

# **Your Mentors: What you need and how to get it?**

**Slides courtesy of David T. Felson MD, MPH**

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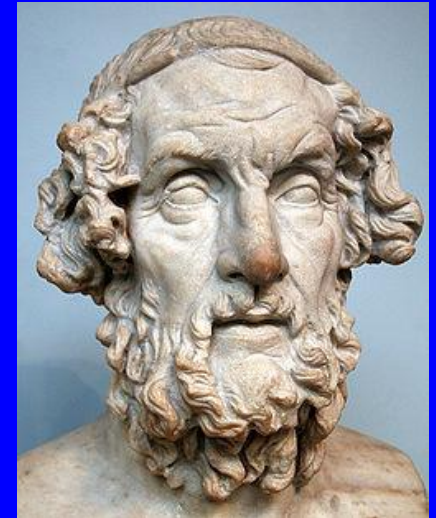
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FIT 2012

# Mentor

- First described by Homer as a “wise and trusted counselor”
- Someone who takes a special interest in helping another person develop into a successful professional



# Why Be Careful About Choosing a Mentor?

- They can be life-long advocates
- They can steer you to a perfect first project or start you on a career-ending path
- They can help you form good habits or bad

# Mentors

- A major determinant of your success as a fellow
- Choose more than one
- There are many kinds of “mentoring”
  - Peer mentoring
  - Dual mentoring (mentor for content, mentor for methods)

# Success is Not Only About a Mentor

- Many people have succeeded without a mentor, or after a bad “mentoring” experience
- Many people have failed despite having a great mentor, and a stellar mentoring experience

# Choosing the Right Mentor

- A productive clinical researcher
- A mentor for others who have succeeded at your goals
- Someone with integrity (critical)
- Someone you like
- Someone with enough time/commitment for you
- Someone whose expectations of you match (or exceed) your own

# Is the Mentor someone whom you would like to become?

- In his/her own career, what relative emphasis does mentor place on:
  - Research
  - Education
  - Patient Care
  - Administration
  - “Extracurricular activities”

# Mentor's Multiple Roles

*Advisor*-shares career experience and knowledge

*Supporter*-provides emotional and moral encouragement

*Tutor*-gives specific feedback on performance

*Sponsor*-seeks opportunities

*Model*-exemplifies the kind of person one should  
strive to be

An effective mentoring relationship is characterized by  
mutual trust, understanding, and empathy.



# Mentor's Multiple Roles

## Tangible Examples:

*Advisor*-shares career experience and knowledge

Time Management - promotes concept of *protected time*

Research Idea Development

Scholarly activities

Trade-offs discussed

Job search

# Mentor's Multiple Roles

## Tangible Examples:

*Supporter*-provides encouragement

Your papers will be rejected.

Your grants will be rejected.

In time, they may be accepted.

Mentors provide the broader context that facilitates an objective evaluation of your “successes” and “failures”

# Mentor's Multiple Roles

## Tangible Examples:

*Tutor*-gives specific feedback on performance

Manuscripts

Grants

Abstracts

Oral presentations

# Mentor's Multiple Roles

## Tangible Examples:

*Sponsor*-seeks opportunities

Funding sources

Networking

Job contacts

Circle of influence

Goal: to advance mentee's educational and personal growth

Your mentor's *primary responsibility* is to you

- Your education
- Your professional development
- Your recognition
- Your career

“In the end, they establish an environment in which one's accomplishment is limited only by the extent of his or her talent.”

# Phases of Training in Scientific Investigation

Early: Mentors may suggest projects-scientifically innovative, challenging, and feasible. Mentors should monitor work closely.

Transition: Increasingly independent role in identifying research questions, formulating hypotheses, designing and conducting experiments, and presenting results.

A good mentor knows when to step back and  
allow more independence.

# The Good Mentor Checklist

- Ensures that you get academic credit for your intellectual contribution
- Nominates you for every conceivable award
- Ensures that your evaluators are cognizant of your terrific work
- Facilitates introductions and networking to launch your academic career



# Qualities of a Good Mentor

- Listens
- Accessible
- Constructive feedback
- Encourages confidence and independent thinking
- Role model
- Builds network
- Encourages multiple mentors
- Avoids dictating choices or controlling behavior

# Potential Conflicts

- Intellectual property
- Authorship credit
- Who gets to present at the big meeting?
- Your ultimate goal of independence

# Barriers to being a good mentor

1. TIME, TIME, TIME
2. Content area
3. Intellectual generosity

# Recognize Negative Mentoring

- Ambivalent, inattentive
- Inaccessible
- Insecure
- Lack of mentoring skills
- Lacks intellectual generosity-perhaps the most difficult.....it is challenging to “let go”
- **SEEK HELP ELSEWHERE**

# Common problems with mentor

Mentor does not give great advice → not knowledgeable about your focus

Solution: seek out advice from those who are knowledgeable. Add a different mentor? (or just change mentors)

# Common problems with mentor

- As you move toward independence, your work may be recognized as theirs. Solutions:
  - Leave the institution
  - Adopt research themes that are tangential to mentors and clearly your own
  - Ignore this problem (it's less a problem than you think)

# Multiple Mentors

- Allows you to draw from unique qualities of several faculty
- Practical standpoint – 1-2 projects/mentor, as limited attention from single mentor
- Several persons to write letters
- Mentors go on sabbatical at inopportune times
- Do not be afraid to seek a distant mentor - electronic world

# Two-Way Street

- What is your role in facilitating this relationship?
- What can you do to help ensure your relationship with your mentor>>>>>colleague endures?



# Being proactive with your mentor

- Be explicit about your expectations and goals
- Do not be passive when it comes to YOUR career
- Know the criteria for success
- Do your homework.....
- Go the extra mile.....

# What Do You Want From A Mentor?

- Regular scheduled meetings
- Advice regarding timeliness, goals, methods, collaborators

# What you want out of mentor meetings

- A prioritization of your goals.
- Decisions about projects
- Deadlines for abstracts/papers/grants
- Advice on whom to turn to for help

# Mentor/Mentee Meetings

- Scheduled at least every 2 weeks
- You (mentee) bring the agenda and the questions
- Ask for feedback about:
  - Direction/goals
  - Prioritization
  - Which projects worth pursuing/which NOT worth pursuing

# Meetings With Mentors

- Come prepared with a list of questions
- Present your research findings
- Ask mentor what is missing
- At the end, let your mentor guide you further

# A Successful Mentee

- Follows-up and checks in
- Is independent
- Asks for advice
- Develops options

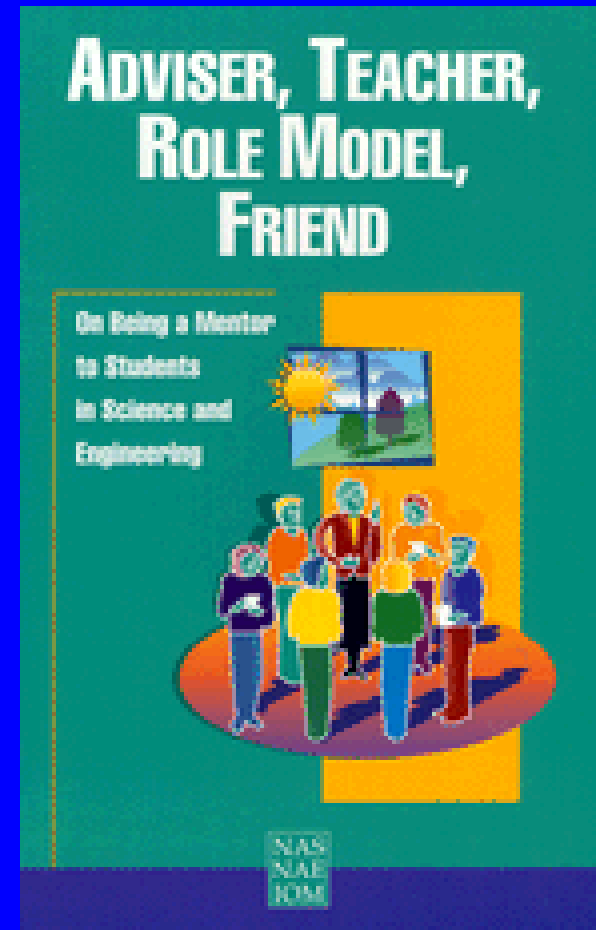
# Why be a mentor?

- Achieve professional and personal satisfaction
- Attract good students-Produce better research, papers, and grant proposals
- Keep current-Stay on top of your field
- Enhance productivity-New ideas, new directions
- Develop professional network
- Great fun!

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