

Why you need a fairy god mentor



TUNING IN

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As we usher in the era of *Frozen*, I don't know if it's legal to say I still love Cinderella. And no, it's not because I once forgot one shoe on my way to the mall, and have found a kindred spirit who is a cartoon. It's because of Cinderella's fairy godmother. Today, I want to turn the concept on its head (the concept, not the person, I promise). With Disney movies getting more empowered female leads, I can't help but imagine what the updated version of Cinderella would look like. And I'd say that the Cinderella of the new age would have a fairy god mentor instead of the other thing.

When women take charge, better choices are made. And I'm not just saying this because my orders have prevented my child from cartwheeling in the balcony, or my cats from eating Lego pieces. A research report from McKinsey is on my side; we need women making more decisions. Unfortunately, only 54 per cent of women have access to mentors who can formally support their journey. Clearly, the need of the hour is not a fairy godmother who waves a wand and turns your muddy shoes into glass slippers, but someone who tells you the wand is already in your hand and that you're nuts for not using it properly.

When Ambi and I took over SaPa, we knew nothing except that we wanted to teach music to kids. Enter **Nirmala Sankaran**, aka Nimmi, aka my fairy god mentor.

Nimmi is the no-nonsense support system I'm lucky to have. She helped me break down scary goals, sat with me for hours on end, gave me food, and occasionally told me

that I was being ridiculous. She has always been nice enough to give me the truth straight but follow it up with dessert. Bad news is best delivered with a slice of chocolate cake, as the saying goes. She's my loudest cheerleader, my harshest critic, my strongest shoulder to cry on.



Am I writing all this just to brag? A little, yes. But I'm also saying all this because no matter who you are – male, female, entrepreneur, employee, artist, Cinderella – what you need is a fairy god mentor. Someone who's most excited to see you dressed up for the ball but will also tell you in a second that your shoes don't really match.

To make your search easier, here's what you should look for. Your fairy god mentor is:

- Always willing to learn, and always pushing you to learn
 - Supportive of your vision
 - Occasionally willing to yell at you
 - ...but never piling on you when you're being too hard on yourself
 - Always has cake on hand
- Here's to finding your own fairy tale ending – not because you were given a dress and a pair of shoes but because someone held your hand and pulled you out of the trenches.

The author is a singer, songwriter, educator and social entrepreneur

