

Building Relationships A Primer for Mentees

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- Mentor was the teacher and guide of Telemachus, son of Odysseus, who searched for his father. Mentor was said to be the goddess Athena in disguise

Homer, The Odyssey

- A mentor is a:
 - Teacher/coach
 - Counselor/confidant
 - Protector/cheerleader
 - Promoter/advocate
 - Facilitator of other mentoring relationships
 - Professional soulmate
- A mentor has credibility, power, expertise/experience, empathy, tenacity

A role model is not a mentor

- A role model is an inspirational person who is emulated and should present an achievable goal, but may also be intimidating or inhibiting

- For success, having a mentor is essential:
 - A major predictor of academic success (publications, confidence)
 - Different mentors may be important at different career stages
 - Multiple mentors are necessary and advantageous
 - one all-purpose mentor is rare
 - avoid over-reliance on one; less potential for “lack of fit” or “personality conflicts”

Isaac Newton

- If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Letter to Robert Hooke February 1675

Why do I need a mentor?

Most cited reasons (BWH)

- Self promotion
- Negotiation skills, conflict management
- Developing a promotion package
- Self assessment
- Integration of clinical and research activities
- Research design and funding
- Advice on papers

Weissman BA, Nadelson CC, Gould SL, 2000

A mentors role

- Help channel career course
 - Guide through academic politics
 - Encourage independence and collaboration
 - Link mentee to the organization and its priorities
 - Increase mentee productivity, creativity, satisfaction
- Provide contacts, network entry, opens doors
 - Recommend mentee for talks, study sections, societies, teaching and administrative assignments
- Obtain information about possible job opportunities and provide recommendations

A mentors role

- Facilitate applications for grants
- Protect mentee from project/research interference
- Assist in securing space, time, funding
- Provide useful feedback
- Give advice, support
- Foster transition to collegial status and sustained relationship

A mentee's role:

- Collaborate with mentor
- Be honest
- Be prepared to be challenged
- Be open to advice and criticism
- Attend to details and deadlines
- Take initiative

Mentoring: Gender and mentoring

- Women get less mentoring than men
 - Fewer women available as mentors
 - Cross gender and cross race mentoring are successful
 - Potential men mentors sometimes assume that women are:
 - Less serious about their careers
 - Will require more caretaking, protection, time
 - Could become sexually involved or accuse mentor of it

Fried, 1996; Hopkins, 1996
Ramanan, et al, 2002

Gender and mentoring

- Greater influence on women than men measured by rate of promotion and career satisfaction
- Mentored women work more hours and publish more papers than non-mentored women

But,

- Women are less likely than men to:
 - be advised about promotion criteria
 - Be encouraged to participate in professional activities (meetings, presentations, organizations)
- Women are more likely to have a mentor use their work to advance the mentor's career

Fried, 1996; Hopkins, 1996
Ramanan, et al, 2002

Mentoring issues for women and minorities

- Relationships seem easier between “like” individuals:
 - There may be difficulty in empathizing with a minority/woman mentee
- Performance of minorities/women scrutinized more closely: minorities may have higher hurdles to prove themselves to potential mentors
- Minority/women contributions may be undervalued

Bickel, J, AAMC, 1998
Harvard Business School 3/29/95

What does a mentee need?

- A mentor who:
 - You respect and are comfortable with (“fit”)
 - Has similar goals, values, specific expertise
 - Has your interest/career as a priority
 - Keeps confidences
 - Follows through with commitments

When choosing a mentor

- Consider
 - What skills do I need to learn/improve
 - What do I want to change/improve in my work style?
 - What networks/contacts would facilitate my goals?

THERE IS NO PERFECT MENTOR

Choosing a Mentor

- Essential Information to gather
 - Expertise: review potential mentor's CV
 - Mentor's record with other mentees
 - How many mentees? Too many?
 - Experience of other mentees with this particular mentor?
 - Alternative agendas e.g., what service are you asked to provide in return for mentoring?
 - Reputation for failing to give credit to junior colleagues
 - History of harassment; sexual, intellectual
 - Time and interest in mentoring
 - Likely to leave the institution or take another position interfering with work together?

The mentor/mentee relationship is a two-way commitment

- Mutually identify assets, needs, short and long term goals
- Jointly set the ground-rules for the mentoring relationship
 - Time, frequency, location and duration of meetings
 - Agree upon focus of work
- Trust is built on MUTUAL respect and a high level of confidentiality

Harvard Medical School Mentoring Study

When relationships don't fulfill expectations

- Fail to help build professional networks, advocate, and create opportunities
- Inadequate job search, career guidance
- Lack commitment; infrequent meetings
- Fail to provide feedback and challenge
 - Negative feedback without constructive criticism
 - Squelch enthusiasm/initiative
- Inadequate guidance on balancing collaboration and individual efforts; fail to facilitate independence
- Excessive non-career productive duties

Ramanan, et al, 2002

Bickel, 1998

Harvard Medical School Mentoring Study

When relationships don't fulfill expectations

- Disrespect; consistently expects mentee to defer
- Boundary violations -- personal and professional; unethical research
- Use mentee to advance their own causes
- Disagreement on the potential of the mentee
- Poor "fit"
- Failure to involve other mentors or transition to collegial role

Ramanan, et al, 2002

Bickel, 1998

Models of mentoring

Assignment

- Pro: can be done very early and allow for (even encourage) change of mentor
- Con: can be like artificially arranged marriages – with unrealistic expectations and no agreement

Models of mentoring

Peer mentoring

- Pro
 - Release of frustration and tension
 - Good feedback and support
- Con
 - Can be competitive, esp. in hierarchical organizations where collaboration may not be valued

Models of mentoring

- Alumni and emeriti
- Pro
 - Faculty with more time, experience and institutional culture perspective from current and/or other institution
- Con
 - May not be current or as influential as in the past

Models of mentoring

Technology: email, phone

Pro:

- Expands options when face contact is insufficient or unavailable
Exchange papers, drafts, etc., for feedback and information, may meet occasionally
- Avoid personality conflicts
- Facilitate work in atypical or emerging fields and inclusion in a larger community, esp. in a field where there is no one like you and your institution

Con:

- Not as regularly available
- Limited personal contact and/or influence

Levy, et al, 2004; Packard, 2003

Models of Mentoring

Sustained mentorship

- Pro:
 - After one or both leave an institution
 - Ongoing need for mentoring, reference and promotion letters
- Con:
 - May foster dependency

Steiner, et al, 2004

Measuring successful mentorships

- Ongoing promotion of interests of mentee
- Publications
- Academic advancement
- Grants acquisition
- Administrative, teaching, clinical research advancement and/or improvement in skills

While HMS does not reward mentoring, neither is there a disincentive to “tor-mentoring!”

Wm Silen, 1998

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