



I34 Why Is Mentorship Pivotal in the Future of Forensic Science?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn important characteristics of a good mentor. Attendees will know what characteristics to look for in potential mentors and mentees and will also develop awareness of the importance of transmission of knowledge through mentorship in their personal and professional development.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by raising awareness on the pivotal importance of mentorship in the transmission of knowledge and overall advancement of our field.

Apropos of the 2014 American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) 66th Annual Scientific Meeting's theme of *Forensic Science Education and Mentorship: Our Path Forward*, this presentation plans to examine the multifaceted meaning of what a "mentor" is, the importance of mentorship in the personal and professional development of the Academy's (including the Section's) members and advancement of the field, as well as the personal experiences of some of the presenters, in roles both as mentors and mentees.

In Greek mythology, Mentor was the son of the divine hero, Heracles (also known as Hercules), and Asopis.¹ In Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, Mentor in his old age is a friend of Odysseus. When Odysseus leaves for the Trojan War, he leaves Mentor in charge of his son, Telemachus, and of his palace. Later on, Telemachus is visited by Athena, who is disguised as Mentor.² Athena is the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, just warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill.³ Athena is also a shrewd companion of heroes and frequently influences heroic endeavors, as in the case of Telemachus. As Mentor, Athena encourages Telemachus to stand up against the suitors of his mother, Penelope, who had remained faithfully awaiting the return of Odysseus for 20 years, and to go abroad to search for his father.

The personal name, "Mentor," has been adopted in English as a term to mean someone who imparts wisdom to and shares knowledge with a less experienced colleague. This connotation of the term is due to Mentor's relationship with Telemachus and to Athena's encouragements and practical advice (while disguised as Mentor) to help Telemachus deal with his personal dilemmas.⁴

In recorded modern literature, the first recorded usage of the term "mentor" can be traced to a 1699 book entitled *Les Aventures de Télémaque* by the French writer, François Fénelon. In the book, the lead character is Mentor, and the modern application of the term is used.⁵

In the modern academic world, the term "mentorship" refers to the developmental relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced partner, who is termed the mentee or protégé. Good mentors are simply people with the qualities of good role models; they listen, guide, educate, provide insight, are practical, are accessible, criticize constructively, are supportive, and are specific. They care, they have success, and they are admirable.⁶

This presentation will include a panel of mentors and mentees. The mentors are prominent AAFS members who will discuss their personal experiences, including what to look for and how to choose a mentee, as well as their satisfactions and frustrations with the mentor role. The mentees will discuss how they chose a mentor, as well as their personal experiences, satisfactions, and frustrations with the mentee role.

References:

1. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heracles
2. Homer. *Odyssey*, Book II, Lines 255 and 268.
3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena
4. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentor
5. Roberts, Andy. (1999) "The Origins of the Term Mentor." *History of Education Society Bulletin*, No. 64, November 1999, p. 313–329.
6. The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership and the Business and Legal Reports, Inc. "Best Practices in Human Resources," Issue 653, September 30, 1999.

Mentor, Mentee, Knowledge