

Welcome to Productive Postdoc Conversations!

Hello and welcome to the Postdoc Academy Productive Postdoc Conversations! This handbook has been created to help mentees and mentors who do not know each other yet, do not work together, or will be interacting with one another as part of a mentoring program, to help you prepare for your first meeting. To that end, this handbook contains:

- Self-reflection prompts to help you reflect on what success means to you (this is a good basis for a first meeting, to chat about and relate to what helps each of you thrive),
- Resources to prepare for your first meeting,
- Icebreaker questions to get the conversation started.

Note: the first Productive Postdoc Conversation theme focuses on setting expectations. Feel free to go through it before having your first mentee/mentor meeting, or to have a first icebreaker meeting to get to know each other prior to exploring that theme.

What you will find in this handout

Below is a **Table of Contents** for this handout - feel free to click on each section title to access sections of interest:

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Dialogue framework for the Postdoctoral Scholar

Self-Reflection Activity: Success that Lasts.

In their article entitled '[Success That Lasts](#)', Laura Nash and Howard H Stevenson talk about the complexity of success. They define four components for enduring success: **Happiness** (feelings of pleasure or contentment about your life), **Achievement** (accomplishments that compare favorably against similar goals others have strived for), **Significance** (the sense that you've made a positive significant impact on the people you care about), and **Legacy** (a way to establish your values or accomplishments so as to help others find future success).

To help you define what success means to you, please reflect on the questions below:

- **Happiness:** what in your life (personal, professional) makes you feel happy or pleased?
- **Achievement:** what accomplishments are you proud of? What would you like to accomplish in the short-, mid-, and long-term? Why is it important to you?
- **Significance:** what does it mean to you to have a positive significant impact? How is this aligned with your values?
- **Legacy:** how can you align your values and accomplishments, with ways to help others find future success.

Prepare for your first conversation with your mentor.

The Academy of Medical Sciences in the UK is running a mentoring program to connect early-career researchers with more seasoned researchers and professors. They have created a lot of resources to support the mentees and mentors involved in their program, including this [handout on the OSCAR model to help mentees prepare for their first meeting with their mentor](#). Feel free to use the information contained in the handout linked above or the questions below to prepare for your first conversation with your mentor:

- What does success mean to you?
- How would you define a successful mentoring relationship for a mentee? A mentor? What is your mentor's opinion?
- What does your mentor need to know about you to support you best?
- What has helped you relate to your mentor(s) in the past?
- What are your expectations and aspirations as a postdoc?
- What are your goals for your postdoc?
- What are your expectations of your mentor?
- What are your mentor's expectations of you? Of the mentoring relationship?
- How do these things align with your expectations and goals? How are they different? If you aren't sure, how will you find out?

Reflection Framework for the Postdoc Mentor

Self-Reflection Activity: Success that Lasts.

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To help you define what success means to you, please reflect on the questions below:

- **Happiness**: what in your life (personal, professional) makes you feel happy or pleased?
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 - **Significance**: what does it mean to you to have a positive significant impact? How is this aligned with your values?
 - **Legacy**: how can you align your values and accomplishments, with ways to help others find future success.
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Prepare for your first conversation with your mentee.

The Academy of Medical Sciences in the UK is running a mentoring program to connect early-career researchers with more seasoned researchers and professors. They have created a lot of resources to support the mentees and mentors involved in their program, including this video on [Building Rapport with your Mentee - the EFFECT model](#). Feel free to watch this video before reflecting on the questions below, drafted to help you prepare for your first questions with your mentee(s):

- What does success mean to you?
- How would you define a successful mentoring relationship for a mentee? A mentor?
- What does your mentee need to know about you in order to have a productive/supportive relationship?
- What has helped you relate to your mentee(s) in the past?
- What do you wish to achieve in your first meeting with your mentee?

Icebreaker suggestions to get the conversation started.

If you could wake up tomorrow and know how to play any instrument perfectly, what would it be?

Who did you most admire growing up and why?

What would you prefer between being famous or being rich?

What is the dish you enjoy the most cooking (or eating!) and why?

What is your most totally useless talent?

What is the place you would love the most to visit (either place in the entire Universe works)?

If you weren't in the field you're in now, what other career would you have?

What is one thing you are grateful for this year?

What job did you dream of doing when you were a kid?

What first made you want to be a researcher?

If you could invite anyone on earth to dinner, who would it be?

Additional Resources

READ

- Nash, L. & Stevenson, H.H. - [Success that lasts](#), *Harvard Business Review*, 2004.
- Rock, D., [SCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others](#), *NeuroLeadership Journal*, 2008.

WATCH

- [Series of videos \(playlist\) on mentoring](#), by *The Academy of Medical Sciences*, YouTube.

LISTEN

- [Podcast episodes on mentoring](#), Faculty Factory Podcast.