

What You Really Need From Mentors

August 20, 2015

A mentor should...	You should...
Be a coach, teacher, advisor, sponsor, agent, role model, confidante.	Understand a mentor can't always play all of these roles; it's fine to have/need others to fill specific roles.
Set expectations and performance goals.	Understand expectations and performance goals.
Set a standing time to meet with you and research group.	Be prepared. Don't go into meetings without a plan.
Provide guidance on proper scope/nature of thesis project (must be publishable no matter what).	Be realistic. Rome wasn't built in a day.
Provide honest feedback.	Ask for honest feedback.
Listen to honest feedback.	Provide honest feedback.
Make certain to focus on developing specific necessary skills such as writing, oral communication, leading meetings, leading conference calls, behavior, negotiating, grant writing, working in team environment, managing conflict, establishing collaborations, etc.	Build on your strengths, but don't ignore working on weaknesses that will hold you back.
Emphasize strategic planning as it applies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry into the lab • Timing of engaging competing work, e.g., clinical time • Timing of pubs • Coordination of publication subject matter with career goals/direction • Steps and timing of grant applications 	Work with your mentor to strategize and time important pieces of your career.
Have a welcoming attitude to additional mentors/consultants.	Engage additional mentors and consultants to fill roles your mentor can't.

Further Advice to Mentees

- Be an opportunist.
- Fear of failure is the death of progress. Learn from failure.
- Take ownership over your individual career development.
- Experience cannot be transmitted; it is acquired.
- Being a team player is critical. Be ambitious in a good way (persistence, discipline, resolution), but learn how to handle the natural desire for credit.
- Great science and great mentoring aptitude may not go hand-in-hand.
- You won't know what you need from mentors all the time, but they will *always* need trust from you.
- Failed mentor relationships are likely to have bi-directional causes. It will be wise to figure out what role you've played in that.
- Mentoring is a dish best served warm.