When I was 17.....
Mentors Young and Old

Edward J. Benz, Jr., M.D.
President
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
The catalysts behind the careers

Mentors leave a legacy in the successful people they've guided on the path to self-discovery

By Joyce Pellino Crane
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

He thought he might be a salesman. Or maybe a furniture store owner, advertising his wares on television. Instead, said Jay Leno, an Andover High School English teacher, he took her creative writing course.

"She said, 'I see you always telling jokes in the allway. Why don't you take my course and become a comedy writer?'" Leno said in a phone interview. That was the first time I experienced anything in school that I thought would be of any value."

Leno said he spent hours writing and rewriting assignments. Today, with an 11-minute monologue to prepare five days a week for his television show, he still spends time writing jokes. It's a process he first began with Hawkes — and Leno has never forgotten it. He memorialized Hawkes after her death with a scholarship fund at the school.

Successful people like Leno don't make it to the top alone, say specialists. Behind each is someone who defined them in a positive light or supported their choices. Through their words and actions, role model catalysts spur an individual on a new path of self-discovery.

Executive coach Mark Campbell of Newton teaches corporate managers to be catalysts for others in their organizations. Hawkes was that person for Leno, helping him to take the first steps from high school to film school. But fame is not a prerequisite for success. Working professionals also experience enormous job sat-
We are responsible for the survival of our own species.

My mentors old and young.

Ageless qualities of good and bad mentors.

The mentoring environment.
What I hear everyday ......

1. Academic medicine is doomed
2. It’s not doomed but it’s just big business
3. The NIH budget is flat
4. The (*) is dead, dying, becoming extinct, threatened, undervalued, unappreciated, harassed, overworked, can’t get tenure
5. (***) are better off than we are.

* Physician scientist, clinical investigator, triple threat, translational scientist, whatever I do
** Surgeons, PhD’s, private practitioners, trial lawyers, bureaucrats, all other living creatures
Results of my informal poll:
- The academic clinician scientist was dead
- The NIH was going to tank
- Managed care would kill academic health centers
- There would be only 40 medical schools left
- In general life in academic medicine was awful
“To harness the power of the scientific method for the purpose of relieving human suffering from disease is among the highest achievements to which one can strive.”

1. Barry Coller, Testimony before House Appropriations Subcommittee, 30 April 1992
My Mentors
Old and Young
“Man has 48 chromosomes ” Sister X, 1962.
“You’ll never be able to do molecular biology in man”

HMS Professor X 1969
“Oh yes you can”
David G. Nathan
The Ideal and Only Protein for Human Molecular Biology, ca 1969

- Thalassemias: Inherited anemias due to selective failure to synthesize a globin chain:
  - Alpha Thalassemia – defective alpha globin synthesis
  - Beta Thalassemia – defective beta globin synthesis
WHAT DO YOU TELL YOUR STUDENT WHEN NOTHING WORKS?
Bernard G. Forget
My mentors and their messages

- We like and respect you, care about you
- We have faith in your abilities
- We have a personal stake in your future
- We’ll trust you with things that affect our success
- You can do it – we’ll show you how
- If you’re messing up we’ll tell you and help you fix it
- We are there when you need us
- You deserve the credit for what you do
- We’ll manage your expectations
- What you are attempting is important – worth it
- We love what we do – and so can you.
My anti-mentors and their messages

• You are stupid, naïve, impertinent, “amusing”, trivial
• You are not interesting to me
• You are not worth anymore of my time
• You are on your own
• Figure it out for yourself
• What you want to do is too hard
• ...and not worth the trouble
• I’m not too excited by what I do
• This business isn’t much fun
• QED: You won’t like it either
• i.e., DON’T DO IT
SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT MENTORING
men·tor (mènˈtôrˌ, -ter) noun

1. A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.

2. Mentor. *Greek Mythology.* Odysseus's trusted counselor, under whose disguise Athena became the guardian and teacher of Telemachus.
To this day a mentor is a guide, someone with wisdom and foresight who helps another find the path. A mentor is generally a more experienced person, passing on their knowledge and skills to less experienced person.
Mentoring is different to friendship. Mentoring has a specific purpose, and the relationship should be entirely focused on the mentee. Mentors should maintain objectively and distance from the mentee, whilst being empathic at the same time. It is important to realize that mentors and mentees have different levels of power.
What Can Mentors Do For You?

• Typically, mentors should be more senior faculty member, ideally in your area of scholarship to provide you:
  – Experience/perspective
  – Sponsorship
  – Guidance
  – Socialization/Introduction into a field
  – Critical feedback on your scholarship
Qualities good mentors should have:

• a clear understanding of the goals of his or her mentees and their reason for committing to those goals
• the ability to create warmth between themselves and the mentee.
• the ability to give constructive feedback to mentees and to help them facilitate their problem solving process by fostering their sense of independence
• the ability to manage themselves – to be aware of their own needs, goals and support structures
• a willingness to learn from their own experiences, the program, other mentors and the new students
What Good Mentors Bring to the Table

1. “Hard” Assets:
   - Relevant experience
   - Perspective
   - Contacts, connections
   - Resources – material and otherwise
   - Road map

2. Ability to listen and to communicate

3. Ability to align goals and gratifications
   - Can their egos be fed by the successes of your mentees
   - Are your “wins” and his/her “wins” compatible

4. Ability to trust and be trusted

5. Ability to let go while staying connected

6. Time, Attention, Themselves
“Older Mentors”

• Advantages:
  – Seniority – gravitas, authority, clout
  – Advanced more extensive network
  – Perspective – “seen it all”
  – Experience as a mentor

• Disadvantages:
  – Extensive Commitments, less time, lack of exclusivity
  – Life Experiences less relevant, ?? professional, also
  – Fatigue, loss of enthusiasm, boldness
“Younger Mentors”

• Advantages:
  – Fewer commitments, more focus on you
  – Life/professional experiences, vernacular more like you
  – Enthusiasm, boldness, exuberance

• Disadvantages:
  – Less seniority/clout/gravitas
  – Less secure, narrower perspective
  – Inexperience as a mentor
  – Smaller, narrower network
Finding Mentors

• Know what mentoring means
• Know the qualities to look for
• Know yourself
• Be involved in your “community of practice”
• Insist that your “boss” help you
• Find more than one!
Mentee Guidelines

• Identify goals and address the needs your mentor can address
• Actively seek feedback from your mentor and use it for your development
• Keep an accurate record of your development and progress
• Stay open to new ideas and suggestions
• Take responsibility for your own development
A Few Tips on Being a Good Mentee

1. It helps to have “Fire in the Belly”
2. Understand that failure often precedes success
3. Be a learner and listener
4. Be alert to opportunities and challenges
5. Be with those who love their work
Bad Mentors

- Age Independent Qualities of Bad Mentors: Avoid "toxic" mentors, mentors who use your work for their development (the "user"), doesn’t have enough time (the "avoider"), believes mentoring is a license to point out mistakes (the "criticizer").
- Specific Issues in Younger Mentors: Inexperience, insecurity, lack of distance/perspective, dependence, “sib-to-sib” issues
- Specific Issues in Older Mentors: burnout/cynicism, over commitment, too much distance, “parent-sib issues”
The “Bad” mentoring experience – what to do

1. Have more than one person to “mentor” you
2. Get help from another mentor
3. Have them help you negotiate
4. Get out of it
Mentors Young and Old: Try Both!

• One can have more than one mentor. Additional mentors can provide different experiences and advantages.

• Have Advisory or more “formal” mentoring relationships with more experienced people at several points along the spectrum of age, seniority, status.
The Mentoring Environment

Eden Exists only in the Bible
Scott Armstrong, Instructor in Pediatrics, TCH, DFCI
Comparison Between Childhood and Infant ALL

Childhood ALL
Good Prognosis

Infant ALL
Poor Prognosis

Children 2-10 Years

Infants less than 1 year
Clinical Question:

- Why do infants with leukemia have a far worse prognosis than children 2 - 10 years old?
  - Hypothesis 1:
    - They have a different disease
  - Hypothesis 2:
    - Same leukemia, different host
Genes that Distinguish MLL from ALL & AML

- FLT3
- KIAA0428
- NKG2D
- ADAM10
- AC133
- FLT3
- KIAA1025
- Lectin HL14
- cDNA ag36
- Cyclin A1
- VESPR
- Putative Oncogene
- cDNA DKFZp586
- KIAA0920
- LMO2