



Mentorship – take a step for the betterment of our future

Mentor. We can all think of at least one person who was a mentor for us during our life as students, young professionals, or at some point during our career. It might be that professor whose work you admired and were a bit scared of at the beginning. Maybe it was the expert who had to assess your knowledge and expertise and passed you to the next step, or perhaps it was an older professional who inspired you and opened doors for you early on. Some of us can think of a time when we were mentors, having the responsibility of sharing experience and knowledge with the new generation of professionals, working together to shape their future in research, clinical work, or business endeavors.

It is often easy to see how the relationship with the mentor is beneficial for the mentee. More than having the privilege to work with experts in the field, the mentor will help to advance the mentee's career, set short- and long-term goals, and use their connections and relations to introduce the mentee to different aspects of the profession. The mentor might help to foster collaborations, introduce peers and colleagues, and expand opportunities for career development.

However, it is not only the mentee that can benefit from the journey. The mentor might also gain from such an interaction. A mentor will have the opportunity to shape the future generation in the way they believe is the most appropriate, ensure high standards in their field, and grow more professional colleagues. A good mentor can recognize the potential in their trainees, encourage and invest in them, and then, maybe, recruit them to their own department, faculty, or clinic, or at least create a long-term connection and future collaboration. In the private clinical world, the mentee might take over the clinic at some point, creating cohesion and continuing the same treatment philosophy with the patients. Besides these benefits, it is the mentor's chance to give back to the profession; in the same way that someone guided you, you can guide and mentor too. Above and beyond, helping someone always feels good and leads to a sensation of satisfaction, fulfilment, and meaningful contribution.

What is a desirable mentor–mentee relationship? Does this relationship just add up to all the points mentioned above or is

it more than that? In the career paths we choose, we always need to focus on the next step, whether board exams, lessons, deadlines, patients, or career choices. We are dealing with a tremendous amount of stress just to move on to the next phase, in a way that makes it hard to step aside, to stop thinking about what will benefit us and try to understand what the next generation needs. Genuine mentors will find a way to promote their mentees while moving forward in their career, and consider their mentees' success in the same way as their own.

While supervisors will help their trainees pass an exam or move to the next step, mentors will think about the next few phases ahead and have a final goal in mind. This final goal is something that the mentor and the mentee draw up together and re-draw again and again to suit the mentee's future plans and desires. A generous mentor will find and encourage other activities that will promote their mentees and help highlight the unique qualities they have, such as creativity, leadership, or open mindedness. Moreover, a good mentor will try to provide their mentees with the opportunities they never had – opportunities that can be beneficial for them for the long-run. Such opportunities include creating connections between the trainees to central and well-known professionals, introducing them to peers, and involving them in global organizations and committees.

However, the support is not limited to the professional life or to the exposure to extracurricular activities. After all, the mentor has often been in the same place the mentees are now, and can support and give advice in many different areas. It is important to remember that in some steps during a career, the mentors might be the only people who truly understand completely what their mentees are going through.

Besides thinking about your mentee's needs, there is nothing better than good communication. Mentors need to see the big picture to promote their mentees, and there are many factors that should be considered. Open communication helps to share problems, worries, and expectations from both sides. After facing those issues and coordinating expectations, it will be easier to promote the careers of both the mentor and the mentee.

Now ask yourself: Did you truly have good mentors during your training or career? Were you a genuine mentor to others?

Being or having a true mentor is not as common as it should be, and it is time to change that. At every stage of our career we should have a mentor and be mentors. Think about the mentor you wished to have and be that mentor. Choose a good mentor to yourself and encourage others, care for them, and become their mentor. We are all in this together, we all need help and advice, and we all can share our experience – so let's do it. It will make our lives easier and richer, and our profession more advanced and fruitful.

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