Investing in Our Future: Enhancing the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

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OBJECTIVES

Identify methods for setting up a successful mentoring relationship, including implementation of practical logistics, application of useful resources, and establishment of prioritized goals.

Reflect upon successful (and unsuccessful) practices of prior mentors and mentees and how to apply (or avoid) these in your current mentoring relationships

Compare and contrast formal and informal mentoring processes, identifying options for current application in your own settings, no matter how busy you are.
NEED FOR MENTORING OF PSYCHOLOGY LEADERS

• Leadership development is critical in everchanging health care environment.

• Leatt and Porter (2003) note commitment to leadership development is an essential component for sustaining the organization’s development.

• Quadruple Aim: Improving the health of populations, enhancing patient experience, focus on staff work life, and reducing per capita cost (Berwick, Nolan, & Whittington, 2008, Bodenheimer & Sinsky, 2014).

• MH leaders require knowledge beyond clinical processes and outcomes to achieve Quadruple Aim.
  • Need knowledge in strategic planning, human resource management, program evaluation, resource utilization and budget development, clinical efficiencies, productivity awareness.
MENTORING IN A NUTSHELL

In order to be a mentor, and an effective one, one must care. You must care. You don’t have to know how many square miles are in Idaho, you don’t need to know what is the chemical makeup of chemistry, or of blood or water. Know what you know and care about the person, care about what you know and care about the person you’re sharing with.

— Maya Angelou —

AZ QUOTES
NEED FOR MENTORING OF PSYCHOLOGY LEADERS

• Some VA training programs have provided brief administrative and leadership rotations, particularly at the postdoctoral level.

• General lack of training in business operations across MH training (Burney et al., 2009; Kearney, Smith, & Pomerantz, 2015).

• Newly published Standards of Accreditation, little mention of specific business operations and clinical administration competencies necessary for psychologists beyond competencies mentioned for supervision, consultation, and interprofessional or interdisciplinary skills and communication and interpersonal skills.

• Strong clinical skills may have little correlation in the successful day-today operation of a complex operational unit with multiple specialties, diverse programs, and competing local and national demands.
OUTCOMES OF SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP MENTORING

• Related to reduction in employee turnover, increased productivity, and improved employee satisfaction (Johnson, 2003; Wright & Wright, 1987).
• Enhances competency obtainment and learning (Aryee & Chay, 1994; Lankau & Scandura, 2002)
• Pilot study of mental health leaders in the VHA National MH Leadership Mentoring Program (Kearney et al., 2018) showed:
  • Significant improvements in strategic planning, human resource knowledge and application, systems understanding, MH business operations, and professional development
  • Significant improvements in their staff’s employee satisfaction and reduction in burnout
• Note: this is a virtual mentoring program!
SETTING UP SUCCESSFUL FORMAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: LOGISTICS

- Committed time on a regular basis is important
- Agreed upon frequency, length, and duration of sessions (after first meeting)
- Flexibility when meetings need to be rescheduled
- Establishing agenda setting
- Establish a mentoring agreement
SETTING UP SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: ESTABLISHING PRIORITIZED GOALS

• Creating a shared set of goals for the relationship
• Obtain additional information
  • [360 degree evaluations](#)
  • Identification of self reported needs based on self evaluations (e.g., VHA MH Leadership Skills Self-Assessment Tool for MH chiefs; PPAQ for PCMHI fidelity, etc)
  • Outline of functional statement job requirements
  • Supervisory input
  • Discussion with others in your same role at other facilities
SETTING UP SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS:
ESTABLISHING PRIORITIZED GOALS

• Critical to reflect not only on opportunities for growth, but also strengths
• What goals will be worth your return on investment?
  • Example: Hiring to your own “weaknesses”
### GROW Model – Goal, Reality, Options, Will

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1: Establish the Goal.</th>
<th>Stage 2: Examine Current Reality</th>
<th>Stage 3: Explore the Options</th>
<th>Stage 4: Establish the Will</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“What do you want to achieve?”</td>
<td>“What have you done so far to achieve the goal?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;How will you know that you have achieved your goal?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;What is happening now?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;How will you know the problem is solved?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;What, who, when, how often&quot;</td>
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<td>“When do you want to achieve it by?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;What else could you do?&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;What if this or that constraint were removed?&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;What are the benefits and downsides of each option?&quot;</td>
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<td>“What challenges have you met?”</td>
<td>“What factors will you use to weigh up the options?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“What challenges have you overcome?”</td>
<td>“What factors will you use to weigh up the options?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;So what will you do now and when?&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;What could stop you moving forward?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;What could stop you moving forward?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;And how will you overcome it?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Will this address your goal?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;How likely is this option to succeed?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;What else will you do?&quot;</td>
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USEFUL MENTORING RESOURCES

- Personal Development Plan
- I-Lead 360 Plan
- VHA Mentor Certification
WHAT WERE HELPFUL MENTORING PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED BY PRIOR MENTORS? MENTEES?
ENHANCING SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: MENTOR ROLES (VHA MENTOR CERTIFICATION MANUAL)

• Provide edible feedback (think sandwich)
• Ask empowering questions
  • What is your most powerful next step?
  • What would you try if you knew you could not fail?
  • If you had unlimited resources, what might you do?
• Deeply listen
• Establish Trust
• Create true awareness
  • What is happening now?
  • What and how great is your concern about it? What’s underneath that?
  • How much control do you personally have over the outcome?
SKILLS AND ABILITIES OF EFFECTIVE MENTORS
(VHA MENTORING CERTIFICATION GUIDELINE)

• Willingness to provide guidance.
• Ability to invest time monthly for at least one year per mentee.
• Willingness to allow mentees to observe you conducting business.
• Ability to share company goals and vision.
• Ability to make accurate observations about the mentee’s performance, attitude, career potential,
• Ability to use coaching skills.
• Ability to guide mentees on career development questions.
• Willingness to let actions speak louder than words—ability to model leadership.
• Ability to teach mentees how to navigate the political structures of the organization and open doors for them.
ENHANCING SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: MENTEE SUGGESTIONS

- Setting the agenda
- Establishing clear goals for each conversation
- Follow up on agreed upon next steps
- Identifying where other resources would be beneficial
WHAT WERE UNHELPFUL MENTORING PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED BY PRIOR MENTORS? MENTEES?
UNSUCCESSFUL MENTOR AND MENTEE PRACTICES

- Unrealistic expectations for the mentoring relationship
- Not setting clear goals for the relationship
- Not clearly articulating growth areas and sharing “failures” as well as successes
- Lack of time investment
- Not following through with sharing resources or implementation of actions
**FORMAL VS. INFORMAL MENTORING PROCESSES**

*Successful people turn everyone who can help them into sometime mentors.”*  
*John Crosby*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
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<td>Usually a part of a formal organizational program</td>
<td>No formal program</td>
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<td>Mentor frequently matched to mentee</td>
<td>Mentee “selects” mentor</td>
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<td>Formal requirements for mentors/mentees</td>
<td>Requirements self imposed if present</td>
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<td>Often include particular mentoring materials</td>
<td>No set particular materials</td>
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<td>Structured timelines – frequency/duration</td>
<td>No set timelines</td>
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CHOOSING FORMAL VS. INFORMAL MENTORING: MENTOR REFLECTIONS

What is my time availability?

What do I hope to accomplish? Do I have specific skills I wish to share?

How important is it for me to select my own mentee?
CHOOSING FORMAL VS. INFORMAL MENTORING:
MENTOR REFLECTIONS

What is my time availability?

What do I hope to accomplish? Do I have specific skills I wish to obtain?

How important is it for me to select my own mentor?

Am I in a new position or role? Am I looking to obtain a particular position?
A THIRD MENTORING TYPE: PEER MENTORS

• Benefits
  • Selection is individualized to your needs (e.g., other chiefs, TDs, ECPs)
  • Goals are flexible
  • Can be short or long term
  • Can be group or individual

• Processes to establish
  • Self initiation required
  • If a group mentoring, set ground rules
  • Address logistics
  • Set goals

• Chips and Salsa Example
MAKING TIME FOR MENTORING

• There is always time for mentoring.
• Set timelines that are obtainable.
• Identify that there will be seasons where formal mentoring is not an option (e.g., can’t commit to monthly meetings, family priorities, etc). Look then for ways to informally mentor.
• Need for open door and how to do that even virtually.
• Realize as a mentor the long term impact you are having....time is worth that investment
• Responsibility for giving back to the next generation
LAST WORD FOR MENTEES

• Avoid the pedestal phenomenon
• No one mentor can give you all the mentoring you desire.
• Honor the gift you are being given by returning the favor to those behind you.
• You can already be a mentor now to someone else.
The best gift you can ever give your mentor is to grow. They feed off your growth. I believe that everyone has the seed of success inside, but too many people can’t find it in themselves and as a result do not reach their potential. But there are those whose purpose in life is to fertilize the seed of potential in another, who are rewarded by seeing that person grow and blossom before their eyes. Raising up others to a higher level is a mentor’s joy and sustenance.

John C. Maxwell
REFERENCES


