How to Develop an Effective Mentor and Mentee Relationship

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Key Elements of Mentor-Mentee Relationship

- Characteristics of each individual
- Roles & responsibilities
- Nature of the relationship
- Goals
- Problem solving
Mentor Characteristics that Portend Success

- Sufficiently experienced and senior
  - Has the right skill sets
  - Can have different types of mentors for different aspects of one’s career
- Accessible & approachable
  - Need to meet with regular frequency
  - Need to listen & respond meaningfully
- Altruistic
  - Helping mentee achieve his or her goals, not (necessarily) the mentor’s goals
- Patient & understanding
- Honest & trustworthy

Allen TD & Poteet ML. Career Dev Quart 1999;48:59
Straus SE et al. Acad Med 2013;88:82
Mentee Characteristics that Portend Success

- Committed to learning & growing
- Passion to succeed
- Willing to put in the work

Straus SE et al. Acad Med 2013;88:82
Mentor’s Roles & Responsibilities

Academics (Advisor)
- Guide & advise
- Provide research connections
- Help navigate the academic system (job search, promotion, professional societies, etc.)
- Help avoid pitfalls, protect
- Role model (academics, work/life balance)

Science (Supervisor)
- Improve mentee’s abilities
- Oversee experiments, help prepare presentations & papers
- Aid in grant applications
- Provide resources

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Mentee’s Roles & Responsibilities

• Open to guidance

• Learn
• Accept criticism, be pushed
• Put in the work, see projects to completion
• Respectful of mentor’s time constraints
• “Drive the relationship”

A good teacher will lead the horse to water, an excellent teacher will make the horse thirsty first. —Mario Cortes

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“Accept criticism. If you do not offer your work for criticism and accept that criticism, meaning give it serious thought and attention, then you will never improve.”

Theodora Goss

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Nature of the relationship

• Setting the stage
  – Acquainted
  – Mutual respect
  – Trust

• Interactions
  – Regular meetings
  – Set clear expectations
  – Open communication w/ reciprocal feedback

• Chemistry
  – Shared values (clinical, research, life)
  – Personal connection
  – Appreciate the other’s position:
    • Mentees are at a fragile stage in their careers
    • Mentors are volunteering their time

“If you wouldn’t do something with [your mentor] after work, then you probably are not going to be doing something with them at work either.”

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Goals

• **Long-term goals**
  – Develop skill sets
  – Advance in academia
  – Independence (mentoring may not end, but is redefined)

• **Short-term goals (for research supervisor)**
  – Learn techniques
  – Conduct experiments
  – Present and publish research
  – Awarded a grant
**Problem Solving**

- **Not achieving goals**
  - Short-term goals
    - Experiments not working
    - Papers rejected
    - Grant applications rejected
  - Long-term goals
    - Career stalling
    - Difficulty with independence

- **Issues with the relationship**
  - Mentor: accessibility, altruism
  - Mentee: accept guidance & criticism; work ethic; normative & quasi-normative errors
  - Relationship: open communication

\[ \text{= Life (maybe)} \]