**Advice from Mentors and Mentees**

**Respect, Partnership and Support**

**Ben Haack: Athlete Leader, SOI board member & SOI consultant – SO Australia**

Try and treat the athlete as no different than probably anybody else. In any sort of typical mentor-mentee relationship, your goal is to try and empower and try and help and support the athlete not necessarily ensure they succeed or take over or anything like that. I think that’s important. I think also honesty is really important in terms of your relationship. I think also trying to, particularly if you don’t really know the person, try and get to know who they are. Try and spend time trying to understand their perspective and what their goals are.

Really over time your goal should be to get the athlete to where they need you less and less. I think that would be a key thing. Try and get them to a point where they can essentially become a mentor themselves over time. Be honest with them. Walk alongside them, not in front of them. Just try and help them achieve what their goals are and what is their vision for what they want to achieve.

**Emanuelle Dutra Fernandes de Souza : Athlete leader, Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger & SOI consultant – SO Brazil**

Be patient, be a good listener. That’s what all my mentors did to help me. Don’t be afraid to be yourself. Just give time to listen to your athlete. We have a lot of information that we want to share, but sometimes we don’t know how to share this in words. Try to help your athlete leader find new words, trying to write some presentations, this will help a lot.

**Rowena Massey: Mentor – New Zealand**

Probably the one key thing I can give you in a really quick time is to just be there as a support. You are not there to make their decisions. You are there to help them and support them to be a better athlete and be a better person and just to basically set some goals, dream up the goals, and just go for it. You’re not their voice, they are their voice. You are just there to be the person behind them. Whether it’s in a social occasion or a personal one or in their sporting lives, you’re just there to be their support

**Growth and Opportunity**

**Vincent Mungai: Mentor – SO Kenya**

Always use the right and acceptable terminologies when speaking to the athlete. The other one is guide the athlete; give them responsibilities – they are able to do that. And offer them that space to make sure they are able to make decisions on their own. The other one is for me, I prefer that mentors have trainings in soft skills because the athlete depends mostly on communication, teamwork, and problem-solving for them to be able to maneuver in the current society. And lastly, to be a good mentor, you need to be competent in disability awareness, understand the needs of the athlete, understand their strengths and also understand the areas they need to improve on.

**Alma Choi: Mentor – SO Macau**

In my experience, a good mentor should be a friend with the athlete leader. Try to understand and discover the best in them, assist them to achieve their goals, be brave, be creative at any time, don’t give up and don’t give in.

**Skills and Flexibility**

**David Thomason – SO Virginia**

Some of the first things that come to mind when I think about working together as an athlete leader and mentor team is don’t forget that you are a team and it’s important that you support each other in those ways. And to every situation, every opportunity, every speaking engagement, bring fresh ears and fresh eyes even if you think you know what to expect because otherwise you’re going to miss out on something and you won’t make the most of that opportunity.

And then finally I always practice what I call “Semper Gumby.” I think that staying flexible and adaptable is so key to making the most of these opportunities. The more you can be flexible, the more likelihood you’re going to make the best of these opportunities.

**Last slide:** For more advice and training, take the “Athlete Leadership: Mentor Course” at <https://learn.specialolympics.org>.