

# The pros and cons of mentoring

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## Abstract

Mentoring is a situation where both parties can win. While teaching another individual, it is amazing how much the mentor learns. The mentee will bring new information, and should challenge the paradigms of the mentor, resulting in both individuals growing in knowledge.

**Key words:** bovine, practice, mentor

## Résumé

Le mentorat permet à toutes les parties de gagner. Le mentor peut étonnamment apprendre beaucoup en enseignant à un autre. Le protégé apportera de nouvelles idées et pourrait remettre en cause les paradigmes du mentor. Il en résultera un approfondissement de la connaissance pour les deux parties.

## Introduction

The definition of a mentor is a wise and trusted counselor or teacher, and an influential senior sponsor or supporter.

The definition of a mentee is a person guided by a mentor.

## Pros and Cons

Some of the pros of mentoring are:

- It forces you to prove your paradigms. Mentees have challenged me to prove what I thought I knew to be true for decades. I no doubt have conducted more laboratory work because of having a mentee with me than any other time. I would estimate 20% of the time the results prove my assumptions to be incorrect.
- It brings new knowledge/ideas/concepts to the practice. If you encourage the mentee to ask questions you will be amazed as to the new ideas that get put on the table.
- It allows for networking. Many times mentees progress into areas of the profession that are not directly related to your daily routine and/or specialties that you can call on when needing additional expertise.

Also they move into different geographical areas so you can call on them for information on the area operations.

- It provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate future associates/partners.
- It adds to your list of friends. Many mentees have resided in our home and have become friends of my wife, members of our practice, and me.

Some of the cons of mentoring are:

1. If you are a person that cherishes time alone that will be sacrificed. There will be times you will feel as if you have an additional spouse/relative.
2. It can increase wear and tear on the heels of your boots. I have had mentees that took shadowing so seriously that each time I would stop to observe something they would walk up the back of my boots!
3. It can create conflicts with clients. I have had clients tell me to remember they are paying me to teach their staff, not students from the various universities.
4. It can be difficult to have private conversations with clients and/or their employees. I inform mentees that there will be times when I will request they find something to do for a period of time, and to not be offended by the request.
5. It increases stress because of concern of injury. Some mentees do not have experience with livestock and can get into trouble, resulting in injuries.
6. Added expense. We provide housing and provide meals when we travel.
7. Liability. It is important you provide workman's comp for students. The universities should provide liability insurance, but most do not.

## Conclusions

Mentoring has been a very positive experience and I encourage the practice. There is a story out there that I bought a bus ticket for one extern and sent him home from a distant location. I do not recall that, but I do recall only one really bad extern. I would have put him on a bus home, but we were in such an isolated location in New Mexico there was no bus service!