

Your Turn to Help a Girl

The names and dates are not critical; it is the point of the story that matters. More than several years ago, I sat with my boss after a particularly challenging meeting. The actions that I needed to take to lead the organization were clear. There was just one small problem: I did not know how to do any of the things on the list.

Tears were welling. Let's be honest; tears were leaking. In between the assorted gurgley noises and nasal twinges that come with a good cry, I managed to coherently utter, "I can't do this job."


I am sure you have had such a moment—a moment when you were fully and totally overwhelmed, feeling your world of work crash in around you, being discovered for the imposter you surely must be. I have no memory of how much time elapsed before my boss responded to my sniveling. In my memory it is a mere nanosecond. "Think about the three things you *can* do in the next three months that will move us in the right direction." I call that phenomenal mentoring.

Imagine everything that might have been said by my boss in that moment. "We don't need weak sisters on the team." "Go ahead and quit then." "I hate it when women cry on the job." The gender of my boss is not important, nor is the rest of the conversation. The point of the story is that I was offered a lift up for a better view, a helping hand, an opportunity for professional development. I didn't have a boss in that moment; I had something much better: a mentor.

When was the last time you were properly mentored? Felt good deep down, didn't it? Somebody saw your potential once. Somebody helped you become better at what you were already good at. Somebody took notice when you needed them to.

Now it is your turn. (Perhaps it has been your turn for a while, but that doesn't mean you get off the

hook!) When was the last time you reached down, over, beside you to mentor someone who could use your wisdom? Nobody teaches us how to be mentors. You can't take that course in graduate school. You simply do what was done for you because that is what we do for each other in all walks of life where wisdom and experience matter more than authority or power.

Author Josephine Billings reminds us that to the world we may be just one person, but to one person we may be the world. You know you owe your success to those who showed you the way. I bet you can visualize them as you read this paragraph. You can hear their words, see their gestures, and remember their facial expressions. You can still *feel* their compassion though your relationship with them may have been years ago. Look around in your life. Who needs a bit of mentoring in your world? Who could use some sage advice, some smart guidance, a gentle nudge? For whom could you be the world right now? 

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