

The unlimited potential of the mentor mentee relationship

By Sharon Vallone, DC, FICCP, Editor

Recently, I had a wonderful conversation with a young, highly motivated colleague who has played a role in linking up doctors of chiropractic with students of chiropractic in a mentor-mentee relationship. She was inspirational! Our talk was a walk down memory lane for me and a reminder of how much gratitude I have for those who have mentored me.

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary¹ defines a mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide.” In my personal experience it has been individuals who have helped me achieve educational and career goals, projects (like completing another issue of the JCCP) or general life advice with all out generosity of spirit. While in school, I was lucky enough to have a 10th Trimester student “adopt” me the first week of school and remain a friend for life as well as the wonderful chiropractor who cared for this penniless chiropractic single parent and her two children in exchange for hugs through my entire education. These mentors, along with Dr. Lorraine M. Golden, founder of Kentuckiana Children’s Center, who was the epitome of who I wanted to be as a chiropractor, kept me in school when I would have given up under the weight of just life in general.

But today, I really want to focus on mentorship and writing! My very first “paper” ever published was written by another author who used notes that I had taken in a class to create a paper and named me second author. Upon reflection, I was pleasantly surprised but didn’t understand how I deserved that status. That seemed too easy! Her explanation was that I had done the work of collecting all the data and made a substantial contribution to the writing of the paper. She wrote the paper with the information I gathered to show me that I had information worth sharing but it had to be presented in a venue where that information could be found. She continued to encourage me by saying, “now it’s time to step up and write something on your own. Stop being the student and become my colleague.” She sent me off with paper and pen to write!

So, I ventured out on my own and wrote a case report that was submitted to a prestigious journal who’s editor was kind enough not to laugh at my efforts (which would have, I promise you, probably kept me from writing anything else for a good long while and stick to what I did best - my clinical practice), but instead, he used his red pen and illustrated where I needed to make changes, rewrite, find more recent citations, etc. He walked me through, step by step how to write a decent case report before there were things like the C.A.R.E. Guidelines² to help guide me.

When complete, it did not meet the requirements for the original journal but he directed my submission to a more appropriate journal who accepted my submission.

Without the first mentor, I wouldn’t have attempted an article. Without the second mentor, I would not have continued to write. And without my current co-editors, I would not be able to coordinate the publication of this journal. They both are individuals who’ve mentored more students (including me!) over the years than I imagine they can even remember.

Mentors make amazing differences in people’s lives. I, like my colleagues, would like to encourage mentorship (as well as mentee-ship), to advance pediatric chiropractic by writing and publishing in professional journals. Whether conducting a randomized control study or writing a case report, your efforts are mentoring others in the field, expanding their knowledge, giving them guidance and encouraging them to try, try, and try again until you succeed (whether that’s being a better diagnostician, creating a successful treatment plan (and perhaps knowing when to refer), or using a new manual technic, perfecting your adjustment. You are an instantaneous mentor to anyone who reads your publication.

And we who would like to be mentored (whether in the art, science or business of chiropractic) or, perhaps, in writing, we need to be courageous and seek out a mentor and ask for their support. A mentor is not a “coach” but someone who takes a personal interest in our long-term growth, helps us see how to get to our goals without drawing out every detail, empowers and encourages us to stay with it until we accomplish our goals (which sometimes will require calculated risks! It’s great to have someone to bounce those off of!).

You, as a mentee, need to be prepared to focus on your project and be willing to hear your mentor’s feedback, without fear of their advice or critique whether or not it is “positive.” Listen, process and then take what you want and execute the recommended steps or changes, and leave the rest. You can always counter the advice with your reason why you want to do something or write the way you have written it. Mentor and mentee exchange intellectually, fostering curiosity and initiative. As a mentee, you have to commit yourself to take steps towards your own developmental progress and continued education.

Mentor and mentee commit to each other to be respectful, responsible and accountable to each other until the project is complete. For some of us, these relationships guide us

along our life process and not just a single project, but either way, the value of the relationship should never be underestimated nor unappreciated. I encourage you to look for and ask for support. Authors, look at papers that are similar to what you would like to write and contact the author or authors and ask if they might be willing to mentor you in your own efforts to publish. Mentors, please be open to communicating with potential mentees and sharing

your knowledge and leadership with them. Together, we will create a stronger foundation of chiropractic pediatrics whether in our clinical practice, in the publications of case reports and case series or academic commentaries, our research foundation or being awarded an advanced academic degree.

We work better together!

References:

1. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mentor>.
2. Riley DS et al. CARE guidelines for case report: explanation and elaboration document. *J Clin Epidemiol*. Sept 2017;89:218-235.