So you finally mustered the nerve to ask a mentor for a cup of coffee. You’re sweating. You can feel pressure mounting. She strolls through the Starbucks door holding an Americano with two pumps of hazelnut in one hand and years of experience in the other.

Here are some key questions you can ask her to take the pressure off you and make the most of your meeting:

1. What would you do if you were me? Don’t waste your time looking to impress your mentor with how smart you are. Tell them about your specific challenges, and ask for their recommendations.
2. What used to be your biggest weaknesses? This whopper of a question will tell you right away if someone will make a good mentor. A good answer reveals the number one trait of a great mentor — self-awareness. Alternative question: “What did you learn about yourself in the last six months?”
3. What are you most proud of?
4. What professional organizations are you associated with and in what ways? No one becomes a rising star in any industry without going to the right conferences and trade associations. A good mentor can help you filter out the best ones, and if you’re lucky, get you access to coveted “invite only” insider groups.
5. How can you determine that you have the ability or potential to be successful in this specific occupation?
6. What does your mentor know now which would have been helpful to know when s/he was in your shoes?
7. What qualities do you look for in the people you hang out with?
8. If you wanted to encourage innovative ideas, how would you go about it?
9. If you wanted to create an environment where motivation can thrive, what’s the first thing you would do?
10. Who has influenced you the most?
11. What do you do to challenge your underlying beliefs, paradigms and assumptions?
12. What would you do differently if given the opportunity?
13. When is breaking the rules okay?
14. How and where do you find inspiration?
15. If you wanted to find the second best answer to a question or problem, what technique would you use?
16. How do you keep your feelings from clouding your decision-making?
17. What’s the best way to keep your eye on future results?
18. How do you bring courage and conviction to risky situations?
19. What do you do to live a balanced life?
20. What dreams and goals inspired you to succeed?