

Mentoring... and being the mentee

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Conflicts of Interest: None

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*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!

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“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

What is a Mentor?

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

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"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

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)

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

Traits of a Good Mentor

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*

Why Be a Good Mentor?

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

Highly structured, short-term: often structured for an introductory period to meet specific objectives

Highly structured, long-term: taking over a departing person's role, master a craft

Informal, short-term: one-shot or spontaneous help or as-needed support

Informal, long-term: "friendship mentoring" — being available as needed and share knowledge

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

Mentoring Resources Available

Mentoring Needs

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

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

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!

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

Trouble Shoot Obstacles

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

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!**

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

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>

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.....”

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

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

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

Disclosure

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

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!

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

References

- <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/publications/rcr/rcr-toolkit/118-rcr-toolkit-mentorship>
- [*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"](#)

Chapter 5 from Burroughs Wellcome Fund and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (2006) *Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty*, Second Edition

“Those who are good mentors get incalculably more out of it than they put into it.”

-Nature 2007

