

Tough Love: You're not perfect. Now what?! By Kathi Guiney, GPHR, SPHR SCP President **YES!** Your Human Resources Solution.

Have you achieved perfection? Nope, none of us has! That means there is always something to learn from a mentor, whose experience can sharpen your future. But it's not enough to say, "I need a mentor!" You must take the initiative to find one, and you must become a desirable mentee. Here's how.

- **Define your goal.** Do you need to improve your performance, fill skills gaps, or expand your network? Be honest with yourself! Setting the right goal will help you choose the right mentor. Identifying a few mentors can help you meet multiple goals.
- **Make a low-cost ask for time.** High-caliber mentors are on everyone's wish list, so they're likely to shoot down a vague, open-ended drain on their time. Try a simple, finite mentorship request: monthly meetings for one year . . . and be punctual!
- **Set an agenda.** Many mentees mistakenly expect the mentor to run the show. Don't expect to show up with a cup of coffee and receive a weekly lesson plan. Prepare specific questions, areas of feedback, and requests for support. Send your agenda in advance.
- **Listen and evaluate.** Your job during your mentorship meeting: listen, engage, and take notes. And remember, your mentor is there to offer advice and perspective, not to make decisions for you. It's wise to weigh their words and apply the things you've learned.

Nobody is perfect, not even your mentor. But together, you can make each other sharper than you were before. And who knows? Maybe someday you'll hear the vague, open-ended cry of, "I need a mentor," and you'll know exactly how to answer: "I am available, but no lesson plans included."