



# On being a mentor ...

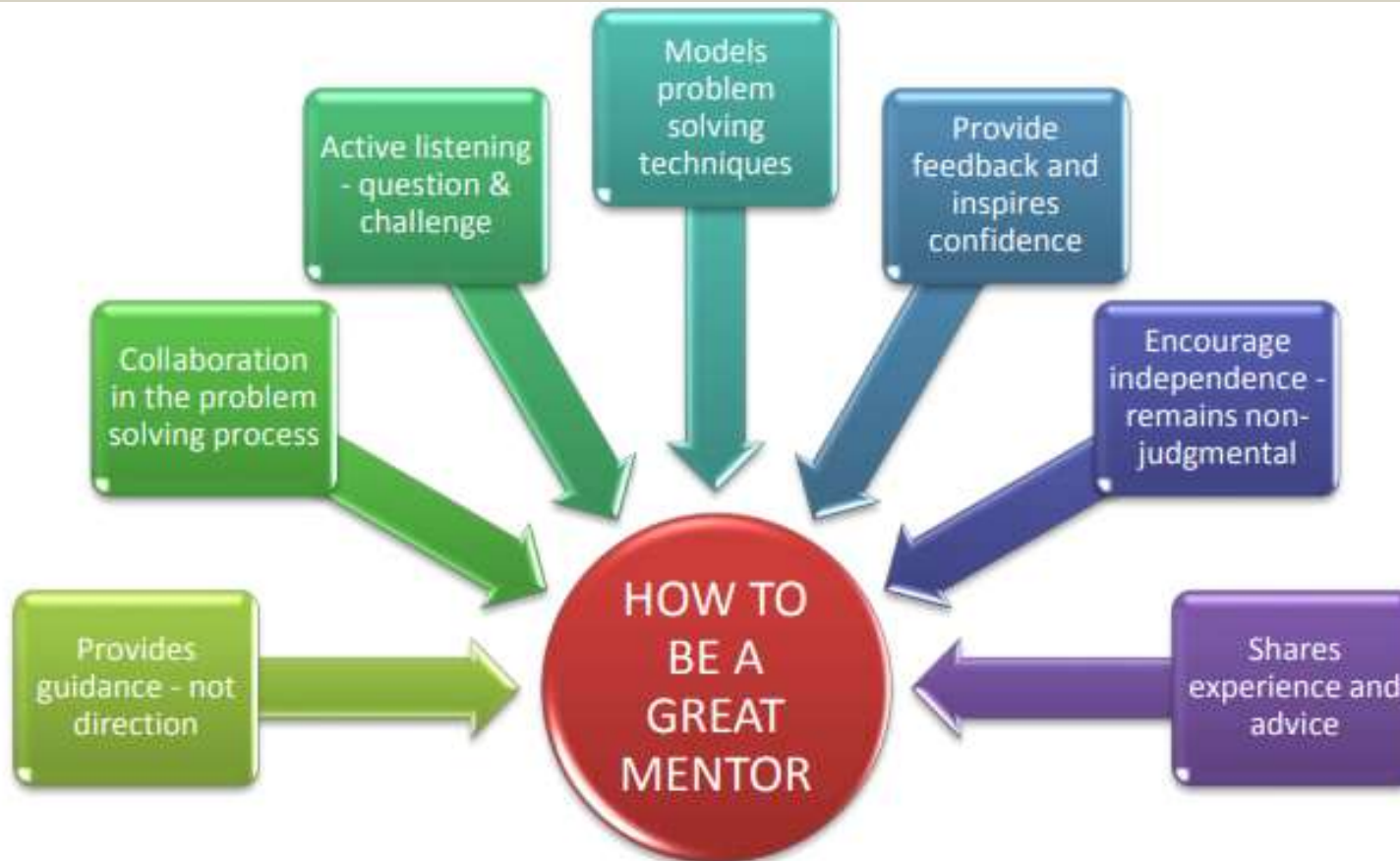
*“... because there is so much more to being a successful science professional than knowing scientific concepts and laboratory techniques.”*

Dr Stephanie J. Bird, MIT



# What does a mentor do?

Pfund defines mentoring as “engaging in a **collaborative learning relationship** that proceeds through **purposeful** stages over time and has the primary goal of helping **mentees acquire the essential competencies needed for success** in their chosen career.” Therefore, mentoring as a collaborative process requires **shared responsibility** between mentor and mentee to make it work.



# A mentor is not a supervisor



## A PhD Supervisor

- focuses on **academic progress**
- serves as an **information source**.

### PhD supervisors ...

- Provide expert advice and guidance on the research proposal
- Help refine the hypothesis and guide the direction of supplementary predictions
- Sharpen the incremental contribution of the research work
- Identify potential weaknesses in the theoretical framework
- Pinpoint potential problems with research design and offer solutions
- Draws attention to innovative methodologies and datasets
- Coach in work planning, organisation, dealing with deadlines
- Guide one on managing a lab, obtaining funding, committees to join (or not)
- Share the 'ins & outs' of authorship and/or sharing credit

## A Mentor

- **helps to navigate** academia, the profession and the organisation
- **provides support**: wellbeing & emotional
- **assists career guidance & role modelling**

### Mentors act as ...

- **Advisers**, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge
- **Supporters**, people who give emotional and moral encouragement
- **Tutors**, people who give specific feedback on your performance
- **Masters**, in the sense of employers to whom you might be apprenticed
- **Sponsors**, sources of information about, and aid in, obtaining opportunities
- **Models** of the kind of person you should be as an academic scholar

From a speech by Morris Zelditch, an American sociologist and emeritus professor of sociology at Stanford University

# Mentor: self-assessment



To what extent do I ...

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- Listen more than I talk
- Focus on the other person, not myself
- Ask open questions
- Be a learning facilitator, emphasising questions and exploration over advice-giving
- Encourage, inspire and challenge others, helping them find their own interpretations and approaches
- Help others reflect on successful strategies they have used in the past, and how to transfer/adapt these for new situations
- Identify, and inquire about, signs of discomfort or hesitation
- Identify goals, signposts or other measures of success
- Provide perspective, a reality check, constructive feedback
- Recognise and encourage another person's potential
- Help others to work through how to approach problem-solving
- Tell others, genuinely, I believe in their capability
- Help others to recognise achievements & celebrate successes
- Ask for specific feedback about the mentoring relationship
- Have the courage to share my experience, the good and not-so-good



# Mentoring Conversations

# The first meeting ...

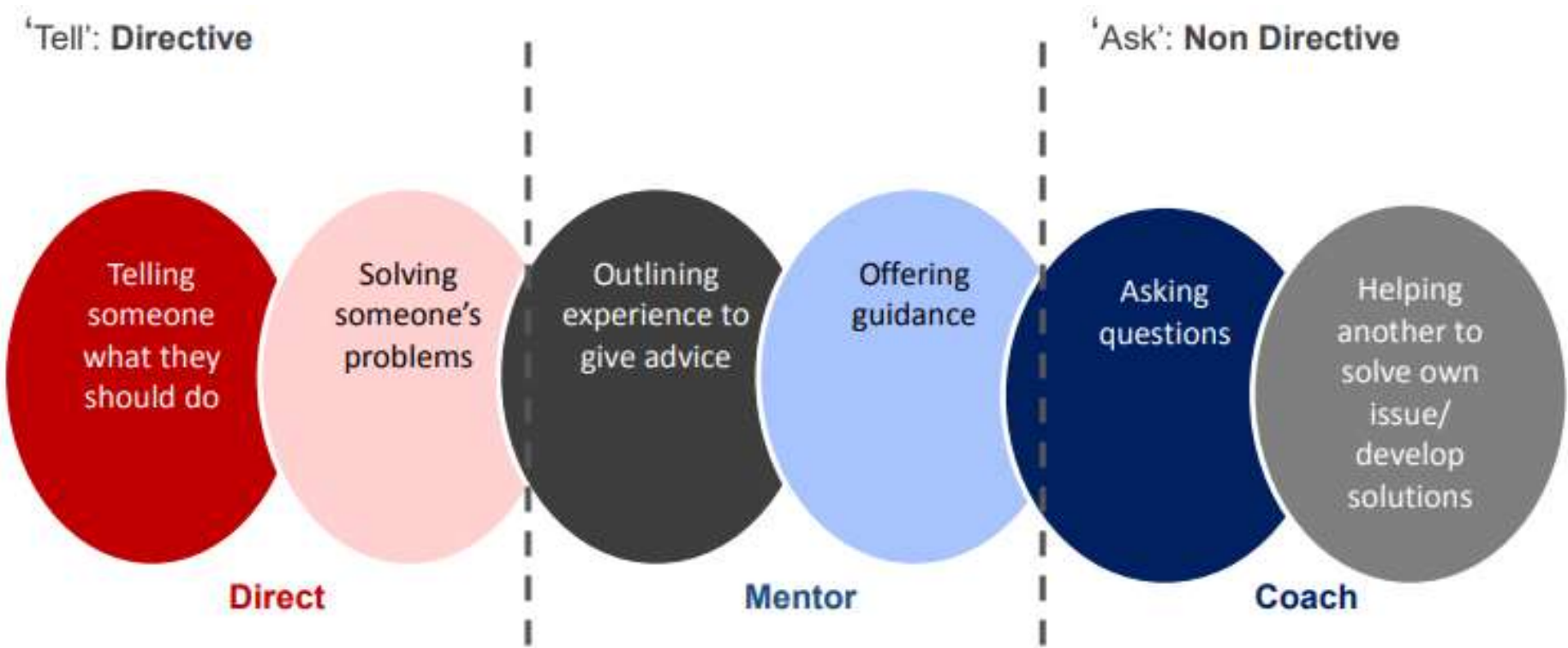


A guide to the first official mentoring meeting

<b>Introduction &amp; Check-in</b> (10 mins)	Ask how the mentor is and what's happened since the introductory meeting. Share your thoughts or reflections on working together since the 'intro' meeting.
<b>Review Goals</b> (15 mins)	Reflect on which goals (mentioned at the intro meeting) you're best positioned to assist with, and in which ways. Let mentee know which goals you are less able to help with, and point them towards alternative resources, if possible.
<b>Refine Goals and Develop Strategies</b> (20 mins)	With your mentee, choose a few goals (for the forthcoming sessions) and first steps.
<b>Establish meeting protocols</b> (10 mins)	Discuss your contact preferences for in-between meetings (email, visit, etc) as well as your availability. Ask them about their constraints as well.
<b>Wrap Up</b> (5 mins)	Review and summarise this meeting. Confirm any commitments or action plans you've made. Express how you're looking forward to meeting next. Confirm next meeting.

# Mentoring conversations

A spectrum ...



Examples: "Research process"

..... "organisational ways"  
"self-management"  
"well-being"

..... "working with colleagues"

# What would we discuss?



Our survey results: N=24

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	# participants rating 'very useful' or 'somewhat useful'
career development/career planning	20
dealing with competitiveness in science	20
dealing with work planning and organization	20
dealing with deadlines	20
problems/conflicts solving	20
personal development	19
developing and expanding connections with peers	19
pitching research ideas	19
managing conflicts	19
writing effectively	18
successful and effective communication	18
maintenance of healthy work-life balance	18
establishing a good relationship with supervisory team	17
establishing a good relationship with lab members	17



# Discussion prompts

A sample of questions ...



## Goal Setting

- What are your expectations about these/this meeting(s)?
- What would you like to achieve/change? How important is this to you? What impact will it have?
- What assistance are you looking for?
- What's working well for you & not so well?

## GROW+ model:

**G:** What are your goals, what are you aiming to achieve?

**R:** What's currently happening in relation to these?

**O:** How can you move your goals forward? What are your options?

**W:** So what's the first step? Next step? By when? Who could help?

**+** : What could get in the way? How could you respond? What can you do if this happens?

## Exploring:

- What will be easiest for you? What will be the hardest part of this for you?
- What, if anything, have you been avoiding?
- What's the upside? Downside?
- What is your mindset in relation to this?
- How might you keep on track?
- What's holding you back?
- What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?

## Ways to introduce/share your own experience:

- It may help to think about ...
- I wish I had known at the time .....
- The work I am most proud of is .....
- I am so glad I did/didn't .....
- A significant obstacle I overcame was .....
- My biggest learning curve has been ....
- My greatest professional success or achievement is .....
- When I graduated, I didn't realise ....
- If there's one thing I believe today's PhD's / aspiring academics should know, it's .....

- If you could start/stop one thing right now, what would it be?

# Something not quite right?

**Chances are you are right. Don't ignore your instinct. Start a conversation and listen without judgement.**



## 1. Ask R U OK?

“How are you going?” or “I’ve noticed that you’re not quite yourself lately. How are you travelling?”

“I’ve noticed that you seem really tired recently” or “You seem less chatty than usual. How are you going?”



## 2. Listen without judgement

Take what they say seriously

Don't interrupt or rush the conversation

If they need time to think, try and sit patiently with the silence. Encourage them to explain

If they get angry or upset, stay calm and don't take it personally. Let them know you're asking because you're concerned



## 3. Encourage action

Ask them: “Where do you think we can go from here?” Ask: “What would be a good first step we can take?” Also ask: “What do you need from me? How can I help?”

Good options for action might include talking to family, a trusted friend, their doctor or Student Wellbeing.



## 4. Check in

Remember to check in again in a few.

Ask if they've found a better way to manage the situation. If they haven't done anything, they might just need someone to listen to them for the moment. You could ask, “Do you think it would be useful if we looked into finding some professional or other support?”

# What if I can't help ...

How to link into other support and advice



## Their network:

Ask who they know who they could talk with – a friend, family, their GP?

## Student Wellbeing

Ground Floor, Australian Hearing Hub  
16 University Avenue  
T: +61 2 9850 7497  
E: [wellbeing@mq.edu.au](mailto:wellbeing@mq.edu.au)

## Contact 'My Coach' EAP


Manager's advice line  
(for MQ staff only)  
<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/wellbeing/employee-assistance-program>

In the case of depression/anxiety:  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)  
Phone: 1300 22 4636

iLearn

CareWISE

Welcome to CareWISE

 A suite of resources curated to assist Macquarie University employees when responding to and supporting those with wellbeing needs

Ask your own **mentor** for advice

# 'No fault' closure

Bringing the mentoring relationship to an end

## Reasons for Ending

- the mentee has achieved his/her goal(s)
- the agreed timeframe has lapsed
- you can no longer commit to the mentoring
- the mentoring relationship isn't working
- changing work/life circumstances

## Ending with a 'no blame' approach

- Give advance notice. Your mentee will appreciate knowing that you can only offer a few more mentoring conversations.
- **Communicate the reason(s)** for ending the relationship – be honest and tell your mentor/mentee why you are ending the relationship. This may be difficult but it is important and shows respect to the other party.
- Give your mentor/mentee honest feedback – what worked well, what didn't – just because your relationship hasn't worked out doesn't mean they won't be successful in another relationship.
- Ending a mentoring arrangement prematurely can be uncomfortable, so it is important to adopt a no-blame approach. If this situation arises, you could say something similar to:
- *"I'm finding that I can't support you in the way I think you need and it may be in your best interest for you to find somebody who has a similar style and approach to your own."*
- Be clear about future contact – e.g. is it 'call me anytime' or is it 'I wish you well, please keep me posted about your progress with an occasional email' ?
- Remember, gratitude is the key to leaving gracefully.



# How will it work?

# Our Mentoring in practice ...

Responses to our questionnaire



## Selecting a mentor

- From the list of profiles available online
- Students would like to know:
  - **mentor's career path**
  - **the field of research**
  - **mentor's achievements**
  - **personal interests**

## Meetings

- flexible meetings ... approx. 1 hour, at least twice per year
- mentor - mentee relationship is anonymous
- Mentees are responsible to plan, schedule and lead the meetings

# How it will work ...



## Step 1.

Submit your profile using the template

## Step 2.

### PhD students will:

- submit an online application, and
- select up to 3 preferred mentors
- An impartial person will match mentor to mentee

## Step 3.

Mentor and mentee will be notified about assignment/matching. The mentee will arrange the first meeting. Potential topics for the first meeting:

- Mentee's backgrounds, research, achievements, interests & goals for mentoring
- Your background, research, career journey and reason to be a mentor
- Is this a suitable mentoring match?
- How would the mentoring work – focus, timing, frequency, availability
- Agree a 'no-fault' ending of the mentoring in the event the mentor or mentee is unable to continue

## Step 4.

Program commences November 2019

## Step 5.

Mid 2020:  
Check-in session for mentors to discuss:

- how it's working
- tips & tricky bits
- Q & A