Mentoring…
and being the mentee

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School

Divisions of Infectious Disease
Massachusetts General Hospital
Brigham and Women’s Hospital

Conflicts of Interest: None
Mentoring… and being the mentee

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School

Divisions of Infectious Disease
Massachusetts General Hospital
Brigham and Women’s Hospital

DISCLOSURES: I have no official credentials that permit me to give this talk!
I Do Not Have All Of The Answers!
July 1999

- Clinical year in ID is complete, salary goes down
- Husband is a junior resident (MD/PhD)
- 6 months pregnant with my first child
- Embark on a research fellowship in cost-effectiveness of HIV treatment interventions (and I don’t really even know what that means)
- Uncertainty: Financial, research, maternal!

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
July 1999

• Clinical year in ID is complete, salary goes down
• Husband is a junior resident (MD/PhD)
• 6 months pregnant with my first child
• Embark on a research fellowship in cost-effectiveness of HIV treatment interventions (and I don’t really even know what that means)
• Uncertainty: Financial, research, maternal!

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
“Having a good mentor early in one’s career can mean the difference between success and failure in any career.”

-Nature 2007
Mentor

- Homer’s The Odyssey: “Mentor” was the trusted friend of Odysseus, who was left in charge of Odysseus’ household in his absence.
Mentor

- Root derives from the Indo-European root *men*-, meaning, “to think”
- Over time, in the French and English 1700s literature, *Mentor* was used as a common noun meaning, “wise counselor”
“For me, there is a difference between a supervisor and a mentor. With the latter you find that you are not simply a student with a research project, but a student with a career in front that the mentor helps you start.”

-Nature 2007

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
What is a Mentor?

• Guides careers, assists in goals setting
• Provides good role modeling
• Provides resources and connections
• Nominates and promotes
• Fosters independence

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
“Go on! You can do it! You can be a mentor!”
Establish the Mentor Relationship

- Work together to set expectations
  - Process mentors vs. Content mentors
- Have a new mentee speak to prior mentees – what can s/he expect?
- Ensure yourself that you have the time
  - Prioritize mentees research needs (paper/grant review) before your own

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Establish the Relationship

• Avoid favoritism
• Avoid over-extending yourself
• Goal is toward professional development
  – Not to become a “friend”
• Recognize that you will not be the “sole mentor” for anyone (do not get territorial)

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Manage Expectations

• Put the “onus” on the mentee to seek you out if/when desired
• How often you will meet?
  – Make meetings regular and stick to them
• What should be prepared for a meeting
• Progress that should be necessary for the next meeting
• What they can expect from you

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Traits of a Good Mentor

- **Accessibility**: open door; approachable
- **Empathy**: provide personal insights
- **Open-mindedness**: respect individuality
- **Consistency**: act on principles on regular basis
- **Patience**: people make mistakes and need time to mature
- **Honesty**: communicate the hard “truths”
- **Savvy**: pragmatic aspects of career

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Why Be a Good Mentor?

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Why Be a Good Mentor?

• **Achieve Satisfaction**: fun to watch the success of your mentees
• **Attract Great Mentees**: better mentors get better/higher caliber trainees
• **Stay on top of your field**: keeps you professionally astute
• **Develop professional network**: make contacts for and from your trainees
• **Extend your contribution**: contributions live beyond you!
### Mentoring Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highly structured, short-term: often structured for an introductory period to meet specific objectives</th>
<th>Highly structured, long-term: taking over a departing person’s role, master a craft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal, short-term: one-shot or spontaneous help or as-needed support</td>
<td>Informal, long-term: “friendship mentoring “– being available as needed and share knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Remember the Big Picture

- Frequently return to: What are the goals?
  - This week
  - At 6 months
  - In 3 years
- Will the path set forth successfully lead to the intended goals over the intended timeline?
- Provide opportunities to “explore” out of their comfort zone
- Be realistic, but encourage “reaching”
# Mentoring Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentoring Needs</th>
<th>Mentoring Resources Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High need, low resources: finding</td>
<td>High need, high resources: this has the potential for a productive and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multiple mentors may be the most</td>
<td>intense relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effective strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low need, low resources: short-term,</td>
<td>Low need, high resources: occasional help may be all that is needed and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation-specific interactions may</td>
<td>the mentor is freed up to help others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be adequate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Be a Role Model, Scientifically

- Encourage good time-management techniques
- Help prioritize and teach when to say “no”
- Clearly state your expectations; be clear when these are not being met
- Offer criticism without shame or discouragement
- Be diligent about record-keeping: review notebooks and data

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Be a Role Model, Generally

- A mentor is a model of identity
- Exhibit highest professional standards
- Positive attitude
- Integrity
- Foster the academic/clinical mission
- Maintain confidentiality
- Service – be present in the community
- Have a sense of humor!

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Confidentiality

• You are privy to a lot of information
  – Prior letters of recommendation
  – Accomplishments/failures
  – Financial situations
  – Personal situations/stressors

• All is confidential

• Trust with such information is critical to the relationship
Communicate

• Discuss at the outset mutual goals and ensure they are aligned
• Listen: be available to hear problems, concerns, stressors; address them in a timely fashion
• Give and request constructive feedback
• Accept such feedback and act on it
• Ask for help from your mentors when the answer is unclear

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Trouble Shoot Obstacles

- Limited resources to get work done: $, space, and personnel
- Academic responsibilities
- Personal life and demands of significant others, marriage and family

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Discuss Politics and Opportunities

- Authorship of manuscripts
- Establishing new collaborations
- Job opportunities of interest

- Relationships will change (both of you will grow); adjust with that change. STAY IN TOUCH!

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Share *All* of the Experiences

- Not just the successes – the failures are equally, if not more, helpful
- Where did you go wrong where you might have made a different choice
- Teach what cannot be taught in school
- Advise on those issues that do not have a single right/wrong answer
- Do not be afraid to show your weaknesses
  - Watching you “bounce back” from a failure is part of what you are teaching

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees & Their Mentors (AAMC)

- Commitments of Post-Doctoral Appointees
  - Show respect, open discussions, seek opportunities, leave behind notebooks/files
- Commitments of the Mentor
  - Skills development, ethical standards, mutual respect, encourage scientific collaboration
- Available at: https://www.aamc.org/download/49852/data/postdoccompact.pdf

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Things That Aggravate Mentors

- “Overpromising” mentee who under delivers
  - “Sorry, I just didn’t get around to it”
- “Last minute” mentee who does not allow enough time for adequate help
  - “My grant is due in 4 hours, can you read it now?”
- “Absent” mentee who lists you as the mentor but with whom you’ve never met
- “Overcommitted” mentee with excessive outside activities
- “Displaced responsibility” mentee
  - “why didn’t you…..”

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Things That Aggravate Mentees

- “User” mentors who use your work for their development
- “Avoider” mentor who does not have enough time to meet, to review a paper, to…
- “Criticizer” mentor who believes mentoring is a license to point out mistakes
- “It’s them” mentor who has an excuse as to why s/he has never had a successful mentee

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Do Not Forget Your Own Needs: What about Mentoring for You?

• We are the eternal student
• Don’t let go of your old mentors! Stay in touch
  – Ongoing advice, letters, professional help, nominations
• Seek out informal mentors: broad/outside perspective on science and politics
• Establish confidants with whom you can trust and share scientifically and politically sensitive issues

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
Reward Good Mentoring

• Office of Diversity & Community Partnership, Dr. Joan Reede

• Excellence in Mentoring Award Ceremony
  – Established at HMS to honor faculty who truly go out of their way and excel as mentors
    • Barger Excellence in Mentoring (1995)
    • Silen Lifetime Achievement in Mentoring (1999)
    • Young Mentor Awards (2005)

• GO! Hear testimonials as to why winners were selected (June 5, 2013, 4-5:30 MEC)
Reward Good Mentoring

- Center for Faculty & Development Potts Mentoring Award for MGH Faculty
- New award, established in 2011, to support senior faculty who have demonstrated excellence in mentoring junior faculty
- Dr. John Potts – Inaugural recipient
- 2013 Awardee: Dr. Maurizio Fava
Give Back

- Remember those from whom you once got advice
- Provide similar advice to others when asked

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
His assistant showed me in, and I sat down with the intent to discuss and outline my research project. I feared that this discussion would prove moot since the pregnancy could transform my promising research career into a nonstarter. I worried that time-sensitive and high-priority projects once intended for me would simply be given to someone else. At the close of our research discussion, I chewed on my lower lip and blurted out, with little confidence or poise, “There’s one more thing. … I’m pregnant.” I will never forget his instantaneous reaction. He responded without missing a beat, “How exciting! How are you feeling?” This simple and caring response was the entryway to a career made possible. There was not a shred of disappointment or concern that I would not be able to deliver on the freshly outlined projects. He understood that for me and for so many like me, research is critical but family is first. I have since recounted to my mentor, who is now a close colleague and friend, how important his reaction was for me at that time. Although he still fails to recognize why it had such a profound impact, his kind and unrehearsed response was the much-needed vote of confidence that I could achieve success in both research and motherhood.

Rochelle Walensky, JAMA 2010
Enjoy the Successes

- Mentees’ successes = mentors’ successes
- Embrace them as your own, even if you are not named
  - Others will know
- Make it “two-way”: learn from your mentee; they can teach us a lot
- Good mentor/mentee relationships seldom end…which is part of the fun!

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
What it’s all about

“Everyone was there to shake my hand, when I won the Spelling Bee, but you were there to hold my hand when I was practicing for the Spelling Bee.”
Thank You

- My Mentor: Kenneth A. Freedberg, MD, MSc and so many others!
- My First (brave) Mentee: Ingrid Bassett, MD, MPH and many others who have followed
Thank You

- Kelly Gebo, MD, MPH, Assoc Professor of Medicine, Johns Hopkins SOM
- Susan McDonald, MD, Professor of Medicine, Johns Hopkins SOM
- Jennifer Haythornthwaite, PhD, Professor, Johns Hopkins SOM

Rochelle Walensky, 2013
References

- **Adviser, Teacher, Role Model, Friend: On Being a Mentor to Students in Science and Engineering**
  The 1997 National Academies handbook on mentoring
- "**Mentoring and Being Mentored**"
“Those who are good mentors get incalculably more out of it than they put into it.”

-Nature 2007