

# Lessons Learned as a New Investigator

The top 10 secrets for success

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Be Mentored

# Who is a Mentor?

- Your previous/current supervisor
- A senior colleague in same/another field
- Someone who has recently lived through the new investigator experience
- The “behind the scenes mentor”
- A variety of mentors may be useful

# Qualities of a good mentor

- Enthusiasm, inspiration, optimism
- Appreciating individual differences
- Respect
- Unselfishness
- Support for other than one's own
- Teaching and communication

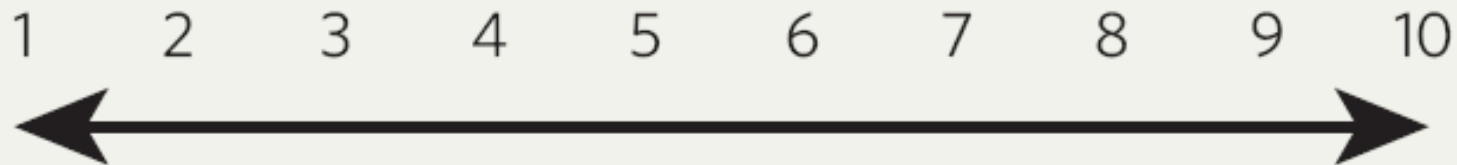
**Adrian Lee, Carina Dennis and Philip Campbell** . Vol 447|14 June 2007  
*Nature's guide for mentors. **Having a good mentor early in your career can mean the difference between success and failure in any field.***

## The direction-self-direction scale

Guided independence  
and scientific creativity

Micromangement

Sink  
or swim



# Who isn't a mentor?

- Simply being a supervisor does not imply mentorship
- Those who engage in sabotage, bullying, revenge-seeking and exploitation.
- those who mistake their own ancient successes for relevant advice

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Be Protected... aka  
Learn to say no!

3

Be Focused

4

Be knowledgeable

5

Be flexible

6

Be persistent



7

Be Balanced



8

Be a collaborator

9

Be able to seize an  
opportunity

10

Take time to write, re-write  
and re-write

And now some practical  
advice

# Milestones for an early career

- Getting first peer reviewed grant
- Getting peer reviewed salary support award
- Publishing 2-6 papers/year (depends on discipline)
- Becoming an expert

# Know

- What is expected from you
- What other colleagues have done recently/are doing
- What internal grants, awards available
- BTW. Keep everything in as organized a way as possible (will come in handy for all applications/ promotion)

# Grants

- Apply early and often
- Apply to a variety to granting agencies
- Small grants are good to start with (and may be more successful)
- Remember you are new at this– ask and accept critical review from respected colleagues well before submission

# Salary Awards

- Protection from teaching and administrative responsibilities paramount in first 3 years
- Will help to obtain confidence of granting agency if they see you are protected and will allow you to have the time to do what you need to
- Ask to see recent successful applications from junior faculty
- Pick your referees carefully

# Publishing

- Fewer good quality publications better than a lot of case reports or reviews which can take valuable time from your real research writing
- Find the journals that have medium/high impact so you can get noticed
- Several first authored papers from your fellowship and then your independent career
- Move to senior authorship after approx. 3 years
- Find a writing time that is protected each week

# Students

- Its good to have students *if* ...
  - they will be a help (e.g. good, quite independent/need not too much supervision)
- Limit number of students in first 2-3 years

# Find your niche/focus area

- It is important for competitive success that you develop an area where you can become an or the expert locally and ultimately nationally and internationally
- Also is importance not to squander your intellectual work in too many areas—productivity will be better overall

Have Fun!

