Overview

This document summarizes key characteristics and actions that foster effective mentee-mentor relationships in the clinical and translational research workforce. The literature[1] on mentorship offers several definitions and frameworks of qualities, attributes, and actions that lead to successful mentoring relationships. After analyzing these frameworks and reflecting on our own experience of developing curriculum, courses, and longitudinal programs on mentorship, we consolidated the core ideas and created this comprehensive list. For each characteristic or action, we explain how strong mentors and empowered mentees demonstrate them in practice.

Strong Mentors and Empowered Mentees:

1 Know themselves.

2 Are clear about expectations.

3 Are aware of and responsive to differences.

4 Are engaged with setting mentees' personal and professional milestones.

5 Explore professional development opportunities.

6 Provide and advocate for feedback.

7 Build effective mentoring networks.

8 Practice advocacy.

9 Foster productivity and resiliency.

10 Support mentees' independence.

How To Use this Framework

Navigate through the list of 10 characteristics and actions below to learn how strong mentors and empowered mentees demonstrate them in practice. The hyperlinks in these tables connect to relevant information and exercises found on our Mentorship in Clinical and Translational Research website. This framework can be used to self-assess gaps, create goals, and evaluate mentoring relationships. Visit our website for instructions and examples of how to create custom assessments using this framework.

Characteristics and Actions that Foster Effective Mentee-Mentor Relationships

Characteristic or Action	How do **mentors** demonstrate the characteristic or action in practice? **Strong mentors:**	How do **mentees** demonstrate the characteristic or action in practice? **Empowered mentees:**
1. Know themselves	- Recognize the value that they can bring to a mentoring relationship. - Define what type of expertise their mentee needs (e.g., scientific/ technical, grant or manuscript writing, navigating institutional culture, career advancement, etc.). - Tailor their mentoring strategy to meet the needs of their mentee(s). - Understand the value of a mentoring network.	- Craft their personal definition of success. - Identify their personal strengths and weaknesses. - Describe how they work best. - Describe their professional interests. - Describe their core values. - Determine the areas in which they need mentorship (e.g., scientific/ technical, grant or manuscript writing, navigating institutional culture, career advancement, etc.) and seek out mentors who fulfill these needs and skills.

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| 2. Are clear about expectations | Establish ground rules for communication (e.g., professionalism, vulnerability, transparency regarding confidentiality). Have a formal discussion about expectations at the beginning of the relationship. Use tools to document the agreement. Periodically review the expectations to ensure that they are being met. Agree and adhere to a regular meeting schedule. Are accessible, approachable, and clear on boundaries (e.g., discuss communication styles and preferences and have expectations for communication outside of meeting times). Set clear expectations regarding research-related matters (e.g., space, time, access to resources, authorship). | Establish ground rules for communication (e.g., professionalism, vulnerability, transparency regarding confidentiality). Contribute to a shared expectation agreement and ensure that expectations are aligned with values and short and long-term goals. Periodically review the expectations to ensure that they are being met. Determine and adhere to a regular meeting time with their mentors. Are accessible, approachable, and clear on boundaries (e.g., discuss communication styles and preferences and have expectations for communication outside of meeting times). Agree to clear expectations regarding research-related matters (e.g., space, time, access to resources, authorship). |

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3. Are aware of and responsive to differences	[Recognize/address unconscious biases](#) and prejudices they bring to the mentor/mentee relationship. - Practice strategies to engage effectively with mentees whose personal background is different from their own (e.g., age, race, gender, class, region, culture, religion, family composition, etc.). - Foster a sense of belonging by using inclusive language that respects differences. - Practice anti-racism and allyship. - Recognize and address issues of equity and inclusion in the mentoring relationship, and if challenges arise, know how and where to leverage resources for support.	[Recognize/address unconscious biases](#) and prejudices they bring to the mentor/mentee relationship. - Practice strategies to engage effectively with mentors whose personal background is different from their own (e.g.,age, race, gender, class, region, culture, religion, family composition, etc.). - Foster a sense of belonging by using inclusive language that respects differences. - Practice anti-racism and allyship. - Recognize and address issues of equity and inclusion in the mentoring relationship, and if challenges arise, know how and where to leverage resources for support.
4. Are engaged with setting mentees' personal and professional milestones	- Through discussions and/or exercises, challenge their mentees to consider: - their [personal definition of success](#). - their [personal strengths and weaknesses](#). [how they work best.](#) - their [professional interests](#). - their [core values](#). - Coach mentees in developing [short and long-term goals](#). - Challenge mentees to envision possibilities and consider stretch-goals. - Support mentees in [understanding metrics of success](#).	- Share their [personal strengths and weaknesses](#) and [definition of success](#) with their mentor. - Establish [short and long-term goals](#). [Understand metrics](#) for achieving specific goals. - Align [goals](#) with their [core values](#).

5. Explore professional development opportunities	• Help their mentees get to know the institutional culture and landscape. ○ Connect their mentees to individuals, groups, and offices that can support their development. • Help their mentees understand promotion metrics. • Suggest courses, books, articles, technology, and other resources for mentee development.	• Assess what new skills and knowledge they need to gain. • Identify development opportunities and leverage connections and resources to learn new skills. • Understand how to prepare for professional advancement (e.g., promotions).
6. Provide and advocate for feedback	• Determine what type of feedback their mentees need and how to best deliver it (e.g., types: formal, informal, encouragement, coaching, evaluation, etc. Format for delivery: written, oral). • Provide timely feedback. • Are supportive and encouraging. • Practice active listening. • Periodically discuss if established expectations are being met.	• Recognize the type of feedback that they need and know how to ask for it. • Are responsive and willing to discuss feedback that they receive. • Periodically discuss if established expectations are being met.
7. Build effective mentoring networks	• Foster their mentees' networks by introducing them to colleagues with similar interests. • Encourage their mentees to seek out new connections.	• Evaluate their current mentoring network and identify gaps. • Seek out new mentors who can fill these gaps. • Understand the value of peer mentorship and dedicate time to connecting with and learning from peers.

8. Practice advocacy	- As opportunities arise, advocate for their mentees to participate or lead. - Coach their mentees in how to have conversations with new connections. - Respect their mentees' contributions and celebrate their successes. - Acknowledge the challenges faced by historically underrepresented groups in the workforce and advocate to increase inclusion and equity.	- Self-advocate (e.g., negotiate for opportunities, resources, training, credit). - Know where to turn for support when challenges arise. - Build their network by seeking out new connections.
9. Foster productivity and resiliency	- Coach their mentees on how to increase personal resilience in the face of professional challenges. - Empower their mentees to seek out resources for support. - Discuss work-life integration and how to align priorities based on values.	- Identify and reflect upon their current time-management strategies and challenges. - Identify which activities are most consistent with their professional goals and use this information to discuss where they should prioritize spending time to maximize the likelihood of professional success. - Factor personal interests and responsibilities into their time management strategies. - Identify strategies to increase personal resilience in the face of professional challenges.

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10. Support mentees' independence	• Suggest that their mentees attend and present at important conferences. • Guide their mentees through the publication process (e.g., choosing a journal, strategies for writing and submitting). • Role model responsible conduct of research. • Provide guidance and support as mentees begin to serve as mentors for others. • Guide discussions on career planning and support mentees through career transitions.	• Identify professional societies and conferences in their field (or the field that they would like to enter) and familiarize themselves with them. • Recognize scientific journals and their respective impact factors that are relevant to their work. • Discuss ways to use their network to foster recognition. • Seek feedback and input from mentors as they prepare for the next phase of their career.

[1]References

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