

JOB SEARCH MENTORSHIP DURING COVID-19

By Maya Khamala



Job searching requires fortitude even at the best of times, but during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges can be overwhelming. If you've never considered seeking the guidance of a mentor, now may be the time. Whether you're unemployed or growing your job prospects, mentorship is more vital than ever to help make beneficial connections in these isolating times.

What is mentorship?

Think of mentorship as a mutually beneficial relationship which can strengthen your knowledge, confidence, and ultimately your chances of finding the right job. A mentor is someone more experienced than you, and their role is to share knowledge and advice on their industry, labour market factors, their personal and professional experiences, your questions, or all of the above.

What a mentor can do for you?

Even if you're not in need of job advice right now, it's worth being aware of the many possible benefits of having a mentor:

- They help you organize your job search, guiding you through the industry/sector you are pursuing. You stand a better chance if you're looking in the right place at the right time!
- They ensure you're aware of all the available options that might help you advance your goals. This could include returning to school, a career shift, or exploring new jobs.
- They provide a fresh perspective when you're facing a barrier or a tough choice. A mentor can draw from their own experiences to help you navigate issues they've dealt with before.
- They listen to your professional concerns or struggles at critical points throughout your career - not just at the beginning. This can be a long-term relationship.
- They help find answers to your specific questions. The one-on-one nature of the mentor-mentee relationship is very conducive to achieving this.
- They help you 'get your foot in the door.' For women and people of color who face more systemic barriers and discrimination in certain fields, a well-connected mentor can help forge a more direct route.
- They play a key role in protecting your job during COVID-19 (and other crises). Research shows those with mentors form stronger emotional bonds to their job, have higher job satisfaction, and perceive greater support from employers.

Where to find a mentor?

A strong candidate for a mentor is someone who knows you, is familiar with your work and abilities, and/or is in your industry. Of course, the right mentor for you may not check all these boxes.

If you have an informal mentor in your network (think professors, colleagues, employers, friends, or even family), you might consider formalizing the relationship. Otherwise, looking outside your usual circles may be fruitful too. Whether it's someone you met through mutual contacts, someone from LinkedIn, or someone whose career you've always admired, be sure to prepare a strong elevator pitch before reaching out!

Bottom line: the right mentor can be invaluable to your professional development—both during COVID-19, and beyond.

Stumped? The YES Human Library at yesmontreal.ca allows viewers to scan the profiles of volunteer mentors with diverse backgrounds and request meetings with them.