

My mentoring philosophy

My goals: My overarching goal as a mentor is to empower my mentees to meet their goals, and to get there by having fun and doing great science. In my opinion, the health and wellbeing of my lab members is even more important than the science. This doesn't mean I'm unconcerned with the productivity of the lab—productivity is the only way for the lab to stay alive, so I have to make sure we're writing papers and getting funding—but it does mean that your health and happiness come first.

How we will work together: Working in a lab is a collaboration. We will work collaboratively, through mutual respect and open conversation, to identify both your future goals and how you work best (what motivates you, what you find stifling, what you need to do your best work and be your best self). This can't happen unless we create a safe environment in which we can all thrive, which relies on a relationship rooted in honesty, mutual trust, and mutual respect. I will do my best to ensure that you always know I care about you and your success, and I ask for your compassion in moments of grumpiness or stress (which will *absolutely* happen). I will also do my best to mentor flexibly, and to provide what each individual needs to the best of my capability. This means my mentorship strategy will differ among lab members, which sounds great, and is what makes sense! But by definition that means that everyone isn't treated exactly the same, because everyone has different needs, and that may sometimes feel uneven or unfair. If I'm doing something that doesn't work for you or that is creating strife in the lab, I ask that you let me know so that I can fix it. Feedback is an important part of assessment, and I will need your help in evaluating my mentorship and how it is working (or not!) for you. As the lab grows, I plan to have regular check-ins with the lab group about evaluating my own mentorship.

Role of the mentee: Being a trainee in biology means that you're trying it out for size. You don't *want to be* a scientist, you *are* a scientist from the first moment you engage in research. You are the leader of your projects and/or your dissertation, and you should feel fully invested in them and your own development as a scientist. It's ultimately your responsibility to pursue projects that interest you, to collect and analyze your data, and to present your results in the form of publications, talks, and conference presentations. I am your guide in this process. Together, we will read papers and books, design projects, discuss how to analyze data and what tools and methods might work best, write papers, and design presentations. It takes a lot of confidence to feel ownership of your research, more than I had as a PhD student, and I will do everything I can to help you get there.

Role of the mentor: I will provide positive feedback, encourage collaborative relationships when outside expertise is needed, point out areas for improvement in your research (as Stacey Smith says, like being that honest friend who points out you have something in your teeth, just in a scientific way), offer necessary resources (like skills training, relevant references for your projects, mental health resources, etc.), and generally be your sponsor, promoter, and cheerleader.

Here are a few examples of what I've learned about myself and my working style, to give you some insight into me and how I work:

- I use deadlines as a motivator and stress is my main form of cardiovascular exercise. I recognize this is unhealthy, and I'm working on it in therapy.
- I need a very quiet space with very few distractions (like a room with no windows and blank walls) to concentrate best. No working in coffee shops for me.
- I am a very direct communicator, in a way that other people sometimes find abrasive or aggressive. I am learning to tone this down, but it's a process. Please always know that it's not you, it's me. This caused some issues for my relationships with past advisors of mine, who are indirect communicators.
- I am anti-motivated by competition with others. Pressure from supervisors to meet unclear expectations makes me rebel and intentionally slow down my own progress. If I'm the only one being cautious, I feel like I have to be extra cautious for everyone.
- I generally feel like I'm never doing enough and don't belong here. (See [imposter syndrome](#); but also see [this](#).) I'm committed to ensuring everyone who wants to be in science feels like they belong.