Navigating Your Relationship With Your PI

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Overview

* Common Issues in PI Relationships
  * Discussion
* Communication and Assertiveness Skills
  * Discussion
* Scenarios
* Resources
THE PLANS:

THE PLAN YOU TELL YOUR ADVISOR

"I'M GOING TO BE A PROFESSOR AT A MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AFTER I GRADUATE."

THE REAL PLAN

LOOK FOR CAREER ALTERNATIVES.

THE SECRET PLAN

BECOME A BAKER/ROCKSTAR/WRITER.
Why Is It So Tricky?

* Working with your PI advisor is more open-ended and more ambiguous
* Most PIs are great at their research – not always great at running a lab
* Mentorship is not always emphasized as a priority for faculty
* Inherent power differential
  * Intersecting Identities
Common Problems Encountered w/ PIs

* The “micromanager” PI
* The “hands off” PI
* May have too many expectations
* Hard to say “no” to them or ask for help
Managing Relationships with PI’s

**Discussion:** What are some difficulties you have experienced or potential challenges you anticipate in working with PI’s?
Meet with your PI often.

Set boundaries and expectations from the start.

Be Proactive
Make It Easy for Them to Support You

* Be organized.
  * Come prepared
  * Bring specific, concrete questions
  * End each meeting with a short review
* If asking for something, make sure to be specific and give them sufficient time
Being assertive can be uncomfortable

There is an inherent power differential... AND as a student, you have a right to express your needs/boundaries.

An important skill in your professional development

Discussion:

What does assertiveness look like for you?

In thinking about yourselves (your personalities, cultural backgrounds, etc) and your relationships with PI’s/advisors or others in a position of power, what has prevented you from being assertive?
Assertiveness Skills

* Keep in mind...
  * Separate the person from the problem.
  * Avoid personalizing problems.

* 1) State the facts.
* 2) Clarify your thoughts and concerns.
* 3) Explain how you would like the situation to be resolved.

Source: http://www.nextscientist.com/communicating-effectively-phd-supervisor/
You have been in your lab for a while now. Your PI has been very available and attentive, and will often suggest articles to read or suggestions for running experiments. Recently, you’ve noticed that she has appeared more demanding. She asks you about every detail of the experiments you’ve run, regularly sends you papers to read with sections already highlighted, and has begun emailing you every day asking for updates on your work. You are starting to feel stressed and frustrated. What do you do?

**Discussion:** Break up into groups of 2-3 and brainstorm how you would handle this situation.
Let’s Brainstorm Together

- What scenarios are you running into with your PI?
- How can we help support you?
- Role-play anyone?
A PI who is emotionally manipulative, takes advantage of you, discriminates against, or harasses you is not acceptable.

Avoid feeling trapped! Figure out what your options are:

- Student Health and Counseling Services
- CARE Advocate
- Multicultural Resource Center
- Office of the Ombuds
- Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination
Resources: Get Support

* Website: studenthealth.ucsf.edu

  - For more information or to schedule an appointment:
    - call 415-476-1281
    - drop in to Millberry Union West, level P8, room 005
    - drop in to Rutter Center, 1675 Owens Street, 3rd floor, room 330

  - Student Peer Support Network (SPSN)
    - spsn.graddiv@ucsf.edu