# Mentorship: A Scientific Perspective #4
# Effective Mentorship Behaviors

## Align Expectations

The mentoring relationship must start with a mutual understanding of what it is about, what each party expects of both themselves and the other party or parties, and what structures are in place to make sure those expectations are met. This is the place of common ground that establishes a strong foundation for the relationship and the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.
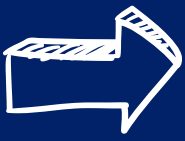
## Assess Understanding

At this stage, ideally near the beginning of the mentoring relationship, all parties work together to see where the mentee, in particular, is in their understanding of the profession, what is required as a professional in that field, etc. Effective mentors prioritize the needs of the mentee(s), and any knowledge gaps the mentees have must be identified in order to build effective mentoring practices that will fill those gaps.

## Communicate Effectively

As with any relationship, communicating effectively is of the utmost importance in a mentoring relationship. Understanding where each party is coming from, as well as where they want to go as a result of the mentoring relationship, is important, and that can only be achieved through regular communication. Effective mentors practice active listening and provide helpful feedback. They also recognize that communication styles may differ, and they work to bridge any gaps in order to accommodate a mentee's (reasonable) communication style.

## Address Equity and Inclusion

Effective mentors acknowledge and reflect upon the biases and assumptions they may have and understand that such internalized biases may impact mentoring relationships. Rather than denying that they have biases, then, effective mentors work through them and towards a fuller and more equitable and inclusive approach to the mentoring relationship. This reflective practice occurs regardless of who they might be mentoring.
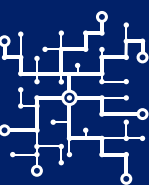
## Foster Independence

Effective mentors work to move mentees from the mentored space to professional independence by providing motivation, building their confidence, stimulating creativity and strategic thinking, helping them to work through their weaknesses, and acknowledging their strengths and contributions. The path to independence in a research environment is made smoother by a mentor who understands the importance of providing guidance during this transitional period.

## Promote Professional Development

Mentees navigate towards independence through a variety of professional development activities, both formal and informal. Effective mentors provide support, encouragement, and advice about the kinds of activities in which to engage as well as help in building a professional network. Mentors recognize the influence they have as role models to their mentees and help them identify and access important professional resources.
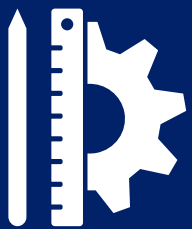
# Mentorship Tools

## Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

IDPs provide structure to a mentoring relationship in addition to articulating a clear set of goals for both the mentee and for the mentoring relationship itself. As such, IDPs are a form of bilateral engagement, encouraging active participation from both the mentor and mentee. Assessments of IDPs show positive effects of their use, including facilitating skills identification and developing abilities, in addition to their correlating with higher satisfaction with mentoring relationships.

## Mentorship Compacts

Mentorship compacts are written agreements between a mentor and mentee that sketch out a structure to help both (or all) parties communicate and understand the commitments and expectations of the mentoring relationship. These are distinct from a contractual arrangement in that they are ideally separated from any sort of power arrangement or rule-bound obligation. Rather, they are collegial documents that prioritize principles over deliverables. In other words, they help each party understand what the other party values in a mentoring relationship.

## Mentoring Maps

Mentoring maps are similar to other tools listed here, but they are less bound by a particular purpose (as opposed to the professionalization purpose of the IDP or the principle-driven focus of the compact, for example.) Instead, mentoring maps are versatile tools that help outline the various resources available to a mentee, including the larger network of professionalization tools that a mentor can help a mentee access.

## Mentoring Plans

Mentoring plans are the most versatile tool because the term can refer to several kinds of documents. Indeed, a mentoring plan could include elements of all of the above tools. At the most basic, a mentoring plan should outline where the mentee is at the beginning of the mentoring relationship and where they should be at different checkpoints throughout the formal mentoring relationship, but the plan may also include resources, networks to access, compacts between and among mentors and mentees, etc. Some mentoring plans also include a mentoring philosophy, which provides an intellectual context for a mentee to understand the positionality of their mentor.

## Questions to Consider

- Which of the tools listed here speak most to you as a mentor?
- Think back to when you were being mentored and consider if a different tool than the one you think of as a mentor would have been more beneficial. If the two answers don't align, how can you integrate both (or all) things for mutual benefit to you and your mentees?
- What qualities of effective mentorship listed here do you think are your strengths? Are any of them weaknesses, and if so, how can you strengthen those areas?
- If you were asked to provide a mentoring philosophy, what would be your key points in such a document?