

**The Postdoc Action**

**What is mentoring*?***

* An inter-personal relationship based on mutual trust, confidentiality and respect, in which typically a more experienced colleague or peer (i.e., the “mentor”) supports and encourages the professional (e.g., career path, skills, ...) and personal developments of another individual (i.e., the “mentee”).

Mentoring is *“****to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be****”* (E. Parsloe, Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring).

**What’s in it for you?**

Every mentoring relationship is different, but having or being a mentor can and will hopefully be valuable in many ways.

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| **For the MENTEE, a mentor can ....** | **MENTORS** **can gain as well** |
| * serve as a valuable sounding board, providing honest and impartial feedback * motivate you and support you to identify your goals and how to reach them * help you by sharing own experiences, knowledge, external viewpoints, ... * help you to build your professional network * ... | * Personal enrichment * Professional development and stimulation * Further development of inter-personal skills * better insights in issues / challenges / barriers for early-career researchers * ... |

**How to start the mentoring relationship?**

Potential topics to discuss/clarify in the beginning are:

* **Time**: how often and how long do you want to meet? How much time do you commit to reserve for your mentee/mentor?
* **Format**: where and how do you want to meet?
* **Confidentiality:** Make an agreement on how you will handle what is discussed during the mentoring meetings
* **Expectations:** what do you want to get out of the mentoring relationship? What do you expect from the mentor? What does the mentor expect from you?
* Any other topic that you consider essential to take up in the beginning

**What kind of topics can you take up with your mentor?**

This essentially depends on the situation, the needs and expectations of both parties, but some potential topics to take up with your mentor are:

* Development and/or discussion of one’s career plan
* Difficult situations / dilemmas / problems related to or having an impact on your work
* How to prioritize different tasks, commitments, ...
* Networking opportunities; potential alternative career paths (e.g., in industry)
* ...

**What makes a good mentee / mentor?**

It is impossible to provide the perfect recipe for a successful mentor-mentee relationship, but a lot depends on the mindset and attitude of both mentor and mentee.

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| A good **MENTEE** | A good **MENTOR** |
| * takes initiative, sets the agenda, is proactive * is open, honest, positive * is willing to share and willing to listen * is willing to receive critical feedback and to be challenged * is committed and has the time and willingness to develop a good mentoring relationship | * is motivated by helping others to succeed * is empathic, is able to listen actively * asks the right questions * is honest, open and constructive * is committed and is willing to make time for the mentee * respects different ways of working * helps to open doors to opportunities |

**References and further reading**

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