

How to Choose Your Mentors, Teachers and Coaches Wisely

If you are committed to growing personally or professionally, you will select leaders to learn from and to follow. It may be in the form of a mentoring relationship, a coaching relationship, or even attending a series of conferences where you learn from experts, authors and executives.

Learning from and modeling those who have achieved more is one of the best ways to advance. However there are some dangers and potential drama if you enter into this type of learning without first knowing yourself and your values.

I can't tell you the number of times I have been disappointed, confused, and gotten off course by choosing the wrong leader to follow. In the end, the learning I received though was actually more valuable than the learning I signed up for. ***What I have learned is that before deciding to follow, emulate, or learn from someone else, you must first be clear about who you are and what you value.*** If you don't know who you are, what you stand for, or which values you live by, you may get off course by selecting the wrong leader or mentor to emulate or follow. You may be unconsciously setting yourself up for failure by seeking perfection, or looking for someone to tell you what to do, or give you permission that only you can give yourself. We all have blind spots, and if you enter into these types of relationships without discernment and self-awareness, you will not only be disappointed, you will be distracted, and disillusioned.

Here are some of the dangers of following without discernment:

- You will believe everything they say
- You will model behaviors and choices that do not align with your values
- You may become distracted by your own cognitive dissonance
- You will be disappointed or disillusioned

Too often we look to strong personalities to help us achieve a certain type of success, yet the same leader who may be able to help a person achieve success in business acumen, may not be the best teacher when it comes to achieving life-balance, relationship harmony or spiritual contentedness. I've seen individuals change their personality to try to match their mentor, and it just doesn't work. (Not that you can't course-correct, or make changes to improve your effectiveness,) but trying to be more like Donald Trump when your natural way of being in the world is more like Eckhart Tolle, let's face

it: It just won't work for you. Their values are different. You have to choose WHAT you want to learn and then apply your learning through that filter.

Here are some ways to gain clarity before choosing a mentor, coach or leader to follow:

1. What area of expertise does this person have that I want to learn about?
2. What values does this person exhibit that are congruent with mine?
3. What values does this individual exhibit that are out of alignment with my values?
4. Do I have a need for this person to be perfect?
5. Am I strong enough to learn from someone that may not have the same values as I do?
6. Can I look through the proper filters to learn what I need to learn?
7. What are my real objectives for working with or learning from this person?