

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a key element in leadership development. Mentoring is defined as an interpersonal relationship in which senior and more experienced organizational leaders support junior or less experienced and/or aspiring leaders.

History gives many examples of the value of mentoring; perhaps Homer in the *Odyssey* chronicled the most famous instance. Homer tells us that around 1200 BC, the adventurer Odysseus made ready to leave for the siege of Troy. Before sailing, he appointed a guardian to his household. For the next ten years, this guardian acted faithfully as teacher, advisor, friend, and surrogate father to Telemachus, son of Odysseus. The mythical guardian's name was Mentor. Homer's story reflects one of the oldest attempts by a society to facilitate mentoring.

Mentoring is an essential element in nurse leadership development and can be defined as an interpersonal relationship in which senior and more experienced organizational leaders support junior or less experienced and/or aspiring leaders. Mentoring is a key developmental strategy used both formally and informally to support recruitment, retention, role transition, and skill development. Mentoring is a developmental process that takes place usually between three parties – the mentor, the protégé, and the organization. Mentoring usually involves an experienced individual with advanced knowledge, who provides assistance to the protégé's (mentee's) career.