

Mentorship between a Dental Hygiene Faculty and Dental Hygiene Graduate:

A retrospective case study.

A Tale of Tooth Cities.



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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Dental Hygienists are oral health professionals that work in various workplace settings. These settings could include, but are not limited to, clinical practice, education, public health, product sales, and research. In clinical practice, the most common workplace, dental hygienists may work with other dental hygienists and/or with other professionals including, dentists, dental assistants, dental receptionists, treatment coordinators and dental office suppliers.

Having access to others' ideas, knowledge, and perspectives can help support professional decision making and development, and even affect the decision to choose a given career in dentistry. Cromley and Haisch, noted that "participants identified mentoring relationships with their current dentist and dental hygienist as the most important factor in determining their decision to choose dentistry or dental hygiene as a career" (2002, p. 5).

Traditionally, the majority of Dental Hygienists work in private dental practices. Many times, it may be a single Dental Hygienist office, which can be isolating for the clinician. Current Dental Hygiene workplaces are evolving to include non-traditional roles such as hospital, long term care settings and independent practices. Wilder and Guthmiller state that as healthcare changes, there are new models of dental hygiene and dental hygienists need to be in leadership roles. "The future depends on DHs who are not only passionate but who seek leadership roles in building professional integration" and mentorships with other pioneers in these fields can help support new practitioners to develop the skills necessary adapt and succeed (Wilder & Guthmiller, 2014, p. 222).

METHODS & MATERIAL

A qualitative study, retrospective case study was used for this research. Two dental hygienists interviewed each other in one session. The case study approach "allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings" (Crowe et al, 2011, p.1). We chose case study design for several reasons. In our experience, dental hygienists have informal mentorships and the impacts of the relationship, personally or professionally, are generally not captured or transferred to others. Dental Hygienists enjoy sharing of knowledge and this builds a sense of community, when many times the job can be solitary. Through understanding and formalizing the mentorship process between the two dental hygienists, data could be collected, themes identified, and conclusions could support recommendations to others.

CONTEXT

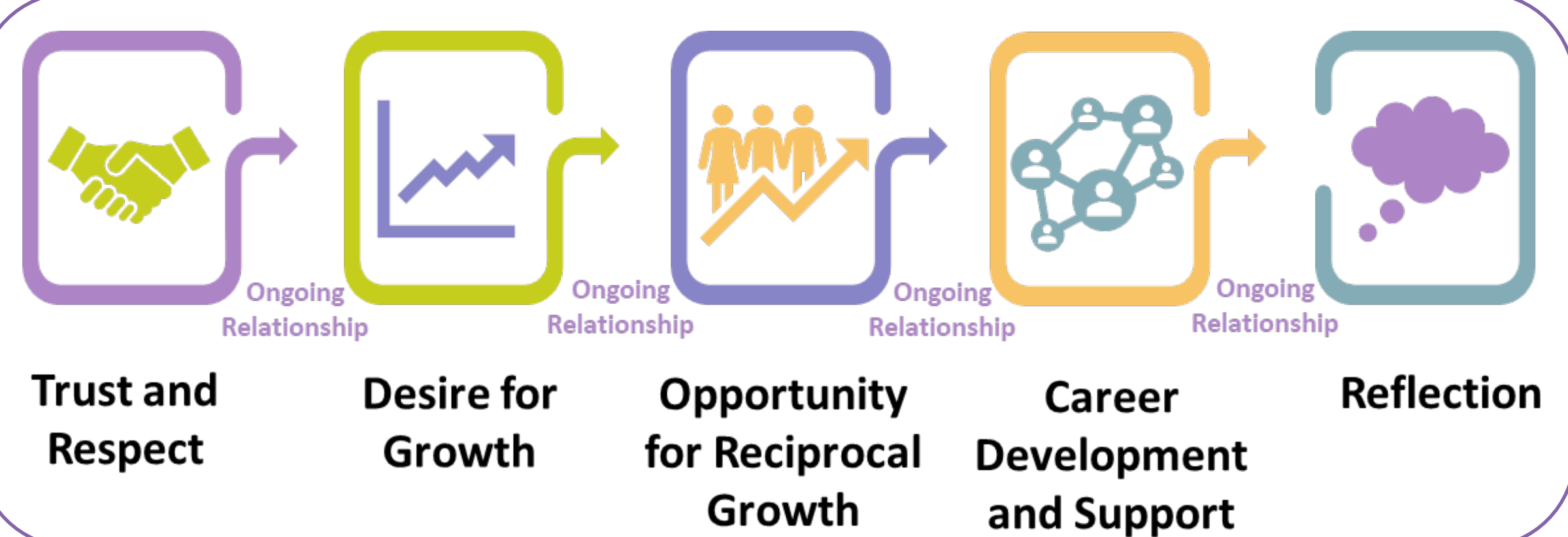
Mentoring has benefits for both the mentor and the protégé. Burgess, van Diggele and Mellis note that "mentoring may offer a means to further enhance workforce performance and engagement, promote learning opportunities and encourage multidisciplinary collaboration" (2028, p. 197). Helm states that "reciprocal growth was a natural extension of the mentor-mentee relationship" (2012, p. 5). Barnes notes that another benefit of mentorship includes "as the length of mentor experience increased, so did the level of career satisfaction" (2004, p. 331).

Current literature supports the definitive characteristics that potential protégés and effective mentors exhibit and argues the mentorships can be transformational and empowering for the participants (Schrubbe, 2004, p. 337).

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When did you graduate dental hygiene school?
2. What has your practice looked like since then?
3. How do you feel the profession has changed since you graduated?
4. How have dental peers and former faculty affected your career development/projection?
5. Where do you see yourself in 1 year and 5 years?
6. What are the barriers and supports in meeting these goals/projections?

BENTON/MALCOMSON MODEL



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of our case study determined that mentorship is an important factor in career development for both dental hygienists interviewed. Brooke's mentorships were formed from dental peers and a former faculty of hers. Paula's mentorship came from dental professionals, colleagues in education, and students/graduates.

The themes that were derived from the data were: **Trust, Willingness/desire to learn and share, Recognition of the reciprocal benefits of mentorship relationship, Reflection and an Ongoing relationship.**

Mentor Personality Traits	
Useful Personality Traits	Limiting Personality Traits
Being Empowering	Exuding Power over other
Instilling Confidence	Competitive
Constructive	Negativity
Authentic	Gatekeeping of Knowledge
Empathetic	Unsupportive
Kind	Controlling

There is a lack of research on informal mentorships, likely for that very reason, the relationship is organic and unstructured.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of informal mentorship for a faculty and her graduate.

Further questions that came out of data analysis were:
How does a mentorship develop?
How is it maintained?
What are the reciprocal benefits?
What are the personality traits of a good mentor and protégé?

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Mentorship has had a strong influence in the two researchers' professional growth and development. Smith states that "mentoring is a tool dental hygienists' can use to implement a stronger culture of mutual respect and positivity within our profession" (2018, para 3).

"By helping others, mentors may become more aware of their own professional skills and work practices, and they may gain insight into other fields or areas within their organization" (Burgess, van Digelle and Mellis, 2018).

Mentorship is increasingly recognised as a bidirectional process, benefiting both mentors and mentees. The researchers determined limitations to mentorships included, but are not limited to, accessibility, time, finances and lack of knowledge of its benefits.

The researchers recommend further studies related to informal mentorships and in the feminist context. Through self-reflection, dental hygienists can determine what they require for professional growth and whether they could use or be a mentor to others! "Mentoring is a lifelong process and each of us has the potential to mentor another individual and to promote the role model of mentor to our colleagues" (Schrubbe, 2004, p. 337).

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