



The Hematology Mentorship Guide for Mentors and Mentees



American Society of Hematology
Helping hematologists conquer blood diseases worldwide

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Why this guide?

One of the goals of the American Society of Hematology (ASH) is to retain hematologists and hematology researchers in the workforce through mentorship. ASH convened a Mentorship Summit in June of 2023 which brought together experts from the field of hematology, spanning the full spectrum from trainees to early/mid-career attendings to well-established and well-respected professors. The goals of the two-day summit were to:

- Assess mentorship needs for hematology trainees and define target audience gaps
- Share ASH internal and external mentorship best practices and models
- Explore, develop, prioritize, and recommend new ASH mentorship projects specific to ASH target audiences

One of the outcomes of this discussion was a realization that how to be a good mentor or mentee may not be intuitive. While mentorship plays a critical role in career selection and career development, there is a lack of resources that teach mentors and mentees how to be effective participants in a mentor-mentee relationship. With this in mind, we are pleased to present this mentor-mentee guide to help address this critical need. ***We lay out how to make the most of our current and future mentor-mentee relationships, with helpful exercises and tips for mentors and mentees!***

Section 1: What is mentoring?

Mentoring is usually a long-term relationship between two individuals, where the more experienced individual (the mentor) serves as a coach, confidant, role model, counselor, and (when possible) a door-opener to facilitate the career development of a less experienced individual (the mentee). A mentor is someone who can help you chart your career course and ideally grows into a career-long relationship. Mentors are part of your career development team (e.g., colleagues, coaches, and partners) and can guide you in selecting a specialty, advise your research and optimal scholar/research-focused career opportunities, or help you determine where to start your next job. It is advantageous for people at all stages of career development to have *multiple mentors*, as well as near-peer mentors who are current with their career stage.

Specifically, mentors:

- Share knowledge and skills
- Are passionate about their work and inspire enthusiasm within you
- Act as a positive role model, leading by example
- Impact your professional and personal development
- Assist with networking by introducing you to other professionals in the field
- Connect you with opportunities that you may not have known existed
- Challenge and encourage you to stretch beyond your boundaries
- Listen well and support new ideas
- Critique your work so that you may learn from your mistakes
- Compliment your work and take measures to facilitate building confidence
- Give advice and guidance, while allowing you to choose the direction
- Dedicate time to the relationship because they are invested in your success

Section 2: Being a good mentee

What is my role as a mentee?

Mentoring works best when both parties (mentor and mentee) mutually benefit and are committed. As a mentee in the hematology space, you will gain valuable career-building opportunities and skills while you contribute to the clinical practice or research overseen by your mentor. This mentoring relationship is recognized as the most effective method to train for an independent career. Like every relationship, you will get out of it what you put into it. At a rudimentary level, mentees need to bring a willingness and drive to learn. To maximize the efficacy of a mentoring relationship, the mentee must:

- Establish their goal is for the mentoring relationship;
- Invest time and energy into developing a trusting relationship with their mentor;
- Actively grow their curiosity;
- Accept candid feedback, thoughtfully reflect on it, and implement it.

Before moving further, note that not every mentor is going to be able to provide you with everything you need. This provides the basis for mentoring committees - different individuals provide their unique insights on the individual things that matter most to you!

How to get the most out of a mentoring relationship:

Be active and intentional! Mentees who take ownership of the relationship and actively contribute as a partner will benefit far more than one who passively participates. This derives from a corporate concept known as 'managing up,' where the mentee understands the productivity goals of the relationship, actively develops a trusting, working relationship with their mentor, learns and adapts to the mentor's communication style, and anticipates future needs for the relationship to thrive. To maximize the mentoring benefits, the mentee should manage up by taking responsibility for:

- Planning and setting up the mentoring meeting agenda
- Completing assigned tasks pre-established deadlines
- Coming prepared to mentoring meetings with questions
- Listening to feedback
- Building trust by completing assigned tasks

How to begin a mentor-mentee relationship:

Before identifying a mentor, it is important to look inward and consider your goals for the mentoring relationship. Ask yourself:

- Do I respond best to gentle guidance or structured/directed guidance?
- What are my values/what motivates me?
- How do I learn best?
- What opportunities can this mentoring experience give me?
- What do I want to take away from this experience?
- What will be different for me as a result of this experience?

Self-reflect on your personal journey

Take time to look back at your life and identify the milestones and life events that are most significant, both in your career and daily life. How did these events influence you? Recognize that these events can be positive or negative. What did you learn from these events? How do you think these will influence your current and future goals?

As an exercise, imagine yourself five years from now totally fulfilled and happy. Ask yourself:

- What work am I doing?
- Do I feel like I am making a difference?
- Do I feel a sense of purpose with my work?
- How does my work impact others?
- Have I grown as a person and/or a professional?
- What skills have I acquired?
- Am I happy in my career?
- What does the ideal career look like? Am I in private practice, biotech/pharma, academia, or a hybrid model? Am I running a lab? Am I an outcomes researcher?

Exercise: Consider using a “[mentoring tree](#)” like the one provided in this guide to identify your current mentoring network, identify unmet needs, and plans to expand your existing network to meet your needs.

How to evaluate the ongoing success of the mentoring relationship:

Like all human relationships, mentor/mentee relationships change over time. As a mentee, you will change and grow throughout your mentoring time, and therefore it is important to periodically re-evaluate the success of the relationship with your mentor. Think about why you are in the mentoring relationship and where you want to be in your career. Ask yourself these questions, and consider changing the nature of the mentoring relationship if necessary:

- What does success look like to me, and am I making satisfactory progress to achieve it?
- Am I growing in my knowledge of the field?
- Are my needs being met?
- Are my mentor’s needs being met?
- What do I need a year from now that we can start working on now?

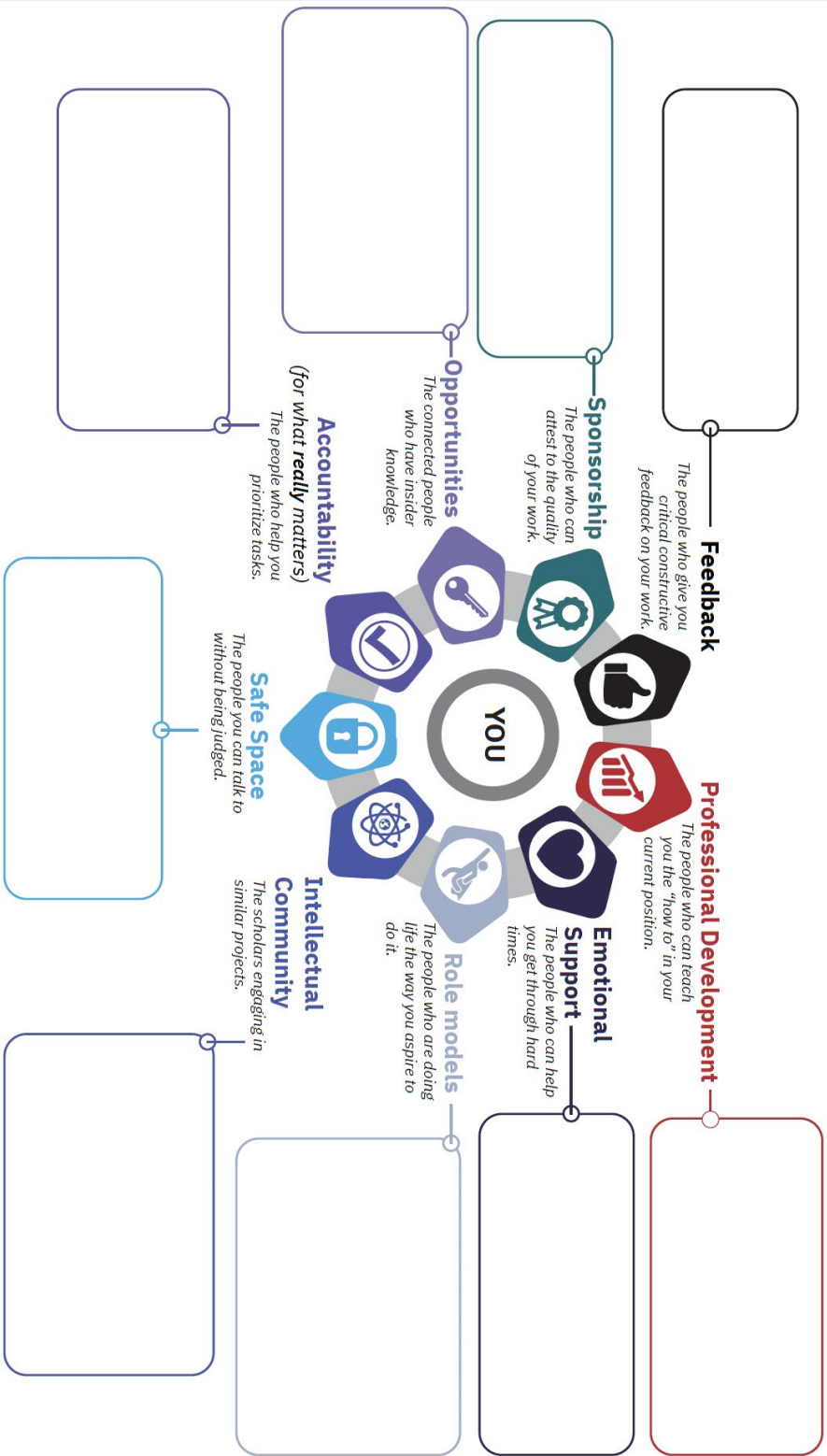
Mentorship Tree Exercise

ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF MENTORS: THE MENTORING MAP

Cécile A.C. Chazot, Max L'Etoile, Jessica Sandland



A mentoring map is a tool to map one's current mentoring network, identify unmet needs, and plan how to expand the existing network to meet one's goals. **On the mentoring map on the right, identify your existing mentors for the categories laid out. Encourage and assist your mentee in filling out their own.**



Source: https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/res-3-006-micro-mentoring-resources-and-materials-science-curriculum-spring-2021/mitres3_006sp21_mentoring_map.pdf

Section 3: Selecting a mentor

How Do I Find a Mentor?

Some academic institutions will schedule mentor/mentee connection events where available mentors will present their work to connect with potential mentees. As a mentee, it is your responsibility to seek out these opportunities by connecting with department leadership and asking your colleagues. In other models, academic institutions establish a mentoring committee based on your discussions with your department chair, other senior departmental colleagues, and/or local experts in your field. In a non-academic setting, you may find a mentor organically while working on a challenging case, or connecting with someone at a medical meeting. In most cases, mentees will identify a mentor at their home institution. However, many mentees without a suitable option at their own institution can match online through a registry such as the American Medical Student Association's system, one of the many award programs offered through the American Society of Hematology, or via their scientific contacts from predoctoral or postdoctoral studies.

It is important to know that one mentor may not be able to provide you with everything you need and that is okay! To complement a formal mentoring committee system or if such a system does not exist, consider establishing a mentoring network based on your needs personally and professionally.

When trying to identify a mentor, it is important for mentees to ask themselves:

- Why do you want a mentor?
- What aspect of your career (research, clinical area of interest, unique interests) are you seeking mentorship in?
- What are the qualities that are most important to you in a mentor?
- Are you committed to investing in the relationship and allowing the mentor to challenge you and help you grow professionally?
- Are you willing to communicate openly and honestly so that your mentor gets to know the authentic you?

Mentoring relationships can vary in purpose, and many people find having multiple mentors throughout their careers is highly beneficial. Once you identify someone who you would like as your mentor, it is important to reach out and clarify why your goals and aspirations align with theirs. Importantly, the mentor/mentee interaction is first and foremost a mutually beneficial relationship. Be sure to inquire if potential mentors have the time and capacity to be your mentor so that you can get the most out of the relationship because sometimes the potential mentor you identify will not be able to devote the quality time necessary to build the relationship to its full potential. In this case, the mentor might represent a critical contributor to your mentoring committee but would not be appropriate to lead the committee.

Setting Expectations

When establishing a mentor-mentee relationship, expectations should be made very clear. At the end of this guide, we provide you a [step-by-step checklist](#) to help facilitate these conversations. But briefly, it is important to discuss the type of relationship that you are hoping to establish (example: research, career advice, medical education, etc.). It is also paramount to mutually agree on things that may, at the time, seem trivial, such as frequency of meetings, the way in which meetings will occur (in person vs. virtual), the best means of communication, and more. These conversations can feel awkward and uncomfortable but are critical. Consider the use of a [mentor-mentee contract](#) to help facilitate this discussion. Feel free to adapt as needed!

Section 4: Phasing out a mentor-mentee relationship

Phasing out the mentor-mentee relationship as the mentee

Sometimes mentoring relationships end for a variety of reasons. When either party realizes that the relationship is no longer productive, it is important to discuss this. Ending a mentor-mentee relationship does not mean that bridges need to be burned. However, in certain cases, the ramifications can be significant *e.g.*, in the midst of a research training position, this may require re-starting a new research effort in a different group with little to no tangible outcomes from the existing effort. The pros and cons need to be carefully considered, as it may be advantageous for the mentee to bring their project to fruition before the transition.

How do you know if it is time for closure? Ask yourself these questions:

- What is missing in this relationship? Is there an opportunity to reshape it or is it time to move on?
- If I am not getting what I had hoped from this relationship, have I taken the initiative to articulate my expectations and needs?
- Have I met my learning goals?
- Does it feel like we are meeting just to meet?
- Have we stopped making progress even though we have been meeting for months?
- Do you not have any future desire to follow through agenda items between meetings? Perhaps there are changes in what is meaningful to you or a change in your career focus.
- Do you no longer see value in meeting with your mentor?

If you have reflected on the questions above and truly feel that you have done all that you can and still find that this relationship is not right for you, that is okay. Prolonging an unfruitful mentor-mentee relationship is not beneficial for either party. If you are ready to move on, according to the Harvard Business Review, “gratitude is the key to leaving gracefully.” Focus on how your needs have changed rather than how your mentor is not

doing what you need them to do. Be transparent and direct and provide a rationale for why you are terminating the relationship, but be gracious for their time. Be sure to listen to their thoughts in a non-judgmental manner.

Ending a formal mentor-mentee relationship does not mean that you cannot remain colleagues. In the context of conducting research under a research mentor, quitting a research project with the intent to change research groups can have multi-component ramifications. It is important to carefully consider pros and cons and vet the situation with other mentors.

Phasing out a mentor-mentee relationship as the mentor

As a mentor, it is also important to be cognizant of when the mentor-mentee relationship should come to an end. The mentor should evaluate the prior-established mentoring plan. Has the mentee accomplished what you both had set out to do? What remains to be done? Is your mentee no longer contributing or is incapable of contributing to the relationship? Some reasons to consider phasing out the mentor-mentee relationship from the perspective of the mentor include:

- The intended task has been accomplished (i.e., securing independent grants, establishing a lab, promotion, career development)
- Lack of adequate progress towards the goal
- Shift in your mentee's career or research focus

Mentee/Mentor Agreement

We the undersigned hereby agree on the following:

The goals and objectives of our mentoring relationship are as follows:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We agree to meet regularly. The time committed to this relationship will be as follows:

Our meetings will typically last for _____ hour and occur _____ for the first four to six months. After six months, we will re-evaluate the frequency of our meetings and increase or decrease at that time.

We will both commit to reevaluating the relationship regularly and both understand that this relationship may end sooner than the originally projected 12 months.

If either of us needs to reschedule a meeting, we will do so sparingly and agree to notify the other via phone/text/email (agree on one) no later than _____ (hours/days) in advance.

We agreed to the following set of ground rules:

1. We will provide feedback to each other and regularly evaluate our relationship by openly discussing our sense of how the relationship is working and whether we are progressing toward the mentoring relationship goals as described above.
2. We both commit to timely execution of all tasks we discuss during our meetings.
3. We agree that when one or both of us feel it is time to terminate the relationship that we will discuss this and either mutually agree to terminate or develop a plan to get the relationship back on track.

Mentor's Signature

Date

Mentee's Signature

Date

Source: Adapted from ACHE Mentee Guide

Section 5: Being a good mentor

What is the role of a mentor?

A mentor is someone with an advanced rank or experience who shares knowledge, expertise, and support with someone who is less experienced. What do they receive in return for imparting their wisdom? At a baseline level, mentors gain the benefits of the professional productivity of a mentee. On a more personal level, mentors report a sense of personal enrichment and sense of satisfaction from strengthening their profession by facilitating the success of next-generation scientists and physicians and grooming future leaders. Before taking on the role of a mentor, especially as a first-time mentor, it is important to reflect on your prior mentor-mentee experiences. Consider the use of a reflection exercise.

Expectations of a mentor

The role of the mentor is to guide their mentee while they identify goals and undergo progressive professional development. While the mentor will benefit from the professional productivity of the mentee, mentors should also help manage the learning experience and keep the mentee focused on set goals and tactical strategies for improvement. Start by [creating a document](#) to detail expectations in the relationship, both your expectations of your mentee, and what your mentee can expect from you. This allows for clarity for frequency of meetings, how/when to get in contact, a timeline for goal and metrics for success.

At different points in the relationship, the role of the mentor may take on that of a coach: giving advice and guidance, sharing ideas, and providing feedback. At other times, the mentor may be more of a source of encouragement and support, acting as a sounding board for ideas/concerns, and providing insights into career development opportunities. If appropriate, mentors should consider a role in sponsorship to help provide the mentee with connections to help them further explore and broaden their network, particularly in the areas that you provide mentorship.

To be an effective mentor, one needs to be a good listener. One must be open-minded, compassionate, patient, and honest. The mentor should challenge the mentee by setting high, but reasonable, expectations in alignment with the mentee's goals and aspirations. They should share experiences with the mentee, including how to handle particular situations or overcome challenges, as opposed to telling the mentee what to do.

The [Harvard Business Review](#) lists six essential things mentors should do. We have adapted the highlights of this article below.

- 1) Choose mentees carefully. Although the prospect of having an energetic and personable junior partner for a multitude of projects is appealing, the wrong mentee can be painful.

- 2) Encourage the mentee to establish a mentorship team. The exclusive one-on-one relationship of mentor and mentee, long the norm, has been replaced by sharing responsibility with others for the growth of a mentee.
- 3) Run a tight ship. Establishing, communicating, and enforcing firm and clear ground rules with mentees can improve efficiency.
- 4) Head off rifts or resolve them when they are small problems. Mentor-mentee rifts are common in both business and academia, and they often aren't dealt with as quickly as they should be.
- 5) Understand your position of power as a mentor. It can be easy for mentors to take advantage of their power over mentees. Remember that both mentor and mentee should be benefiting from the relationship.
- 6) Pass on your accumulated wisdom and expertise to your mentee. A key metric of a successful mentor/mentee relationship is the capacity of the mentee to utilize what they have learned independently. Check in periodically and assess where your mentees are in their mastery of the wisdom and expertise you are passing to them. Be prepared to change your tactics or have a hard conversation if your mentees are not demonstrating wisdom and mastery.

Check in with your mentees on a regular basis and ask direct questions about how the relationship is going. While this will be unique to each mentorship relationship, consider doing so every other meeting or quarterly. Allocating even just 5 minutes can make a big difference. Ask yourselves (and be specific):

- What is working well?
- What isn't working well?
- Is the mentee appropriately moving towards their intended goal?
- Is there anything else that I, as the mentor, can do differently to help facilitate reaching that goal?

Be prepared to change techniques or formats to best benefit both the mentor and mentee.

How to have hard conversations about performance with a mentee

Always remember that professional mentoring is focused on career development. As such, mentee growth in meeting professional productivity and maturation milestones is paramount. Despite everyone's well-meaning intentions, some mentees will have trouble meeting the requirements of their job and their role in the mentoring relationship. If you find your mentee is struggling, have a private conversation soon when the problem is small before it becomes a larger issue. Sometimes there is an easy solution, but sometimes the environment is not conducive for the specific mentor/mentee pairing. When having a hard talk about performance:

- 1) Frame the conversation around your mentee's professional goals.

- 2) Be discreet (private) when you are having a discussion about performance. Don't call your mentee out and publicly shame them. Instead take them aside, possibly with another member of the mentoring team, and speak sensitively and directly.
- 3) Be discrete (specific and separated) about exactly what the performance issue or shortcoming is. Go back to your document of expectations and bring up recent specific events where the mentee is not meeting that expectation. This lets you avoid inflammatory language like 'you always,' or 'you never,' and instead focus on exact incidents where the mentee did not meet expectations.
- 4) Reiterate your expectations and ask the mentee to create a plan for their improvement. While you as the mentor provide resources and remove barriers, your mentee needs to do the actual work. You can ask if there are any reasonable accommodations you can provide your mentee so they can meet expectations.
- 5) Follow up your conversation with an email. Keep it simple, summarize your conversation, and include the specific action items your mentee came up with for improvement.

If the situation still does not improve, this is an indication that the environment for this mentor/mentee pairing is not likely going to work. Check with your institution for the acceptable ways to transition the mentoring role to one or more other mentors.

When and How to reach out for help

Do not go it alone as a mentor. Build your mentoring team early, even before you start taking on mentees. If you already have mentees, think critically about your skill and capacity as a mentor and reach out to your colleagues early before problems arise. Build your mentoring team with trusted colleagues and have regular conversations with them about what is/isn't working for you and your mentees. Ask about their mentees, as you will learn from each other and find ways that you can both give and receive support.

Mentor Mapping Exercise



Adapted from: <https://graduatementoringcenter.iu.edu/mentorship/Mentoring%20Guidelines/Reflection.html>

Section 6: Step-by-step mentee guide

At this point, you have identified a mentor who is willing and able to be your mentor. Through this step-by-step guide, we highlight the critical parts of this guide in an easy to use fashion. Not all of this will be applicable to everyone based on each individual's needs from their mentor, so adapt as needed!

Preparing for the first meeting:

[] Clarify your values: Look back at the questions you answered earlier - what motivates you?

[] Identify knowledge and skill gaps: What are you struggling with professionally that your mentor can help? Jot these down. Consider using the [Mentorship Tree](#) provided in this guide.

[] Define your goals and a timeline to make it happen.

[] If you are hoping to start research projects with your mentor, what are you interested in? Do you already have a research question? What have you already done? Be sure you are well prepared to discuss.

[] If this is someone who you are considering as a career mentor, what aspect of their career interests you? What have you already done? Be sure you are well prepared to discuss.

[] Take the initiative to set up the first meeting and “manage up.” Be responsive to communication (in most cases, this will be email).

[] Spruce up your CV and share with your mentor

[] Use the questions above to create an agenda for the meeting

[] Consider printing out a copy of the [Mentor-Mentee Agreement](#)

During the first meeting:

[] Be punctual and be cognizant of the time set aside for the meeting

[] Follow your agenda, but be flexible in case the conversation shifts

[] Share your background, values, and needs; share your CV in advance of the meeting

[] Ask questions, actively listen, avoid distractions (from phones, watches, email)

[] Create a plan for future meetings:

- How often will you meet? Twice a year? Quarterly? Monthly? Set a date for the next meeting.
- Will you correspond in between and how (email, text, Teams/Zoom, etc.)
- Consider filling out and signing a version of the [Mentor-Mentee Agreement](#)

[] Send a thank you message after the meeting

Example talking points during your first meeting (depending on your level of training):

- What led you to this specialty or research focus? How did you decide this field was the right one for you? If you could go back in time, is there anything that you know now that might have influenced your decision one way or another?
- When you were in medical school/residency/fellowship/postdoc/junior faculty, what did you do to engage faculty at your institution to build your network?
- When you were a medical student/resident/fellow/postdoc/junior faculty, what kinds of research projects did you develop and/or participate in? How did you arrange these opportunities?
- What advice do you have about how to start a research project?
- Do you have ongoing projects with opportunities that I can partake in?
- Do you recommend putting all efforts into forging a single research project or to simultaneously develop a secondary project?
- What is the best way to write a personal statement?
- When considering fellowship or postdoctoral research programs, what factors should I consider? How do I select a program?
- Are you a "hands-on" mentor? If not, who would provide me with direct supervision and teaching in the laboratory or clinical research setting?
- How often would we meet and in what setting?
- How many other trainees do you mentor?
- Would I be able to have input and/or choose between ongoing projects, or would I be expected or allowed to develop an independent project?
- Regarding an independent project, would you facilitate the development of the project, or would I develop it without substantial input from you.
- What are examples of trainees that you have mentored that have progressed into independent academic research, pharma/biotech, or clinical positions?
- What are examples of awards and grants that your mentees have competed for?
- What is your thinking and expectations regarding peer-reviewed publications, review articles, and book chapters? Do you anticipate potential authorship opportunities? How would this be determined?
- Will there be opportunities to participate in peer-review?

After your first meeting

Take some time to reflect on the first meeting and ask yourself:

- Am I invested in working with this mentor to advance my career development?
- Do I feel we are communicating openly and honestly?
- Do we understand and agree upon roles in the relationship?
- Can I commit enough time to meet the mentor's expectations?
- Do I trust my mentor?

Before your next meeting

This is the time to start working on relationship-building. Your goal during this next period of time is to work on clarifying goals, developing a plan to tackle goals, and to commence the work. Perhaps your mentor asked you questions to clarify your goals. Be sure to spend time reflecting on these and acting on them as necessary.

Having the right mentor can tremendously affect your development. To achieve maximum benefits from the relationship, you must work hard to fulfill mentee requirements. Your mentor will help you, so ask questions and listen carefully to the mentor's feedback and advice. Be open to constructive criticism, accept it graciously, and learn from your mistakes. Do not be afraid to try new things or test new ideas. Respect your mentor and show appreciation for your mentor's efforts.

Between meetings, it is important that the mentee continues to exert efforts to maximize benefits of the mentor-mentee relationship. This includes:

[] Follow through on assigned tasks

[] Establish future meetings

[] Be flexible, as issues may arise, and the timeline you set may not work. Your mentor will help you navigate the process.

[] Set the agenda for future meetings

[] Keep your mentor updated on progress: Reaching out regularly will stimulate them to think about you and your project(s), which will almost certainly translate into a more effective facilitation of career development and research outcomes.

[] Continue to “manage up”

[] Ask for feedback, reflect, and implement feedback.

With each subsequent meeting, all items on this checklist continue to be important.

After each meeting, ask yourself:

- Am I still learning and growing?
 - Am I still committed to and moving towards pursuing my goals?
 - Is this relationship continuing to be productive?
 - Do I trust my mentor and believe that they have my best interests in mind?
- Regarding the mentor's advice to advance the research project, be patient, as most significant projects require time-dependent building. With important and innovative research, one cannot always predict linear flows, and substantial progress can sometimes require many months of effort. Work with your mentor to develop a secondary project, which might evolve into a major project that supercedes the primary project, or might be put aside as momentum with the primary project accelerates.

Phasing out a mentor-mentee relationship

If your goals are met, goals have changed, or the chemistry is not quite there, it may be time to phase out the mentor-mentee relationship. See page 8 for how to do this gracefully without closing any doors for the future.

References

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ACHE Executive Guide

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