

Tips for Mentors

Mentoring is a key ingredient in promoting success for trainees and young academic faculty. There are several important components of a successful mentoring program, most important of which is the mentor/mentee relationship. The mentor must provide experienced and committed shepherding for the mentee; the mentee must commit to the development of the requisite expertise and must work to achieve the desired goals. This relationship requires commitment on both parties. Serving as a mentor is not an obligatory responsibility; not all individuals are suited for the mentoring role. It is critical that both parties trust that each has the other's best interests at heart. There must be transparency of the individual expectations and roles in the relationship.

These "tips for mentors" represent some guidelines for you as you embark on the mentoring relationship with your mentee.

Duties of a mentor:

- 1. Guidance**
- 2. Advocacy**
- 3. Support**
- 4. Role Model**

The ideal mentor integrates all 4 of these duties. Basically this involves providing guidance and opening doors.

Attributes of a good mentor:

- 1. Altruism, generosity**
- 2. Recognition of the mentees individuality**
- 3. Gives time and is accessible**
- 4. Is creative and visionary**

The mentor/mentee relationship focuses on the trainee. It is a 2 way commitment, and the best relationship is organic, meaning it is natural, and unforced. The relationship utilizes skills in communication and conflict resolution. One cannot have too many mentors, and at least more than one is ideal. However, the mentor

/mentee relationship can be and should be discontinued by either party if desired without concern.

The ideal mentor holds the following responsibilities:

- 1. Desire to develop the mentee's strengths and goals.**
- 2. Is approachable, knowledgeable, and willing to share information**
- 3. Provides constructive feedback**
- 4. Provides opportunities for development (such as papers, talks, chapters, contacts, and committees)**

Benefits for the mentor:

- 1. You will develop leadership and counseling skills**
- 2. You will gain an enhanced organizational commitment and recognition**
- 3. You will enhance your career satisfaction**
- 4. You will gain phenomenal personal gratification of impacting the professional lives of others**
- 5. You will plug the "leaky pipeline" of too few active and skilled mentors in our current academic environment**
- 6. You will profit from "knowledge transfer", i.e. you will learn from your mentee.**

How to succeed:

There is no one formula. Some recommend having a contract or written agreement with outlined goals, and a time frame for achievement of the goals. All agree that meeting at regular intervals is optimal, so to review the goals and success on meeting each milestone. Your meetings can be formal – in the office, over a coffee or a meal, or informal and after hours. Basically all you need to do is CARE and you will meet with success.

Thank you for participating in our mentoring program.

**Sarah S Donaldson, MD
Director of Mentoring
Stanford Radiation Oncology**

