

BUILDING NETWORKING SKILLS

One of the advantages of mentoring is that it allows the mentee to hone his or her social skills in a professional setting. Here are some skills that you may want to work on together:

Making contact and introductions

- ✓ Practise mentee's "30-second infomercial" or "elevator speech" together.
- ✓ Discuss grooming, attire, exchange of business cards.
- ✓ Make some small talk in your first few minutes.
- ✓ Discuss topics which often come up during small talk or in social interaction in professional circles. What's current, taboo, acceptable, unacceptable?
- ✓ Discuss how to approach strangers in a networking setting such as a conference or a cocktail.

Keeping the conversation alive

- ✓ Discuss and practise "ice-breakers."
- ✓ Discuss appropriate questions to ask to establish contact and build a relationship.
- ✓ Generate a list of topics that the mentee might be interested in discussing; then brainstorm who it might be appropriate to discuss them with.
- ✓ Cover appropriate ways to join or leave a conversation while mingling.

Follow-up

- ✓ Discuss the importance of follow-up after a new contact has been established.
- ✓ Brainstorm productive ways to keep a new connection alive.

