



How to be a Mentor

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Mentor

A person who helps a more junior person develop professionally through a combination of advising on projects, skills development, creation of opportunities, and personal growth in an intensive manner over an extended period of time.

Greek Mythology

Homer's *Odyssey* – Mentor is Odysseus' trusted friend who runs the household when Odysseus leaves

Athena, disguised as Mentor, counsels Odysseus' son Telemachus

1750 mentor – “wise counselor”

A Spectrum of Helpers

Advisers – Focused, pointed help

Facilitators – Door openers, opportunity creators, linkers

Mentors – Full-blown deal

Benefits of Having a Mentor

Mentors are perceived by mentees as being important to career advancement and career satisfaction

Presence of a mentor may be related to choosing an academic career

Apparent benefit on productivity and success

Sambunjak D, et al. JAMA 2006;296:1103-15.



Benefits of Being Mentored

Mentored medical school faculty

- Better research skills
- Better research preparation

Mentored primary care fellows

- More likely to publish 1 or more papers/yr
- More likely to secure funding as PI early

Steiner JF, et al. Acad Med 2000;75:74-80.

Steiner JF, et al. J Gen Intern Med 2002;17:845-51.



Disturbing Aspects Regarding Mentorship

Prevalence of having a mentor ranges from 19-93%

Men 3 × as likely as women to have a positive relationship with a mentor

10-32% of mentees report that their mentor used their work to further the mentor's career rather than the mentee's career

Sambunjak D, et al. JAMA 2006;296:1103-15.

Osborn EH, et al. Acad Med 1992;67:59-62.

Fried LP, et al. JAMA 1996;276:898-905.



Expectations of Mentor

Help trainee choose research project(s)

Meet with trainee regularly (e.g., weekly) to review progress in research and didactic coursework

Give timely feedback on manuscript or grant drafts (e.g., within 1 wk)

Advise trainee on seeking funding

Prepare trainee for abstract presentations

Assign credit (e.g., first authorship) where credit is due

Counsel trainee on job opportunities and negotiating for jobs

Serve as a mirror for mentee self-reflection

Nurture, then set free

Goldman L. J Gen Intern Med 1991;6:341-4.

Chin MH, et al. J Gen Intern Med 1998;13:117-22.

Saha S, et al. J Gen Intern Med 1999;14:745-9.



Features of a Great Mentor, According to Mentees

Writes well

- Macroedits
- Microedits

Stickler for details, yet sees the bigger picture

Fast; never the “rate limiting step” in mentee’s research

Door always open, literally

Keeps up with the literature

Features of a Great Mentor, According to Mentees

Pushes mentee to develop his/her own research agenda, not that of the mentor

If mentee works on mentor's project(s), it's as a stepping stone for the mentee

Doesn't try to clone the mentee

Guides, but doesn't control

Nominates mentees for awards, important roles in national organizations

Creates opportunities

Matchmaking, team building skills

Separates the worthwhile from the waste of time (committees, other potential collaborators) for the mentee

Features of a Great Mentor, According to Mentees

Encourages mentees to pause and ask the “So what?” question

Excellent teacher

Willing to take chances

Always encouraging

“... knows how to inspire, motivate, congratulate, and criticize, all without creating a sense of antagonism or favoritism.”

Has a sense of humility

Selfless

Leads by example

Role model in balancing personal and professional lives

Features of a Great Mentor, According to Mentees

Not mentee's best friend, but really cares about mentee's personal life

Pro-active (doesn't wait till mentee comes to him/her with problems)

Can work with mentees whose interests do not align exactly with mentor's

Attracts mentees from outside his/her shop

Leaves a long-lasting impact, lasting well beyond the time the mentee still "needs" the mentor

Expectations of Mentee

Know thyself

Work hard

Be pro-active

Be flexible and innovative

Focus, focus, focus

Be respectful

Be prepared when meeting with mentor

Be responsive to mentor's feedback

A Good Mentee ...

Identifies personal goals

Seeks feedback

Keeps record of her development/progress

Takes responsibility for herself

Stays open to new ideas and suggestions

Uses feedback to improve performance

Uses her mentor as a role model

Is respectful and considerate of her mentor

Demonstrates her best qualities

Special Issues

Gender, race, age, etc. differences – should not be issue for core areas

Co-mentorship is generally effective

- 87% of co-mentors believe that co-mentored protégés have received a better experience
- Sample model
 - 1° mentor for the research domain
 - 2° mentor(s) for professional development, advocacy, psychosocial support

Long-distance mentorship is generally ineffective

- 78% of long-distance mentors did *not* find long-distance mentoring as effective for protégé

Luckhaupt SE, et al. J Gen Intern Med 2005;20:1014-8.

Anderson L, et al. Clin Trans Sci 2012;5:71-7.



Mentoring Agreement: Key Points

Research

- Mentee's productivity (abstracts, papers, grant applications)
- Progress of mentee towards independence
- Responsible conduct of research by both parties

Educational activities

Professional/career development

- Skills development (writing, speaking, reviewing, managing time, leading teams)
- Progress towards promotion
- Networking by mentor on behalf of mentee
- Work-life balance
- Plans for independence from mentor

Mentoring Agreement: Key Points

Support

- Protected time
- Resources
- Advocacy, emotional support

Communication

- Frequency and structure of meetings
- Progress reports
- Feedback
- Confidentiality

Personal conduct/interpersonal relationships

- Managing conflicts
- Authorship order



Managing Relationships with Mentees: A Series of Case Studies

Changing Horses in Mid-Stream

One of the post-doctoral fellows in your group has asked you to be his 1^o mentor and chair of his dissertation committee. He is not the easiest person to work with, never takes the initiative to set up meetings, but shows up when you set up the meetings, and seems to get a lot out of your guidance.

You've carefully reviewed 3 drafts of his protocol and helped him obtain a small dissertation grant to support his work.

Changing Horses in Mid-Stream

When the final version of the protocol comes around 3 months later, you are surprised to see that one of your colleagues in GIM is listed as the chair of his committee and you are listed as the “outside representative.”

Your feelings are hurt and this feels unethical because so many of the project ideas are yours and you have made a huge investment time-wise to help this fellow out.

Discussion

What should you do?

Why did this happen?

How can you avoid this problem in the future?

Would a mentorship contract help?

Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't?

A young investigator is doing research with 2 mentors. He decides to write an abstract for a national meeting.

3 weeks before the submission deadline, he circulated a draft of the abstract to his co-authors.

Mentor A provides feedback immediately, but Mentor B does not. Despite numerous attempts to contact Mentor B, the submission deadline arrives, and still no word from Mentor B.

Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don't?

Unsure whether to include Mentor B as an author, the mentee asks Mentor A. Mentor A says to go ahead and include Mentor B, so the mentee does.

Finally – after the abstract is submitted – Mentor B gets around to reading it, and disagrees with some of its content. He tells the mentee in no uncertain terms that the abstract isn't very good and, in its present form, he would not have agreed to be listed as a co-author.

Discussion

What went wrong here?

Have you ever submitted an abstract without approval of the final draft by all co-authors? Has anyone ever done that to you?

Is an abstract really “just an abstract?”

If you were Mentor A, what would you have recommended?