Mentoring Philosophy  
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Throughout the years of serving in various mentoring positions, my mentoring philosophy has evolved to reflect my training in educational psychology research, the lessons I have learned from my mentors and mentees, the challenges I have overcome, and the values and beliefs I hold as a mentor. Currently, my primary mentorship role is realized through my position as a cognitive lab manager, in which I have the opportunity to mentor four undergraduate research assistants. My mentoring philosophy embodies the following paradoxes of the mentorship relationship that I have come to appreciate: 1) to effectively mentor, I must actively seek to learn, 2) being qualified to mentor necessitates domain expertise, however facilitating mentee’s academic development is often prompted by asking them questions, 3) rigorous, empirically based research is essential, but sharing personal experiences provide valuable opportunities for meaningful mentorship relationships, and finally 4) application of educational/psychological theories to effective mentorship practices can be highly effective, but there are some lessons that cannot be taught. Bearing these nuances of mentoring in mind, the ultimate goal for every mentoring opportunity I have is to find a harmony among the many mentorship dialectics.

Mentoring is intricately tied to learning. I have found that the more open I am to learn from my own mentors and mentees, the better I am able to mentor. I have had the privilege of meeting students from diverse academic and personal backgrounds, who have each provided a unique mentor-mentee dynamic. I believe that investing the effort to familiarize myself with students’ prior knowledge, interests, and goals supports my ability to mentor them in a manner that is optimally challenging, engaging, and meaningful for my mentee. I strongly encourage our undergraduate research assistants to critically test what they are learning against the content we discuss in our lab meetings, and strive to initiate in-depth discussions of our research projects. I practice responsive mentoring by making time to pull apart complex cognitive, educational, and psychology theories underlying our research studies, prompting our research assistants to ask questions, and sharing how the principles and concepts have practical applications to the way we learn. I take genuine interest in the courses they are taking, volunteering experiences they are engaged in, and other aspects of their academic lives in order to help make meaningful links between what they are doing outside of the lab with the work they are conducting within the lab.

A benefit of serving as a cognitive lab manager is that the information is often directly applicable to the lives of students from a broad range of backgrounds. As a mentor, I commit myself to remaining informed about ongoing research findings, issues, and current events that are tied to the educational psychology research being conducted in our laboratory. I believe that having a solid foundation and an up-to-date knowledge base of our studies is a prerequisite to successfully engaging the research assistants in inquiry based learning through hands on lab experiences. In addition to providing our research assistants with experience in research logistics such as data collection and analysis, I sought out additional opportunities to engage them in more critical reflections and applications of the research-based practices they were learning about in our laboratory. I was passionate about raising their awareness regarding the multidimensional application of different psychological theories, promoting an appreciation of diverse perspectives, having them develop critical thinking skills to identify gaps in the academic literature.

As such, in collaboration with my advisor (and primary mentor) whom I received excellent opportunities to engage in meaningful research experiences during my graduate career, monthly lab meetings were set in place to give our undergraduate research assistants an opportunity to share their ideas, thoughts, and opinions regarding the studies conducted in our lab. During the lab meeting, my goal is to set an inviting atmosphere that allows our undergraduate research assistants to take ownership of their research experiences, and I take on the role of a facilitator and mentor rather than a supervisor and manager. I have taken the initiative to prepare group discussion questions regarding academic journal
articles as they relate to our research studies, provide opportunities for our research assistants to share their specific research interests and career goals, and also give us feedback on the progress of ongoing studies. I have also updated our laboratory website to include pictures and biographies of our research assistants to represent the important role they play in our lab, as well as to support their professional development. My goal is to have them meaningfully engaged and invested in the projects that we are conducting in the lab. As a mentor, I am consistently disseminating information regarding opportunities for academic and professional development, including additional research opportunities, information about involvement in professional organizations, advice on courses, graduate programs, and more.

Major goals of the lab meetings are aimed to have our research assistants see the value and relevance of research as well as to train them to become critical consumers of information. I am passionate about inciting our undergraduate students’ confidence, evoking excitement in their pursuit of knowledge, and celebrating new discoveries and realizations. As a mentor, I challenge our research assistants to actively engage in the creative process of research: idea generation, synthesis of distally related concepts, and original construction of knowledge. With the permission of my advisor, I recently encouraged our RAs to consider pursuing an honors thesis, prompted them to share their proposals at our lab meetings in order to receive constructive feedback, and offered our lab resources to potentially run their original research studies. I have also invited them to a research talk I will be giving with my advisor at the University of Florida International Center, to familiarize them with research presentations. We are currently collaborating with our undergraduate RAs on several poster presentations of the studies in our lab to submit for the annual Graduate Student Research Day at UF. These activities reflect my commitment to remember that meaningful learning via mentorship is rarely a passive experience, but instead, results from providing my mentees the opportunities to become the active agent of their educational and growing experiences.

Excellent preparation, advanced grasp of theory and research-based information, and organization are undeniably linked to my ability to serve as an effective mentor in an academic setting. I believe in setting high standards and creating a rigorous research environment, and I have continually observed our research assistants rise to the challenges. However, I am also sensitive to the importance of creating a supportive atmosphere and strive to develop a community of researchers who share mutual respect and understanding. I believe that providing opportunities for our research assistants to reinforce skills associated with the critically examination of psychological constructs is important, but I also value the opportunities to meaningfully apply the research to our lives. I enthusiastically embrace spontaneous mentoring and learning moments in which the research assistants venture to share their unique stories as they relate to their classes, research, and future academic goals. I am open to hearing about their experiences as well as sharing my own as they reflect on their knowledge and understanding. I frequently take time to speak with our research assistants’ one-on-one, and find great fulfillment in learning more about the myriad of unique ideas, goals, and interests each of them have.

As a mentor, I hope to make a contribution to my mentees’ careers as ongoing learners that are far reaching and extend beyond the span of their research experience in our lab. For me, an important goal of mentoring is to foster a live curiosity and intrinsic motivation within my mentees that will orient them towards meaningful learning and critical reasoning in their future personal, educational, and professional experiences. Ultimately, I strive to build opportunities for my mentees to develop the tools and skills that will give them the confidence to dig deeper into the paradoxes and nuances in their field, to tolerate times of ambiguity, and to stand up to challenges that will propel them to greater understanding. The expertise in educational psychology and the repertoire of teaching and mentoring tools I have acquired during my graduate career serve to enhance my mentorship abilities. However, I believe that the practice of mentoring involves a merging of the sciences and the arts. As I participate in the exciting exchange of knowledge and experiences, mentoring is an adventure in which I am discovering new challenges every day.

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