

Mentoring: Developing a Productive Mentoring Relationship



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ITHS

Institute of Translational Health Sciences
ACCELERATING RESEARCH. IMPROVING HEALTH.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Identify the pros and cons of different mentoring styles
- Define the phases of mentoring and how mentoring approaches should evolve for each phase
- Identify tools that are useful for improving communication between mentors and mentees

True or False

- The best mentor is an expert in your field
- You only need one mentor
- You should find out more about the mentor before engaging with them
- The mentor your department/division/school assigns you is the one you should stick with

Myth 1: The Expert is the Best Mentor

- Can be helpful, but there is not always an expert in your field
- Ask about the mentor's past experience in mentoring:
 - Talk to former mentees
 - Have they won any teaching awards?
 - Funding stream
 - Mentees success (publications, grants, promotion)

Myth 2: You Only Need One Mentor

- Mentoring teams have many benefits
 - Advancement advice versus content expertise
 - Advice on work life balance
 - Advice from some one closer to you on the career path
 - Peer mentors

Types of Mentors

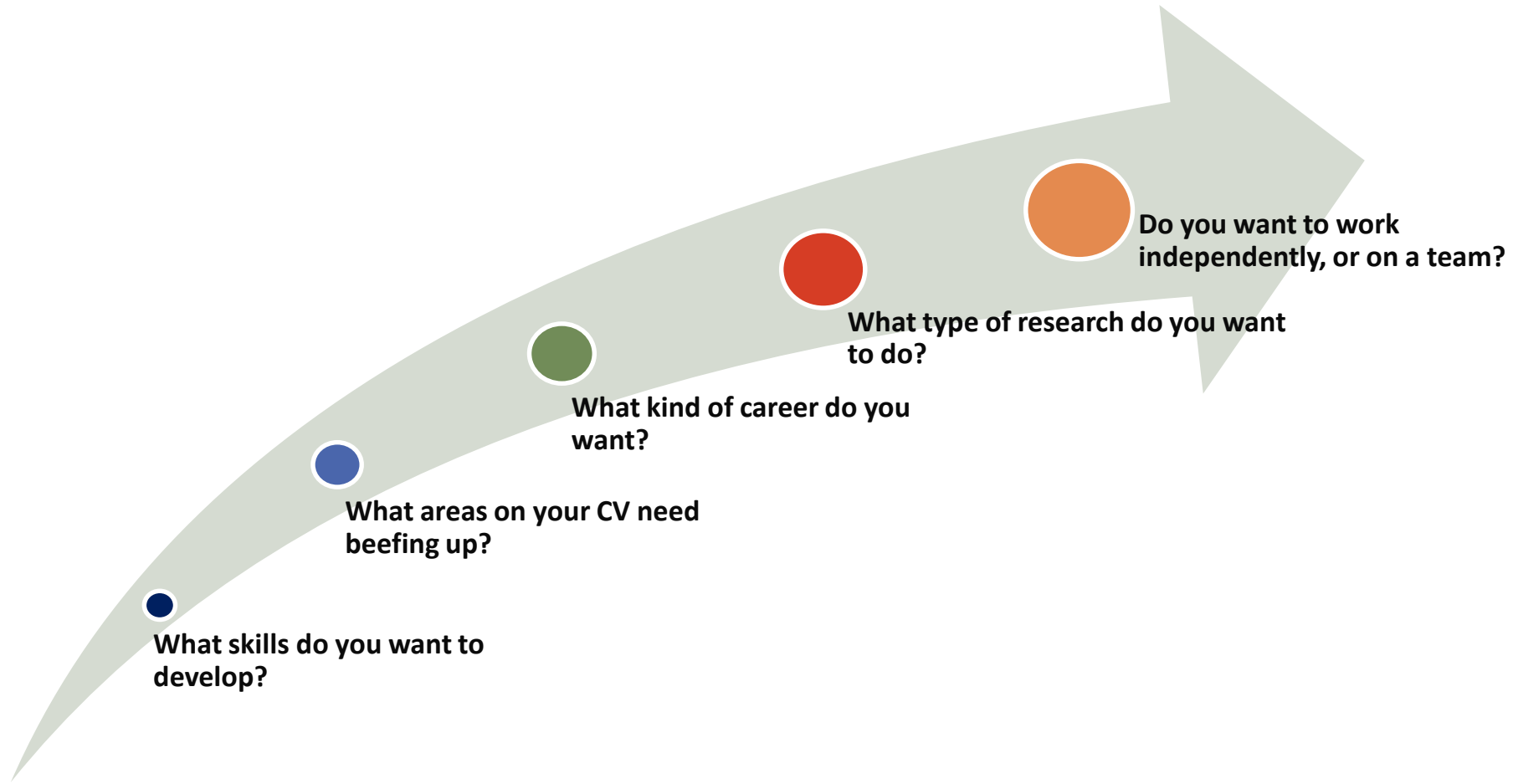


- Career Mentor
- Content Mentor
- Project Mentor
- Co-mentor
- Peer Mentor
- Life balance mentor

Myth 3: You Get What you Get

- Mentoring is dynamic
- If you are assigned a mentor, be sure the fit is right
- It's a time commitment for the mentor, too, so no need to waste anyone's time if the fit isn't right

For Early Career Researchers: Before you Embark on This Journey...



Do your homework

How to Interview Mentors/Mentees

- Is there common ground (and is it too common)?
- What are they like to talk to?
- What is their time like?
- Experience with the University and promotion process?
- Do they like mentoring?
- How many people have they mentored?
- What is the success rate of mentees?
- What is the mentor's expectations from mentees?
- What is their mentoring philosophy and style?

Types of Mentors

The Guide

Hands on guidance, explaining how and why; creating opportunities to learn

The Challenger

‘Making Waves’; challenging, stimulating, questioning, probing

The Role Model

Unseen, largely unfelt. The Mentee unconsciously adopts aspects of the mentor’s thinking behaviours and/or style

Stages of Mentoring

- 1. Initiation:** when a mentor/mentee engage in a contract to help the mentee advance to the next step in their career.
- 2. Cultivation:** Mentor guides the mentee in meeting career goals and milestones.
- 3. Separation and re-definition:** Sometimes the hardest part of the process. How do you become colleagues?

Stage One: Initiation-What you Need to Succeed



- Clear understanding of roles
- Clear understanding of outcome
- Individualized Development Plan (IDP)
- Contract

Get to Know One Another

Analytical

- Wants to be right
- Distant, formal, logical, conservative
- Information gathering to the point of indecisive

Driver

- Wants to be in control
- Impersonal, results oriented, demanding, factual, impatient
- Focus is on efficiency, get to the point
- Can feel threatening to others

Gather information, ask questions

Tell, share information

Amiable

- Wants to be sure, low risk
- Supportive, agreeable, careful
- Need to build trust, may seem easily influenced because they don't want to create discord

Expressive

- Wants to be recognized
- Stimulating, unstructured, outgoing, enthusiastic, impulsive
- Need a lot going on to keep their attention

Relationships

Individualized Development Plan (IDP)

- Opportunity for the mentee to reflect on strengths, weaknesses and career goals
- Creates milestones to help the mentee achieve goals
- Helps the mentor(s) benchmark progress objectively
- Sets the stage for a contract between mentee and mentor

Components of an IDP



- Self-assessment
- Long-term goals
- Short-term goals
- List of opportunities the mentor can create
- Time line for mentee

Mentorship Contract

- Simple agreement between you and mentee
- Sets the frequency of mentoring visits. There is no set guideline, but meeting frequency depends on mentee developmental level:
 - Graduate students and post docs: once a week
 - Junior faculty: monthly (for skill specific development and project advancement)
 - Senior faculty: twice a year (for advancement advice)
- Sets goals and timelines

Stage Two: Cultivation-What you Need to Succeed



- Time/Meeting agenda-OUTCOMES!
- Keep up with the IDP
- Make sure you have feedback
- A mentor network for both

Meeting Agenda – General*

- General Check in (5 minutes)
- Review progress on near term goals (15 minutes)
- Make adjustments to IDP, if needed (10 minutes)
- Go over product review, such as papers, presentations (25 minutes)
- Schedule the next meeting (5 minutes)

* Times are recommended, but not fixed

Meeting Agenda – Crisis Management

- Check in (5 minutes)
- Allow mentee to tell their story (20 minutes)
- Discussion (30 minutes)
 - Empathize (but don't commiserate)
 - Ask about what they learned from situation
 - Talk about how they might do things differently
 - Determine if you need to intervene or allow mentee to solve on their own
 - Discuss next steps
- Wrap up (5 minutes)

Meeting Agenda - Feedback

- Check in (5 minutes)
- Feedback (40 minutes)
 - Ask the mentee to do a self evaluation
 - Engage in the “feedback sandwich”, start with positive, discuss growth opportunities, end with a review that includes positive
- Schedule time for next review

What do you do when a mentee is not meeting their milestones?

Prevention Strategies

- Regular meetings should always include milestone check-in
- Readjust the milestones and expectations for any delays
- If the mentee continues to miss milestones, check whether the career goals are still meaningful
- Make sure you are giving the type of guidance they want

Remediation Strategies: The Difficult Conversation

- Begin by asking permission to provide feedback
 - “Roger, I have some concerns about your progress in the program. Do you mind if we take a moment now to discuss?”
- Open the conversation as gently as possible
 - “I want you to know that I am your mentor, and I am here to help you with your career and your projects. Any feedback I give you is to ensure you are happy in your career.”
- Ensure you leave any emotion out; focus on the behavior you would like to address – not the person
 - “Let’s talk about your publication record.”
- Ask for the mentee's insights into the problem
 - “What do you think may be getting in the way of you submitting papers?”
- Ask the mentee to come up with a potential solution, and then develop an action plan
 - “What do you think we could be doing differently.”

What do you do when a mentor is not meeting your needs?

Common Problems and Strategies

- Mentor is not available
 - Make sure you get on their calendar!
 - Suggest flexible meeting strategies
- Mentor talks too much about *their* career issues
 - Redirect the conversation
 - Come with an agenda in hand
 - Give the mentor an assignment (review a paper, aims, etc.)
- Mentor does not provide career opportunities
 - Remind mentor of the IDP goals
 - Ask mentor about professional meeting and association opportunities
 - Be forward! Introduce yourself if you have to

Stage 3: Separation and Re-definition-What you Need to Succeed

- Clear end goals
- Celebrate successes
- Review skills learned
- Discuss opportunities for further growth
- Reassure you aren't gone, but the need for regular mentoring is no longer necessary
- Do not lose your mentor!



Case Studies from the NIH

Dr. Felecia Garcia is a first-year postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Montgomery (Monty) Morton's laboratory. Because Dr. Morton's laboratory emphasizes independence, Dr. Garcia chooses her own project, plans experiments herself, and meets with Dr. Morton (who travels extensively) every 2-3 months to discuss her data, figures, and conclusions for papers. She knows that, regardless of how she performs, Dr. Morton will write a glowing generic recommendation for any job to which she applies, and that she can take her project to her next position. She is uneasy, however, because a 6th year postdoctoral fellow in her lab has had his main paper rejected from 10 journals so far, even though Dr. Morton helped to write the paper.

What is mentoring style should the mentor have made that clear before entering the lab?

Advantages? Disadvantages?

Action needed?

Case Study

Dr. Wong is supervised by Dr. Colin Powell, who stresses publication productivity in high-impact journals. Postdoctoral fellows are assigned specific projects, meet with Dr. Powell weekly on an individual basis to discuss experimental details, and keep up with the competition by reading grants and papers reviewed by Dr. Powell. Dr. Wong expresses nervousness about his upcoming yearly evaluation, when Dr. Powell provides each lab member an in-depth, written performance critique. He actively helps fellows compete for the jobs for which he decides they are best suited, and his recommendation letters describe strengths and weaknesses. Part of their project may be taken to future jobs, based on a written agreement.

What is mentoring style?

Advantages? Disadvantages?

Action needed?

Resources

NIH Guide to Mentoring and Training

<https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/mentoring-training/guide-training-mentoring>

Nature Mentoring Toolkit

https://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/career_toolkit/mentoring

Top 10 Tips for Mentors, Science

<http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2010/10/top-10-tips-mentors>