The Training Connection, Inc.

MENTORING moment



ISSUE 8
August 2026

BACK TO SCHOOL ENERGY FOR YOUR LIFE AND CAREER

By Shere Kidd



There is something special about August. The days are still warm, but the energy begins to shift. The carefree nature of the summertime gives way for more routine, structure and preparation for a new season. Growing up, some of my favorite childhood memories involved preparing to go back to school: new supplies, fresh goals, a new schedule and routine, the excitement of entering a new grade, and a belief that this year can be different and better than the last.

I smile thinking about the many years Mom would pile us in the car to go back-to-school shopping. We would go to Tyson's Corner Mall, our favorite mall in the Northern Virginia area, to shop for a couple of new outfits and sneakers. Then we would stop at Woolworths for school supplies. We loved picking out our new pencils, paper, folders, and the ever-trendy Trapper Keeper! It was also exciting to pick out a new backpack and lunchbox, confidently keeping up with the latest styles.



EXCITEMENT FOR WHAT'S TO COME

The night before the first day of school was also a big deal in our household. Mom would get the curlers out to do our hair. We would lay out our new outfits, right down to our socks, and go to bed earlier than usual because we were just so excited! We would set our bookbags by the door and discuss what to pack for lunch. There was something so magical about that evening.

It was filled with anticipation, optimism, and possibility. We believed we were stepping into a fresh start. New teachers. New classmates. New opportunities. A chance to learn, grow, and perhaps become an even better version of ourselves. My siblings and I still reminisce about the good ole days preparing for going back to school, over 35 years later.

What if we brought that same excitement and enthusiasm to our careers? As adults, we rarely give ourselves that same gift. Instead of pausing to prepare for what's ahead, we often rush from one responsibility to the next without taking time to reflect.

Before the busy fall season begins, consider making the month of August your professional "night before school" and ask yourself:

- What have I learned about myself this year?
- What strengths do I want to build on?
- What habits or mindsets do I need to leave behind?
- Where do I want to grow over the next few months?
- Who can help me get there—a mentor, coach, supervisor, or trusted colleague?
- What bold step have I been postponing because it feels uncomfortable?

Just as we once prepared for a successful school year, we can intentionally prepare our minds, our goals, and our relationships for the next chapter of our careers.



PACK YOUR PROFESSIONAL SUITCASE

As students, we prepare for a new school year by gathering the supplies that we need to succeed. As professionals, we should be encouraged to do the same. As you prepare your professional backpack, what do you need to carry into the next season? Consider the following:

- **Pack your curiosity.** Ask more questions. Stay open to new perspectives. Be willing to learn from people who think differently from you.
- **Pack your confidence.** You do not need to know everything before you take the next step. Growth often begins when you are willing to stretch beyond what is familiar.
- **Pack your connections**. Your network is an important part of your professional success. Reconnect with colleagues. Reach out to mentors. Build relationships before you need them.
- **Pack your resilience.** Every semester has challenging assignments and every career has difficult seasons. Remember that challenges do not mean you are failing, they may be preparing you for something greater.
- **Pack your purpose.** Do not become so busy pursuing success that you forget to define what success means to you.
- **Pack your supplies.** While you are packing, why not treat yourself to a few new office supplies? Just as new school supplies brought excitement and a sense of possibility, a fresh notebook, planner, or favorite pen can provide a small but meaningful boost of motivation.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Whether you're beginning a new mentoring relationship, participating in a leadership development program, pursuing your next promotion, or simply striving to become better at what you do, remember that learning doesn't end when school does. It becomes a lifelong journey.



Every new season offers an invitation to grow. Carry the curiosity of a student, the courage of a beginner, the discipline of a lifelong learner, and the confidence that every experience, whether a success or a setback is helping prepare you for what's next.

So, as August ushers in a new rhythm, take a moment to pack your professional backpack with intention. Embrace the excitement of new possibilities, invest in your growth, and approach this season with the same hopeful anticipation you once felt the night before the first day of school. After all, the most successful professionals never stop learning; they simply keep showing up, ready for the next lesson.

Ask a Mentor

To gather even more tips for embracing a back-to-school mindset, make it a conversation with your mentor or even a coffee break with your supervisor and mentor together. Consider asking:

- What do you do to signal a “fresh start”?
- Are there any new supplies or technologies you’ve been using lately?
- What is one thing that has worked for you in becoming more intentional about your career strategy and long-term goals?
- How do you approach goal setting and stay accountable throughout the year?

Meet the Author



Shere Kidd, M.S., is The Mentoring Connection's (TMC) Program Manager and a Facilitator for TTC. As a self-proclaimed life-long learner, Shere takes pride in being able to encourage continued learning, growth and professional development. Shere facilitates mentoring matches based on both individual and organizational goals. Additionally, Shere provides overall TMC client support, to include outreach and follow-up, as well as coordinating and facilitating client mentoring forums and trainings, from logistical details to A/V management.

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Founder Message

The Training Connection, Inc. is dedicated to helping our clients realize the full potential of their employees. Our philosophy is simple: "Everyone has something to contribute and something to learn." We capitalize on the experiences of successful individuals (mentors) who are committed to developing future leaders. Let us show you what our knowledge, experience, and dedication can mean to you both personally and professionally.

Kathy Wentworth Drahosz
CEO/People Developer