

# How to Work with Your Mentor

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# Mentor and Telemachus

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**Odysseus → Trojan War**

**Son Telemachus had some issues maturing, couldn't defend his home**

**Athena** *goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, strategic warfare, mathematics, arts, craft, etc)* **disguised herself as Odysseus' old friend Mentor**

Taught Telemachus the courage and skills he needed → **trusted advisor, teacher, friend**



# The Art of Mentorship

- The art of “mentor acquisition” in any field remains not only an elusive concept, with significant variability in the adoption of structured versus organic relationships that develop more naturally throughout an individual’s career, but also an occasional challenge in pragmatic implementation
- Mentorship in surgery is not “one-size-fits-all”
- Mentorship setting varies significantly
  - clinical
  - academic/research
  - administrative or leadership pursuits (career development)
- Guidance comes in many forms
  - mentor
  - coach
  - sponsor

# Mentorship

- 1. Long-term, ongoing relationship:** relationships often last for years, allowing mentee to benefit from the mentor's wisdom and guidance over time.
- 2. Focus on holistic personal and professional development:** addresses various aspects of mentee's life, including career, personal growth, and work-life balance.
- 3. Informal and flexible structure:** Mentoring is typically less structured than coaching, with meetings scheduled as needed and conversations covering a wide range of topics.

## *Benefits of mentoring*

Mentoring helps individuals gain valuable insights and advice, leading to increased self-awareness, personal growth, and career development.

# Coaching

- 1. Time-bound and goal-oriented:** Coaching relationships are usually short-term, with specific, measurable goals.
- 2. Focused on specific skills and performance improvement:** Coaching addresses particular skills, behaviors, or performance issues.
- 3. Formal structure and accountability:** The coaching process includes regular, structured meetings with clear expectations and progress tracking.

## *Benefits of coaching*

Coaching helps individuals improve their skills and performance, leading to increased confidence, productivity, and career growth.

# Sponsorship

- 1. Advocate for the individual's career advancement:** Sponsors actively promote the individual's achievements and potential within the organization.
- 2. Focus on visibility and opportunities within the organization:** Sponsors help the individual gain exposure to decision-makers and secure promotions or high-profile projects.
- 3. Influence and decision-making power:** Sponsors hold positions of power and can directly impact the individual's career trajectory.

## *Benefits of sponsorship*

Sponsorship helps individuals gain access to career-advancing opportunities and positions them for long-term success within the organization.

# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Career Enhancement

- Scholarly productivity
- Provide challenges



# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Career Enhancement

- Networking





# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Career Enhancement

- Sponsorship
- Faster time to promotion
- Higher salary



# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Career Enhancement

- Protection



# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Psychosocial Support

- Confidence in academic roles and skills



# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Psychosocial Support

- Professional Identity
- Academic Career Choice
- Specialty Choice



# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Psychosocial Support

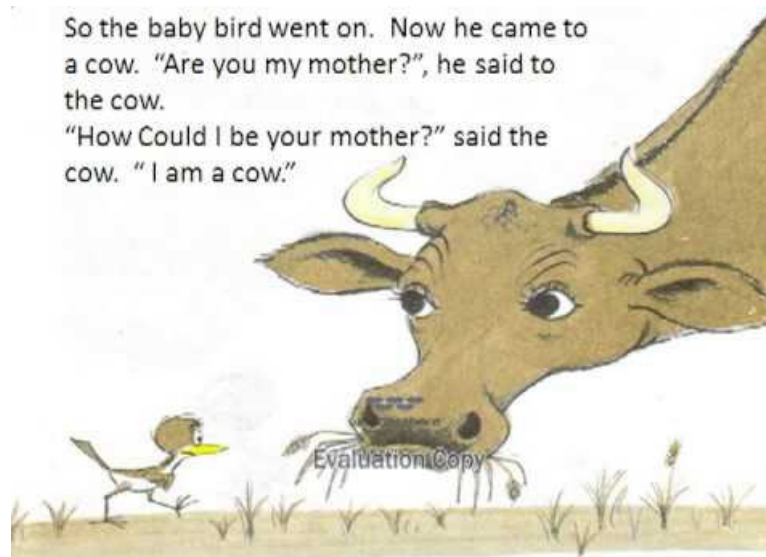
- Stress Reduction



# Finding the right mentor(s)

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- Accessible and makes time for you, but doesn't expect monogamy
- Considers your ideas seriously
- Prioritizes the human relationship (not boss vs. employee)
  - Prioritizes your professional/personal development
- Keeps things confidential



# What's the purpose of mentoring relationship?

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## Psychosocial Support

- Sense of belonging





# How to have a high-yield mentoring relationship

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## Self-assessment first

Identify your own preferences and needs

- consider personal and professional domains

Identify goals, opportunities for growth

Identify productive and unproductive habits





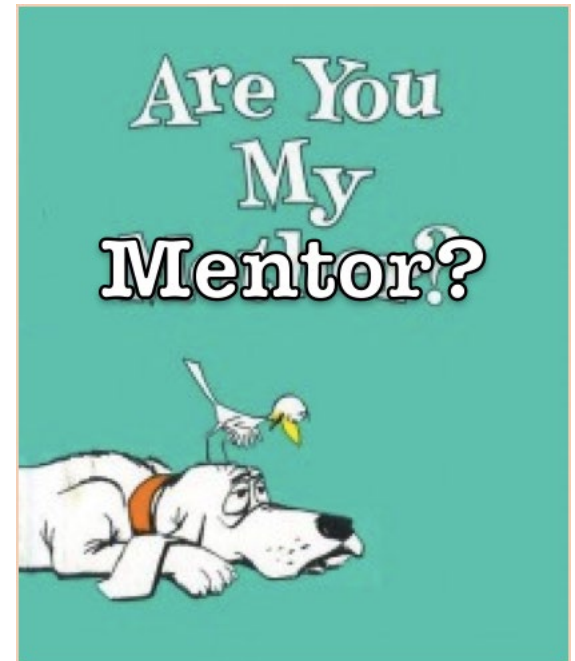
# How to have a high-yield mentoring relationship

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## Find the right mentor(s)

Traditional mentor  
Sponsor  
Coach

Seek mentoring:  
early  
from multiple places  
from junior- and senior-level faculty  
for different goals



# How to have a high-yield mentoring relationship

## Take an active role

Be engaged

Follow up

Solicit feedback

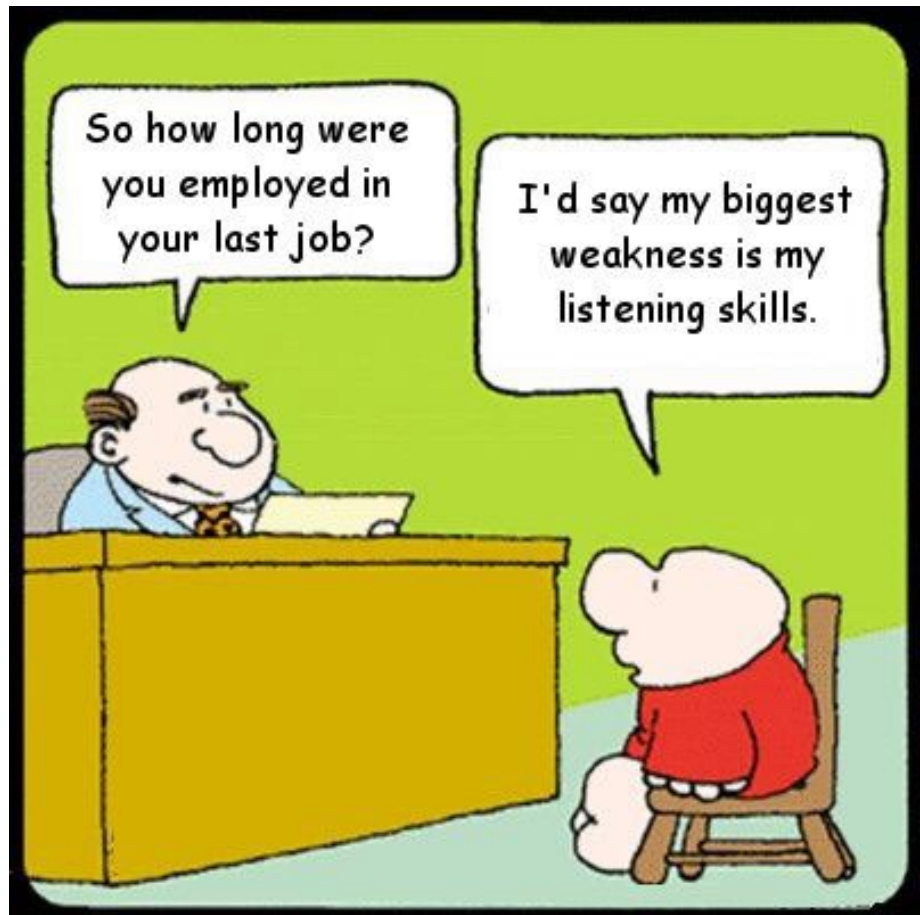


# How to have a high-yield mentoring relationship

## **Be an Active Listener**

Write down advice

Be observant



# How to have a high-yield mentoring relationship

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**Managing up makes it easier for the mentor to be helpful**

Set the meetings

Figure out the agenda



# Frequency of Meetings

## Depends on:

- Goals
- Availability
- Active Issues



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# Content of Meetings

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- Research projects
- Clinical issues
- Life issues
- Don't forget the big picture



*“At this point in the meeting we’ll open a discussion of whether or not we needed to have this meeting.”*



# Transition

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- Relationship with mentor ideally changes as your career advances
- Relationship may need to change for other reasons – communication is key
- May require new and different mentors for next stage in career/life



## Do's and Don'ts

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## **DO: Take the driver's seat in the relationship**



# DO: Define 2-3 specific goals of relationship

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## **Career goals**

Research

Networking

Job

Setting up a practice

## **Psychosocial issues**

Confidence

Professional identity

Work-life balance



## **DO: Initiate and schedule regular meetings**

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**DO: Come to every meeting with an agenda**

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# Agenda

1.

2.

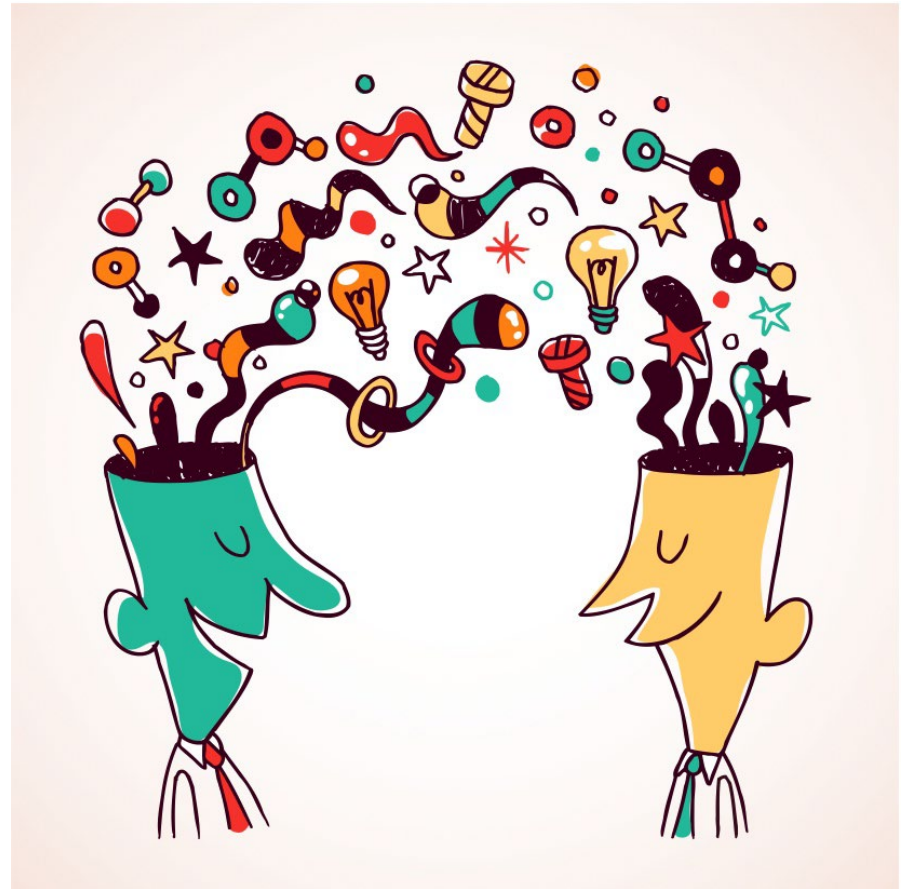
3.



# DO: Come to every meeting with an agenda

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- Progress on research projects
- Other topics for discussion:
  - Specialty choice
  - Clinical issues
  - Fellowship/job
  - Society participation
  - Personal issues



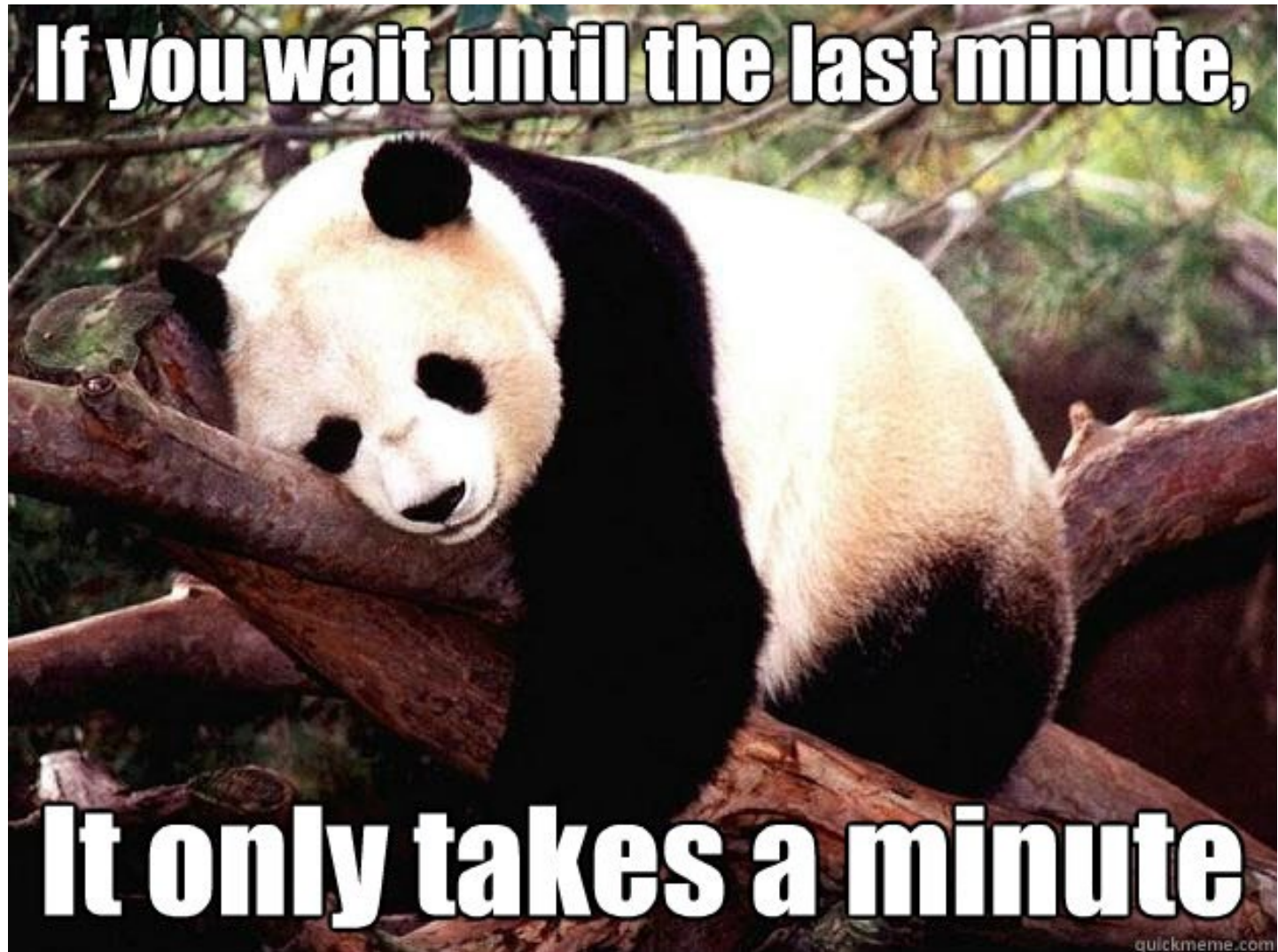


## DO: Follow-up on previous meeting's agenda



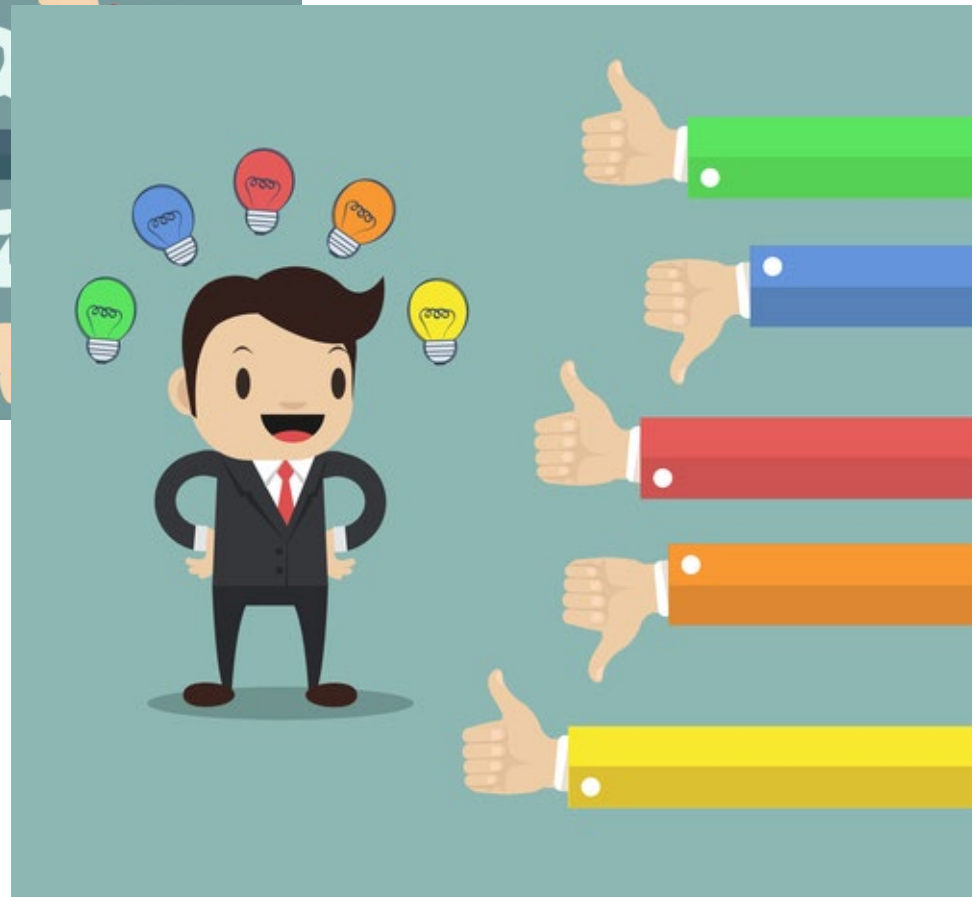
**DO: Give us a couple days to look over a draft**

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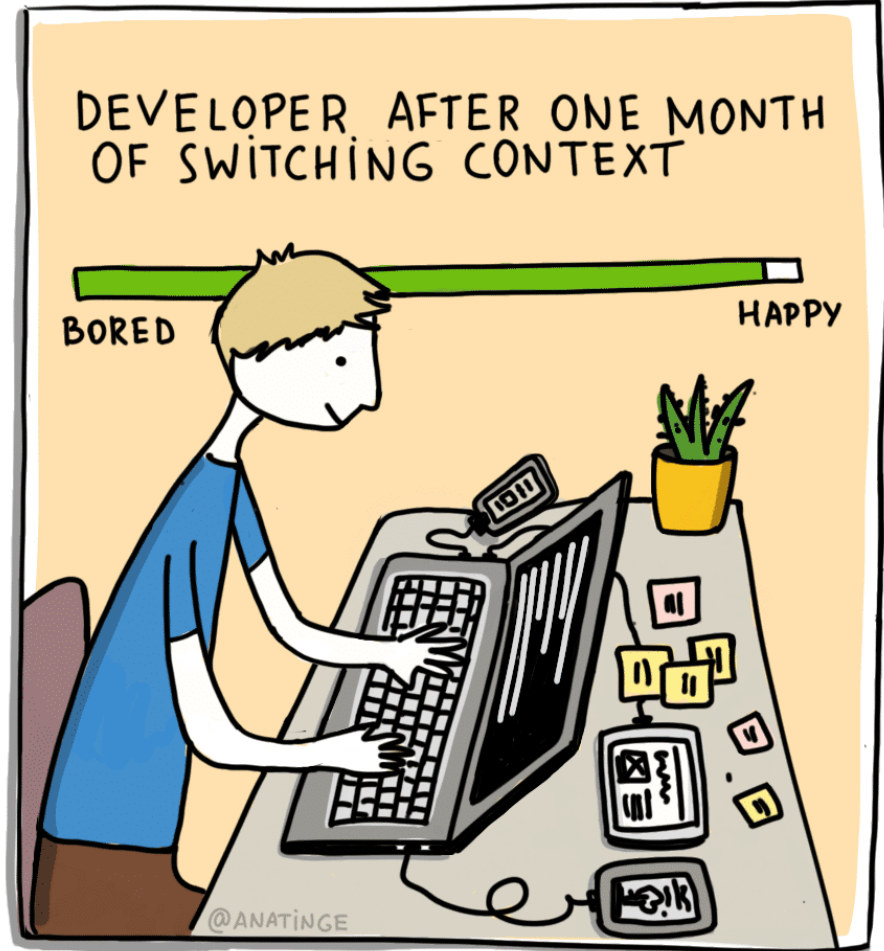
## DO: Ask for feedback

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## DO: Pick a project you are truly interested in



## DO: Reassess relationship

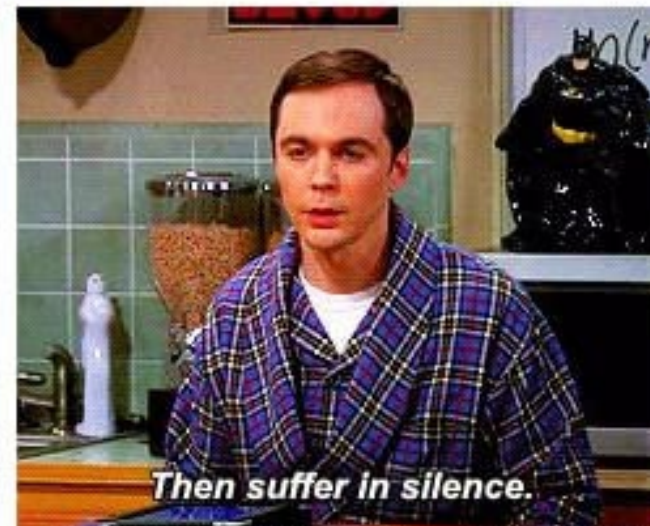
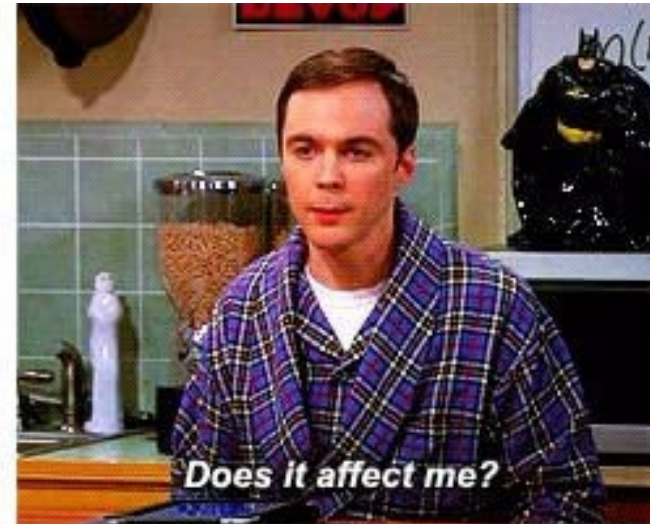
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# DON'T: Suffer in Silence

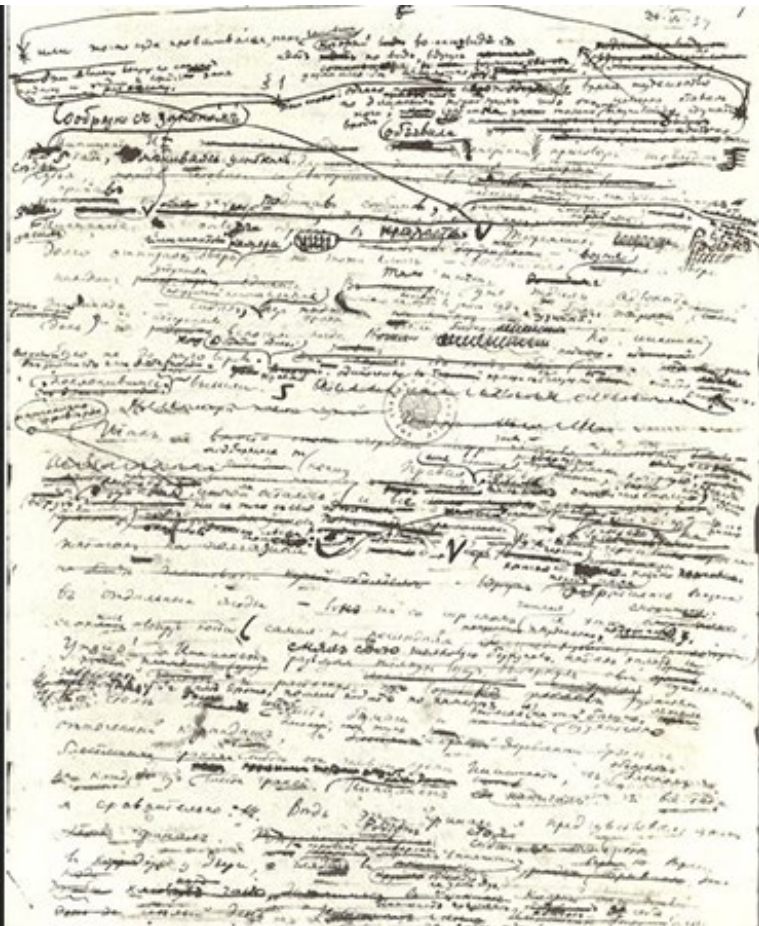
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## **DON'T: complain to people who can't help**

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## DON'T: become a clone

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## DON'T: Go radio silent for a long time

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- Set up the next meeting
- Update them in-between meetings on progress

# How to Break Up with Your Mentor




by Carolyn O'Hara

<https://hbr.org/2014/05/how-to-break-up-with-your-mentor>

- Take stock of your needs and goals
- Consider giving your mentor a second chance
- Don't draw it out
- Be transparent and direct
- **Disengage with gratitude**
- Keep the door open



# Power of mentorship for civilian and military acute care surgeons: identifying and leveraging opportunities for longitudinal professional development

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Mentorship Categories	Pearls	Pitfalls
Clinical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a mentor who is relatable in terms of clinical practice</li> <li>• Cultivate a psychologically safe environment to discuss challenging case or request intraoperative guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure of the mentor or mentee to openly and honestly acknowledge successes and <u>failures</u></li> <li>• Self-critical or punitive attitudes toward clinical complications</li> </ul>
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximize meeting productivity with a focused agenda</li> <li>• Keep the mentee's best interest in mind in terms of authorship, recognition, promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in a research mentorship when one or both parties lack bandwidth</li> <li>• Failure for both parties to set clear goals and meet deadlines</li> </ul>
Executive Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify mentors who have followed a similar leadership pathway (e.g. advanced degree, administrative role, etc.) to understand the nature of the commitment</li> <li>• Mentors should help seek out leadership and job opportunities, committee participation and national or global engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not being open to ongoing mentorship as one progresses through their career or inability to consider “non-traditional” opportunities</li> <li>• Choosing leadership roles, pathways or mentors that do not align with one's interests, <u>strengths</u> and academic mission</li> </ul>
Professional Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be strategic and pragmatic in selecting the organization that best fits your needs and try to diversify your mentors across institutions</li> <li>• Identify at least one “hard target” or deliverable from committee or professional society engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid overcommitting to multiple mentors or committees and not being able to deliver</li> <li>• Do not use professional society mentorship as a substitute for local mentorship, as the mentor will lack specific insight for local programmatic issues</li> </ul>



**Good luck!**

