

# Introduction

When HarperCollins Leadership first approached me about authoring a book on mentoring, I was still coalescing the vision for the ten-year, ten-volume series I'm writing titled *Master Mentors: 30 Transformative Insights from Our Greatest Minds*. I'd just finished launching volumes 1 and 2 and had made appearances on more than two hundred podcasts, television shows, and radio programs as part of the book series' launch and ongoing marketing campaign. And the common questions nearly every host and interviewer wanted me to address were often less about the individual mentors I'd featured in the first books and more about the actual process of mentoring: how to select one, how to become one, what to do and not do on both sides, what mentors get right and wrong, and how to recover when conversations don't go as planned. I was frequently asked if mentoring was still relevant in a post-pandemic and increasingly hybrid/virtual work world. When does it go sideways? How do mentors deal with unprepared

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or overly demanding mentees? The questions seemed endless and interesting and I had an answer for all of them (imagine that . . .).

So I went to work outlining and codifying my point of view on mentoring, recognizing that other books have been written about this topic and by well-qualified authors, including the leadership icon John Maxwell (whom I've interviewed for the *On Leadership with Scott Miller* podcast). As I built my book architecture and drew on my own three decades as a mentor and mentee, I quickly realized I wanted to focus on the many roles mentors play, and specifically on how they differ based on the mentor-mentee dynamic. I identified fifteen roles I thought were important and when I presented them to my early group of advisors who read all my pre-released manuscripts, most of them about passed out. They told me fifteen was a death march, and I absolutely had to narrow the list to a more manageable number. Like eight. Or, at the most, ten. But never fifteen.

I agreed.

I set about clarifying my thoughts on each role and determining which ones were duplicates and could be eliminated or collapsed into others. But a funny thing happened on the way to winnowing the roles—they took on a clearer distinction and seemed worthy of inclusion. With some tightening, I landed on thirteen (admittedly, even that was a little painful). Of course, even then, some roles may seem similar to each other with only nuanced differences. Others will feel distinctly different in their goals and application. I think your own point of view on the differences and similarities will come to life once you meet with individual mentees and experience their own unique personalities, fears, joys, and perspectives. My intent is to give you a road map for all the roles I think you'll be asked to play, consciously or even unconsciously, as you mentor.

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I think maybe later, after reading this book, you might say to yourself: *Oh, now I see some nuances between this role and the other that Scott was talking about.*

At least that's my hope.

So, my advance apologies for intentionally violating the “magical number seven” rule. I think it's more important you build your awareness about all thirteen roles even if your brain can't recall the list as easily as if there were fewer. That's why we have books. Maybe I'm insolent or maybe I'm onto something valuable for each of you. I'm sure you'll let me know in your Amazon reviews. I read them all . . . after a few glasses of champagne. Surprisingly, I don't care as much after the cork pops.

Here are some quick tips on how to make the most of this book:

First, the book was written nearly exclusively for the mentor, not the mentee. I don't think there are any secrets mentees can't know about, but I'd caution you about how you choose to share what you're reading, as you want your adoption of the roles to be natural and aligned with your style and never feel contrived, awkward, or obvious that you're moving from one to another.

Second, the thirteen roles are not all going to happen in every mentoring relationship. And they certainly don't happen all at the same time or in any specific sequence per se (with a couple of minor exceptions). My intent is to equip you with the knowledge, awareness, preparedness, and enhanced skills (and even scripts) so as topics and circumstances arise, you can identify a role that's relevant and worth adopting at any moment.

Third, I focus on each role in two sections: Chapters (for reading and absorbing) and Captures (for reflection and note-taking). My recommendation is to read the chapter and highlight anything you

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think will be valuable for where you are in your own mentoring journey—including insights, phrases, questions, or statements you might like to integrate into your conversations.

Each chapter aligns to a role and is organized into similar parts:

- A description of the role
- The goal
- Upsides
- Downsides
- Skills
- A narrative aligned to the identified skills
- Video illustration (that's the QR code) of me, the author, highlighting key insights and sharing bonus material in a short video

Then after you've read the role-specific chapter, use the captures section for taking notes before, during, and after your mentoring sessions or as a pull-through of any insights you'd like to remember to draw upon later.

Finally, visit [greatmentorship.com](http://greatmentorship.com) for more tools and resources to help perfect your mentoring contribution.

Here are some potential watch-outs to consider as you're reading about each of the roles:

- I use a lot—I mean a lot—of metaphors. I hope you like them and find them valuable. If you don't (and some of you won't), keep reading and leave them behind. I certainly don't want you getting hijacked by what you think is a distracting metaphor. It's how I speak and thus

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how I write. At least you know you're getting an authentic Scott Jeffrey Miller experience.

- You'll likely find some of the roles very similar to each other and may even struggle to see substantive differences. In some cases they are subtle and the differences might come to you later, even after reading and hopefully in the midst of your mentoring sessions. Don't get hung up on similarities—keep reading to the next chapter or role if you are spending too much time trying to differentiate.
- At the end of the book, what I hope you take away is awareness of when you choose to function in a particular role. Make them your own. Maybe you decide to choose three or four roles and stick with them for much, most, or all of your mentoring time. That's your call. Don't get bogged down in a quandary of “am I in *this* role or *that* role?” Just the awareness that there are roles and some of them will come more naturally to you and be more valuable to your mentee is mission accomplished. There is an optional card deck and accompanying journal available at [greatmentorship.com](http://greatmentorship.com) that have been designed as tools to help bring these roles to life in an organized and thoughtful way across your unique mentorship journey.

Your potential for positively influencing your mentee is incalculable. In fact, you will never know the full extent of your impact, because your mentee doesn't always fully appreciate or even understand it themselves. That's OK. Just trust that your investment is likely changing a life. Maybe even your own.