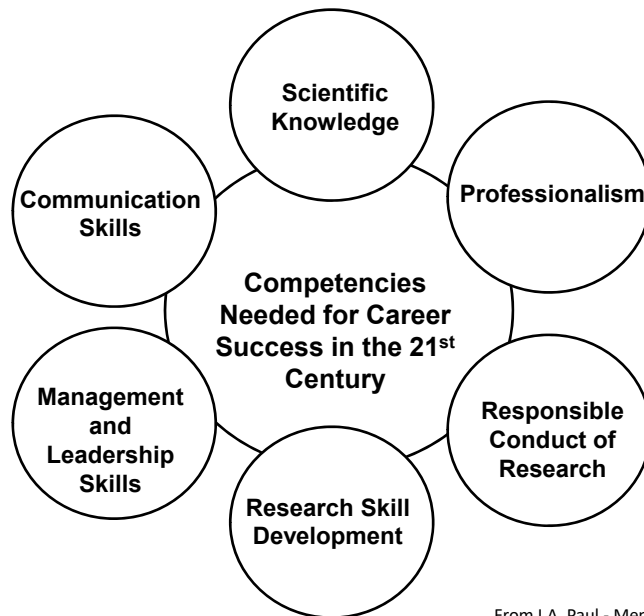




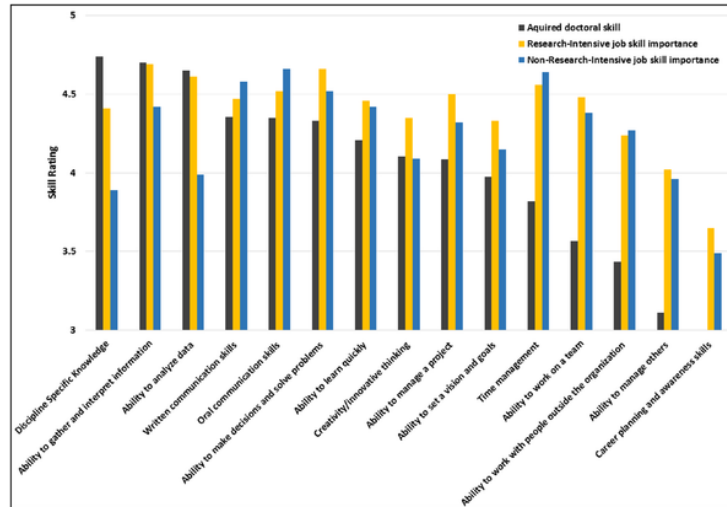
Navigating the Mentoring Relationship: Best Practices for Mentors

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Fig 1. Transferrable skills: Acquired doctoral skills and skill importance ratings in research-intensive and non-research-intensive careers (means).



Sinche M, Layton RL, Brandt PD, O'Connell AB, Hall JD, et al. (2017) An evidence-based evaluation of transferrable skills and job satisfaction for science PhDs. PLOS ONE 12(9): e0185023. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185023>
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0185023>



Mentoring and Leading with Emotional Intelligence

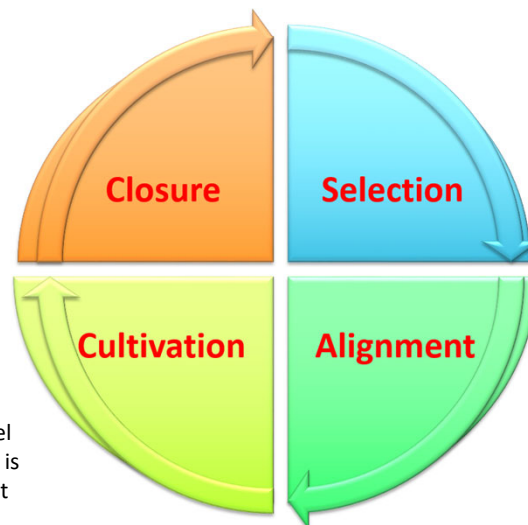
<p>Self-Awareness: Recognizing your own emotions Knowing your triggers and hot buttons Understanding your conflict style Understanding your communication style Knowing your personality and work style</p>	<p>Social Awareness: Accurately reading the emotions of others Having empathy for others Understanding your organization</p>
<p>Self-Management: Controlling negative emotions Dealing with setback Being appropriately driven Being flexible and adaptable Controlling edges (communication, personality and work style) Understanding principles of self-care</p>	<p>Relationship Management: Being an inspiring leader Exerting influence and motivating others Promoting teamwork Knowing how to mentor and coach Promoting inclusion of diverse individuals Dealing effectively with conflict and difficult conversations</p>

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Common Barriers to Mentoring Relationships

- **Mentor**
 - Competing demands/time restraints
 - Power differential
 - Lack of understanding of mentoring role
 - Personality
- **Mentee**
 - Concern about underachieving
 - Unrealistic expectations of mentors
 - Power differential
 - Availability/scheduling
 - Personality

Phases of the Mentoring Relationship



The mentor and mentee should feel motivated and confident that each is contributing toward shared goals at every stage.

Selection Phase

- What is your motivation to be a mentor?
- What are the mentees seeking?
- Do you have the pertinent experience and skills?
- Do you have time to mentor?
 - Responsiveness
 - Flexibility
 - Commitment
- What is the best format for the mentoring relationship?
Dyad, Team?



Getting Started: Communication and Mutual Self-Exploration

- Initial Mentoring Conversation
- Self-Assessment Questionnaire
- Individual Development Plans

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

- Planning and communication tool
- Identification of short and long-term research and career goals
- Promotes productive mentor/mentee communication
- Dynamic document that grounds and guides

When to use IDPs

- Before Mentor Selection
 - Self-Assessment Questionnaire
 - Clarifying goals, strengths and areas of desired growth
- After Mentor Selection
 - Use to launch specific conversations about future directions for the mentee's research and career
 - Map out concrete timelines for completing each phase
- As Part of an Ongoing Mentoring Relationship
- Use to assess progress, changes in direction or interests, establish timelines and mutual expectations

Exploring Resources

1. Initial Mentoring Conversation: Questions and Strategies Document
2. Assessing Fit Checklist
3. Self-Assessment Questionnaire
4. Individual Development Plans

Alignment Phase



Alignment Phase

- Shared understanding of what each person expects from the relationship
- Problems between mentors and mentee often arise from misunderstandings about expectations.



Alignment Phase

- Begin discussing expectations early
- Establishes structured milestones (flexible)
- Mentoring Agreement/Compact
 - Expectations of mentor
 - Expectations of mentee
- Iterative conversation: expectations change over time
 - frequent reflection and clear communication necessary to maintain a collaborative relationship



Expectations to Align

- **Role/Functional:**
 - Generally apply to each mentor/mentee team
 - Often does not change
- **Relational:**
 - Unique to each relationship
 - Establish ground rules for how the mentor and mentee can bring their best and whole selves forward.
 - Change over time as the mentee gains in maturity and experience.
- **Project:**
 - Make explicit what specific work will be done, when, and by whom

Alignment Process

- **Prior to Alignment: Mentor's self-reflection**
 - Clarify goals and expectations of your own career and be honest about your ability and desire to reserve time in your schedule dedicated to your mentee's best interest.
 - Be honest with yourself about how you work best and how a mentee can best work with you.
- **During Alignment:**
 - Use the mentor/mentee expectations documents and the IDP to prompt strategic conversations
 - Collaboratively prepare a mentoring compact
- **Revisiting Alignment:**
 - Regularly discuss if you and your mentee remain in alignment
 - Edit/revise expectations documents, IDPs and mentoring agreements as expectations change

Tools for Alignment

- Common Expectations for Mentors
- Common Expectations for Mentees

- Mentor-Mentee Compacts/Agreements

Dr. Chris Lumen is a fellowship-trained cardiovascular surgeon and has been on the clinical faculty for three years. Dr. Lumen is highly motivated to develop a new translational science line of inquiry. He discussed this exciting new line of research with his mentor, Dr. Pat Stent, a senior research faculty member in the department with a large and well-funded research laboratory. Dr. Stent was very enthusiastic about these new sets of experiments. After a few discussions, Dr. Stent invited Dr. Lumen to join the laboratory, then introduced Dr. Lumen to the lab manager, Dr. Gene Plaque, and instructed them to develop the research together. The laboratory manager, Dr. Plaque, had previously experienced a great deal of frustration with rotating medical students and residents, and having been “assigned” to assist such individuals with their work, and had concerns regarding the competing demands Dr. Lumen would experience between clinical practice and basic research. However, Dr. Plaque did not feel comfortable expressing any of these concerns directly to Dr. Stent or Dr. Lumen because of the hierarchy of a physician-led surgical department. After about two months, Dr. Plaque did finally express his concerns and frustration to Dr. Stent, indicating that Dr. Lumen frequently leaves the laboratory in the middle of experiments to attend to clinical cases. Dr. Lumen leaves much of the work incomplete and typically asks Dr. Plaque and other laboratory staff to continue the experiments in his absence, placing an unexpected extra workload on Dr. Plaque and other members of the laboratory. Moreover, Dr. Lumen frequently expresses frustration to Dr. Plaque about how much time experiments take to complete.

Signs of Misalignment

- Mentee and/or mentor dreads attending mentor meetings.
- Mentor does not find the time to meet as agreed upon.
- Mentor does not respond in a timely manner.
- Mentee does not follow through on deadlines.
- Mentee does not feel a sense of belonging within the environment.
- Mentee's work is successful, but movement toward independence is not being fostered by mentor (e.g. mentor does not give up authorship position, publically advocate for mentee, etc.)

Signs of Misalignment

- A sense of shared curiosity and teamwork is not present.
- Mentor does most of the talking and direction-setting during meetings.
- Mentor or mentee finds themselves avoiding the other.
- Mentor and/or mentee avoids eye contact during mentor meetings. (Can be culturally relative.)

Cultivating the Mentoring Relationship



“In each moment you spend in another person’s presence, you are communicating that person’s importance to you. Are you doing this consciously or unconsciously?” – Denise Holmes

Cultivating the Relationship: Mentor Responsibilities

- Advise on what you know; admit what you don’t and refer to others
- Provide relevant examples and resources
- Recognize your mentee’s strengths and areas of growth
- Give constructive feedback
- Foster your mentee’s independence
- Respond to the changing needs of your mentee
- Don’t shy away from difficult conversations
- Celebrate successes
- Revisit mentoring plans, IDPs, expectations
- Periodically evaluate progress and assess relationship



Maintaining Effective Communication

- Good communication is a key element of any relationship and a mentoring relationship is no exception.
- A culture should exist where mentors and mentees are always able to speak openly with each other about the issues and to actively listen to what the other person is saying.
- It is critical that mentors reflect upon and identify characteristics of effective communication and take time to practice communication skills with their mentees.

Two Sides To Every Story

Rarely likes my spontaneous fun ideas
Can seem forceful and argumentative
Rarely lets me finish a sentence or complete a thought
Does not pay attention to any details – even important ones

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Two Sides To Every Story

Rarely likes my spontaneous fun ideas	Changes her mind all the time, even on the way to where we are going
Can seem forceful and argumentative	Seems sensitive and thinks we are arguing when I think we are just discussing
Rarely lets me finish a sentence or complete a thought	Takes a long time before she responds to my questions.
Does not pay attention to any details – even important ones	Talks to me about too many details; wants shopping lists, careful budgets, schedules for house repairs

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Effective Communication in Mentoring Relationships

- **Increase your awareness of yourself and others.**
 - Enhances the potential for intentional partnership and mutual benefit.
 - Be clear about your own agenda
 - Separate out your own thoughts, feelings, and wants from those of your mentor/mentee
- **Get curious about the other person's story.**
 - Possibility of greater connection and value for both parties.
 - Listening in order to learn something new

Effective Communication in Mentoring Relationships

- **Listen for passion and potential. [ACTIVE Listening]**
 - Aim to Understand:
 - What makes the other person tick?
 - What has brought them to this moment in their career?
 - Where they would like to go next?
- **Share your own hard-earned experience.**
 - Helpful and inspirational to others coming along a similar path

Skills for Effective Communication

- Active listening
- Attending
- Reflective Listening
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Open-ended questions
- Probing
- Self-disclosure
- Interpreting
- Confrontation

Effective Communication: Body Language

- Positive Body Language
 - Eye contact (depending on the culture)
 - Open or relaxed posture
 - Nodding or other affirmation
 - Pleasant facial expressions

Verbal Barriers to Communication

- Moralizing
- Arguing
- Preaching
- Storytelling
- Blocking communication
- Talking too much

Non-Verbal Barriers to Communication

- Shuffling papers
- Avoiding or refusing eye contact when mentee is speaking
- Allowing interruptions or distractions
- Crossed arms
- Pointing fingers

Communicating Difficult Issues,
Resolving Conflict and Providing Feedback

Conditions to Allow for Effective Discussions of Difficult Issues

- Feeling of mutual trust and respect
- Past experience with open and frequent communication between mentee and mentor.
- Understanding that everyone makes mistakes.
- Ability to see each other as individuals.
- Ability to admit that one doesn't know everything.
- Understanding that there may be an unrelated issue that is the underlying cause of the problem.
- Willingness to entertain different ways of handling the issue.
- Sensitivity to cultural, gender, personality differences that may influence perceptions.
- Attention to the development of communication and problem-solving skills.

Steps to Take to Discuss Difficult Issues

- Identify an appropriate space for discussion.
- Agree to ground rules.
- Specify needs clearly.
- Be flexible in ways of handling the problem.
- Develop a solution that works for both the mentor and the mentee.

Imagine you are a postdoctoral fellow and...

- During group meeting your fellow postdoc interrupts you often. You can never get through your data, you get stuck on tangents, your boss has started to comment that you are unfocused. You feel like they are trying to one-up you with their “smarts” so they look like the better postdoc.
- Yesterday they interrupted you 4 times, and you have had enough!

Using the Feedback Scaffold

State the constructive purpose	“I would like to talk about group meeting yesterday”
Describe what you observed	“When I was presenting my data you stopped my presentation four times to discuss your part of the project”
Describe the impact on you, the group, the project	“I feel frustrated and like I am not able to tell my data story and to get the critical feedback I need to move my project forward”
Give the individual a chance to respond	
Offer specific suggestions	“How about this, Can you hold your questions until the end next week?”
Summarize and express support	Sounds like we are going to try X, Y, and Z next week...If it doesn't work for us, let's re-look at this again.

Case: Giving Constructive Feedback

As he leaves the crowded conference room, Dr. Tariq tells Dr. Timms he'll see her in a few minutes. Dr. Timms was the last presenter in the practice session. Back in his office Dr. Tariq sits looking distractedly out the window and releases a heavy sigh. He shifts his attention back to his notes for a last review: . . . reading slides . . . too fast . . . too long . . . print too small . . . too much print . . . Color contrast . . . meandering. . . . A few moments later he hears a knock on the door and beckons Dr. Timms to come in. She plops in a chair across from him and looks up expectantly. He meets her gaze and smiles. "Thanks for coming by. I wanted to make sure we could review your talk since the conference is in a week and I know you're in clinic all day tomorrow—and then I'm out of town," he says with a heavy accent. Dr. Timms continues to stare without comment, a blank expression on her face. "Well, as you know I think your research is really important and I'm glad that we have this opportunity to share it. I think this conference will be a great opportunity for you to meet some key colleagues in this field." She nods slightly, and shifts in her seat. "I do think there are a few things that could tighten your presentation." She continues to stare and Dr. Tariq keeps his focus on his notes as he continues. "For example you had some long sentences, and even whole paragraphs on your slides. While they were well written"—his computer chimes as a new email arrives and he glances over to see who it's from. *Oh, not again.* . . . "As I was saying, while they were well written—I mean you know your writing is strong—it is really too much text for a slide. You could try to shorten some to bullet points. Then you can still make those points without just reading your slides to the audience." He looks up and sees that she is now looking at the floor. "It would also allow you to increase the font size a bit. I think it might have been hard to read from the back of the room." He looks up again and sees she is taking some notes. "To cut back on the time, I think you could cut the four slides on the background and just briefly summarize those." He waits for comment and the silence drags on a few moments. "What do you think?" "I can look at it." Her face remains expressionless as she glances up and briefly meets his eye. "That might allow you to slow down a bit," he continues. "Of course it's natural to get nervous and then one tends to talk faster. Perhaps you could practice it a bit at home and focus on slowing the pace and not looking at your notes as much. Have you tried practicing out loud to yourself at home?" "Yes."

The phone rings. He checks caller ID. *I'll have to call her back when this is over.* "Okay then. I can send you a link to some tips on slide composition and oral presentation and hopefully that will be helpful." There is another long moment of silence. "Well do you have any questions for me?" "No, not right now." "Okay then, well good luck!" He forces another smile and reaches out to shake her hand as she rises to leave. She takes it and smiles back feebly. Thanks."

Constructive and Destructive Approaches

Constructive

- Calm and respectful language
- Appropriate body language (tuning-in)
- Acknowledging emotions
- Allowing others to speak
- Using paraphrasing to ensure you understand
- Asking helpful questions
- Delaying responses if you are angry or upset
- Normalizing relationships afterward

Destructive

- Yelling and threatening
- Using threatening or disengaged body language
- Talking over others
- Being sarcastic
- Demeaning others (or the process)
- Using verbal threats
- Dominating the airwaves
- Saying one thing and meaning another
- Avoiding the other party afterward

Maximizing Mentoring Relationships; Sharon Milgram, NIH

Closure of the Mentoring Relationship



Closure of the Mentoring Relationship

- When should it happen?
 - Purpose is served; intended achievement was accomplished
 - Long-term goals achieved
 - Departure from institution (in some cases)
 - Shift in mentee's research focus and development
 - Lack of adequate progress toward goals
 - Bad fit



Mentor Responsibilities: Ensuring Meaningful Closure

- Be Proactive
- Be sensitive to when the relationship has run its course
- Review intentions laid out in mentoring plan with mentee to acknowledge what was accomplished, what is yet to be done, what was and was not successful
- Consider adopting the no-fault rule, meaning that there is no blaming if the partnership is not working
- After formal mentoring relationship is finished, follow up on your mentee's successes
- Provide a summative evaluation of the experience
- Say "thank you" and give credit where credit is due
- Learn from your experience when mentoring others

Take-Aways and Tips

Some General Strategies

- Discuss expectations, goals and progress - early and often
- Help mentees understand the difference between research and career mentors
- Know about resources such as IDPs and beyond
- Help mentees cultivate relationships with multiple mentors outside of your research group
- Develop a framework for giving/receiving feedback and navigating difficult conversations
- Understand that there will be imperfect fits and disappointments and deal with them (with compassion)

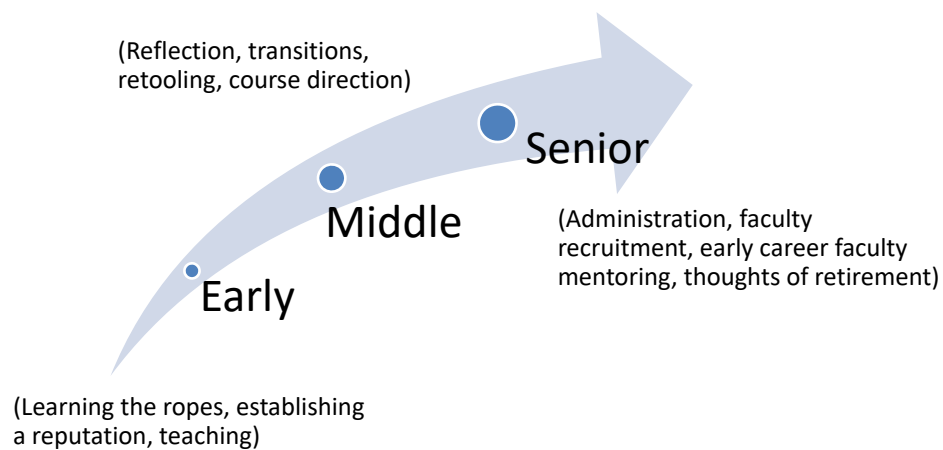
Mentoring Across Differences: Key Principles

- **Be aware of your own assumptions.**
 - People are shaped by differences in experiences, gender, race, social class, education, generation, geography, and a multitude of other cultural influences
 - Increasing your awareness of the ways you are a product of your past can help you avoid assuming that others see the world in the same way.

- **Be curious about the experience of colleagues who have different life experiences.**
 - Putting yourself in other people's shoes and seeking to understand how they may have come to their different points of view is a critical step in building a mentoring relationship.

- **Address differences openly.**
 - Relationships in which it becomes comfortable to talk about and acknowledge differences have much greater potential value for both mentor and mentee.

Mentoring Over the Career Span



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