Introduction to Mentoring

A Guide for Mentors and Mentees

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE
CENTERING ON MENTORING

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, American Psychological Association (APA) President Gerald P. Koocher, PhD, convened a presidential task force on mentoring to connect psychology graduate students and early career psychologists with more experienced senior psychologists in a range of mentoring relationships that cut across areas of scientific and professional interests. The mission of the task force was to work with organizations and individuals to facilitate mentoring relationships both formal and informal; and to leave structures in place that will sustain mentoring as an integral part of being a psychologist. To accomplish this goal, the task force created a training program for potential mentors and mentees that is appropriate for State, Provincial, and Territorial Psychological Associations and Divisions. A pilot mentoring program is being launched at the 2006 convention and if it proves successful, a broader program may be established. A long term goal is to establish web-based networking for the APA membership. Further, the task force hopes these efforts will inspire diverse educational, research, and policy outcomes. To gather support for this endeavor, the task force established partnerships with the Policy and Planning Board as well as other boards and committees. They sponsored special programming at the 2006 convention that stemmed from this initiative. This *Introduction to Mentoring* was produced as a general guide for prospective mentors and mentees who are interested in engaging in professional developmental relationships.

MENTORING DEFINED

A *mentor* is an individual with expertise who can help develop the career of a mentee. A mentor often has two primary functions for the mentee. The career-related function establishes the mentor as a coach who provides advice to enhance the mentee's professional performance and development. The psychosocial function establishes the mentor as a role model and support system for the mentee. Both functions provide explicit and implicit lessons related to professional development as well as general work–life balance.

For the purposes of this document, it is important to differentiate between the terms *protégé* and *mentee.* The term protégé has a clear history in mentoring research and primarily applies to individuals engaged in senior–mentor and junior–protégé relationships within an organization where protégés are clearly identified as "under the wing" of a mentor—protected and nurtured over time. The term mentee is used here to refer to the broad range of individuals who may be in the role of "learner" in mentoring relationships, regardless of the age or position of the mentor and mentee.

Research has consistently found mentored individuals to be more satisfied and committed to their professions than non-mentored individuals (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Furthermore, mentored individuals often earn higher performance evaluations, higher salaries, and faster career progress than non-mentored individuals. Mentors can also benefit from a successful mentoring relationship by deriving satisfaction from helping to develop the next generation of leaders, feeling rejuvenated in their own career development, learning how to use new technologies, or becoming aware of issues, methods, or perspectives that are important to their field.

STAGES OF MENTORING

In the ***initiation stage,*** two individuals enter into a mentoring relationship. For informal mentoring, the matching process occurs through professional or social interactions between potential mentors and mentees. Potential mentees search for experienced, successful people whom they admire and perceive as good role models. Potential mentors search for talented people who are "coachable." Mentoring research describes this stage as a period when a potential mentee proves him- or herself worthy of a mentor's attention. Both parties seek a positive, enjoyable relationship that would justify the extra time and effort required in mentoring.

Formal mentoring programs manage the matching process instead of letting these relationships emerge on their own. Good matching programs are sensitive to demographic variables as well as common professional interests. The assignment of a mentee to a mentor varies greatly across formal mentoring programs. Mentors may review mentee profiles and select their mentees or program administrators may match mentors and mentees. Regardless of the method, a good formal mentoring program would require both parties to explore the relationship and evaluate the appropriateness of the mentor–mentee match.

The *cultivation stage* is the primary stage of learning and development. Assuming a successful initiation stage, during the cultivation stage, the mentee learns from the mentor. Two broad mentoring functions are at their peak during this stage. The career-related function often emerges first when the mentor coaches the mentee on how to work effectively and efficiently. Coaching may be active within the mentee's organization when a mentor assigns challenging assignments to the mentee, maximizes the mentee's exposure and visibility in the organization, and actively sponsors the mentee through promotions and recognition. Mentors outside of the mentee's organization can also provide valuable advice on how to thrive and survive; although they lack organizational power to directly intervene on behalf of the mentee. The psychosocial function emerges after the mentor and mentee have established an interpersonal bond. Within this function, the mentor accepts and confirms the mentee's professional identity and the relationship matures into a strong friendship.

The cultivation stage is generally a positive one for both mentor and mentee. The mentor teaches the mentee valuable lessons gained from the mentor's experience and expertise. The mentee may also teach the mentor valuable lessons related to new technologies, new methodologies, and emerging issues in the field.

The *separation stage* generally describes the end of a mentoring relationship. The relationship may end for a number of reasons. There may be nothing left to learn, the mentee may want to establish an independent identity, or the mentor may send the mentee off on his or her own the way a parent sends off an adult child. If the relationship's end is not accepted by both parties, this stage can be stressful with one party unwilling to accept the loss. Problems between the mentor and mentee arise when only one party wants to terminate the mentoring relationship. Mentees may feel abandoned, betrayed, or unprepared if they perceive the separation to be premature. Mentors may feel betrayed or used if the mentee no longer seeks their counsel or support.

During the *redefinition stage,* both mentor and mentee recognize that their relationship can continue but that it will not be the same as their mentoring relationship. If both parties successfully negotiate through the separation stage, the relationship can evolve into a collegial relationship or social friendship. Unlike the cultivation stage, the focus of the relationship is no longer centered on the mentee's career development. The former mentor may establish mentoring relationships with new mentees. Likewise, the former mentee may serve as a mentor to others.

FORMS OF MENTORING

The mentoring relationship is inherently flexible and can vary tremendously in its form and function. The mentoring relationship exists between one individual in need of developmental guidance and another individual who is both capable and willing to provide that guidance. Further, the mentoring relationship represents an important developmental relationship for the mentee as it supports and facilitates his or her professional development. Given the wide variety of mentoring relationships, they are broadly classified as formal or informal (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992) according to the manner in which the relationship formed. Below are some of the possible needs of mentees, roles and characteristics of mentors, and settings for the relationship, which can be combined to create a wide variety of relationships.

Mentee Needs

- Guidance in a general or specific professional area
- Series of questions or issues
- Broad career development
- Early career development
- Ethical and moral guidance
- Assistance in navigating professional settings, institutions, structures, and politics
- Professional identity development guidance

Roles and Characteristics of Mentors

- Acts as an experienced role model
- Provides acceptance, encouragement, and moral support
- Provides wisdom, advice, counsel, coaching
- Acts as a sponsor in professional organizations, supports networking efforts
- Assists with the navigation of professional settings, institutions, structures, and politics

- Facilitates professional development
- Challenges and encourages appropriately to facilitate growth
- Provides nourishment, caring, and protection
- Integrates professional support with other areas such as faith, family, and community
- Accepts assistance from mentee in mentor's professional responsibilities within appropriate limits
- Enjoys the opportunity to pass on their wisdom and knowledge and collaboration with early career professionals

Settings

- Professional settings
- Organizations (e.g., APA)
- Community
- Internet, e-mail, telephone
- Informal national and international networks within specialties

Relationship Types

- Established career and early career
- Professor to student
- Professional to professional
- Peer mentoring (same developmental level with specific experiential differences)
- Friendship
- Parent-like features can be present
- Task-focused versus relationship-based
- Daily contact versus less frequent contact
- Short- versus long-term mentorships
- Collegial collaborations

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring relationships develop spontaneously and are not managed or specifically recognized as a mentoring relationship within a larger organization. A mentor reaches out to a mentee (or vice versa) and a relationship develops which benefits the mentee's professional development. Due to the spontaneous development, these relationships depend somewhat more on the individuals having things in common and feeling comfortable with each other from the beginning. The relationship may develop out of a specific need by the mentee around a task or situation for guidance, support, or advice. The relationship is most likely to be initiated by the mentee as she or he seeks support around a specific task. This type of relationship might also develop when an established professional needs an early career professional to complete certain tasks within an office or project setting.

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring relationships develop within organizational structures that are specifically designed to facilitate the creation and maintenance of such relationships. Wanberg, Welsh, and Hezlett (2003) identified six primary characteristics of formal mentoring programs that can directly influence the program's effectiveness: (a) program objectives, (b) selection of participants, (c) matching of mentors and mentees, (d) training for mentors and mentees, (e) guidelines for frequency of meeting, and (f) a goal-setting process. Program objectives may vary from socializing newcomers into an organization to intense career development of a target population (e.g., high potential people, women, ethnic minorities). These objectives affect the scope of the mentoring and will help drive goal-setting and training objectives. Formal mentoring programs are generally more effective when mentors voluntarily participate (rather than being drafted or coerced) and are intrinsically motivated to help mentees (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, in press).

Formal programs vary widely in their methods to match mentors and mentees, and in their preparation of individuals to engage in mentoring. Programs that solicit important matching criteria from both parties are more likely to initiate successful mentorships. Matching criteria may include professional interests, demographics, geographical location, human interest factors (e.g., hobbies, lifestyles), personality, values, and learning orientation.

Orientation or training programs for mentors and mentees can help both parties establish a psychological contract for the relationship. Training objectives can include clear communications of expectations of the relationship, goal-setting procedures, conflict resolution skills, and general structure of the mentoring program. Furthermore, these programs often suggest guidelines for frequency of meetings. Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) found such guidelines were related to more frequent meetings and more mentoring. Typical guidelines suggest one or two meetings per month and specify the mentee as the responsible party to initiate these meetings.

Finally, a goal-setting process provides structure to the relationship. Good goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

Developmental Networks and Mentoring

Mentees often have more than one mentor throughout their careers. With multiple mentors, a mentee can benefit from different mentors who have a variety of experiences and skill strengths to share. A developmental network perspective is used to expand our understanding of mentoring. Different mentors may be able to address different developmental needs of mentees in order to facilitate career progress.

Filstad (2004) observed that most organizational newcomers had multiple role models that served different needs during the work adjustment process. Although most of the mentoring research has focused on only one mentor–mentee relationship, Kram (1985) recognized relationship constellations that provide multiple sources of developmental support for a mentee. More recently, Higgins, Chandler, and Kram (in press) provide a theoretical framework to reconceptualize mentoring. The typology of developmental networks is described by two dimensions: (a) the diversity of social systems from which mentees draw upon to form developmental relationships, and (b) the strength of these relationships.

For early career psychologists, a matrix of mentors and developmental functions is presented in Table 1. Consistent with developmental networks, the matrix recognizes that one mentor may not address all of a mentee's developmental needs and that additional mentors may be needed to fill in the gaps (Chao, in press).

TYPES OF MENTORS

A mentor's position, relative to the mentee, is typically superior in status and power, although some mentors may be peers and others may even be subordinate to the mentee. Mentors who have professional roles that are superior to the mentee often have power to affect the mentee's career development. They may be in positions of authority to evaluate the career progress of the mentee or to provide resources and experiences that enhance the mentee's development. These mentors also can use their power indirectly, by influencing people who are directly responsible for the mentee. In contrast, peer mentors typically do not exercise formal power over mentees, but they often provide support and both partners share lessons learned

as their careers progress. Their similar positions and shared developmental needs provide a common ground for peer mentoring. Finally, subordinate mentors can be rich sources of information about people and procedures. Mentees who are new to an organization may be more comfortable asking a subordinate or staff person for help because making the request and receiving evaluations are generally less threatening.

In addition to superior, peer, and subordinate types of mentors, these relationships can be distinguished by the key criteria that match a mentor with a mentee. Typically mentees are drawn to mentors who have key experiences in a particular professional specialty or interest area. The professional area is an obvious matching criterion, but it is not the only one. Mentees often seek mentors who share important demographic characteristics such as gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, mentees can identify with particular mentors who have values, attitudes, and experiences that the mentee holds or aspires to have.

Table 1 illustrates how different mentors may help a mentee address a variety of developmental needs. This table is presented as an example and is not an exhaustive list of mentoring relationships or types of mentoring support. Across the top of the table are six types of mentoring relationships describing mentors who are senior, peer, or junior to the mentee, and also describing matches based on professional interest, demographics, or common values and experiences. Four career-related and four psychosocial mentoring functions are described for early career psychologists. Table 1 illustrates how a senior mentor may be well-positioned to help a mentee publish scholarship and obtain tenure, yet that senior mentor may not be well-positioned to help a mentee balance work–family issues. Thus, multiple mentors may be better than a single mentor. Although there is some research to support the use of multiple role models or mentors (cf. Filstad, 2004), more information is needed to know how mentees synthesize lessons learned and how they resolve conflicting information and advice.

THE ETIQUETTE OF MENTORING

Many psychologists are familiar with the necessity of rapport development with clients for positive therapeutic outcomes. The therapeutic relationship plays a pivotal role in the experience for both client and practitioner. Successful mentoring also depends on the quality of the relationship between mentor and mentee. Mentoring relationships may involve sharing more personal information related to professional growth whereas in therapeutic relationships, the therapist is likely to have stricter boundaries of self-disclosure. Training programs for counselors do not assume that trainees come with the knowledge necessary to develop strong rapport

with clients, however little guidance is offered to mentors or mentees about the dos and don'ts of establishing a healthy mentoring relationship. The mentoring relationship mirrors in many ways a relationship between a counselor and a client, however it differs significantly in other ways. Areas in which the two overlap include positive regard, setting boundaries, active listening, and ethical behavior. However, one important area in which the mentoring relationship does not parallel a therapeutic relationship is that it is specifically *not* therapy.

In an effort to facilitate the development of functional and successful mentor relationships, articulating the rules of etiquette for these encounters may prove beneficial for both mentors and mentees. Although not intended to be comprehensive, this *Introduction to Mentoring* outlines key points that are essential to the development of rapport and the evolution of functional mentor relationships. Some points may be more appropriate for mentor relationships between two professionals and others more appropriate for mentor relationships between a student and a professional. These points are stated under the rubric of etiquette, along the lines of the conduct agreed upon by professionals to be observed in social and professional life.

Frequently both parties come to a mentor relationship with divergent expectations. Mentors may enter a mentor relationship to pass on wisdom received from their mentors. Mentees may solicit a mentor for counsel on career development. Some mentors may conceptualize the relationship as a business arrangement in which both parties benefit and some mentees may feel entitled to the attention of the mentor. The Stages of Mentoring section (p. 5) of this guide outlined the mentor relationship and establishing appropriate boundaries and warned that the relationship can devolve into a tangle from which both mentor and mentee wish to escape. What mentor does not have a story about a mentee who turned into a nightmare and a drain on resources? What mentee has not had a less than stellar mentor with stories about the hardships suffered under a tyrannical mentor? With some forethought and empathy, the mentoring experience can prove not only beneficial for all involved, but also lay the groundwork for a lifelong professional relationship.

Carl Rogers (1957) argued that all that was necessary for a successful therapeutic encounter was unconditional positive regard. Although this may not be sufficient to guarantee a successful mentor relationship, any relationship without a shared sense of respect is likely to quickly become dysfunctional. Respect is a cornerstone of the mentoring process. In a world where resources are in short supply and stress levels at all-time highs, respect can serve as a social lubricant for mentoring—respect for *both* mentor *and* mentee. Without shared positive regard, encounters become taxing and productivity levels fall. However, it is from a place of respect that a mentor understands the multiple forces involved in the struggle for professional identity development in the mentee and it is from a place of respect that the mentee understands the time limitations under which a mentor struggles. Although respect is earned and develops over time, it is a wise mentor and mentee who enter their relationship from a respectful stance.

A mentor who is clear and upfront about what the mentee can expect from a mentoring relationship, who guides the process, and who sets appropriate boundaries, creates an environment in which the relationship can thrive. A mentor who can provide perspective during critical incidents, and encourage the mentee to find

balance, enables growth through the relationship. From the mentee's perspective, respectful behaviors such as punctuality, reliability, and the development of an independent work style, create an environment in which the mentor can best meet the needs of the mentee. This broad perspective may help a mentee to understand and value that the mentor relationship can be the start of a long-term, mutual, professional relationship that changes over time.

The number of complex circumstances and interactions in a mentor relationship are limitless, but basic social etiquette can be applied successfully in most cases. Respect, sensitivity, and equanimity can always serve the mentor and mentee well. Specifically, Table 2 lists a number of do and don't recommendations differentiated by mentor and mentee, though most can be applied to both parties.

MENTORING AND ETHICS

Are ethical guidelines needed for mentoring when this process involves two adults? Should these guidelines rise to the level of standards? That is, should ethical guidelines be mandatory? Psychologist Linda Phillips-Jones suggested that standards for mentoring are not required but that better preparation for both mentors and mentees is needed (http://www.mentoringgroup.com; retrieved November 15, 2005).

Most professions have an established code of conduct, often called an ethics code. The APA's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* is subdivided into five general principles and 10 standards (APA, 2002). The general principles can be seen as an aspirational guide to appropriate interactions with others in many situations, including mentoring. They do not, however, dictate what is good and bad mentoring. The following section provides an illustration of the relationship of these ethical principles to the mentoring relationship.

APA Ethical Principles

Principle A is ***Beneficence and Nonmaleficence.*** Psychologists should try to help others and be careful not to harm them. Although this is good advice, it may be harder to define both *help* and *harm* in the mentoring relationship than in more formal psychological relationships. When considering this principle, psychologists must also be aware that mentoring is a mutual relationship. Although one member of this

relationship is viewed as having information and skills that will assist the other, the relationship is reciprocal: Each can benefit from the other over the course of the relationship. Therefore, it is not just the mentor who must remember this principle but also the mentee. The actual process of addressing this principle will be related to the purpose of the mentoring. For example, if mentoring exists within a research context, there are issues of workload and publication credit. On the other hand, if the mentoring is within an organizational context, issues may be more closely related to confidentiality and navigation of internal political systems.

Principle B, *Fidelity and Responsibility,* leads the mentor to clarify the roles of each party to the relationship. Part of this clarification process is establishing that the mentor will help the mentee and not just use the mentee to further his or her own career. When these roles are established, it is important for both parties to understand that they may evolve over time. A healthy mentor relationship matures and both the roles and responsibilities change to accommodate that maturation process. It is important for both the mentor and mentee to be aware of any changes that have occurred.

Principle C, *Integrity,* follows from the previous principle. Both the mentor and mentee need to do what they have agreed to do when establishing the relationship. If a point of conflict or confusion arises, each person should be willing to resolve that issue.

Principle D, *Justice,* calls psychologists to aspire to fairness, and to ensure that access to psychological services is free from inappropriate bias. By virtue of Principle D, psychologists consider choices they make regarding with whom they will enter a mentoring relationship, and explore their reasons for choosing a particular mentee as opposed to other possible individuals who may desire such a relationship.

Principle E, *Respect for People's Rights and Dignity,* guides both the mentor and mentee to consider personal differences so that any differences do not bias their interactions. This principle also serves as a reminder that in some mentoring relationships there may be a power differential that could impact the process.

Potential Problems in Mentor Relationships

Although mentoring is generally defined as a relationship that helps the mentee and the mentor, problems in the relationship may hinder the career development of either individual. If the bounds of the relationship are not clearly understood, a mentee may be overly dependent on a mentor, asking for micromanagement instead of career advice and counsel. A mentee may also ask for personal favors or expect involvement and credit with the mentor's work. Such a relationship would not help the mentee establish his or her own independence and would intensify difficulties in the separation stage. Mentors should not use nor exploit their mentees, nor should they take credit for the mentee's work. They may resist the separation stage and insist on some voice in the mentee's career decisions. Severe interpersonal problems with the relationship may mitigate the value of many mentoring lessons.

Perhaps the most visible interpersonal problem in mentoring occurs when

the relationship moves from a professional one to a personal one. Research on cross-gender mentoring has identified sexual relationships as a potential problem (Young, Cady, & Foxon, 2006). Although sexual relationships are not confined to cross-gender mentoring, no research on sexual relationships in same-gender mentoring has been published to date. Kram (1985) describes how observers perceive unfair advantages to a mentee who is also in a personal relationship with the mentor. If the personal relationships are substantiated within a single organization, the organization will generally terminate any formal relationship between the two individuals and may even terminate one or both participants employment.

In addition to problems within the relationship, mentors and mentees may experience problems with performance issues. Mentors may be jealous when their mentees outshine them. In addition, one partner may struggle as a result of errors made by the other. For example, a mentee's reputation may be tarnished if his or her mentor commits a serious breach of ethics. Likewise, a mentor may be viewed negatively if his or her mentee's performance is not meeting expectations. The mentor's judgment in selecting a good mentee may be questioned as well as the quality of the mentor's counsel and advice.

Problems with mentoring may be minimized when both parties have clear expectations of what the professional relationship can do and what it should not do. Formal mentoring programs often include a training component for both parties to understand the expectations. Specific content of these training programs depends on the form of mentoring and purpose of the mentoring program.

In general, personal reflection about the mentor relationship both before initiating it and throughout its course, by both the mentor and mentee, will contribute to a robust, growth-oriented relationship. Finally, although obvious but often forgotten, both the mentor and mentee are human beings who strive to meet personal needs and goals in a complex world. Everyone has bad days, and forgiveness and patience will aid in overcoming what may appear to be barriers to a successful mentor relationship.

CONCLUSION

Mentoring has long been recognized as a powerful tool in career development. Early career psychologists are advised to find mentors, either informally on their own, or to participate in formal mentoring programs. Regardless of how a mentor and mentee are matched, etiquette and ethics demand that the relationship be conducted in a professional manner with consideration and respect for both individuals. Mentoring is a dynamic process and a developmental network of mentoring can

help mentees identify several mentors who can address a variety of career-related needs. Successful mentorships often evolve into friendships with both partners learning and providing support for the other.

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Table 1. Example of a developmental network for a mentee

Mentor–Mentee Relationship → Developmental support offered by this mentor ↓	Mentors who are career-seniors to the mentee	Mentors who are career-peers to the mentee	Mentors who are career-subordinate to the mentee	Match based on professional specialty area	Match based on demographic factors	Match based on important values, experiences, etc.
Career-related: How to get tenure	+	0	–	+	0	0
Career-related: How to publish	+	0	–	+	0	0
Career-related: How to get grants	+	0	–	+	0	0
Career-related: How to start your own practice	+	0	–	+	0	0
Psychosocial: Role-modeling	+	+	–	+	+	+
Psychosocial: General support, counseling on job stress, anxieties	+	+	+	+	+	+
Psychosocial: Work–family balance	0	0	0	0	+	0
Psychosocial: Networking	+	+	0	+	+	+

Note. + = likely function for this type of developer, 0 = possible function for this type of developer, – = unlikely function for this type of developer

Table 2. Mentor and Mentee Dos and Don'ts

Mentor Dos	Mentor Don'ts
Do provide mentorship only in your areas of expertise. Suggest other mentors as resources outside your expertise or when the attempted mentoring relationship is not working.	Don't take on more mentees than is realistically manageable.
Do indicate openness to being a mentor. Be accessible to the mentee.	Don't treat mentees as free labor.
Do maintain clear, distinct boundaries with the mentee. Set clear expectations.	Don't make personal requests of the mentee.
Do treat the mentee professionally and in an ethical fashion. Be thoughtful and sensitive about the mentee's feelings and time.	Don't gossip about the mentee.
Do model professional behavior.	Don't micromanage the mentee. Provide advice and counsel, but do not direct the mentee to take specific actions.

Mentee Dos	Mentee Don'ts
Do set specific goals and expectations for the mentoring relationship. Clearly communicate what you want from the relationship. Maintain distinct boundaries and understand what the mentor expects.	Don't expect the mentor to make decisions for you. Learn to resolve problems and issues independently of the mentor.
Do be proactive. It is the mentee's responsibility to maintain contact with the mentor and schedule future interactions.	Don't take advantage of the mentor. Respect the mentor's time and help.
Do treat the mentor professionally and in an ethical fashion. Be thoughtful and sensitive about the mentor's feelings and time.	Don't gossip about the mentor.
	Don't take rejection of a mentoring request personally.