

# Mentoring Challenges

Joan Y. Reede, MD, MPH, MBA

Harvard Medical School

Office for Diversity & Community Partnership

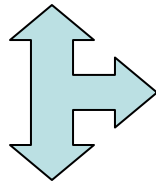
November 21, 2008



# The Mentoring Relationship: Expectations

## Mentee Characteristics

Demographics  
Personality  
Relationship Skills  
Expectations



## Mentoring Outcomes

## Mentor Characteristics

Demographics  
Personality  
Relationship Skills  
Expectations

- **Demographics**
  - e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age, culture, values
- **Personality characteristics**
  - e.g., dominance, submissiveness, nurturance, neediness
- **Relationship Skills**
  - e.g., difficulty with self expression, difficulty with listening

# Expectations re: Mentoring Outcomes

- **Developmental Outcomes**
  - Knowledge
  - Technical Skills
  - Competence
- **Career Outcomes**
  - Graduation
  - Recruitment
  - Promotion
- **Enabling Outcomes**
  - Career Expectations and Plan
  - Network
  - Resources
- **Emotional Outcomes**
  - Confidence
  - Self Esteem
  - Job Satisfaction
  - Intellectual Challenge

# Problem Beliefs and Expectations of Mentees

- Their supervisor is their mentor.
- They will be given frequent, positive and honest feedback.
- Their mentor will guide their careers and ensure that it is successful.
- Their expectation of the ideal work and environment will be fulfilled – yet, this ideal is different for every person.
- They will be recognized by others as being superb doctors.
- They will have, or be given, a successful project.
- They will be first author on manuscripts so that they will advance (preferably in Nature or Cell).

# Problem Beliefs and Expectations of Mentors

- People can be mentored with little effort.
- They are responsible for the people who work for them (but this term is ill-defined and may not include mentorship).
- That mentees' deliverables will enhance their own efforts (last author, unit well run, more patients being seen, etc.).
- Avoiding people problems is the best way to respond.
- Their expectations of the ideal work and environment will be fulfilled (yet rarely share their vision with others).

# Conflict: The disconnect between beliefs, expectations, perceptions, and actions

## Functional

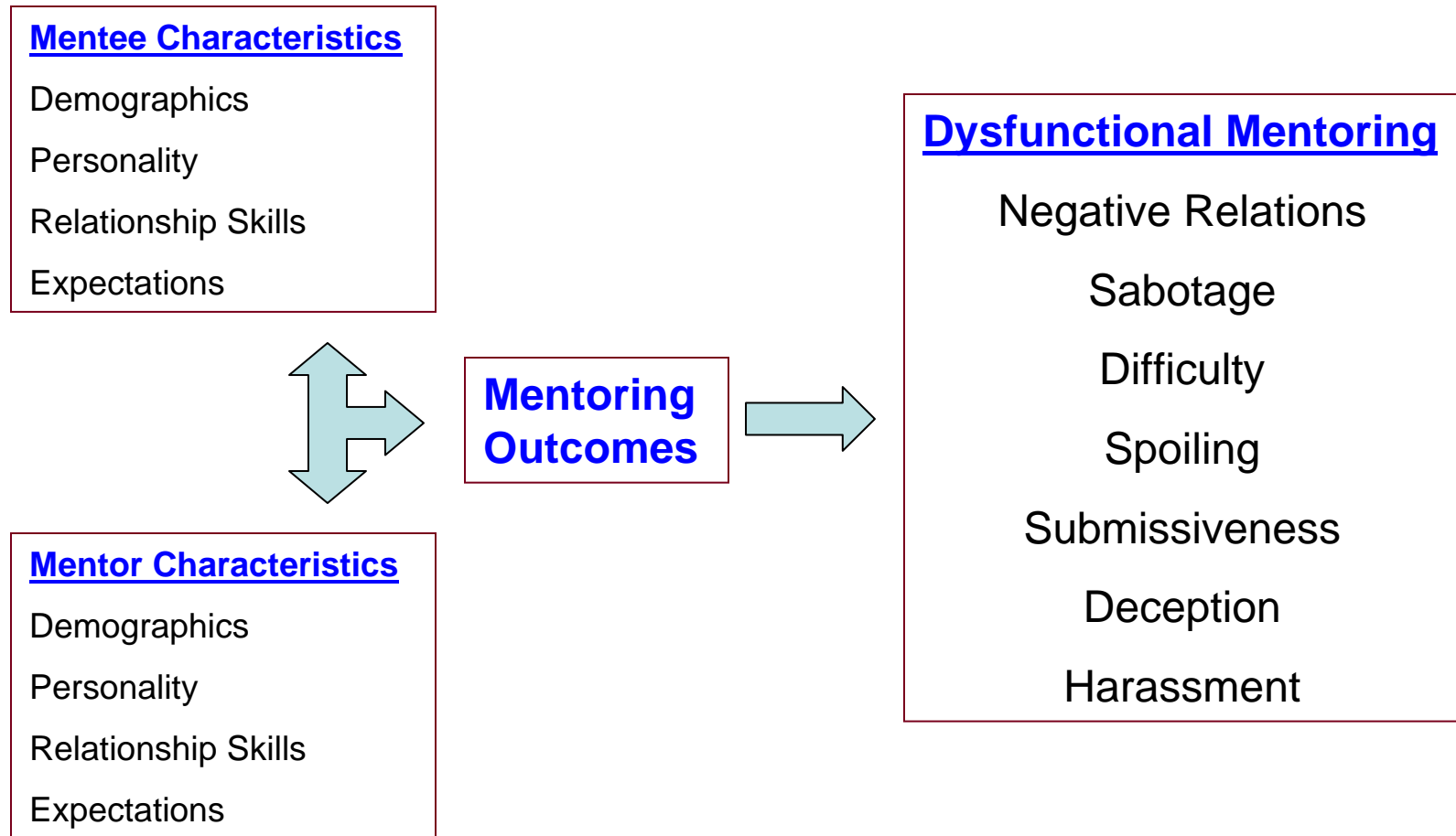
- Personal growth
- The sharpening of ideas
- The improvement of products
- The development of processes

## Dysfunctional

- Possibility of losing
- Negative emotions
- Loss of control
- Resentment
- Behavioral outcomes



# The Mentoring Relationship: Dysfunctional Mentoring



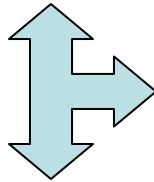
# Dysfunctional Mentoring

- **Negative Relations**
  - “Stereotypical tyrannical mentor”
- **Sabotage**
  - Resentment
  - Revenge
    - Direct – verbal insult
    - Indirect – political damage
  - Silent treatment
  - Career damage
- **Difficulty**
  - Good intentions
  - Conflict
  - Binds
- **Spoiling**
  - Actual or perceived betrayal
  - “A good relationship gone sour”
  - Perceptions of violation of fairness
- **Submissiveness**
  - “In exchange for relational or organizational rewards”
- **Deception**
  - Manipulating information to obtain compliance
  - Ingratiating behaviors
  - Censoring or distorting communications

# The Mentoring Relationship: Outcomes

## Mentee Characteristics

Demographics  
Personality  
Relationship Skills  
Expectations



## Mentor Characteristics

Demographics  
Personality  
Relationship Skills  
Expectations

## Dysfunctional Mentoring

Negative Relations  
Sabotage  
Difficulty  
Spoiling  
Submissiveness  
Deception  
Harassment



Relationship  
Terminates

Relationship  
Maintained

# Outcomes for Maintained Dysfunctional Mentoring Relationships

## Mentee Outcomes

- Self esteem (-)
- Job satisfaction (-)
- Stress/anxiety (+)
- Absenteeism (+)
- Turnover (+)
- Mentoring propensity (-)

## Mentor Outcomes

- Stress/anxiety (+)
- Mentoring Propensity (-)
- Jealousy (+)
- Betrayal (+)
- Overdependence (+)
- Overestimation (+)

# Responding to Conflict

- Avoid it



- Go around it, complain, make it worse



- Go through it, and learn from the process



# Develop a Conflict Toolkit

## **Assertiveness**

satisfy your own  
concerns



## **Cooperativeness**

satisfy the other person's  
concerns

# Develop a Conflict Toolkit

## **Competitive** (I win , you lose)

- When you know you are right
- To protect against people who would take advantage
- When enforcing unpopular rules

## **Accommodate** (I lose, you win)

- When you know you are wrong
- To build up social credit
- To preserve harmony
- To aid in the development of others

## **Compromise** (Trade off)

## **Avoid** (I won't play)

- When there is no chance of satisfying your concerns
- When potential damage of conflict outweighs benefits of resolution
- More information should be gathered
- Others can resolve the conflict more effectively

## **Collaborate** (I win , you win)

- To find an integrative solution
- To merge insights
- To gain commitment to the solution
- To work through hard feelings
- To protect or enhance important relationships

# What to do to avoid the worst problems?

- Discuss expectations prior to hiring.
- If there are changes in the environment or resources available, talk about them or admit uncertainty.
- Accept legitimacy of people having different expectations
- When deciding a course of action, try to foresee unintended consequences and consider several ways to address the situation before announcing the action.
- If possible, frame changes in a way that will account for individual's expectations.

# How do you know if there is a problem?: The Mentor's Role

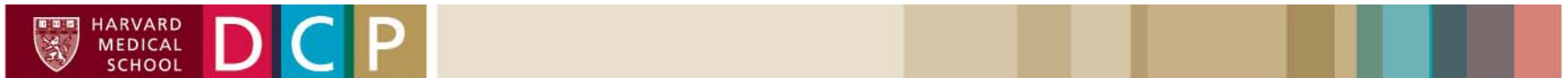
- Ask for honest feedback.
- Do not assume things are fine just because your mentee has not complained.
- When your mentee tells you things are fine, you may want them to expand on the answer.
- Ask your mentee specifically what is going well and what is not going well.

# When involved in a difficult personal conflict, remember:

- Recognize that you are in conflict.
- Manage yourself.
- You are hearing only one side of a story; avoid jumping to conclusions.
- Respect the feelings of the other person; it is usually better to understand than it is to voice agreement or disagreement with what you are hearing.

# When involved in a difficult personal conflict, remember:

- Identify what you want to accomplish, both the task and the relationship goals.
  - Listen.
- Describe the situation using concrete terms, focusing on specific behavior rather than the personality of the person.
  - Listen.
- Express your feelings in a constructive manner. Specify what you want explicitly and identify both positive and negative consequences.
  - Listen.



# When involved in a difficult personal conflict, remember:

- If you think the problem may have a legal ramification, write a personal note to yourself describing what you were told and what you did as a response.
- If you are uncertain about the seriousness of the problem, don't hesitate to ask for advice or help, explicit or confidential.

