

How to be a good mentee

In: [Tips for Growing Your BA Career](#) By: [Laura Brandenburg](#)

So you are thinking about taking the plunge and working with a career coach or mentor to help move your business analysis career forward. What can you expect? What can you do to get the most out of the time and money you are about to invest?

Here are 7 tips for getting the most out of working with a career coach.

1. Have a **clear goal** for the relationship and a general direction for your career. If you don't know what you want out of working with a coach, you are likely to be disappointed. If you aren't sure about your next step, your goal might be to find the direction for your career, that's OK. But if that's it, be clear about it.
2. Ask your coach if they can help you achieve your career goals. Sometimes coaches do not have the [business analyst skills](#) or experiences you might assume they have and would rather help you find the right person than lead you astray. Be honest and up front about what support you need so they can best support you.
3. **Be open and willing to accept help.** Oftentimes the advice that comes from my own business coach is completely unexpected. I sometimes find myself thinking he didn't get it. Then I roll over his input a few times and realize he saw a truth about me or my business that I wasn't even aware of. And sometimes when working with a coaching client, they shut down every suggestion I make so quickly that we never get anywhere. These relationships tend to fizzle out quickly on both sides. When you work with a coach, be open to the unexpected. (I often say that in requirements elicitation, sometimes my [best questions](#) are those that get misunderstood by my stakeholders. It's the same way when you are working with a coach.)
4. **Share your progress.** Whether it's an "aha" moment based on the input from your coach or a total disaster based on advice they gave you, share it. Your coach will learn more about what works for you and what doesn't and be able to improve their approach to your relationship. A good coach is going to be invested in you personally and want to help celebrate your [success](#).
5. **Own the relationship.** Don't expect your coach, even a paid one like me, to drive your bus. As the client, you are in charge of your own career and will do most of the driving in the coaching relationship. This means you come to meetings with questions, feedback, and discussion topics and you do the work that comes from the meeting.
6. **Invest for the long-term.** From time to time, I receive panicked emails looking for short-term support. At its best, coaching is a long-term relationship and the more the coach knows about the entire context in which you work, the better advice they will be able to give. This doesn't happen in a half hour conversation or a quick document review.
7. **Engage in a professional relationship.** Your coach is not your therapist, your spouse, or your best friend. Don't treat them like one. They are a trusted professional advisor. That being said, there is a fine line between personal challenges and professional ones.