

Teachers and Tutors (Tips for Tutors)

You don't have to be a classroom teacher in order to be a successful tutor. In the book, The Art of Learning to Teach, George Haddad writes, "For me, a teacher was someone who made me curious about how things work and the reasons why they are the way they are. I had many "teachers"- in the literal sense of the word- who taught me in a classroom environment, but unfortunately they are not the people who stick in my mind. I usually forget them sooner or later." There are many people who walk into our lives and become our teachers. A tutor can do the same thing.

When my children were little, my wife and I purchased a home in Washington, New Jersey. Our neighbors were the Slikers. Roy Sliker was retired. He took the time to show me how to cut my hedges and still leave my fingers attached to my hand! He showed me how to prune trees so that light from the sun could reach all the branches. Roy took me to a river and I learned to fish with no weight so that the bait would tumble naturally through the current. Roy was not trained to teach me those things. He just took an interest and shared some of his time with me. Roy had all the ingredients needed to be a good tutor: a bit of time, interest and caring.

A friend from another state wanted to be a tutor but became frustrated with the course she had to take and the lessons she had to write. It brought back some bad college memories. In a letter she wrote, "My image of myself as a tutor was sitting in the County of Flemington Public Library and having someone read or write with me, very informal-no lesson plan, specific material to cover. I really believe that the way to learn to read is to read, the way to learn to write is to write, and everyone is different so you just work together to find a way. "I think my friend has the right idea. When we sit down to share and discuss a book or a piece of writing, we are opening up a door to a friendship, setting out on a new journey, exploring together.

Dr. S. Elaine Rogers (East Stroudsburg University) writes, "What do we remember about our "best" teachers? We tend to remember most those who made us feel worthwhile-those who cared about us." That teacher may indeed be a classroom teacher or a neighbor, a grandparent, a friend. A tutor should be added to that list. Someone who reminds us of what we can do and therefore opens doors to new possibilities, to bless someone's life is a rich reward indeed.

Works Cited:

1. The Art of Learning to Teach, Mary Beattie, copyright 2001 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.
2. "An Intimate Statement on Teaching-Revisited" by Dr. S. Elaine Rogers, Society of Park and Recreation Newsletter (Volume 18, Number 2) Spring 1994

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