

Middle Children Make Good Mentees

Most of you are too young to have grown up with *The Brady Bunch*. I watched syndicated (unbeknownst to me at the time) episodes of this blended family of six children; Carol, who has three daughters, marries Mike, who has three sons. The children's struggles with sibling rivalry, puppy love, and self-image had my 7-year-old mind utterly engaged every day after school. I myself was one of three daughters. Being the middle child, I tried to relate to Jan Brady, who constantly found herself in the shadows of her younger and older siblings (<https://youtu.be/w2fXs3bf-p0>). It took me until my freshman year of college, when I attended a different university from my older sister, to realize that "the middle" is where it's at! I've had a mentor since the day I was born! And I avoided the excessive parental attention given to the baby of the family, entirely unnecessary in my opinion (but my little sis may disagree).

Mentors are invaluable. In the form of an older sibling, they are there to show you how to do everything from taking your first steps to walking into high school. Especially in high school, they'll make sure you know what to wear, how to avoid mean girls, what classes to take, and even what to do when an upperclassman asks you out. The best is learning what not to do. When big sis gets caught sneaking out the front door after curfew, you learn to use the back door.

And so it is with professional mentors. If you have the opportunity to develop a mentoring relationship with someone who has walked down a career path you'd like to follow, you are fortunate. You will benefit from their successes and failures. It doesn't mean you won't experience your own stress and trials, but you will have the benefit of a trusted, more experienced mentor to guide you through them.

Seeking mentorship doesn't mean that you aren't your own individual with unique ideas and career goals. My older sister's pursuit of a career in information technology didn't keep me from entering pharmacy school. My professional mentors have contributed to my development, but have not dictated my career path. You will likely find that you develop multiple relationships with different mentors. One may guide you through work-life balance, while another may push you to achieve your goals for research and scholarship. Some mentoring relationships may be lifelong, while others are seasonal. All are valuable.

To this day, I am incapable of purchasing a new computer without first asking for my older sister's advice. I often text pictures to both of my sisters when out shopping. How else is a girl supposed to know what to wear?! It's a welcome dependence on people I trust, and so it is with mentors.

About the author: Keri Sims is a consultant for ACCP who focuses on residency membership and journal operations. She is currently celebrating her 17-year anniversary of pharmacy residency completion.