

Making the Most of Your Mentor: A Guide For Mentees

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Agenda

- Introduction to mentoring
- Stages of mentoring
- Special situations
- Cases and discussion

From the mentee's perspective!

*Originally presented at Society of General Internal Medicine 2006 and 2007
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Defining the Mentor Relationship



A Relationship



A Mentor is different than a...

- ◉ **Manager**
 - Directs work
 - Focus on performance
 - Based on organizational needs
- ◉ **Role Model**
 - A distant relationship
 - Passive role
- ◉ **Sponsor**
 - Champions
 - Focus on career development
 - Based on advancement goals

Good mentorship can...

- Increase productivity
- Improve career advancement
- Increase achievement of grant funding



Roles

Mentor

- ◉ Advanced rank/experience who guides, teaches, develops novice
- ◉ Skill development
- ◉ Academic guidance
- ◉ Research
- ◉ Personal development

Mentee

- ◉ Active role: plan and set agenda
- ◉ Follow through
- ◉ Ask questions
- ◉ Ask for feedback
- ◉ Listen
- ◉ Managing up

Desired Qualities

Mentor

- ◉ Available and accessible
- ◉ Coach & role model
- ◉ Recognize potential
- ◉ Provide opportunities
- ◉ Inspire to take risks
- ◉ Improve
 - Sense of identity
 - Competence
 - Effectiveness

Availability—the open door

- *“M was always accessible, and she always made it abundantly clear to her students that she would rather talk about science with them than do just about anything else.”*

Inspiration

- *“On many occasions I remember walking into her office convinced that I had been wasting my time, and then ten minutes later walking out with a smile and the sure knowledge that what was a bad result was indeed just what I needed!”*

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Mentee

- ◉ Well organized and takes initiative
- ◉ Creativity and motivation
- ◉ Open to new ideas
- ◉ Seeks feedback
- ◉ Respectful and considerate
- ◉ Know resources
 - especially other people

Stages of Mentoring

Kathy Kram

Initiation

Initially hierarchical

Cultivation

Interactive sharing

Separation

Plan to independence

Redefinition

Collegial relationship

Stages of Mentoring

Kathy Kram

Initiation

Positive emotions

Cultivation

Relationship reality

Separation

Negative emotions & stress

Redefinition

Gratitude

Initiation: First Steps

Clarify *Values*

- Know yourself
- What values do you respect?
- Interpersonal preferences
 - Personality
 - Gender
 - Race
- Work style
 - Hands on vs. gentle guidance

Clarify *Your Needs*

- Knowledge gap
- Skills gap
- Confidence level
- Opportunities
- What do you want mentor for?
 - Professional
 - Personal
 - Research
 - Academic
 - Skill development

Set A *Clear Vision*

- Write down goals
 - Three months
 - One year
 - Three years
- Be specific
- Even if you don't know – try!

Securing A Mentor...or two!

Where to Look



- Target those you know & respect
- Look w/in your department & outside
- Conduct informational interviews
- Ask for recommendations

Common Difficulties



- Perceived unavailability
- Fear of rejection
- Career indecision
- Trying to find “all-in-one” mentor

What to Do



- Be persistent and don't give up
- If uncertain, seek someone to guide
- Find more than one
- Find junior and senior mentors

Tips for the First Meeting

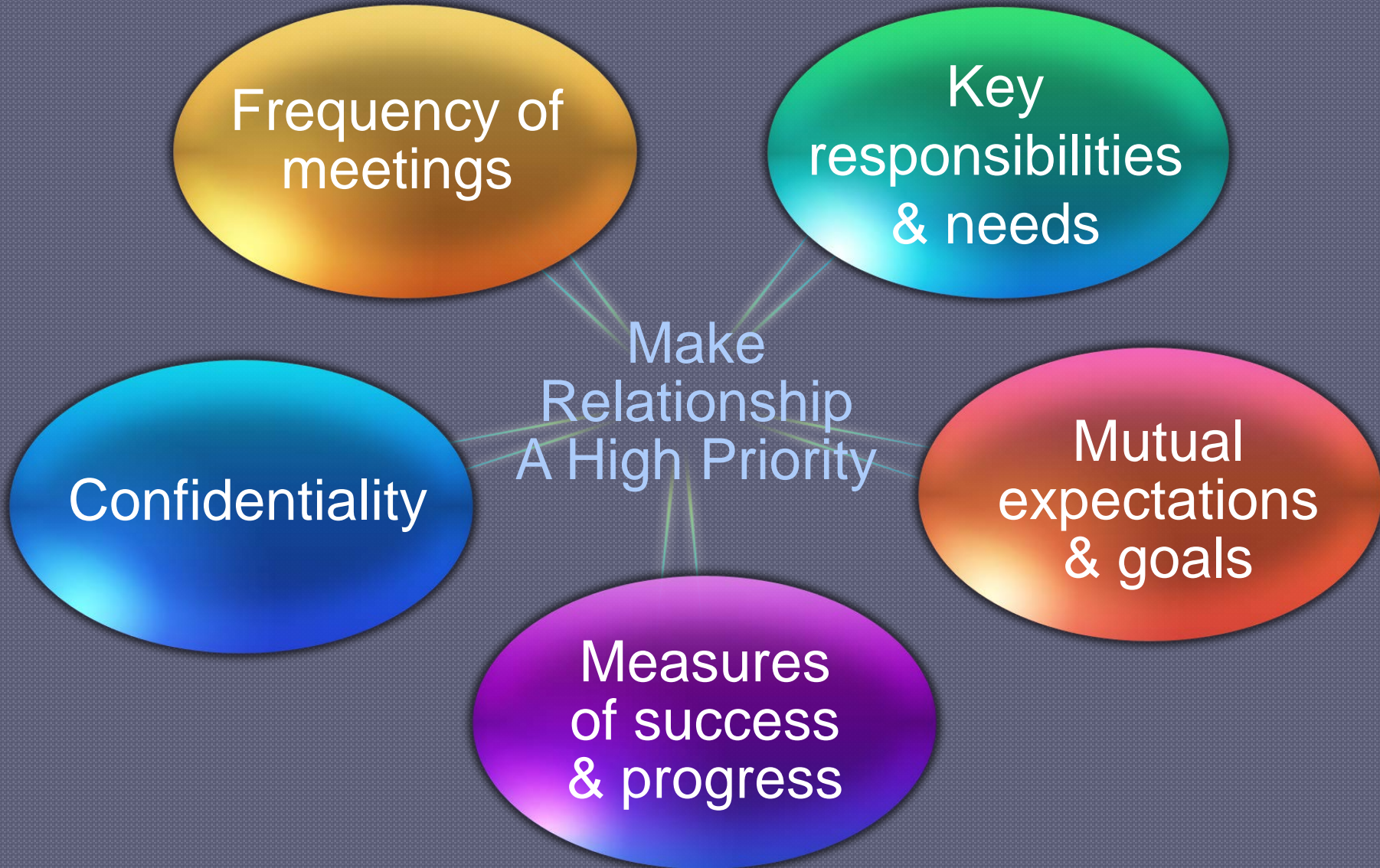
- Market yourself: you are recruiting mentor
 - Don't have to ask formally at a 1st meeting
- Communicate clear goals & needs
 - Being prepared demonstrates organization
- Give positive feedback
- Bring a specific and limited request for help to engage the prospective mentor (e.g., research idea)
 - Ask permission to request more help later
 - State exactly what the help might be
- Be accountable: follow up & stay engaged
 - Make mentor feel appreciated

Initiation



Cultivation

Cultivation: Agreement on Structure and Objectives

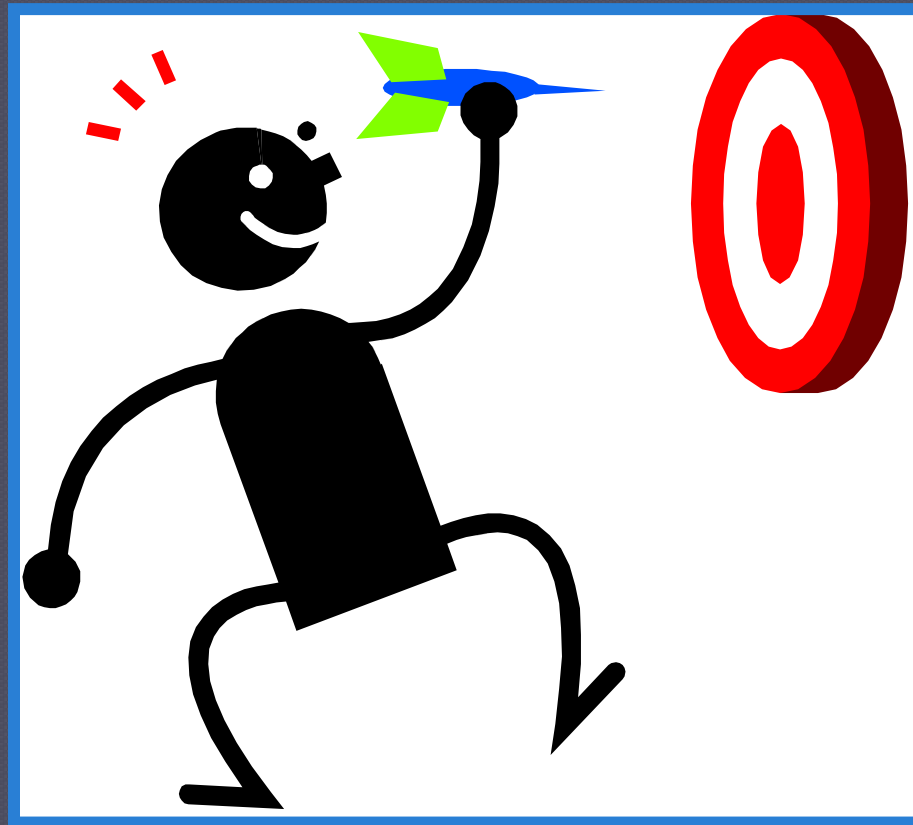


Cultivation: Managing Up

- Understand yourself and your mentor—Goal is to develop a healthy working relationship compatible with each person's work style and expectations
- The mentee takes ownership of the relationship
 - Let your mentor know what you need
 - Set own goal schedule and stick to it
 - Be responsive to suggestions
 - Make yourself available, be flexible
 - Straightforward, bring up issues
 - Directly ask how success judged

Managing Up

Mentor



Mentee



Communication

- ◉ Manage the flow of information
- ◉ Ask directly about mentor's preferred style
 - Detailed facts/figures vs. overview
 - Email vs. phone
 - Listener vs. reader
- ◉ Listen actively, ask questions
- ◉ Avoid defensiveness—you asked them for help!
- ◉ Think very carefully if disagree
 - Should put forth own ideas
 - Disagree respectfully, ask clarifying questions

Meetings

- Agree on regular meeting schedule
- Set agenda for meetings
 - Check-in
 - Discussion of 2-3 topics
 - Long-term goals
 - Short-term action items
- Actively inform on progress in preferred style
- Identify what is expected prior to next meeting

Use your mentor's time wisely!

Special Situations

- ◉ Multiple mentors
- ◉ Long distance
- ◉ Dissatisfaction/problems

Multiple Mentors: **Necessity**

- ◎ **Ways to make it work:**
 - Clear roles & expectations
 - Good relationship among mentors
 - Complementary experience
- ◎ **Potential problems**
 - Unclear expectations
 - Disagreement or competition
 - Inefficient/overlap

Long Distance

- ◎ Ways to make it work
 - Establish locally and then continue
 - Occasional face time at meetings
 - Clear expectations
- ◎ Potential problems
 - Not as effective as on-site
 - Lack of direct observation
 - Problems with email or phone

Dissatisfaction and Termination

- Society of General Internal Medicine mentoring survey
 - 84% unsatisfactory mentoring relationship
 - 23% terminated mentoring relationship
- Most common complaints
 - Mentee did not follow through
 - Mentee did not use mentor's time effectively
 - Poor fit with work style and/or personality

Dissatisfaction

- ⦿ Mismatch of goals, commitment, expectations
- ⦿ Reluctance to own and pursue own development
- ⦿ Reluctance to ask for personal help
- ⦿ Mentor or mentee can suggest change
 - Depends on style how approach
 - Ask for advice

Know yourself

○ “A man should not strive to eliminate his complexes, but to get into accord with them; they are legitimately what directs his conduct in the world.”

- *S. Freud*

○ "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

- *George Santayana*

Know yourself

- Other important relationships
 - Parents, teachers, coaches, professors
- Sources of conflict
- Common issues
 - Need to please others
 - Independence
 - Control
 - Confidence

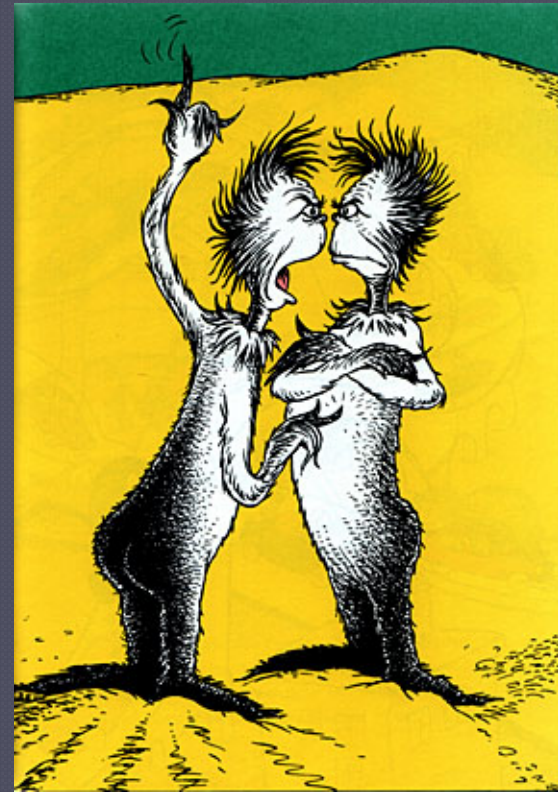
Separation

- ◉ A natural evolution
- ◉ Ideally, a planned separation as mentees achieve goals and independence
- ◉ Are there future mentoring needs?
- ◉ Work toward a collegial relationship

Separation

◎ But...

- Marked by conflict and negative emotions
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Abandonment
- Resentment



Redefinition

- ◉ A new relationship
- ◉ Peer and colleague
- ◉ Friendship
- ◉ Gratitude



Conclusion

- ◎ Mentees have an active role in mentoring
 - Know values
 - Know needs
 - Manage up
 - Show appreciation
- ◎ Mentoring requires time and nurturing
 - Worth the effort!

Case #1

Hannah is a 3rd year resident. She is interested in studying clinic care coordination because she has seen many areas for improvement in the structure of her own continuity clinic. There is a senior mentor she has approached for advice about setting up a small project to study proposed changes in the clinic. He is excited about her interest and wants her to do one of the research projects he already has underway instead of her own study.

- Is this a good idea?
- When should you join on with someone else's projects vs. starting your own?
- When do you begin to assert your own ideas instead of following along on all your mentor's projects?

Case #2

John just started a fellowship and is finding his mentor is somewhat absent. He finds it takes several emails and phone calls in order to set up a meeting and once he has a meeting with his mentor she interrupts their conversation to answer the phone and works on email while they are talking. He feels like she doesn't have time to help guide him. He has asked her about other people who might be able to help him with his projects and the only person she suggested wrote back "too busy" to his email request.

- What should he do?
- How do you know if the problem is you?
- When do you end a mentoring relationship vs. trying to work on it more?
- How do you end a mentoring relationship?

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