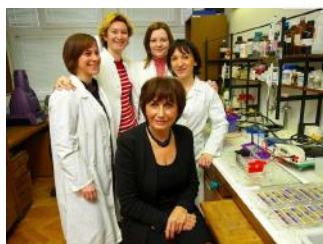




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HANDLING TRICKY MENTORING SITUATIONS



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ERASMUS+ project "Harmonization and Innovation in PhD Study Programs for Plant Health in Sustainable Agriculture –HarISA" February 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th, 2021

DIFFICULTIES

I. **Difficult situations? Yes!**

Doubts at the beginning

- *At first I was a little anxious because I had never done it before, and I was not sure what it would be like;*
- *I was a bit apprehensive, and felt anxious. I did not know exactly what it would be like or what would happen, so I scribbled several notes on a piece of paper about how I wanted the first time to be;*
- *I felt difficulty in knowing exactly what students wanted or how I had to show things to them, you know?*



Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

<https://peppertt.com/blog/10-lessons-learned-in-10-years-in-business-in-11/>

DIFFICULTIES

I. Difficult situations? Yes!

Frustration with attendance

- *The students come at the beginning and then they stop coming... We always expect we will see more people and if there are few of them, it is frustrating*
- *It is useless to tell us that the number of students makes no difference. It is true that small groups work better, but it's nice to see the group when all of the student come. I feel good about that*
- *We are discouraged when they don't come. "Is it my fault?" is the first question I asked myself. I thought they didn't like me*

Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

DIFFICULTIES

I. Difficult situations? Yes!

Daily tasks

- *I'm always anxious because, beyond mentoring, I have to think about several other things during the day*
- *I understand that it is hard for both mentors and students to be there during the mentoring period*
- *The students always use the mentoring period to do something that, in their minds, is more important.*



<https://bizmatrix.com.au/mentor-importance-one/>

Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

DIFFICULTIES

II. Difficult situations? No...

What is a difficult situation?

- *Difficult? I don't know if there was any difficult situation...Nothing has ever hit me directly. In every job, you have situations that are easy to solve and others that are more difficult. It is inherent to the job, right?*



<http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2016/08/26/you-need-a-mentor-or-three/>

- *What is a difficult situation? I don't know what you mean?*

Good mentoring relationship involves mentor self-awareness and identification of his own style, strengths and limitations.

Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

DIFFICULTIES

II. Difficult situations? No...

There are issues, but not problems

- *I have not had difficult situations in mentoring. Students do not bring many problems to solve: they bring some questions, and sometimes they ask: what would you do in this situation?*
- *Most students feel no need to seek help for serious problems. These are very rare. They come only with occasional doubts, mostly concerning research problems and careers.*



Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/04/mentor-ethically>

RESOURCES

I. External resources

Program Coordination and Supervision



<http://stephenconroycoaching.com/index.php/mentoring/>

- *I'm in contact with the program coordinator and I also take my doubts to the supervisor*
- *I have a group of people who I know that I can rely on. In the mentoring program, there are many people who I can talk to about doubts and I'm absolutely secure because of this.*

Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

RESOURCES

I. External resources

Exchanges with other mentors

- *We can talk to other colleagues and see if they have faced similar situations*
- *The mentors send emails to one another, so I feel very comfortable in telling them everything*

Mentors need to have an open-minded attitude, with commitment and willingness to actively maintain the relationship over time.



<https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2015/10/power-mentoring>

Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

RESOURCES

II. Internal resources

My life experience

- *I think that to be a mother helps in mentoring, I have three kids. In a way, the students are my children...;*
- *I think that to have worked under stressful situations, as I experienced in my medical practice, helps in mentoring... It's like a school for life;*
- *The fact that I'm a pediatrician helps me a lot...*

While past experience is important for mentors, they are aware that the "route" will be determined by the students. In mentoring relationships, it is sometimes easy for mentors to develop a paternalistic attitude, and it is important to resist it.

Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

RESOURCES

II. Internal resources

My personal style

- *The personal way of dealing with situations also appeared as a resource in the mentors' relationship with students and tasks.*
- *First, I have to understand the situation, and what is happening. Then I will try to solve it in the proper way;*
- *I always ask direct questions;*
- *I think the best resource I have is "feeling".*

There are mentors who are more thinking-oriented, while others emphasize action and there are also those who are more focused on emotion and intuition.

Gonçalves and Bellodi, 2012, Sao Paulo Med. J. vol.130 no.4

PhD students opinion

Summary of results

Acquired competencies

- *Lack of satisfaction with competencies related to career development.*
- *Problem solving and work in team are among the best developed competencies including professional knowledge and experience regarding research activities*



<https://emottawablog.com/2018/11/the-unwritten-rules-of-mentorship/>

PhD students opinion

Summary of results

Postdoctoral employment

closure

- *Options are work in scientific organisations or self-employment/starting your own business.*
- *PhD study did not prepare them well for a career outside of higher education.*
- *Employers do not have jobs which require a PhD degree and financial support of their employees for PhD study is rare.*

Doctoral students financial support through projects and grants

- **Croatian Science Foundation research project** „Potential therapeutic biomolecules of next-generation probiotics“ HRZZ IP-2019-04; 2019-2023; Project leader: Prof. Blaženka Kos, PhD
- **Croatian Science Foundation research project** „Probiotics and starter cultures – surface proteins and bacteriocins“ HRZZ IP-2014-09-7009; 2015-2019; Project leader: Prof. Blaženka Kos, PhD
- **Support of University of Zagreb** (2015-2020) Projects leader: Prof. Jagoda Šušković, PhD)
- **FEMS Research and Training Award** “Isolation and characterisation of exopolysaccharides from selected autochthonous *Lactobacillus* strain” for Katarina Zorić, FEMS-GO-2017-004, Department of Life Sciences, University of Trieste, under the supervision of dr. sc. Paola Cescutti)

