

Being a Writing Mentor

By Susan May

Mentoring seems to be one of the many buzz words people use today. Everyone is looking for a mentor or to be mentored. A real mentor is not someone that has to be sought out or assigned. I think it might be more serendipitous.

A real mentor is person who comes long at the right time and you just connect. I've had people in my life that have guided me - my mother, my father, grandparents, my husband (when I will listen), but a mentor is different. This person not only guides, but shows interest in the same things you do and is eager to exchange knowledge.

I just recently found a true mentor. I had been toying with writing a manuscript for years. When my mentor moved to town, she started a writing group that I joined. After a few years of her sharing her knowledge with me, I realized she had become my mentor. I did not meet her and think this woman will mentor me. What I did know was that I wanted to learn to write well and to sell books. She shared her knowledge, experience and became my sounding board for ideas.

There was nothing about each of us that said we would ever have a mentoring relationship. I'm from the deep south and she is from the northwest, I'm middle aged and she is my mother's

age. She lives alone and I live in a house full of people. We did connect through our desire to write a book. I'm a sponge soaking up what she knows and her wisdom about writing and publishing. I'm as eager to learn as she is to share. Outside of helping another writer I don't think she ever planned to become a mentor.

I heard an unpublished writer state that published authors should mentor the unpublished. A published author's response to this statement was, "Be your own mentor by attending writing conferences, reading, and joining a critique group." I agree with the published author. You can't demand for someone to be your mentor.

My mentor and my relationship are not based on demand but on give and take. I respect her space. I realize she has her own writing to do. I request her time, if she has it, to answer my questions. I don't feel she owes it to me. Mentoring is not critiquing, though that can happen. Mentoring is more about leading, guiding, teaching and sometimes pushing. I haven't followed blindly. I have listened to other authors. My mentor has not led me wrong, but it is still my responsibility to learn where ever I can.

Not everyone makes a good mentor, but when you find that mentor/mentee relationship that works you know it. What does my mentor get out of our relationship? My undying gratitude to

start with, the pleasure of knowing she was a part of my success
and that she have passed her love of words on to someone else.

You're the best. Thank you. Claudia.

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