Mentors. Here at Toastmasters we love talking about mentorship, because it really works! But mentorship is more than just being there to transfer your knowledge or guide your protégé, but a mentor can do so much more. It’s also about making connections, building relationships, inspiring someone to do more than they thought they were capable of. And sometimes, you might even be considered a mentor to someone and not even know it. What I want today to be about is a time to reflect on periods in your life when you acted as a mentor to someone and helped guide them, whether officially or unofficially. Also, think about times in your life when you had a mentor or considered someone to be your mentor.

I’ll tell you briefly about someone I considered a mentor, who inspired me to be where I am today. I knew early on that I wanted a career and I wanted to be free to travel and make my own decisions. As early as I can remember, my aunt seemed to have that kind of life. She was in the U.S. Public Health Service, a branch we know as Commissioned Corps, and with her job she was able to live in so many different places and was dispatched all over the world to help those suffering through crisis. The Haiti earthquake? She was there. Syrian refugees? She was there. Katrina? Yep. She retired after years at her final duty station with the CDC, but before she retired, she would regale me with all these stories about her life, and gave me advice on how I can forge my own path. She taught me that education is important and it can help to lift you out of a difficult situation. Only later did I realize that education was her ticket out of a bad life. Divorced from an abusive man at 17 with two kids, her decision to go to nursing school changed her life. And that’s what inspired me to change mine, to take hold of my destiny and mold my future without letting someone else do it for me. To me, that is truly mentorship, even above and beyond, to be able to guide and inspire someone to make them realize that they have the power to make the most of this one life we have.

I have a few people in my life I consider mentors, both officially and unofficially. I hope that I am also seen as somewhat of a mentor as well and can live up to the title. I am an aunt myself, and I really hope that I can serve as a guide to my nieces in a similar way that my aunt helped guide me.

With that, I would like to go around the room and ask you to introduce yourself and tell me someone who inspired you or acted as your mentor or protégé. And if you don’t want to mention that, you can tell me someone you find inspiring out there in the world. For time, maybe we’ll stick with a couple sentences for each of us. Let’s start with our guests

Speech Title: Reaching a Consensus

Length: 20 Minutes

From: Level 3

Pathways: Effective Coaching

BIO:

Mary Billingsley has been a federal employee for The Department of Health and Human Services since February 2013, and currently works under the Office of the Secretary, with the Assistant Secretary of Administration in the Office of Human Resources. As Area 34 Director for District 27 and Secretary for HHS Toastmasters Club, her goal is to empower, support, and contribute to the dedicated Toastmasters’ members to ensure their professional growth in public speaking and leadership. Always striving for positivity, Mary believes in resiliency for overcoming challenges to live your best life!