



A Mentee's Guide to the Mentoring Relationship

Utah Coaching Advancement Network Guide

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HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

INTRODUCTION & HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

As a faculty member, trainee, or learner in an academic setting, you have likely been strongly encouraged to find mentors for your career, and even been assigned a mentor. Mentoring is not a one-way process, however; both the mentor and mentee play active roles. To make the most of your mentors you need a strategy and a process to cultivate strong and productive relationships. This guide is a resource for mentees to understand the fundamental aspects of a mentoring relationship and their responsibilities within this important relationship. This guide complements our guide for mentors.

Many mentees feel that a mentor is someone (in a more senior position) who will appear in their careers and begin to offer them guidance and advice. In this model, the mentee's role is to passively absorb the guidance of the mentor and to rely on the mentor in times of need. But this is your career, not theirs. Optimized mentoring is a bidirectional relationship. This relationship is often initiated by a would-be mentee. The mentee, rather than being a passive absorber of the mentor's wisdom, takes an active role to initiate and maintain the relationship. With responsibility and effort, mentors and mentees can create a strong relationship through which the benefits of the mentoring relationship can be realized. This resource is divided into eight sections, representing phases of a mentoring relationship.

- **Defining Mentoring.** Sections 1 and 2 will define mentoring and how mentoring fits within an eco-system of developmental relationships.
- **Initiating the Relationship.** Sections 3, 4, and 5, will address the beginning of a mentoring relationship and how to establish the proper expectations to serve as a foundation of a strong relationship.
- **Maintaining the Relationship.** Sections 6 and 7 will address how to maintain and strengthen the relationship over time and how to effectively “manage up”.
- **Transitioning the Relationship.** Section 8 will address the topic of transitions in the mentoring relationship.

In many sections, there are also checklists and worksheets that you can use as tools to apply the concepts. We hope that this resource helps to clarify the role of the mentee in a strong mentoring relationship and wish you success in your future mentoring relationships!



CHECKLIST: DO'S AND DON'TS AS A MENTEE

DO'S

<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognize the different types of developmental relationships and how a mentor may differ from a coach, advisor, or sponsor. (See Section 1)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognize how mentoring relationships may develop and that there are different types of mentors. (See Section 2)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognize your goals and needs from a mentoring relationship before engaging a potential mentor. (See Section 3)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Examine your current network to identify people whom you may approach as potential mentors. (See Section 4)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take the initiative to initiate contact with your mentor. (See Section 5)
<input type="checkbox"/>	When entering a new formal mentoring relationship, take the time to define mutually acceptable goals and expectations. (See Section 5)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Follow through on the actions that you and your mentor have mutually agreed to. (See Section 5)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take responsibility to set the agenda for mentoring meetings. (See Section 6)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively manage and maintain the relationship, including showing appreciation for the mentor and maintaining regular contact. (See Section 6)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take feedback gracefully. (See Section 7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognize when it may be time to transition or end a mentoring relationship and how to navigate that process. (See Section 8)

DON'TS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Be passive and wait for the mentor to initiate meetings and develop the agenda.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expect to be spoon-fed answers. The mentor may have valuable perspective, but your career decisions are still your responsibility.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expect that one mentor will fulfill all your mentoring needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Only approach your mentor when you have a problem. Remember to maintain contact for the sake of the relationship itself.

SECTION 1. THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Connecting with individuals who can help support you as you define goals and develop your career is crucial for success. Relationships that provide such support are called developmental relationships. There are four major modes of developmental relationships: advising, mentoring, sponsorship, and coaching.

While there is overlap, differences between the developmental relationships can be viewed from the perspective of :

- **Whether they are driven by the person seeking development or the person offering it and**
- **Whether they are driven primarily by asking questions or giving answers (see Figure on page 4) for a detailed description of each type of developmental relationship.**

MENTORS

All of the developmental relationships are important, but mentors can provide a consistent, longitudinal cornerstone. Mentors are also well suited to serve as advisors and sponsors when the need arises. A mentor generally has experience and perspective on a similar path to the one the mentee is pursuing and thus can help to guide the mentee toward success. The mentoring relationship can therefore be seen as being driven by the mentor's expertise.

While the mentor and mentee's paths are similar, however, they are not the same. When the mentor bases their advice on the goals that they think the mentee should have, it can lead to frustration, lack of progress, and burnout. Thus, mentoring relationships should start with questions: about the mentee's goals, values, aspirations, and the mentee's experience thus far, as well as what they are looking for in the mentoring relationship. When the mentor truly understands what the mentee is seeking, their advice, perspective, wisdom, and ability to serve as a role model become enormously powerful.

ADVISORS

Advisors provide information and expertise specific to a given task. This developmental relationship is generally short-term, with the advisor providing information and the advisee having the responsibility to take action. Advising is often used in the context of selecting classes, learning to navigate a process, such as submitting an IRB application, or learning to perform a technical task, such as running a specific assay. Mentors often provide advising in the context of mentoring relationships, since the mentee is often pursuing tasks in which the mentor has expertise.

SPONSORS

Sponsors use their connections, social capital, and reputation to advocate for opportunities for individuals they choose to sponsor. This could include facilitating networking and connections for collaboration, giving public credit, nominating for awards and roles, or recommending for opportunities. Risking one's reputation by recommending an individual usually requires a close relationship; a sponsor needs to have confidence in the likely success of the person they recommend. Mentors, therefore, are frequently in an excellent position to sponsor their mentees for opportunities and it is appropriate, and common, for mentees to request sponsorship from their mentors.

COACHES

Coaching is a time-limited developmental relationship focused on developing internal clarity and confidence related to professional identity and goals. The coach does not necessarily have experiences specific to the coachee's path, but uses the coaching skills of listening, asking powerful questions, and challenging with support to help the coachee reflect on their personal values and develop clear goals and confidence in how they will pursue them. Mentors and coaches serve different roles, but mentors can incorporate coaching skills into their mentoring to ensure they are focused on the mentee's goals. As you choose your mentors, look for individuals who start by listening and asking you about your goals, so that their advice is aligned with where you want to go.

Modes of Developmental Relationships

Gap to be Addressed:
Perspective and Experience

When to Use:
When a mentor and mentee share a common pathway; the mentor can guide from their greater experience

Example Cases:
Modelling skills and way of being
Sharing experience / perspective
Developing professional goals
(e.g. Individual Development Plans)

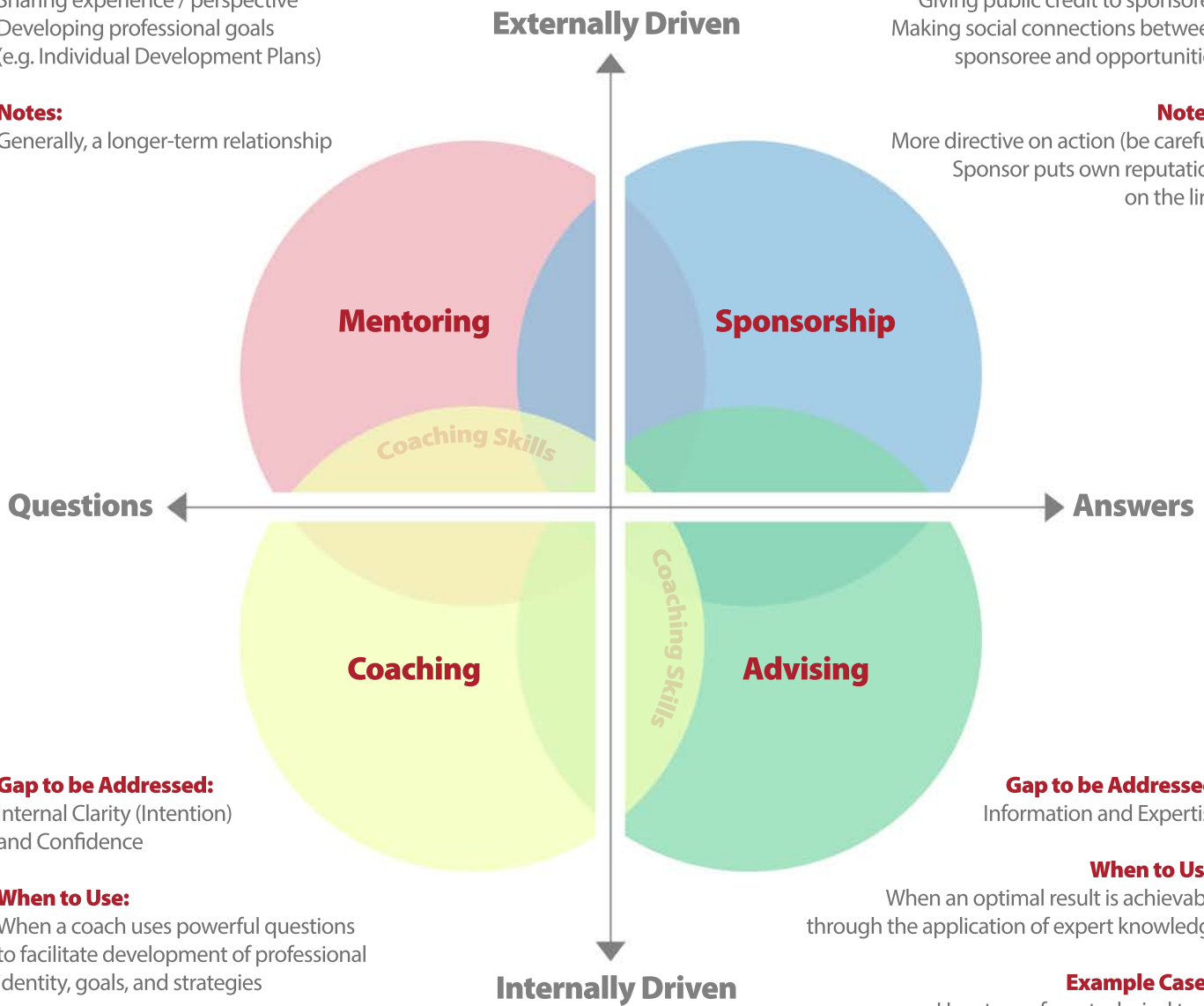
Notes:
Generally, a longer-term relationship

Gap to be Addressed:
Connection and Endorsement

When to Use:
When a sponsor has greater social resources to advocate for and connect sponsorees with opportunities

Example Cases:
Nominating someone for role
Giving public credit to sponsoree
Making social connections between sponsoree and opportunities

Notes:
More directive on action (be careful)
Sponsor puts own reputation on the line



Gap to be Addressed:
Internal Clarity (Intention) and Confidence

When to Use:
When a coach uses powerful questions to facilitate development of professional identity, goals, and strategies

Example Cases:
Reflection on personal values
Making important career choices
Setting professional goals and plan
Accountability partnership (balancing challenge and support)

Notes:
Coachee drives agenda and goals
Coach drives process

Gap to be Addressed:
Information and Expertise

When to Use:
When an optimal result is achievable through the application of expert knowledge

Example Cases:
How to perform technical tasks
Navigating specific processes
Information on choice options

Notes:
More directive on choice (be careful)
Onus of action on the advisee



YOUR MENTORING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

No one mentor can fulfill all your mentoring needs. No one mentor can have experience and perspective in every area in which you might benefit from, which could include research, teaching, clinical care, career development, leadership, life, or any other project you might take on. Just as you will rely on a broad range of core professional relationships in your career (see Figure, below), it is useful to have a Mentoring Board of Directors, that is, a broad range of mentors for the various facets of your career. See Section 4 for advice on how to fill gaps in your board of directors.

Having multiple mentors allows a mentee the benefit from multiple useful perspectives. At the same time, knowing your own values and goals can help you decide between differing opinions among mentors. Often, it can be effective to ask to meet with the mentors together (in cases of mentoring differences) to discuss how the options might be aligned. Consulting with additional mentors or with peers or friends and family can also help you determine which guidance is right for you. When you choose not to follow the advice of a mentor, make sure you acknowledge their input and explain how you reached your decision, to sustain the trust of the mentor and continue a valuable relationship.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hastings, L. J., & Kane, C. (2018). Distinguishing mentoring, coaching, and advising for leadership development. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 158, 9-22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20284>
- Marcdante, K., & Simpson, D. (2018). Choosing when to advise, coach, or mentor. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 10, 227-228. <https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-18-00111.1>
- Geraci, S. A. (2016). A review of mentoring in academic medicine. *The American Journal of Medical Sciences*, 353(7), 151-157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjms.2016.12.002>

WORKSHEET: MENTORING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On this worksheet, enter your values and your goals. Now think about the mentors you have—where do they fit on your mentoring board of directors? Consider what you are missing; what other kinds of mentoring could help you achieve your goals? Consider the diversity of perspectives represented by your mentoring community.

To add mentors, think of individuals you know who you think do those things well and consider asking them to be on your board. Your current mentors may also be able to suggest some options. Your institution or professional society may have a mentor matching program that could be a valuable source of connections. Be open to possibilities. And then make sure you establish what kind of mentoring you are looking for with each new mentor.

MY VALUES

MY GOALS

Teaching Mentors

Clinical Mentors

Research Mentors

Career Mentors

Leadership Mentors

Life Mentors

Sponsors

Advisors

Coach

SECTION 2. WHAT IS MENTORING?

In the beginning of one's education and career, one's experience with developmental relationships often takes the form of teachers and advisors. These roles are typically hierarchical, and the interactions are generally directive with the senior person giving instruction or direction to the junior person. At this early phase, even when one has a mentor, there is likely still a high degree of power difference, which influences the relationship towards a more directive and hierarchical condition.

As one completes the "training" phase of one's career and enters the professionally practicing phase, "teachers" are often replaced by "supervisors". These two roles are not the same. While a supervisor can give you task-related direction and feedback, they often do not provide career and personal development feedback. For career and personal development feedback, one must cultivate mentors. Although many departments provide formal mentors, **cultivating mentors is a personal responsibility** as is central to one's career development and success.

According to Pololi :

The mentoring process provides a means by which junior faculty can develop professional academic skills including career management, knowledge about academic (healthcare), and collegial networking. Mentoring in research and academic development may be particularly important to new faculty, who often find themselves inadequately prepared for academic careers.

Mentors are people who care about your development and have greater live experience in a direction, professional or personal, that you are interested in pursuing. From their greater experience, mentors are able to provide you with perspective to more effectively navigate the process in your common direction.

- Pololi L, Knight S. Mentoring faculty in academic medicine. A new paradigm? J Gen Intern Med. 200ep;20(9):866-70. doi: 10.1111/j.1525-1497.2005.05007.x. PMID: 16117759; PMCID: PMC1490198.



SHARING A COMMON PATH

Who can you engage to become a mentor? Well, anyone. The main condition is that you share a “common path” and that the prospective mentor has greater experience in that path. A common path could be a common professional discipline or work project. Researchers in the same research field is a common example or clinicians in the same specialty. A common path could also include other areas such as common gender, common ethnicity, or any common life experience.

FORMING AN INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIP AND ALLIANCE

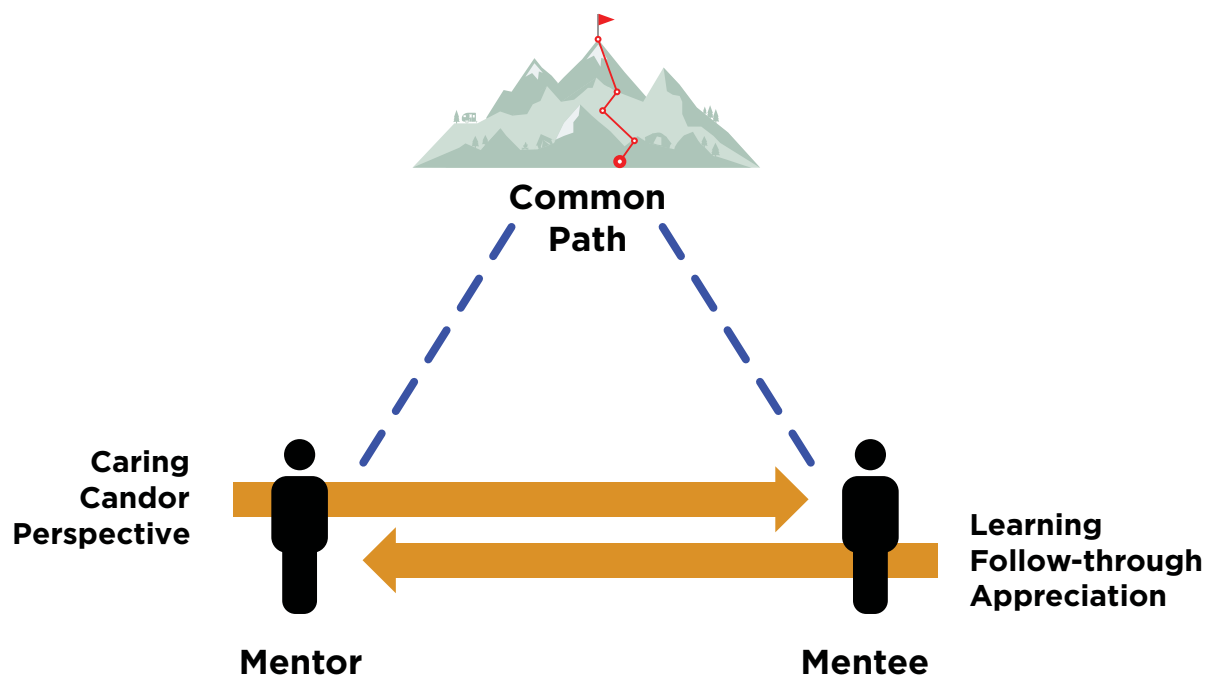
As an early career professional, one should put consistent effort towards meeting new people in one’s field. In that process, one may find certain more experienced people with whom there is good “chemistry”. One may find oneself going to them often for counsel. In those circumstances, it may be worthwhile to formalize a mentoring relationship.

Approaching someone to become your mentor can seem like a daunting task. However, for many would be mentors, being approached more formally brings relief and clarity about the relationship, especially if they are already serving in an informal mentoring role.

With creating a formal mentoring relationship, what is at the center of the relationship is this common path. The common path allows the mentor to provide value to the mentee through giving perspective from their experience relative to that common path. The mentor also contributes towards relationship by giving of their caring and their willingness to be appropriately candid when it’s in the best interest of the mentee.

On the other side, mentees may not feel that they have anything to offer, but the mentee also has much to give. A major gift of the mentee relates to the intrinsic rewards valued by mentors. Mentors derive satisfaction through their influence in the development of the mentee. So, the mentee offers value to the mentor through their willingness to learn and to follow through with what was agreed. As the mentee recognizes their development, expressing appreciation for the role of the mentor in that development is another important gift. Beyond these intrinsic rewards, of course, mentees may also increase a mentor’s productivity or introduce the mentor to valuable collaborators.

The mentee plays an important role in “giving” within the relationship: only using the mentor in times of need but otherwise neglecting the relationship is neither sustainable nor rewarding for the mentor.

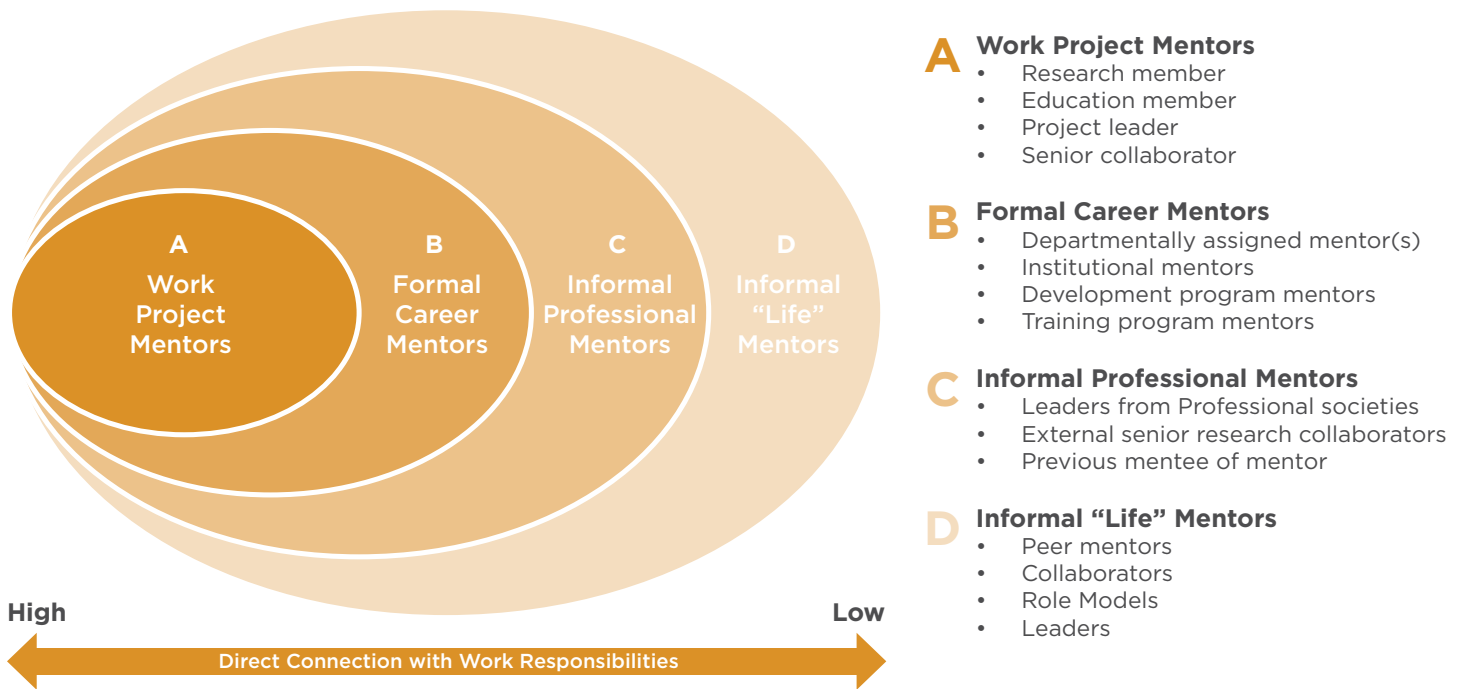


Once the mentor and mentee can both contribute towards each other along the common path, the relationship strengthens and flourishes into an alliance. This relationship takes effort on both sides to maintain and strengthen. Please see Section 5 regarding the responsibilities of the mentor and mentee.

DIFFERENT MENTORS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES

One traditional notion about mentoring is that a person can only have one mentor. That's a lot of pressure! There are many facets of you, and for each facet, there is potential for a mentor.

When we think of mentoring, we think of two main types of mentors: formal mentors and informal mentors. In the diagram below, mentors in the A and B categories are considered formal mentors while mentors in the C and D categories are considered informal mentors.



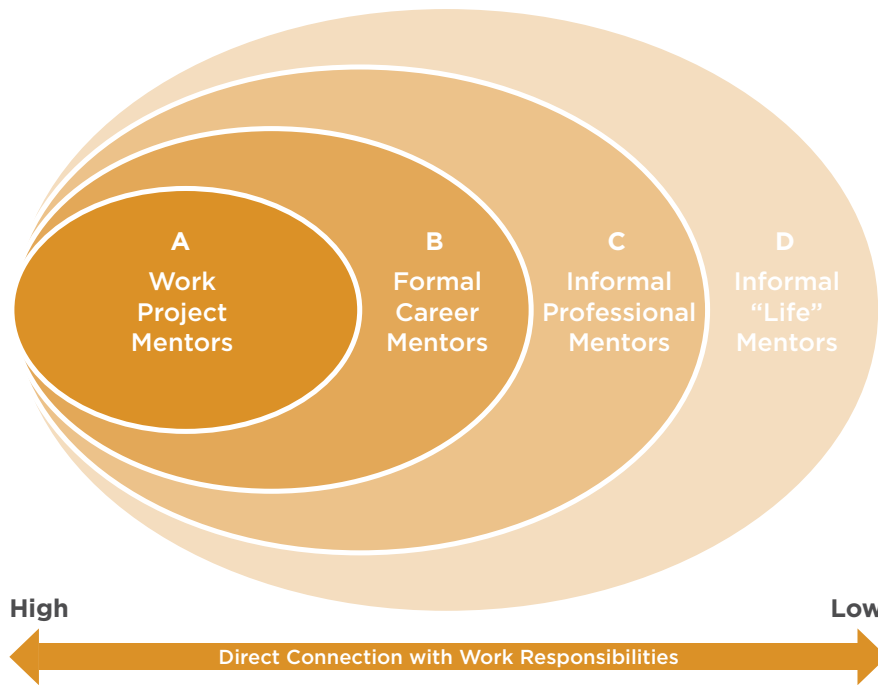
Formal Mentors. In the earlier phases of one's career, one will generally have more formal mentors. This group of mentors are often related to work tasks (esp. in research fields) and may serve as work sponsors or project leaders. In cases where the organization assigns mentoring relationships, formal mentors would belong in this category.

Informal Mentors. This group of mentors are typically those that the mentee has sought outside of formal work relationships. Also, many formal mentors become informal mentors as the mentee develops and becomes more independent, but wants to maintain the relationship. Informal mentors are less involved in direct work responsibilities relative to the mentee and can often give more objective feedback.

As a person transitions from early-career to mid-career, mentors who were once formal mentors can become informal mentors. It is still important to maintain this network of informal mentoring relationships as these mentors can serve as sponsors for career opportunities as well as continue to provide valuable perspective in navigating the next career phase.

WORKSHEET: MENTORING RELATIONSHIP MAP

In the table below, write down the names of your mentors in the appropriate column. Are you missing mentors in a particular column? Who might you begin to cultivate a relationship with to develop additional mentoring relationships?



Group A Work Project Mentors	Group B Formal Career Mentors	Group C Informal Professional Mentors	Group D Informal "Life" Mentors
(Examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research mentor • Education mentor • Project leader • Senior collaborator 	(Examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit assigned mentor • Institutional mentors • Training program mentors • Develop. program mentors 	(Examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders from professional societies • External senior research collaborators • Previous mentee of mentor 	(Examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer mentors • Collaborators • Role models • Leaders

SECTION 3. PREPARING YOURSELF TO BE A MENTEE

Before seeking out mentors, mentees would be well-served to clarify their own goals, responsibilities, and expectations for the mentoring relationship. Choosing a mentor is not just about what the mentor knows or the position the mentor holds. It's also about the character of the mentor and the fit of the mentor's style with one's own.

■ CLARIFYING YOUR GOALS

As you enter a mentoring relationship, be aware that your mentor also has their own agenda and goals. They would like to be helpful to you, but it is not their role to supply you with answers that you should be considering. When a mentee has weak or unclear goals, it creates a dynamic where a mentee can get co-opted by the agenda of the mentor. This is not to say that the mentee should not advance the agenda of the mentor; often this a key way that a mentee can provide value in return for the mentorship of the mentor.

When a would-be mentee knows their own agenda, they can better create an environment where the goals and needs of both sides are equitably addressed within the relationship.

■ CLARIFYING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

When mentees enter mentoring relationships, they often overly focus on their own needs and not enough on their role in contributing to the relationship. In many cases, this leads to passivity and the deterioration of the relationship. In fact, in mentoring relationships, the onus for initiative and engagement rests on the mentee. For example, the mentee should be creating the agenda for the mentoring meetings. The mentee should also be initiating regular contact with the mentor. This means that being a mentee entails understanding the responsibilities of a mentee (See Section 5) and being willing to carry out one's responsibilities within the relationship.

■ CLARIFYING YOUR STYLE AND EXPECTATIONS

When you are working with others, you will have behavioral tendencies that will play out. For example, you may have a certain relationship towards authority figures. You may be very deferential, or you may be somewhat rebellious. Let's say that you tend to be deferential. In that case, having a mentor who is very directive may pose a challenge to you. On the other hand, you may instead be direct and blunt in your communication. In that case, you'll want to find a mentor who can respond well to that kind of communication.

Before entering a mentoring relationship, understand your own style. Your style will interact with behavioral expectations on the part of the other person. Consider whether your style will be compatible with a would-be mentor.

■ A MENTOR AS SOMEONE WHO MODELS A WAY OF BEING

Ultimately, what you really want in a mentor is someone who models a way of being that you aspire to. Anyone can give you perspective and advice, but it's most useful when you respect the person behind the advice. When you are considering engaging a mentor, consider the character of that person and whether their way of being is something that you would like to emulate in some way. If so, what are those aspects of character that you are seeking?

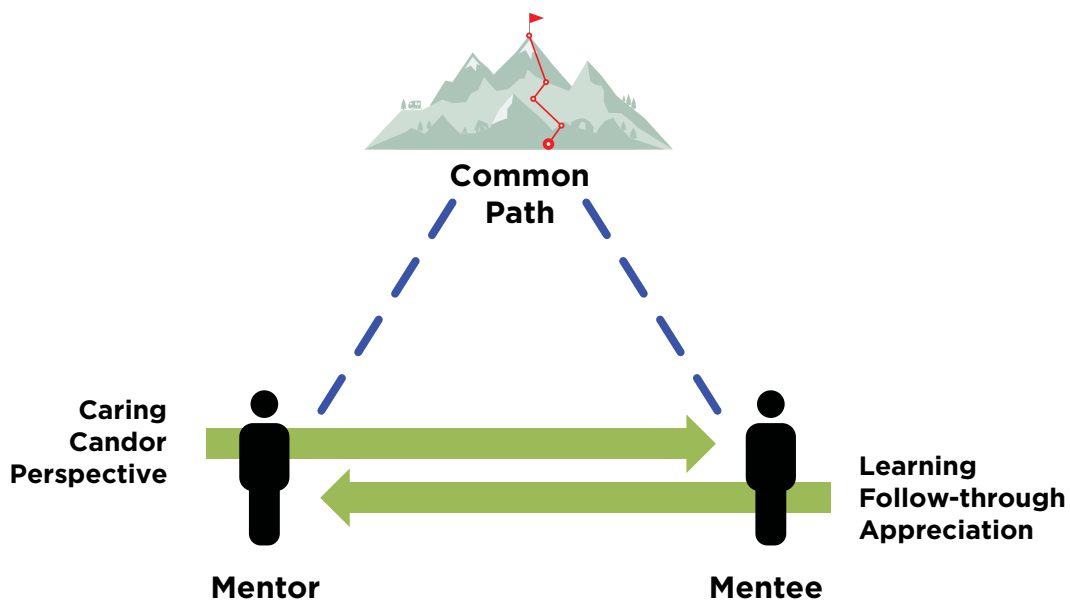
WORKSHEET: PREPARING YOURSELF TO BE A MENTEE

In the table below, briefly reflect on the following prompts prior to seeking out mentorship.

CLARIFYING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

How would I describe my “path”?

What is my goal along this “path”?



MENTOR EXPECTATIONS

How might I want a potential mentor to help me along this common path.

What are the characteristics of a potential mentor which might be the best fit for me?

MENTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

What are the main professional responsibilities that I would need to uphold as a part of this mentoring relationship?

What kind of time am I ready to commit to maintain the relationship?

SECTION 4. INITIATING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

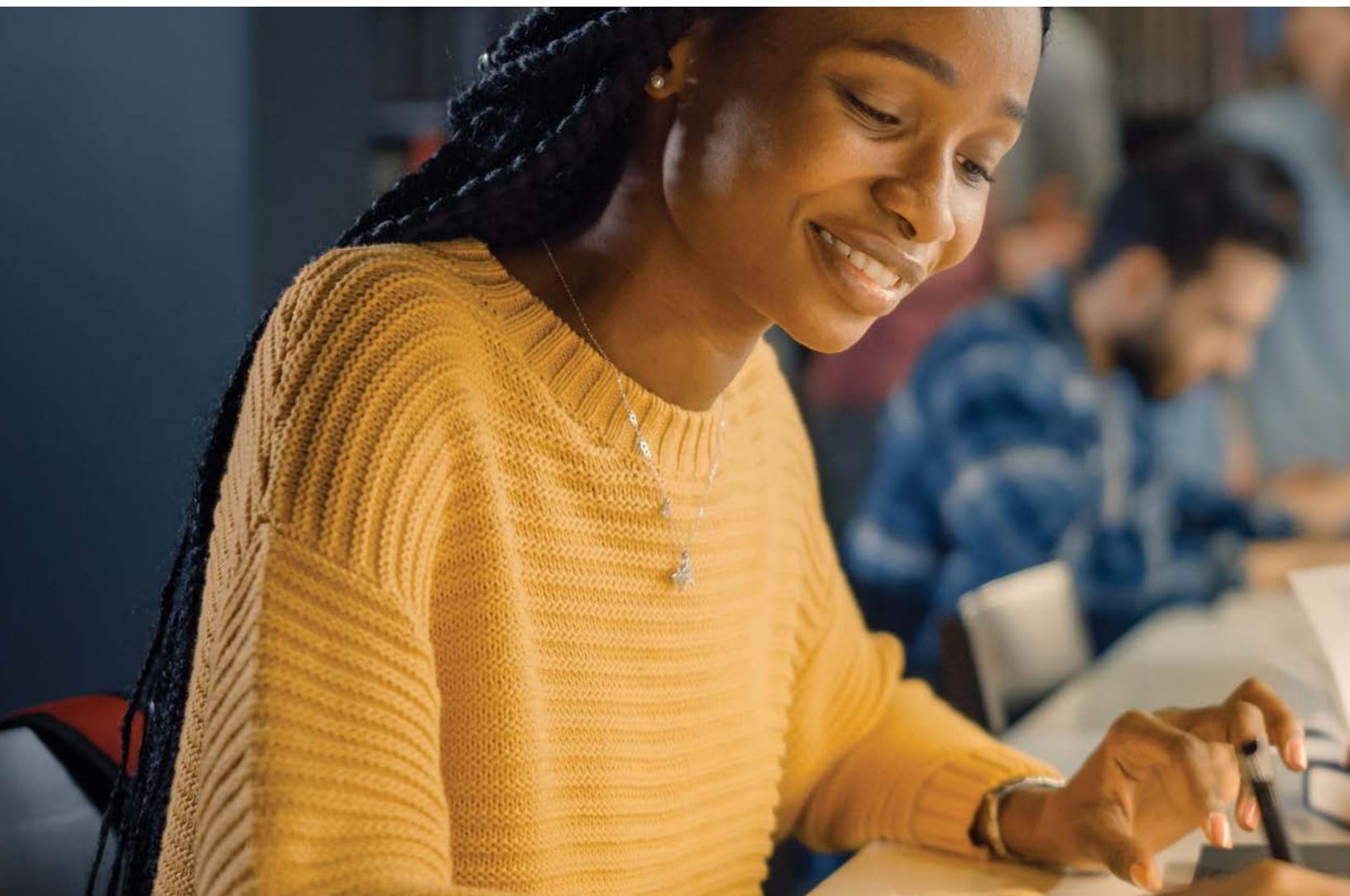
After preparing, it is time to find a mentor - or more than one! Remember, your goals may be personal or professional. While navigating this process it is very important to keep goals at the forefront. Start with listing your goals and then list the mentor(s) that might be helpful to reach these goals.

Next, finding a mentor might be as easy as looking at your current network. If you know someone who knows a potential mentor, or is in the same department/school it is okay to ask that colleague to make an introduction. It is also completely acceptable to “cold call” or “cold email” a mentor who you do not know to ask if they might be willing to serve as a mentor. Best case, they agree, and worst case they may be too busy, but they may recommend another potential mentor. Do not be afraid to reach out. People frequently are honored to be asked to be a mentor and thoroughly enjoy the relationship with mentees.

Mentoring relationships can start up at any time, so be open to just asking if you are inspired by someone or think they might be a great fit. For example, if you are in a lecture and are really impressed with the person delivering the lecture, do not be afraid to introduce yourself and ask to email them for a meeting. If the fit seems right, then ask at that meeting if they might be willing to serve as a mentor.

Remember that mentoring relationships change over time, as do your needs for mentoring. Do not be afraid to tactfully ask current mentors for recommendations for others with different or more advanced expertise.

Finally, don't forget to look wider than your current local network. Think first in your local division or department. Then look to your school's faculty (or student) affairs or faculty development office. Even further, look to your national or international specialty society's webpage for mentoring connections. Some sites even have a “connection” website where you enter your information, and they match you with a potential mentor. When you go to conferences you may meet a future mentor as well.



■ WHOM IN YOUR NETWORK MIGHT YOU APPROACH TO SEEK MENTORSHIP?

When you realize you need assistance in your career-building, you are ready to find a mentor. Finding a mentor may not be as hard as you think. There may already be a few people who have been your mentors, and they may want to continue being your mentor. Or you may need a new mentor and someone you already know can fill that role. As you progress in your career you will find individuals who have similar interests to you, and you will get along with them quite well. These people are future colleagues and collaborators. You are already beginning to build your professional network.

Think about who has influenced your career. There are many people in that category, as nobody gets through the education journey alone. Who has had a profound influence on you, your path, your trajectory, and direction? You may not have previously realized people are aiming to mentor students and trainees. They do this because they know they were taught by caring mentors themselves. This is the education path: we all stand on the shoulders of those who have taught us.

As you think of the people who have had a positive influence on you, one person may stand out, perhaps more. Someone in the field you are aiming to go into, someone who has carved out a path you may want to follow, or someone who has interests that are similar to yours. The future mentor does not have to be exactly like you, but it will help if there are a few things you have in common. When you have identified a few possible mentors, consider who may be the best mentor for you at the given moment.

If you do not identify any possible mentors with this thought exercise, be patient. Your future mentor may just not be in your circle of influence right now. You may need to join an organization, become more involved in a community, or actively do something to understand who the influencers are within your desired career path.

Not every person you have identified may be able to be your mentor. However, you will not know unless you move towards creating that mentoring relationship.



SECTION 5. BUILDING A SOLID MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

How is being a mentee different from being a student? In a student-teacher relationship, the teacher controls the agenda. Topics (coursework) are assigned by the teacher, and the student has little input as to the direction of the course. In a student/teacher relationship, goals are pre-defined by the teacher or the institution and apply to all the students in the course.

In the best mentor/mentee relationship, however, the goals and the agenda are set by the mentee, based on topics of their specific interests or needs. The mentor is guided by the mentee's agenda and provides perspective and advice to help the mentee achieve their goals.

WHAT TO EXPECT OUT OF THE RELATIONSHIP?

As the New Radicals sang in 1998 "You get what you give". This holds true in many areas of life, and the mentor/mentee relationship is no exception. When the mentee is engaged with the process, open and honest about their needs, and responsive to suggestions from the mentor when those suggestions align with their career goals, the relationship can be extremely positive for both parties.

A mentor should expect that the mentee is prepared for each meeting, has followed up with tasks that were previously discussed, and has considered important next steps that would be helpful to discuss. The mentee should expect the mentor to actively listen at each meeting and provide guidance targeted to the mentee's needs.

Expectations should not include the mentor performing tasks for the mentee or vis versa. The mentor may not have answers to all the questions the mentee poses, and neither should the mentor expect all their advice to be followed.

Other expectations for the relationship include:

- **Confidentiality:** Both the mentor and mentee should maintain confidentiality surrounding personal information that is shared.
- **Open mindedness:** Both the mentor and mentee should consider their own biases and do their best to leave them behind before each meeting.
- **Recognizing limitations:** The mentor should recognize their own limitations and where they may not have the answer or information that the mentee needs; the mentee should recognize when they will not be able to follow suggested advice.
- **Accountability:** The mentor should provide accountability to the mentee, who should be accountable to the mentor. The mentor should ask about actions or goals that were discussed at the prior meeting and the mentee should be prepared to discuss how those goals were achieved or why they were not met.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MENTEE AND MENTOR

For the mentoring relationship to succeed, the mentee must take on responsibility and initiative for their own development. They must consider their own goals for the relationship and be an active participant in the relationship.

The mentee's main role for each meeting is to develop an agenda. This sets up the mentee as the one primarily responsible for their career development, while the mentor plays an influential supporting role that draws on their perspective and experience. Mentees should follow through with any agreed-upon work outside of the mentoring session.

- Propose an agenda for the mentoring sessions and arrive prepared.
- Keep track of the topics discussed and of any follow-up work required.
- Work with the mentor to actively define the scope and commitments in the relationship, including frequency and method of communication.
- Work with the mentor to identify and develop goals.
- Communicate your needs. Be candid and allow yourself to be vulnerable.
- Be open-minded to the mentor's perspective and be "coachable". At the same time, know your own values.
- Communicate with mentors on major developments in your career.
- Maintain contact with mentors and follow up as agreed upon.
- Notify the mentor if you cannot make a scheduled meeting.
- Notify the mentor when you are unable to achieve a mutually agreed-upon goal due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., a need to attend to personal wellness).
- As conditions change, revisit the scope and goals of the relationship.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MENTOR MAY INCLUDE:

- Be available to the mentee. Truly set aside time and be present.
- Establish mutual agreement on frequency and method of communication.
- Maintain contact with the mentee and initiate contact when necessary.
- Promise and maintain confidentiality.
- Direct the conversation into areas that are important to the mentee's career success. While the mentee may have an agenda, the mentor should play an active role in adding to that agenda and exploring areas the mentee may have overlooked. On the other hand, it's important for the mentor to listen to the mentee's values and goals, and not simply assume or impose goals based on their own values and expectations.
- Help the mentee develop personal goals and a plan to achieve their goals.
- Be open-minded and non-judgmental.
- Actively listen and ask questions to clarify professional intentions.
- Be willing to share one's own experiences.
- Be thoughtful and strategic about approaches to problems and issues that come up.
- Recognize one's limitations and be willing to direct the mentee to other resources.
- Provide the appropriate level of accountability to the mentee.
- Recognize and honor when the mentor or mentee, might not be able to achieve a mutually agreed-upon goal due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., a need to attend to personal wellness).
- As conditions change, revisit the scope and goals of the relationship.

Establishing ground rules at the start of the relationship is one way to prevent damaging the relationship if you disagree. Consulting with peers, other mentors, or a coach can help you prepare to hold a difficult conversation with the aim of standing up for your needs while sustaining an important relationship. At times, you may need the support of other faculty or mentors to successfully end a dysfunctional relationship. Most institutions have ombuds-people who can provide confidential support and sometimes even facilitate conversations as you navigate difficult relationships or political dynamics that may surround the mentor/mentee relationship.

ESTABLISHING THE GROUND RULES OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Often at the beginning of the relationship there is a "honeymoon" phase where both sides assume that their goals are aligned, and the relationship will run smoothly without the constraints of a structured agreement.

Because of the initial optimism, mentors and mentees often overlook the need to explicitly align expectations and establish ground rules and commitments for the mentoring relationship. For example, the mentor may expect to meet once a quarter whereas the mentee had expected to meet once a month, or the

mentee is looking for broad career guidance, while the mentor is only prepared to give targeted advice for a specific task. Such misalignment of expectations can lead to misunderstanding and can strain the mentoring relationship. Discussing and coming to an agreement on common expectations and commitments at the start of a mentoring relationship sets the relationship up for success.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

As a mentee, it is important to think about your own goals for the relationship. Why did you choose this specific mentor? What goals are you hoping they can help you meet? How do they fit in with your other mentors? What amount of time can you realistically devote to the relationship? How much time are they likely to have for you?

It is critically important for the mentor and mentee to discuss their expectations before diving into the content of mentoring. Discussing expectations is often done during the first meeting. This discussion should include the scope of the relationship, the obligations of both the mentor and the mentee, and the logistics of meetings and communication. It should be noted that the mentee's goals for their interactions with the mentor may change over time as trust develops, and that the goals may become more expansive or more refined. These shifts may be subtle but are important to recognize to ensure ongoing alignment within the dyad. Thus, while this section focuses on setting ground rules and commitments at the start, it is a good practice to revisit this discussion periodically, especially in a longer-term mentoring relationship.

STRATEGIES TO ALIGN EXPECTATIONS

- Discuss expectations during the first meeting. A good place to start may be for the mentor and mentee to discuss what both mentorship and “menteeship” mean, and to fill in gaps in these definitions together.
- The mentee should share with the mentor their goals for the relationship
- The mentor should share how they might help in achieving those goals
- Review the responsibilities of both the mentee and mentor: For a mentoring relationship to develop and thrive, both the mentor and mentee should be aware of their respective responsibilities and commit to follow through on those.
- Discuss expectations around timing and duration of mentoring: Some mentees may desire focused mentorship for a short period of time, while other mentees may expect, or be open to, a longer-term interaction.



PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND ETHICS IN BEING A MENTEE

Now that you have ground rules and expectations of both the mentor and yourself as the mentee, some common expectations are needed to help all mentor/mentee relationships flourish. A concept named psychological safety has been promoted as a foundation for communication in relationships. The definition of psychological safety is defined as a shared belief held by members of a team that team members can speak up without fear of retribution. In psychologically-safe teams each team member feels safe, accepted and respected. The ideal of psychological safety is important for communication, understanding and improvement. For example, if you do not feel you can speak up to your mentor about a concern, the concern is not discussed and the concern persists. If your mentor brings up concerns in a way that are demeaning or demanding, perhaps they need to learn more about the concept of psychological safety. Psychological distress is the opposite of psychological safety, and it does not build the mentor/mentee relationship.

How can psychological safety be promoted? As you build relationships there are specific ways in which psychological safety can flourish. Here are some specific things you can do to weave it into your relationships:

- Frame the issue as a learning problem, not an execution problem. We need everyone's voice and brains to help improve because we are better together than alone.
- Acknowledge a sense of your own fallibility. This helps others understand you are interested in improvement and that you are also learning.
- Model curiosity by asking questions, which forms a necessity for others to speak up. As you invite others to ask questions you are also helping them be inquisitive and are an example of being curious.

Asking questions is a great way to promote psychological safety, and possibly the most powerful way to build your career. What is your hypothesis? What is your goal? What is your path? How are you going to get there? What are the steps needed to succeed? Questions lead to answers, or at least they lead to the next question. As you seek to build relationships with your mentors (i.e., your possible future collaborators) you will have opportunities to ask questions, discuss your perceptions, and deepen your understanding.

Questions are perhaps the most potent creator of psychological safety. As your mentor asks you questions, you must think of answers. As you think of questions, your mentor will also need to think of answers, or they may ask you a question in return to make you think of the answer yourself (the Socratic method). There are good questions, and there are better questions, which also means there are bad questions. Think of someone asking you the question, "Why did you do that?" If the tone of voice is right and the relationship has been built up prior to that question being asked, it may not be a bad question. However, if the tone of voice is stark and the relationship is lacking depth, the question could create some tension.

The ethics involved in building relationships include many concepts you have learned since kindergarten. There are catalysts and barriers to building relationships that have psychological safety at the foundation. There are obvious barriers that create psychological distress such as incivility, intimidation, and even abuse. Stay away from these barriers and tell someone you trust that can help these behaviors be reported as appropriate. Catalysts that help build relationships with psychological safety include asking questions, obtaining feedback, learning to disagree without being disagreeable, and even revealing some vulnerability. Learning how to do these things well will improve the culture of your mentor/mentee relationships.

In essence, we need to care about how others perceive us, our questions and our answers. Building the relationship is part of your responsibility, so take ownership of your relationship contribution and make it the best relationship it can be. As a mentee you will have lots of questions, and you will find lots of answers. Aiming to create psychological safety within your relationships will be your best method for improvement.

BASIC PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION: USING EMAIL AND SETTING UP MEETINGS

As you build psychological safety into your mentor/mentee relationship there are some simple things you can do to promote an excellent relationship. These include responding to email, setting up meetings and following through with tasks.

You undoubtedly have an email address and assuredly get many emails. Some are useful and some are not (the junk folder exists for a reason). Email can be a professional tool used to communicate tasks that need to be done and help set up meetings. If you do not respond to emails, there will be a lack of communication. Please be responsive to emails sent to you by your mentor. By not responding to an email, you are sending a message that you don't care about the subject.

It helps to send emails that have clear expectations such as "Response Needed", "Information Only", or "Decision Requested" in the subject line. Be responsive to email but give the benefit of the doubt to others that do not respond immediately. Timely use of emails is anticipated of both mentors and mentees with an expected response time of hours to days. If a week passes and you have not responded, you may have been busy, but the email partner will think you are not being responsive. If you are going to be away from work on vacation, set up automatic email responses during the time you are away. Use proper email etiquette to maintain communication and meet expectations. Find a way to maintain your email inbox so important emails do not get ignored. Lastly, don't assume emails never get to you or that they were never sent to you. Sometimes the email address is not typed in correctly and sometimes the junk folder grabs important emails.

Meetings are necessary as a part of your professional mentoring activities, so it is necessary you know how to set up meetings and make them productive. Take ownership of setting up the meetings on a defined date, time and platform. You must meet with your mentor to start the mentor/mentee relationship. Some of these relationships will do better with standing meetings, while others may prefer to set up the next meeting at the end of each meeting. Make the next meeting date and time clear for everyone involved. Be sure all necessary people are invited to the meeting and all involved persons who want to be on the meeting are invited. Some meetings are more important than others, so do your best not to be double-booked so you don't have to choose between meetings.

Email and meeting discussions are places where tasks can be assigned and reported on. Reporting back on assigned tasks is an important duty that will further the project progress. The assignments should be clear in the email or clearly defined at the end of a meeting. This allows for projects with many moving parts to succeed. One step at a time, each project you touch can succeed if the project success is clearly defined and the steps to success are reported on each step of the way. A timeline for project success can also be a helpful tool. Follow up on the tasks you are assigned for the best outcomes.

In summary, email, meetings and reporting back on assignments will help organize your efforts. Use email in a productive way. Use meetings to further your objectives. You are responsible for making the meetings happen in a timely fashion and with assignments reported on. Keep moving forward as you think ahead to the next meeting.

BEING ORGANIZED AND HAVING AN AGENDA

Do your best to be organized and prepared for your mentoring meetings. This usually entails having a strong agenda for the meeting. A meeting agenda is a list of discussion items or activities listed in the order in which they will be discussed or done in a meeting. The last five minutes of a meeting should include what the assignments are for each person in the meeting to clarify roles and responsibilities, and then define the next meeting date and time.

Does every important meeting have an agenda? Perhaps not, as some meetings occur in the elevator or at lunch. But an agenda grants every important item time to be discussed. If an item is not discussed, the item can be moved to the next meeting agenda for discussion. The agenda is made before the meeting begins and is usually sent to those invited to the meeting at least a day in advance.

WORKSHEET: SETTING GROUND RULES AND COMMITMENTS

This tool can be a useful framework for establishing the mentoring relationship. The mentee completes the left-hand column of this document and sends it to the mentor. After the initial meeting, the mentor completes the right-hand column and returns the document to the mentee. Further discussion may still be needed to refine the goals and expectations of the mentor/mentee relationship. Both the mentor and the mentee initial each row of the document once it is finalized to indicate their agreement.

	MENTEE COLUMN	MENTOR COLUMN	INITIALS OF MENTEE & MENTOR
GOALS	List up to 3 goals that you hope to achieve from this relationship: 1. 2. 3.	Refine the mentee's goals based on discussion with the mentee: 1. 2. 3.	
SPECIFIC OUTCOMES	At the end of this relationship, I would like to have completed the following (e.g., manuscript, curriculum development, or application for a leadership role)	I acknowledge the specific outcomes desired by the mentee.	
DURATION	Keeping in mind that mentor/mentee relationships can change over time, is this relationship envisioned as short-term or long-term?	Reflection on anticipated duration of the mentor/mentee relationship.	
LOGISTICS	I propose the following meeting logistics: - Time -Frequency -Duration -Modality	The agreed-upon meeting logistics - Time -Frequency -Duration -Modality	
RELATIONSHIP TERMINATION	I agree that this relationship may be ended by the mentor or mentee at any time and for any reason, and that this will not be held against the mentor or mentee.	I agree that this relationship may be ended by the mentor or mentee at any time and for any reason, and that this will not be held against the mentor or mentee.	

	MENTEE COLUMN	MENTOR COLUMN	INITIALS OF MENTEE & MENTOR
COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY	I pledge to keep all of our conversations confidential, unless a topic that is discussed could lead to reasonably foreseeable harm.	I pledge to keep all of our conversations confidential, unless a topic that is discussed could lead to reasonably foreseeable harm. By mutual agreement, I may provide sponsorship or networking.	
TOPICS THAT ARE OFF-LIMITS	I do not wish to discuss the following topics:	I do not wish to discuss the following topics:	
OBLIGATIONS	As the mentee, I am responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Professional conduct during this relationship -Setting the agenda for each meeting -Reflecting upon the mentor’s advice between meetings 	As the mentor, I am responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Professional conduct during this relationship -Actively listening and reflecting upon the items presented by the mentee -Providing questions for the mentee to consider (i.e., “homework”) at the conclusion of each meeting 	
REGULAR CHECK-INS	I will participate in regular check-ins with the mentor to assess whether my goals are being met and if any new goals have emerged	I will track whether our conversations appear to be aligned with the goals stated at the outset and to identify when new goals emerge.	
CONCLUSION	I will tell the mentor when I think my goals have been achieved and it is time to conclude the mentor/mentee relationship.	I will discuss with the mentee whether I think they have achieved the goals of the relationship.	
OTHER AGREEMENTS			

SECTION 6. MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING THE RELATIONSHIP

How to be coachable. How to have deeper conversations.

Being coachable is one of the most important qualities to bring to your mentoring relationship. The most important themes here center around protecting time with your mentor, being open to growth, asking questions and expecting feedback. This starts with protecting the time that you and your mentor share. Make sure to carve out the time for your meetings and protect that time. This honors your mentor and allows them to trust that you are truly “in” the relationship to learn.

Make sure to be engaged during meetings so the mentor knows that you value their time, and the meeting is productive. Select dates and times that are mutually accepted. When you are accepting these times, make sure not to overbook or have a deadline too close to the meeting to avoid being distracted or possibly canceling. It is okay to cancel occasionally—mentors will appreciate that you recognize when you won't have the ability to be “present.” But if it becomes a habit, that is a sign of lack of commitment, or lack of alignment with the established goals.

During your meetings, it is extremely important to be open to feedback from your mentor. Have an open mind and an open heart to willingly accept possibilities for growth, even though they might be difficult to hear at first. Prepare questions for your mentor prior to the meeting and ask them during the meeting. Make sure to take notes so that you can reflect upon your meeting afterward.

Some of the most important growth that occurs in mentoring relationships actually takes place after the meetings. This is the time for you to reflect upon your notes and pursue the “work” that you have set out for yourself in conversation with your mentor to achieve your goals. It might even be helpful to give yourself 30 minutes alone after your meeting is finished for you to reflect and make an action plan for yourself prior to your next meeting. If you keep this up, then your mentor will certainly be impressed with your organization, and you will then keep on task toward your goals.

YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF AND VULNERABILITY

Two other very important qualities to bring to a mentoring relationship are vulnerability and authenticity. One of the great joys of mentoring relationships is when both parties are able to fully be themselves, and admit challenges while seeking growth. This starts with being honest with oneself first. Try to avoid worrying about what others (including your mentor) might expect you to value and think first about what you value most. This was a key step when you were preparing for finding a mentor, keep your goals and values at the center of these relationships. Prior to meeting with a new mentor, it may be helpful to review your own values and priorities that you may have written down at a previous step.

One useful tool for identifying your goals and values is a 9-step strategy published by Linda Pololi: <https://www.bmj.com/content/332/7535/s38>.

Next, being vulnerable is not always easy and it might be challenging if your mentoring relationship is not a great fit. For this reason, it is important to “feel out” the fit prior to establishing a formal mentoring relationship. Only agree to the relationship if you feel that you can be genuine with your mentor and you feel that they are someone you can trust. This might be something you reflect on after your initial introductory meeting.

Once you have decided it's a good fit, with safety for vulnerability, then it is important to establish ground rules for confidentiality with your mentor. This will help with your authenticity in conversations moving forward. When you are having meetings, remember to be open to growth and feedback. When discussions become deeper, allow yourself to pause and be thoughtful. Sometimes after years of training we have almost reflexive beliefs and responses to questions because it is what we have been taught to think or feel or do. Safe mentoring relationships are an opportunity to take a step back, question, and reflect on these beliefs and then move forward with a clear answer that is true to yourself.

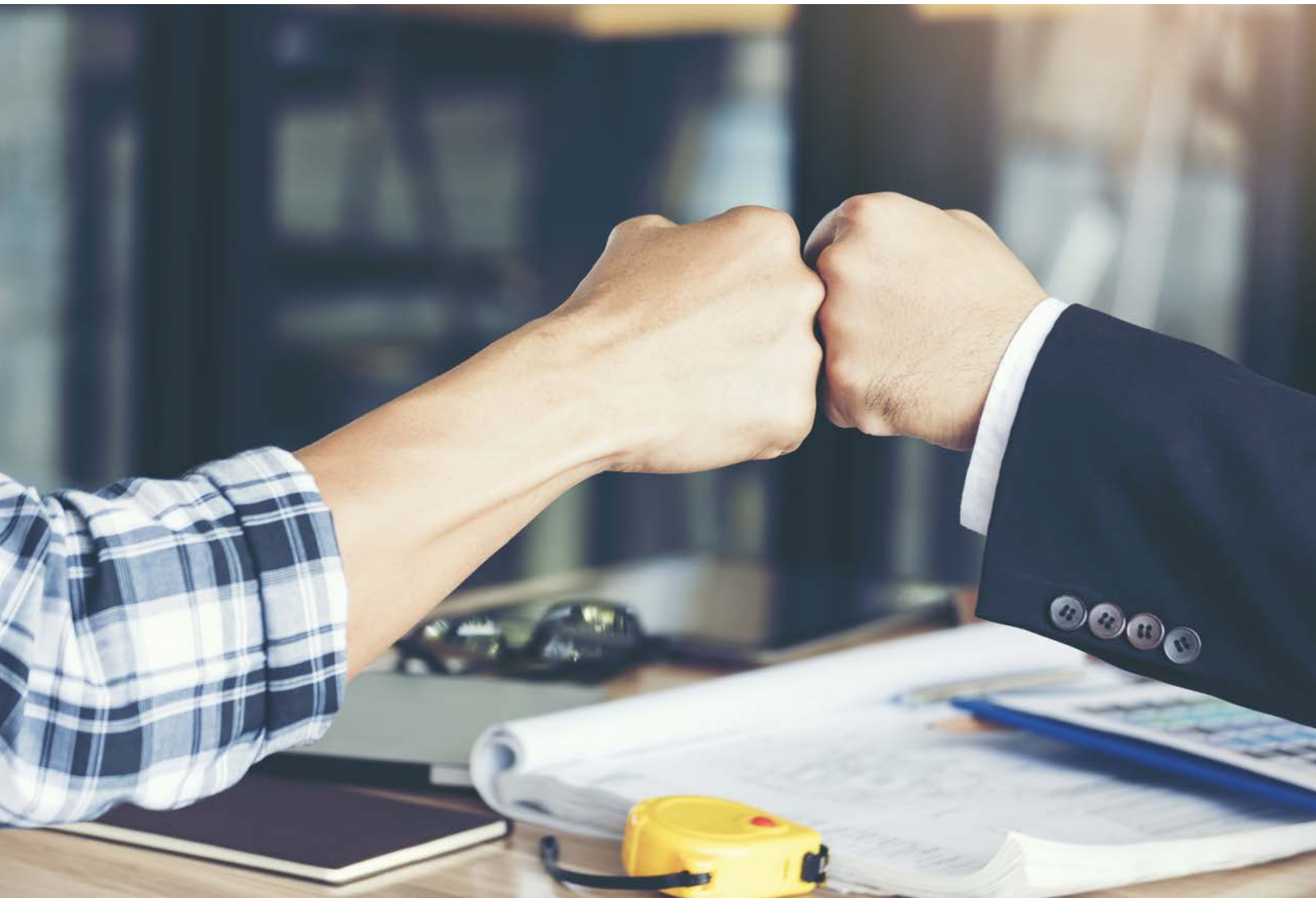
SHOWING APPRECIATION AND STRENGTHENING THE RELATIONSHIP

One of the reasons mentoring relationships are so rewarding is that both the mentor and the mentee gain substantial benefit. This can be compromised if the mentor does not feel appreciated, however, so make a point to show appreciation in multiple ways to strengthen the relationships.

One of the best ways to keep your mentor feeling appreciated is to show it to them - in multiple ways. First and always, say “thank you”. Say “thank you” prior to meeting, during the meeting when key pieces of wisdom are shared, after the meeting and then frequently during the longitudinal relationship. There are never too many ways to say and express your thanks to others. Additionally, we all will make mistakes and you might accidentally miss a meeting or run late, this is ok, but you must show and express sincere apology if this happens.

In addition to saying “thank you”, you can show appreciation by being respectful. This starts with being respectful of your mentor’s time and expertise. Try to always be on time and never run over time unless the mentor is initiating this. Learn what you can from your mentor, and even if you don’t initially agree with their advice or expertise, you can still be thankful for their perspective. Remember to reflect and if, over time, their advice becomes clear, make sure to thank them again for pushing you to consider a new perspective or to accept a valuable nugget of wisdom.

Finally, showing appreciation also can be accomplished by following through on your deliverables. This could be setting up meetings, being prepared with agendas, finishing tasks on time or delivering products or meeting deadlines. The more that you communicate that you are on task and organized with your shared goals, the more that your mentor will see you are growing through the relationship, which can be extremely rewarding for mentors. Pro tip: if you need a mentor to review a grant, application or paper, then ask them in advance how much time they need to complete the review. Knowing this will help you plan your “due date” for getting them the info.



MANAGING MULTIPLE MENTORS (INCLUDING LIFE MENTORS)

We recommend that everyone have multiple mentors. Refer to the section on the “Mentoring Relationship Map” to see a visual representation for this. You should have personal mentors and professional mentors, as well as formal and informal mentors. Mentors should have an area of focus, such as life, career overall, clinical progress, research, writing, service, education, etc. It can be daunting to think about keeping up all of these relationships. As your goals change and grow your need for mentors will also change. Your need for a research mentor may be very heavy during a summer research project but may then be simmering for a year until the next one. A specialty mentor may also be needed on a regular basis throughout your career. The best way to keep these relationships strong is to stay organized.

First, use the diagram on pages 8 and 13 to map out WHO you need regarding mentors. List specifically the types and expertise you are seeking. Then, consider HOW OFTEN you would like to meet with these individual mentors. This could be yearly, biannually, quarterly, monthly or even weekly depending on your needs. Then map out WHAT you would like to discuss at these meetings and ideally, set them on the calendar well ahead of time. Make use of recurring calendar invitations, if applicable, so you can 1) stay on task and prepared for meetings and 2) avoid forgetting to schedule.

Next, keep organized between your mentors. Pro tip: establish your timeline for each relationship and work backwards. For example, for a promotions mentor, think about when you are going up for promotion and work backwards to figure out how often you need to meet. This could be years in advance, so break this time up into manageable sections for meeting times. For a grant deadline - think about all the steps and set up a schedule and send out meeting invitations at the beginning of the project.

Finally, a phrase that we like to use is ultimately, the mentoring relationship works best when the mentee is the “Captain of their Mentor-ship”. Imagine a ship sailing toward an island (imagine the island is your goal). The ship represents the mentoring relationship but the captain and decision maker in the relationship is the mentee. This means that it is the mentee, not the mentor, who is driving the relationships. The mentee should be the one setting up meetings, establishing agendas, sending follow up information, and keeping to deadlines. They should be in charge of the mentorship to make it stronger and more likely to succeed.

MAINTAINING CONTACT (INCLUDING IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT)

So, you have put all this work into finding a mentor so now it is important to maintain that connection. This is especially important if you don't see your mentor regularly in your day to day world or if there are long time spans between mentoring sessions. It is always easier to maintain contact than to go through the awkward effort of re-initiating the relationship. There are many ways to do this, but we have listed a few examples here:

- Many meetings these days happen in the virtual environment but often it is nice to actually meet over coffee or lunch to make that personal connection. Consider requesting an in person meeting early on in the relationship if possible.
- For upcoming meetings, consider attaching an agenda to the calendar invite, especially if it has been a long time since the last meeting. This will help your meetings be more efficient as well.
- If you find a mentoring session particularly helpful then take a few moments to send a brief email or text message letting them know. It is always nice to be appreciated!
- When the mentoring relationship ends, send them a thank you note. Emails are good but handwritten notes add a personal touch that many mentors often treasure.
- After you have moved on, don't hesitate to drop them a line every now and then. Mentors love to hear how it is going for their prior mentees, even many years later.

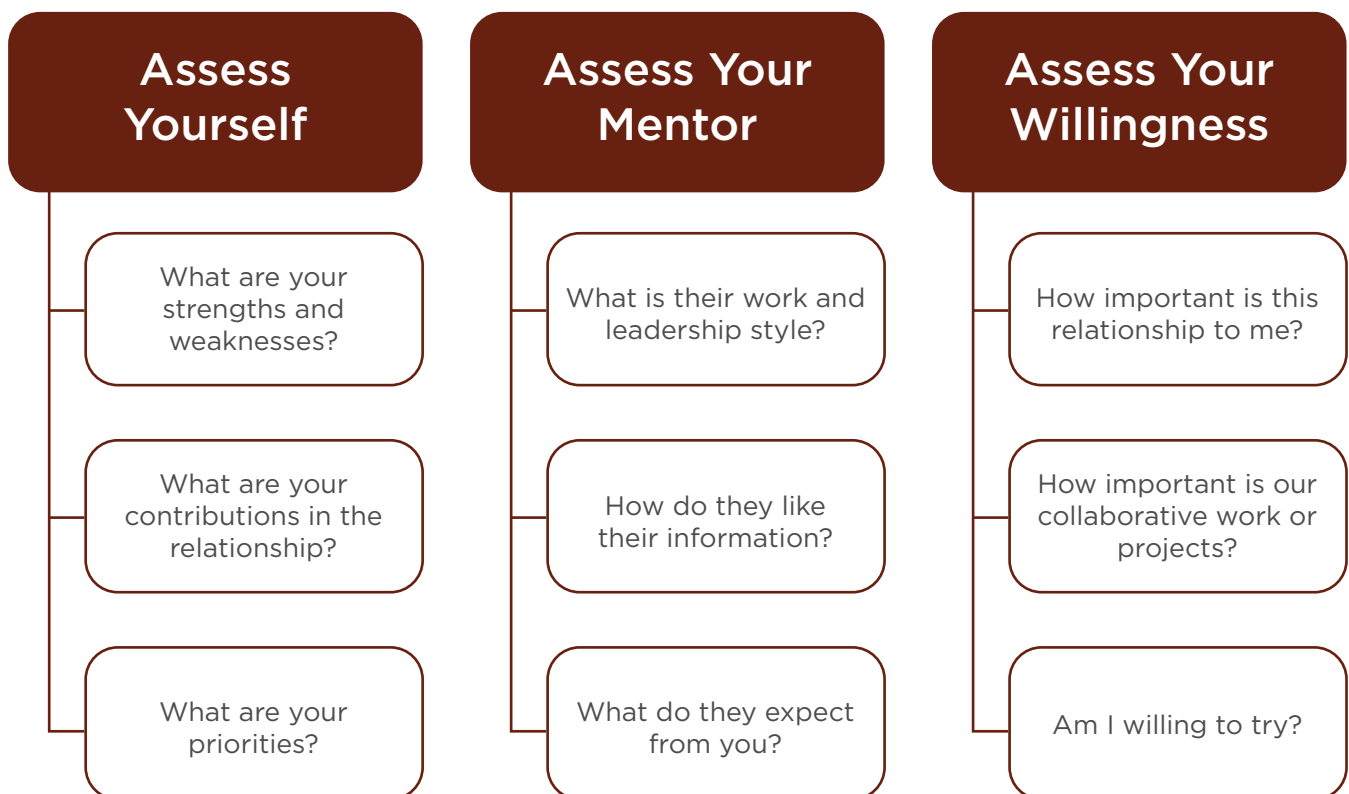


SECTION 7. MANAGING UP

One of the challenges in maintaining a healthy and productive relationship with your mentor is learning how to successfully “manage up”. This skill is key to your success as a mentee. What does it mean to manage up?

“Managing up is about consciously and deliberately developing and maintaining effective relationships with supervisors, bosses, and other people above you in the chain of command. It is a deliberate effort to increase cooperation and collaboration in a relationship between individuals who often have different perspectives and uneven power levels. It is about consciously working with your boss to obtain the best possible results for you, your boss, and the organization.”

Before going over some of the techniques for managing up, there are three areas to assess to make sure that you are ready to manage up. It is crucial that you have a good understanding of yourself, your mentor, and whether or not you are willing to put in the work to manage up since the process isn't always easy.



Now that you've reflected on your relationship with your mentor and your willingness to put in the effort to have an effective relationship (even when it's hard), let's go over some tips for managing your mentor. Just as your supervisors and directors have unique leadership and management styles, each mentor comes with a different way of navigating their professional relationship with you as their mentee.

Based on your mentor's personality, there are certain approaches to managing up that may be helpful. Individuals who are introverted tend to direct their energy inward, process internally, and feel revitalized by time spent alone. Extroverts tend to direct their energy towards others, process with others, and feel restored through socialization. Consider the tips below based on which description fits your mentor best.

Managing the Introverted Mentor

- Preparing to meet
 - Take the initiative when arranging meetings
 - Give them time to prepare
 - Limit impromptu meetings
- Tips while meeting
 - Give them time to process new ideas and questions
 - Keep the conversation focused and concise
 - Ask questions
 - Invest in relationship building
- Follow-up
 - Keep them in the loop with any updates or changes
 - Embrace electronic communication

Managing the Extroverted Mentor

- Preparing to meet
 - Take the initiative when arranging meetings
 - Plan to meet in person
- Tips while meeting
 - Be a good listener while they talk
 - Exhibit friendliness
 - Know that they tend to process out loud
 - Clarify and recap key points
 - Welcome opportunities to brainstorm
- Follow-up
 - Check in regularly
 - They may be okay with impromptu check-ins

We hope that you find a mentor who is a good match and supportive of your goals. These successful pairings can help you excel. To keep a good relationship going with your mentor, make sure to manage yourself first. Take the time to clarify your goals and hold yourself accountable for any progress that you discussed with your mentor. It also helps to make sure that your priorities are aligned with the priorities of your mentor. Working towards mutually agreed upon goals helps both you and your mentor.

When you make life easier for your mentor, they are more likely to keep mentoring and supporting you. This can be done by being respectful of their time, bringing solutions to the table rather than problems, and showing appreciation for their dedication and expertise. You can also manage up in these successful relationships by asking for feedback and having a growth mindset.

Despite best efforts, you may come across challenges in your relationship with your mentor. In these instances, managing up becomes even more important. The first step is to identify the difficult behavior of your mentor. Are they canceling meetings with you? Are they using language that is harsh or confrontational? Remember that it is their certain behavior or action that is problematic, rather than your mentor as a person. Next, assume that your mentor has positive intent even if the delivery was not ideal. Your mentor agreed to work with you because they believe in you and want you to succeed. This re-framing can be helpful in difficult circumstances. When you find yourself in a challenging situation, seek to understand the message that was communicated and where your mentor is coming from. We will review specific skills for how to do this in the section on receiving feedback.

Finally, not all relationships are meant to last. If you find that the challenges and difficulties outweigh the benefits, it may be time to gracefully end the relationship with your mentor. Take time to reflect at the end of any mentoring relationship and maintain professionalism always.

TAKING FEEDBACK GRACEFULLY

We often focus on the art of giving effective feedback, but there is a certain skillset involved in receiving feedback gracefully as well. Feedback is an opportunity to learn about your skills and abilities from the perspective of others. The Johari window shows us that there are four quadrants when considering who we feel we are and how we are perceived. Feedback helps bring awareness to our blind spots, the parts of ourselves that are known to others but not known to ourselves. Studies also show that the more feedback we receive, the more productive and effective we are. What an awesome opportunity to learn about what we are doing well and where there are opportunities for growth!

Johari window

	<i>Known to self</i>	<i>Unknown to self</i>
<i>Known to others</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Blind Spot</i>
<i>Unknown to others</i>	<i>Hidden</i>	<i>Unknown</i>

Your mentor has key insights into your strengths and weaknesses and is well positioned to provide you with this feedback. As with managing up, there is some personal preparation that should take place before you receive feedback from your mentor. It is important to start with self-assessment. What aspects of your project or role are going well?

Algiraigri AH. Ten tips for receiving feedback effectively in clinical practice. Med Educ Online. 2014; 19: 25141.

Stone D, Heen S. Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well. Portfolio Penguin; 2015.

In what ways can you improve? What steps will help you to make those improvements? Reflecting on these areas will allow you to have a more productive conversation with your mentor when the time comes.

Once you find yourself in a feedback conversation with your mentor, there are some best practices for receiving that feedback. Here are a few:

- Be a good listener. You may be tempted to jump in and provide additional information or clarify your intentions, but avoid the urge and make sure to listen attentively to the important information that your mentor is taking the time to communicate.
- Maintain a growth mindset. We all make mistakes and feedback provides us with an opportunity to make changes for the better.
- Try not to take information personally. Constructive feedback is not a judgment on you as a person. It is a comment about a behavior or approach that could be improved.
- If the information that you receive is vague or unhelpful, probe with clarifying questions in order to get meaningful information. A helpful phrase is “help me understand...”
- There are 3 kinds of feedback: appreciation, coaching, and evaluation. Try to identify which type of feedback your mentor is giving you. If they are giving you evaluation, but you are expecting appreciation that could lead to disappointment.
- Create a SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based) action plan in collaboration with your mentor.

There are three different types of triggers that may cause an emotional response when receiving feedback:

- Truth triggers: set off by the substance of the feedback itself. The feedback feels off, unhelpful, or untrue.
- Relationship triggers: tripped by the particular person who is giving us the feedback. This may relate to perceived credibility of the feedback giver or how we feel treated by them.
- Identity triggers: something about the feedback causes our sense of who we are to come undone. We feel overwhelmed, ashamed, or off balance.

When feedback triggers come up, it is still important to listen carefully. Based on the feedback trigger, there are certain things that can be helpful to listen for and certain follow up questions to ask.

Trigger Type	Listen For	Questions to Ask
Truth	Data that they have that you don't. Interpretations that aren't the same as yours. Impacts that you may not be aware of.	Can you give me an example? How did that impact you or the team? What am I doing that is getting in my own way?
Relationship	Switch tracks that put a second topic on the table about our relationship. Systems between us – what are each of us contributing to the issues, and what's my part in that system?	What am I contributing to the problem between us? Can you help me understand your feedback? Then, I want to talk about why you're offering it and some of my relationship concerns.
Identity	What is my wiring – how far do I swing and how quickly do I recover? How do I talk myself through my particular pattern? Opportunities for growth.	Can you help me get perspective on your feedback? What could I do that would help me improve? What could I change that would matter most?

What should you do if your mentor is not offering regular feedback? The answer is simple. Ask for feedback if it is not voluntarily given. It is acceptable and encouraged to ask your mentor for specific feedback related to the work you are doing together or other aspects of your professional development. Your mentor should also be asking you for feedback as well. Ideally, feedback is a two-way street.

Finally, after you receive feedback make sure to express gratitude to encourage your mentor to continue to offer it.

Additional Resources

1. Manuel SP, Poorsattar SP. Mentoring up: Twelve tips for successfully employing a mentee-driven approach to mentoring relationships. *Med Teach.* 2021; 43:384-387.
2. Zerzan JT, Hess R, Schur E, Phillips RS, Rigotti N. Making the most of mentors: A guide for mentees. *Acad Med.* 2009;84(1):140-144.
3. Pololi L. Career development for academic medicine—a nine step strategy. (2006). *BMJ Careers.* <https://www.bmj.com/content/332/7535/s38>.

SECTION 8. TRANSITIONING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Unlike in coaching where there is often a pre-determined engagement period, many mentoring relationships can last for years or decades as long as the mentor and mentee find the relationship mutually beneficial. As a mentoring relationship develops however, there is often a “drift” in the relationship which requires the attention mentor and mentee to revisit initial assumptions of the relationship and to address issues, redefine the relationship, or end the relationship.

WHY RELATIONSHIPS DRIFT

Drift in mentoring relationships can sometimes be attributed to a misalignment in values (e.g., mentee wants to work on X, but the mentor has no interest or background in X). Most commonly, however, mentoring relationships fail because of inattention to the relationship, which, over time, erodes trust in the relationship. In a mentoring relationship, there are three elements: the mentor, mentee, and the common path. The drift may stem from any or all of these three elements, including:

Mutual Behavior / Common Path

- Mentee and mentor not aligned in assumptions and expectations
- Mentee and mentor not aligned in professional interests and goals
- Changes in roles and circumstances of mentor and/or mentee

Mentee Behavior

- Mentee is passive and doesn't initiate agenda
- Mentee doesn't heed guidance
- Mentee doesn't follow through with agreed upon commitments

Mentor Behavior

- Mentor not committing adequate time to mentoring
- Mentor not understanding the mentee's context and being too directive
- Mentor not acting in the mentee's best interest

As you begin to recognize that a relationship is “drifting”, what should you do?

First, look at aspects relating to **mutual behavior**. Perhaps when the mentoring relationship started, expectations were not properly set, or circumstances have changed and the expectations require updating. Return to that process and reassess goals and reaffirm commitments and expectations.

Second, look at aspects relating to your **(mentee) behavior**. Perhaps you may need to put more initiative and responsibility into the relationship. Perhaps there's something you are doing that is reducing the enthusiasm of the mentor for the relationship. Before looking at the mentor's behavior, first look at your own behavior. It's easier to modify one's own behavior versus that of trying to influence change in others.

Third, look at aspects relating to the **mentor's behavior**. Perhaps the mentor's style is being too directive, and the mentee has evolved beyond that style of mentorship. What the mentee used to tolerate is no longer tolerable. In this case, it is the responsibility of the mentee to manage up to communicate their needs and to offer the appropriate, respectful feedback.

Mentoring is meant to be meaningful and rewarding to both sides and both sides have a responsibility to maintaining and growing the relationship. If a relationship is drifting, there is often more than one cause. Re-focus on the relationship and how each side can better contribute into it.

In the end, there are times when the mentoring relationship does not serve both sides. If a meaningful effort to salvage a failing relationship does not yield satisfactory results, each side has the option to evaluate and unilaterally decide their willingness to stay in the relationship. If this is a formal mentoring relationship, then a more formal process to mutually end the relationship is appropriate. If this is an informal mentoring relationship, then the mentee also has the option of letting the relationship lapse without a formal process, although it is ideal to have a conversation with the mentor.

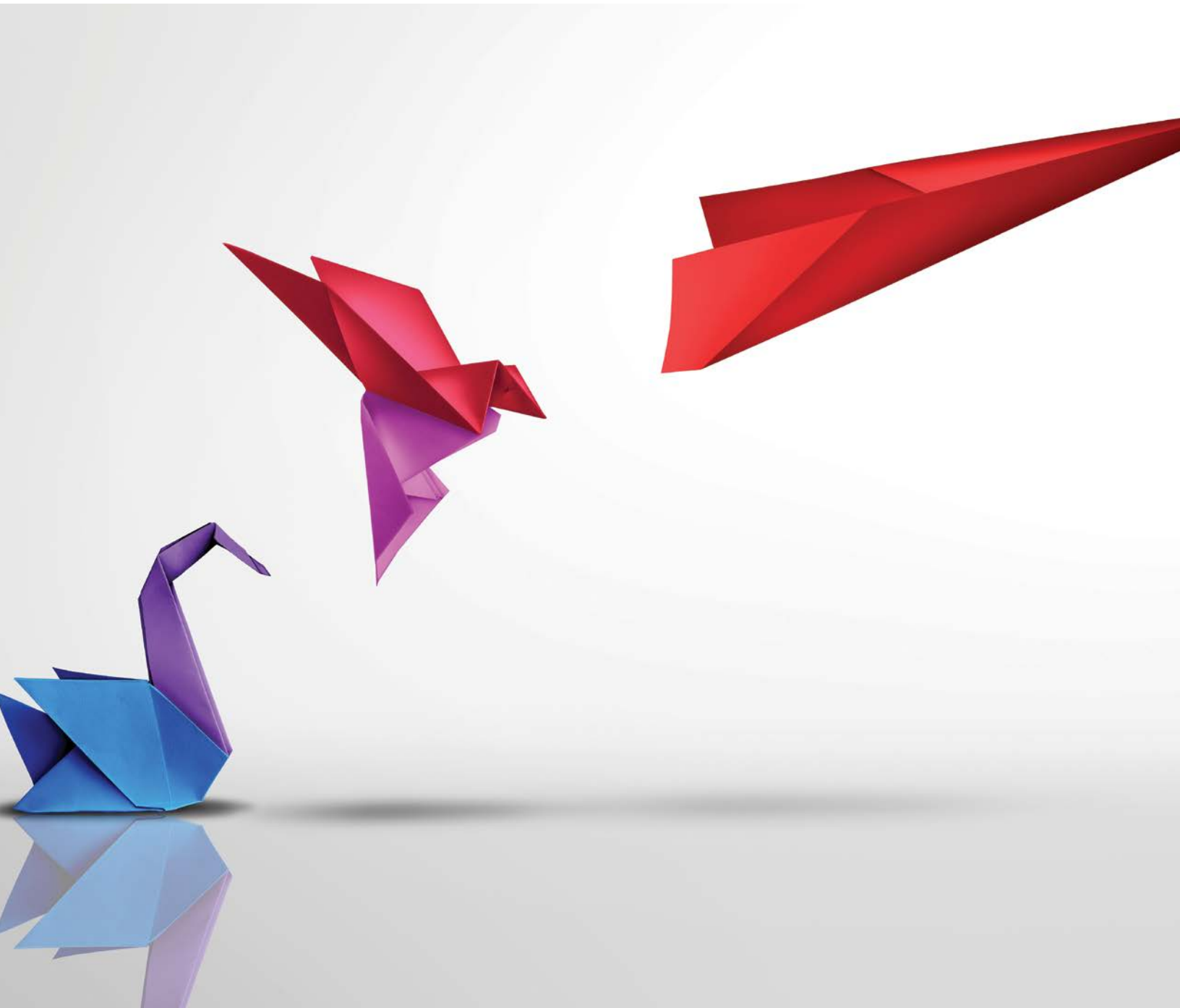
Often, drifts in the mentoring relationship in cases where there is still mutual goodwill is a signal that the mentoring relationship is entering a new phase.

EVOLVING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

In many ways, a long-term mentoring relationship parallels the relationship between a parent and a child. In the beginning, the parent is more directive and the child more deferential. However, as the child continues to develop, the parent must be willing to cede more autonomy and regard in proportion to the development of the child.

While a mentee is not a literal child, he or she represents a developing figure with some dependence on the greater experience and perspective of the mentor. Over time, the nature of this dependence changes towards lesser dependence, and eventually towards independence and potentially collegial equity. (If a mentoring relationship began as a formal relationship, there will often be a transition from a formal towards a more informal mentoring relationship.)

As the nature of the mentoring relationship changes, there is often moderate tension as the mentor must adjust to the greater development and autonomy of the mentee. Mentors who can make this adjustment will have the best chance to maintain a long-term mentoring relationship. For the mentee, they must continue to gently advocate for greater autonomy and professional regard while respecting the history of the relationship that has been established.



THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide was created to support the development of mentees in initiating, sustaining, and benefiting from rich and rewarding mentoring relationships across their career. Each section addresses a major pitfall and provides tools and resources to help mentees navigate that aspect of mentoring effectively. Our hope is that with this guide, you have learned valuable ideas, skills, and perspectives that will make you more effective and collaborative as a mentee and more successful in your career, in aligning your values and goals and then achieving those goals—and finding mentors to help you do so.

	Mentee Pitfall	Core Theme
1. The role of developmental relationships	Being unaware of the different kinds of developmental relationships beyond mentoring	There are different types of developmental relationships and activities
2. What is mentoring?	Not knowing the criteria for mentoring relationships and the different types of mentors	The mentoring relationship is built from people who share a common path and intentionally participate in a professional relationship
3. Preparing yourself to be a mentee	Not knowing one's goals for being in a mentoring relationship	Know one's own agenda for the mentoring relationship
4. Initiating a mentoring relationship	Waiting for a mentor to "show up"	Identify potential mentors from your existing network
5. Building a solid mentoring relationship	Not understanding and living up to the responsibilities of being a mentee and making assumptions	The mentee and the mentor should clarify commitments and expectations up front
6. Maintaining and strengthening the relationship	Not engaging the mentor in a way that makes mentoring meaningful for the mentor	Take responsibility to be coachable, vulnerable, appreciative and to initiate contact
7. Managing Up	Not taking responsibility to appropriately influence the mentor – being a victim	Even when there is a power differential, mentees can influence mentors
8. Transitioning a mentoring relationship	Now knowing how a mentoring relationship may need to evolve over time	Be intentional about evolving or ending a mentoring relationship

The long-term goal of this guide and the Mentor Training Program at the University of Utah is to foster a Mentoring Culture, where all faculty and learners have training in mentoring, and use those skills not just in long-term mentoring dyads and teams, but in everyday interactions, to facilitate continuous growth and development of colleagues and learners. Benefits of developing such a mentoring culture include increased retention, improved morale, increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction, accelerated leadership development, better succession planning, reduced stress, stronger and more cohesive teams, and increased individual and organizational learning.

That goal also depends on mentees who excel at creating productive and rewarding relationships with mentors. We hope that this new resource will help you understand the fundamental aspects of mentoring relationships and take ownership to practice and realize the benefits of excellent mentoring (and coaching, advising, and sponsorship).

ADDITIONAL PROMPTS

As you reflect on the value of mentoring and your role as a mentee, consider the following prompts.

- What is the value of good mentoring? How can a mentee increase that value?
- How do we value mentoring as an institution?
- Are there examples in your own experiences of older vs. newer models of mentoring? How did your experiences compare? What could you learn from your experiences and apply to your behaviors as a mentee?
- What are the advantages of focused, long-term mentoring dyads?
- What have you learned from your own mentors about how to be a better mentee, whether by example or through learning what not to do?
- Commitment: what is a step you are willing to take to foster a bi-directional mentoring relationship or your own unique path?
- What will you do differently as a result of this guide?

