Talking with a mentor can sometimes be intimidating or overwhelming. One thing to remember is that although a mentor can be an invaluable resource, they can be very busy and their time is valuable. As a mentee, you will want to be sure to use your time wisely to gain the information and advice you need. Please remember that calling a mentor for the sole purpose of asking for a job can have a negative effect on the relationship. Focus on learning how to get to where the mentor is in his/her career, and the steps you need to take to get there. Once a relationship is established, it may turn into a job opportunity, but that is a decision the mentor should make based on what you have shown them.

Here are a few sample questions any mentor / mentee relationship would benefit from:

1. What ideas or thoughts inspired you to get started?
2. Is this the career path you always wanted to pursue?
3. Why do you do what you do?
4. Which books, organizations, or people inspired you to make your decisions?
5. What is the one action you have taken that has accounted for most of your success?
6. If you could change your professional life in one way, what would you change?
7. Which magazines, newspapers, or information products do you use for advice?
8. How do you handle obstacles, adversity, and / or failure?
9. How do you define success?
10. When, if at all, is breaking the rules okay?
11. How do you prevent emotions from clouding your decisions?
12. Which attributes are most important in your industry? Your company? Your position?
13. What are the best methods towards developing those attributes?
14. Which groups or people are in your personal / professional network (sphere of influence)?
15. Are there specific professional groups / organizations that would be beneficial for me to be involved in for this career path?
16. Do you have a mentor now, or did you have one that helped you to get where you are?
17. What is the most important piece of advice you could offer a new professional?
18. What is the most difficult part of starting a career?
19. What do you feel is the most common mistake new hires make?
20. What do you feel the younger generation could do differently to be more successful?

Remember that you do not need to ask all these questions in the first meeting. Try to find appropriate ways to weave these into normal conversation so it doesn’t sound like a formal interview. If they occur in natural conversation, you will most likely get a more in-depth and personal answer. The goal of the relationship with your mentor is to understand the advice you are being given, and to find ways to incorporate it into your life. It is better to fully comprehend a few select concepts than to memorize answers to a long list of questions.

If you are not experiencing success in your life, then there is something that you do not know.