

生涯導師何處尋

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『[台灣女科技社群諮詢互助網](#)』的建構最主要目的是希望提供一個女科技人的互助聯繫網路，身為女科技人一員，走過求學與工作的人生旅程，我深刻感受到那永遠長期的忙碌，生活中太容易失去自我。如果生活中多一些夥伴、多一些隨時可以請益的人、多一些隨時可以求助的人、多一些可以擴大研究領域合作的人、多一些…，日子一定不一樣，研究可能更多元，成果可能更豐碩、生活可能更有趣、心情可能更愉快…。逝者已矣，來者可追，於是在退休前的這幾年，邀請幾位也有同樣構想的朋友一起來做這個女科技人社群網路的計畫，除了提供性別與科技相關資訊外，希望藉此平台促進女科技人之間的認識與聯繫，為年輕尚未或剛跨入職場的女科技人介紹生涯導師朋友，讓年輕後輩的生涯發展更為順遂而豐富。

也許有人懷疑，妳們又不是諮商團體，又沒受過專業訓練，如何給人家輔導呢？的確，這不是諮商，也不是輔導，不過是介紹一位或幾位較年長的朋友或老師在人生的旅途或專業的發展上給予一些建議和協助，擴大身為少數的女科技人的專業人際網路。也許這樣如師如友的關係會維持終身，也許短暫時間就不再繼續，但是總值得一試吧？

諮詢網上有女科技人介紹，內容主要來自女科技人電子報的人物特寫與女科技人簡介，為了擴大接觸面，也希望包含一些女科技人的教學網頁與部落格，歡迎你主動告訴我們網址，豐富女科技人的友誼網絡。

最近在 AWIS(Association of Women in Science) 春季期刊中讀到一篇關於『人生導師』(Mentor)的文章，覺得作者的觀點不錯，可以介紹給大家。因此請計畫助理寫了一篇讀後感，謹附於後，以供參考。

「Are Mentors Who We Think They Are?」一文讀後感

劉佩誼(研究計畫助理)

「良師益友」這名詞聽起來好像只是一句成語或口號，但其實仔細思索，它和我們的生活息息相關，因為人不是獨居的動物，而是需要相互扶持的群體生活。在互相幫忙的過程中，相互學習、成長，在這期間，我們可能結識一些朋友，他們對我們的影響是好是壞，在事情尚未結束前都不能輕易的定奪，而我們又要從何處去找尋一生的良師益友呢？這些疑問 Callie Raulfs 在「Are Mentors Who We Think They Are?」一文中有所分享，並探討了她個人的經驗。

成長的過程中，我們很容易就直接把老師當作最主要的輔導來源，小時候遇到問題就是找老師，涵蓋範圍可能包括課業、升學、就業、感情、甚至是家庭等種種問題，因為相較於同年紀的朋友，師長們的歷練較豐富，視野也廣闊許多，相對能給予較多有實質意義的意見，但是假如我們從未主動去請教師長，我們和老師之間的關係仍然是疏遠的。

做研究可不同，指導教授就是頂頭上司，可能週週開會討論或是天天見面洽談，甚至照三餐詢問實驗進度。有些指導老師可能會讓我們覺得很沮喪，因為他們除了實驗數據外，對於研究生的未來發展或是當下的身心狀況顯得不聞不問，使得我們常常詢問自己是不是選錯老闆了？為什麼他們只關心結果，而不像小時候的導師那般關心我們的生活狀況。

事實上，指導教授相對於研究生並不單單只有師生關係而已，還有些許的互利共生。他／她會給你充足的實驗環境與設備還有經費資助，期許你能全力以赴你所負責的計畫，這樣老闆才有足夠的數據可以發表論文，而我們最終也能得到碩／博士學位與研究上的成就。況且光是論文、實驗和經費的事情就讓教授們忙到顧不暇己，通常哪裡有多餘的精力顧及你的感受呢？

那麼，如果教授不是我們最好的生涯導師，那我們又該去哪裡找我們的人生或生涯導師呢？其實我們經常相處的同學、朋友或是同儕就是一個最好的管道，因為我們都在相同的地方學習成長，每日生活在一塊，對於彼此的生活習慣都有一定程度的了解，比起師生間的拘謹，朋友之間的同輩關係更可使我們暢所欲言進而了解彼此，學習與研究上的同甘共苦都將使我們的關係愈來愈密切並共同成長。將來在日後的某一天，朋友或同事很可能在工作上提拔我們，提供我們換工作的好機會，讓我們在職場上平步青雲。這...不就是最好的良師益友嗎？

有時，有些人我們可能認為不會與他們成為朋友，因為他們身上有些人格特質並不是我們認同的，像是特別積極勇於爭取權利的人與十分安靜低調的人可能就不太容易搭在一起，因為我們可能不是那麼契合。但這種看似與我們不是很契合的人，其實也有許多面向可以讓我們學習或借鏡。我們也可以試著以他們為師友，而不是一開始就敬而遠之，釋出敵意，讓我們自己少了一個磨練自己的機會，這樣不是很可惜嗎？

俗話說的好「三人行必有我師」，沒有人十全十美，也沒有人是完全符合自己需求的良師益友，正因為如此，我們才更要從各種場合、各種管道及身邊的朋友請益、學習與成長，珍惜每一個可以成為我們人生導師的機會。

(下附該文原文 pdf 檔)

Are Mentors Who We Think They Are?

By E. Callie Raulfs

As a recently minted Ph.D. and beginning postdoctoral fellow, I am well aware that mentorship is important for the success of my future career. I am less sure however, what mentorship means exactly or where to find it. To explore the topic of mentorship from a postdoctoral perspective, I agreed to write this column for AWIS magazine, despite the disclaimer that I do not claim to have all (or any!) of the answers on mentorship. Nevertheless, I do hope you will join me and even contribute your own thoughts on this very important subject. (Please see the note on the “Mentorship Forum” at the end of this column.)

To begin the journey, I bought a copy of Dr. Donna Dean’s handbook *Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relationships: A Handbook for Women in STEM* (1). I also attended a recent AWIS mentoring event hosted by Dr. Dean, and I have drawn from both of these sources in writing this column. Lastly, in keeping with this quarter’s theme on Arts & Sciences, I interviewed a long-time friend, Mr. Weston Cutter (2), a nationally recognized poet and instructor at Northwestern University, on mentorship in the humanities field. Although he speaks about mentorship from a writer’s perspective, I find his insights relevant to my own experiences. Tying together Weston’s opinion, my own personal musings, and Dr. Dean’s wisdom, I pose the question: “Are mentors who we think they are?”

I’ve always looked for mentorship from my research advisors. Before I started graduate school I imagined working passionately with my advisor on a cutting edge research project. We might pause for coffee or lunch, at which time my exemplary advisor would inquire about my mental and emotional health as well as future career plans. She would impart wisdom to me from her own experiences, helping me address my insecurities, and most importantly, find my way through a challenging and competitive field of research.

Needless to say, if you were as naïve as I was, you learned (as I eventually did) that your research advisor(s) were not the flawless mentors you wished for. While my advisors consistently demonstrated concern for my work and professional progress, I often felt



bitterness or disappointment when they did not demonstrate an interest in my career goals outside the lab. I criticized myself for choosing unsupportive advisors, thinking I had made a mistake in my mentorship decisions. If only I had selected another lab, I reasoned, everything would be better...

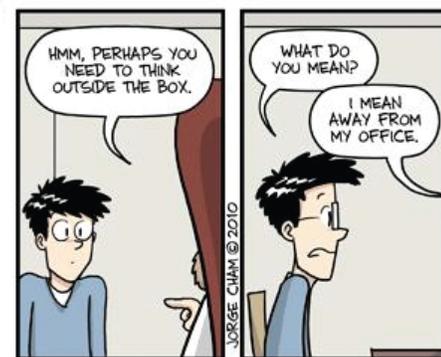
After reading Donna Dean’s mentorship handbook, however, I have come to realize that I relied too much on my advisors for mentorship that may not have been theirs to give. In fact, according to Dean’s handbook, our best mentors may not be our advisors. Although very often advisors do serve as mentors (and of course I’m not discounting the many qualified advisor/mentors out there), fundamentally the advisor-advisee relationship represents a conflict of interest. Advisors cannot always be our biggest support-

ers or promoters because our relationship with them is contractual. Most often our advisors are responsible for paying our stipends, providing overhead costs, and offering scientific vision for our research projects. In return we give them our hard work, brain power, and dedication to the projects at hand. The personal success of our advisors is implicit on this contract, making it difficult for them to always put our best interests first.

But if our advisors are not the best source of mentorship, where do experienced mentors come from?

Weston writes, “I’ve ... found mentors in unexpected places. I worked on river boats for 5 years, summers during college, and one of the pilots there (John Halter) was one of the first people who took me (and my writing, and my reading) seriously, and he’s had a profound and lasting influence on me and my work. After college I worked at a bookstore, and ended up under the crazed wing of maybe the smartest and best-read man ever, and there’s literally no part of my reading/writing life he didn’t have an influence on (2).”

Reflecting on this, I see now that I have held some pretty strong, preconceived notions of who represents a good mentor and where I should find them. Dean encourages us to think of men-



Piled Higher and Deeper” by Jorge Cham www.ph-dcomics.com (used with permission).

torship more broadly. One often undervalued source of mentorship includes peer mentors such as colleagues at our same career stage who can provide us with a tremendous amount of support and knowledge relevant to our everyday lives. Peer mentors can also serve as examples of the diversity of opportunities that await the other side of the next career transition. Since they are “in the system,” so to speak, they are crucial in helping us learn the ropes, develop technical skills, understand lab dynamics, and mature scientifically. Dean says, “Never, ever discount the importance of peer mentoring. At the end of the day, your supervisor may need to write you a letter of recommendation, but it is very likely a peer colleague or friend who will give you a contact or help you make that crucial connection that lands you the next job (1).”

Dean appeals to us to learn from “nonmentors” as strongly as we would from mentors, as “nonmentors.” Nonmentors may just be individuals who represent a mentorship style that does not jive with our own. More often than not, we easily identify nonmentors because they represent aspects of ourselves that may be weak or lacking. In my case, I would identify a highly aggressive mentor as a nonmentor, because I am generally not comfortable with this type of personality trait. Thus, I would benefit from developing better skills to deal with (rather than avoid) aggressive individuals as well as to become more appropriately assertive myself. In sum, recognizing how we categorize good mentorship and nonmentorship can also become a lesson in developing our own personal strengths and identifying our weaknesses.

Now that I’ve broadened my understanding of mentorship a little, I wonder how might I go about finding these elusive individuals?

Weston writes, “Every instance of mentorship I’ve engaged in has, aside from those which have been academically/educationally stipulated, come about because of this sort of longing or craving, but never in any clear way. I know I’ve always looked for models, which may have a lot to do with this particular field. None of the mentor relationships I’ve ever been in have been formal.” (2)

The AWIS mentorship session I attended also addressed the informality of finding good mentorship. One of the female scientists present likened it to dating, saying, “You can’t just go up to a person you find attractive and ask him/her to be your boy/girlfriend.” The discussion consensus was that finding good mentors is all about building substantive relationships. Just as no relationship is ideal, however, no mentoring relationship is ideal either. It is a give-and-take process. To paraphrase another session participant, mentorship is a two-way street; there is always something a mentee can bring to the table. Additionally for the mentors, there is always something to learn from your mentees. For me, the thought that I should mentor and care for my mentors as much as I expected them to do for me was a novel idea

When I asked the AWIS session participants how to locate mentors outside the lab, several participants told me it is a slow and

potentially painful process. Oftentimes you may just not click with the other person. Or perhaps the mentor you are pursuing is really just too overwhelmed to handle the responsibility. But some tried-and-true advice included being involved, being around, volunteering, following through, and being persistent. “It starts with networking,” one woman said. Another idea was to approach people for specific short-term mentorship needs, perhaps help with writing a fellowship application, attending a conference, or learning more about a specific job or career path. These short-term mentorship interactions also have the added bonus of helping to build solid relationships necessary for long-term mentorship.

So returning to the question, “Are mentors who we think they are?” I have to say, indeed no. My perceptions were idealistic and self-limiting. After reevaluating my understanding of mentorship (although I’m still not sure how to find mentors, a subject for future columns), I am beginning to feel that I am not as isolated as I once thought I was: there is potential for mentors at my fingertips.

I’d like to close with a quote from Weston, who eloquently sums up the importance of mentorship.

“The real magic of mentoring, it seems to me, has to do with the fact that, for most people, once they’re done with their schooling, they’re done with having relationships with folks from whom they’ve clearly got lots to learn, and having a mentor allows someone the deep and sexy satisfaction of being able to still learn, which I think is an ache we all have, for life... Anyway, we probably don’t even know how to fully value the importance of mentorship in artistic fields—they’re infinitely valuable, those relationships (2).” ■

References

1. Dean, D. J. (2009). *Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relationships: A Handbook for Women in STEM*. New York: Springer.
2. Weston Cutter is a writing instructor at Northwestern University in Orange City, Iowa. To read more of Weston’s poems and writings, please visit Corduroy Books at: <http://corduroybooks.wordpress.com/bio/>.

Mentorship Forum

Do you have a mentorship story or suggestion for topics you’d like to see covered in the mentorship column? Please contact Callie at callie.raulfs@gmail.com with the subject title “Mentorship Forum.”



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