

Handout for Productive Postdoc Conversation Activities

TOPIC

Which Postdoc Academy topic are you preparing to discuss with your mentor?

DECIDE WHO TO TALK WITH

Your postdoc advisor or supervisor is not the only mentor you should have; i.e., it is perfectly fine, and even recommended, to have a network of mentors who can support you in various ways, without having a vested interest in your research. Consider the following questions to decide who to have this Productive Conversation with:

- What do you wish to gain from this meeting (e.g., advice, resources, support, etc.)?
- Who could you have this conversation with (e.g., senior postdoc, advisor, other faculty member, career adviser from postdoc office, etc.) and that could address your need (by providing resources or ideas, inducing change, or advocating for you)?
- Who among these people could you have an open and honest conversation with?

WHAT ARE YOU COMING TO THE TABLE WITH?

An important part of the preparation for mentoring conversations is being aware of what you come to the table with, both consciously and unconsciously. Assumptions can impact the way you communicate, alter trust and prevent conversations from being as honest and transparent as possible ([here is an example that pertains to discussing one's post-postdoc career path](#)).

Please reflect on the questions below:

- What hesitations, assumptions, unmet prior expectations, fears are you coming to this conversation with?
- Where do your hesitations, assumptions and fears come from?
- What hesitations, assumptions, and experiences do you think your mentor is coming to this conversation with? What evidence do you have for these?

PREPARE

Now that you have acknowledged these assumptions, please use the prompts below to prepare for your conversation:

- What is your goal with this conversation? What do you intend to share/discuss with, or get from your mentor?
- What would make this conversation productive and helpful for you? For your mentor?
- According to your answers to the previous questions,
 - What questions or discussion prompts would you like to use for this conversation (feel free to use the prompts shared in the Productive Postdoc Conversation activities)?
 - How would you like to introduce the topic?
 - How would you like to close the conversation? What next steps would you like this conversation to end on, both for you and your mentor?

Is there anything else you would like to do to prepare for the conversation - ***this includes making sure that your mentor has access to the corresponding faculty toolkit, for example?***

CHAT

Feel free to use the space below to take notes during the conversation:

REFLECT

- Congratulations for leading this conversation with your mentor! How did the conversation go?
- What evidence would you use to back up your answer to the previous question?
- If you did not get all the answers to your questions during the conversation, are you planning to include some questions in your next conversation with your mentor? Or do you wish to leverage other resources?

MAKE A PLAN & ACT

- Did your mentor agree to take action in some way during or after the conversation?
 - If yes, how can you keep your mentor accountable (e.g., “*Thank you*” email with a kind reminder of what they agreed to do)?
- What are you planning to do after this conversation? Please write down your goals and/or action items below:

- What will help you stay accountable (e.g., *completing item X by the next PALS meeting, and sharing that accomplishment with other postdocs during the PALS meeting*)?