I’ll Help You

Building a relationship with your tutee is vital. Gaining the trust of a writer who comes to you for help is essential in that writer’s confidence and trust into what you tell them. Of course, an intimate relation should be at all costs avoided, but sometimes, our tutees may have plans of their own. Having a strictly business approach may sometimes shy our tutees away, and conflict with an effective learning opportunity for both the tutor, and the writer. If there is no underlying bond between you and your writer, there is no reason for the tutee to remember what you tell them, and truly take into consideration the many strategies in writing you hope to project as a tutor.

Every good tutor of mine here at De Anza has built a bond with me in an academic sense. When I ask one of my Chemistry tutors to help me out with a problem, they immediately self-reflect and find themselves in my shoes when they were in the class. “Oh yeah! I remember that problem; I was so confused as well! So, here’s what you can do…” This little self relevance is building a bond with the tutee. By talking to your tutee in [the real world] where no tutor knows everything, and learning is a two-way street, your tutee achieves a sense of comfort, and begins to build a trust with you. By placing yourself in your writer’s shoes by relating their problems to yourself, the ice between you and your new found friend is broken, and he/she is far more receptive to soak in what you tell them. After all, they, just like us, are learning.

Many times, while working toward establishing an academic relationship with your writer, your tutee may fall under the wrong impression. I’ve heard countless times the many instances where the tutee asks the tutor out for a cup of coffee or for a bite to eat after class. The situation where a tutee is attracted to the tutor is common in the tutoring field, but there are ways to veer away. To avoid such situations, it’s important you level the playing field. We should avoid dressing and talking in a way that displays any social differences, or studying in a place that indicates a certain social status (http://www.urbanministry.org/wiki/relationship-building-tips-tutors-and–tutees), as we all know, opposites attract. More influential than our attire or environment, is the manner in which we speak to our tutees. If we keep a strictly professional but friendly attitude and relation, such situations are far less probable.
In the instance our tutee is simply blind to all our subtle hints, there is no wrong in letting them know you are not interested. Keeping a smile and positive attitude will shoot them down to a soft place, and surely make for an interesting meeting the next time around.

There are more ways for establishing a relationship with your tutee which doesn’t involve your past tutoring experiences, or even an awkward coffee date. “I just met my tutee this afternoon, and I can already tell that we're not going to get along” (http://www.urbanministry.org/wiki/overcoming-differences–tutoring–relationships–common–concerns–and–solutions). Despite some not so great first impressions of your tutee, it’s ok, and the few months you’ll be together will iron out many of the creases you may first encounter. In fact, your projecting a relaxed attitude over time will not only rub off on your tutee, but will make future tutoring sessions a breeze. A mellow, cool, attitude will gain you some respect from your tutee and make finding some common denominators much easier. Tutoring in a way is much like life, at the end of the day; it’s only what you make it.

Have fun. Building a bond with your tutee doesn’t have to be a boring step by step process. Just like we’ve made friends in the past, tutoring is no different. A friend is only as good as you are, and when you’re a tutor, it’s important you’re the best. Of course this doesn’t imply you should go head over heels for your tutee, but a good tutor finds ways to help their tutee’s more than by what a book can tell them. Helpful attributes like outside work on your part as the tutor like ideas on a paper, or even some creative ways to glue together a paper like an out-line. Beyond all else, building a relationship with your tutor comes down to how well you can network and communicate with people. Because many of our tutees are international students, it should be a challenge and a huge ego boost to know you’ve helped someone achieve an assignment they otherwise couldn’t have done alone.

Establishing a bond with your tutee builds confidence. Like the MANY international students here at De Anza who've come from distant home lands, many writers including myself at a point, simply don’t know about the help they have available; left feeling alone. By acting not only as a tutor, but a friend, your tutee can reach academic heights never thought possible. Tutors, in my experiences, and in many, act as a support stronger in a sense than
the instructors themselves. With the notion that there is always a friend and not just a teacher willing to help, no task is impossible. Because you’ve built a bond, your tutee now has trust in you, and far more important, trust in themselves.

A tutoring session where the tutor makes no attempt to first stand alone with the tutee simply detonates the foundation out from underneath a productive session. When you take no time to first recognize a tutee as a person, respect is invisible and productivity is cut into eighths. Because you take no time in talking to your tutee, who by surprise isn’t just a tutee, but a [person], you’re simply a talking stranger. How much can you believe of what someone’s telling you, if you don’t ever know them? Even a simple, “Hi, how are you doing?” can go a long way in the tutoring process. Ultimately as we’ll all come to realize, building a relationship is important, and inevitable.

Even if your approach to tutoring is that of computers, you’re going to build a relationship with your tutee no matter how rough, tough, and no emotion buff you are. If you see a person who you just sat a foot away from, for an hour in a place you can hardly turn around in, and don’t acknowledge, but shy away and act as though you didn’t know them; this isn’t rough and tough, it’s actually anti-social, and more practically referred to as weird. If you make eye contact with a tutee you’ve helped out at one time or another, of course you’re going to shoot them a smile, and a sense of courtesy and respect won’t be far away.

Building a relationship with your tutee, beyond just helping them academically, is important for not only the writer, but for the reader as well. Sometimes, the unfortunate instance of an attraction between you and your tutee may conflict with your role as a tutor. But, your strategic approach, and the power of NO, will quickly scheme you out of such positions. There are many ways to build a relationship with your writer, and over time, despite some imperfect first impressions, it is, inevitable. Making tutoring fun and exciting may aid in your process of building a relationship and can make the subject more interesting. By constructing a bond through simple real world conversation, you as the tutor can catch a glimpse of what’s actually going on in your tutee’s head. With an impression of
your writer’s personality, you can adjust, and derive different methods in which can benefit them best. Building a relationship with your tutee makes you as the tutor much more responsive. By making friends with your tutee and acting as support, your writer builds trust, and confidence in both you, and themselves. By building a relationship with your tutee you are building bond; a bond which you can both tug on in either way. By establishing a relation with your tutee, you may be tugged into a position alien to your understanding, expanding your mind to a horizon of tutoring which can lead you and your new friend to a new world of knowledge.

Sources


Tutoring Matters

By Jerome Rabow, Tiffani Chin, Nima Fahimian


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