

## **The Gift of Mentorship**

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Mentorship is like a smile to the world. It is a gift that we can all give to others that makes a long lasting positive impact on a person's life. It is an incredible opportunity to be a mentor, to change the life of an individual and guide them on the road to success. To share this ability to help and to guide is a very generous gesture that has a positive impact on the mentee, our profession and on society. It is a precious gift that, once received, is transmitted to the next generation like a tradition. The ability to mentor is in each and every one of us and to offer this gift to others is to start on a journey of self-discovery and immense fulfillment.

Mentorship is not parenting, but a part of parenting is probably mentoring. A mentor shows incredible patience and leadership. He or she will use their own experience to develop and design guidance that is tailored to their mentees. In no way does one's experience mold the future of others. It only provides a starting point for an open-minded conversation. Mentoring has no formula. In a way, it is the connection between two minds: the mentor shows the path and the mentee is ready to embrace the vision and start an exciting journey traveling along that path.

Mentors have responsibilities. It is an unwritten contract that is drawn between two people, an unspoken commitment to provide selfless guidance. A mentor can envision the future but cannot guarantee it. He or she is not a magician who can make all obstacles disappear. On the contrary, a mentor has a role of facilitator and teacher, putting the mentee in the position of the captain of the ship, showing the mentee how to navigate through rough seas and learn to spot the icebergs. In that sense, mentoring is like teaching for a lifetime. It happens when a mentor believes in the success of their mentee and a mentee trusts the word of their mentor. Mentoring is letting the mentee decide their future and teaching him or her to learn from that very experience and that connection. To be a mentor is committing to an extraordinary journey where fulfillment comes from the success of mentees.

I am very fortunate to be one of many who had the extraordinary chance to call Dr. Charles J. Burstone their mentor. I first met Dr. Burstone when he came to Paris in the mid-1980's to teach biomechanics. At the time, I was preparing my journey to the US and I was hopeful to be among the few who would enter the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Connecticut. The depth of his knowledge was fascinating and I remember his kind encouragement and his enthusiasm about Orthodontics. During my residency program at the University of Connecticut, Dr. Burstone taught us diagnosis and treatment planning and, of course, biomechanics and appliance design. It is through his teaching that my passion for Orthodontics was nurtured and my love for teaching grew. It is a bit surreal to think that he designed the program at the University of Connecticut in the early 1970's with a vision of what Orthodontics was going to be today. All that was missing at the time was a tablet, the internet or digital models, and perhaps Facebook. Dr. Burstone had it all figured out and he gave us this wonderful gift, mentoring us to be who we are today. He taught us so much about orthodontics, research, orthodontic education and leadership. For me, it was the dream of a lifetime that came true when I attended my residency program at the University of Connecticut.

Dr. Burstone also gave very practical advice as he had traveled the world. It was also with a smile and with the pride of seeing all of us develop as young teachers. On our way to Bergen Norway for the European Orthodontic Society meeting, Dr. Burstone told Steve Lindauer and me to "take pictures of the city as soon as the sun would be out, and not to wait." It was so true to do this in the moment rather than wait. And every time I take bus no. 42 in Paris, I remember what Dr. Burstone once told me: that it was the most beautiful journey through Paris from the center of town to the Eiffel Tower, passing by all the well-known landmarks of the City of Lights. I learned so much from him: preparing for lectures, presentations and writing articles. He was always patient and compassionate about the hesitation and anxiety of the novice. As a young teacher, I often reached out to him and we talked about the challenges and the frustrations of a university environment. He always listened with patience, smiled to reassure me, and offered his

thoughts. It was always a moment of enlightenment and a learning experience.

Dr. Burstone loved to travel and he loved to teach. He had such a wonderful curiosity about the world and about the people. He had the best stories about his travels to many faraway countries and I wish that he had written a book about them. He touched the lives of so many, helping us unleash this extraordinary potential that we all carry deep inside of us, this strength that makes us who we are. Dr. Burstone had the special gift of making us better and he gave us the

confidence to go further, to achieve above and beyond the best we could do.

When I heard the news on February 11, 2015, I called Dr. Ravindra Nanda. I was in total disbelief and it is hard for me to imagine orthodontics without Dr. Burstone. I have a debt of gratitude to him and all my mentors who have made me who I am today. They gave me the love of teaching and mentoring and I am eternally grateful for that Gift. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for being such incredible mentors!