

# Disrupting Ableism and Advancing STEM: Fostering Effective Mentorship in the STEM Ecosystem

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# Today

- What is mentorship and why is it important to supporting a robust STEM ecosystem?
- What mentorship challenges exist for individuals with disabilities?
- What factors have been shown to enhance mentorship and mentoring relationships involving persons with disabilities?
- What roles do individual mentors, mentees and organizations play in promoting robust cultures of mentorship that disrupt ableism?

CONSENSUS STUDY REPORT

# The Science of **Effective Mentorship** in STEMM



There is a *Science of Mentorship* that can frame our conversations about the important role of mentorship in disrupting ableism.

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*“Talent is equally distributed across all sociocultural groups; access and opportunity are not” (Dr. Angela Byars-Winston)*

# Mentorship: A Definition

Mentorship is a professional, working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development, and success of the relational partners through the provision of career and psychosocial support (NASEM, 2019)

Career  
Support

Psychosocial  
Support

Mentorship:  
Important  
Outcomes

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Identity affirmation

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Sense of belonging & connectivity

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Self-efficacy

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Persistence

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Career satisfaction

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Productivity

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What  
mentorship  
challenges  
exist for  
individuals  
with  
disabilities?

- Underrepresentation in education & work
- Disclosure
- Access to mentors
- Access to networks
- Access to career development resources
- History of negative mentorship experiences
- Lack of mentors with similar lived experiences

Not all mentoring relationships lead to these important outcomes.

Factors found to enhance mentorship outcomes include:

Expectations

Trust

Self-reflection

Mentorship Education





# Roles for Mentors

# Mentors can ...

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- Have the same expectations for mentees with disabilities as you would for those without disabilities.
- Disclose their own disability (if they have one)
- Share their expectations and ask for the expectations from their mentee

# Mentors can ... (continued)

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- Discuss expectations about the role they will play with their mentee:
  - Help identifying and meeting other professionals in STEM
    - those with and without disabilities
  - Career guidance and resume review
  - Solving workplace challenges

# Mentors can ... (continued)

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- Discuss expectations about how they will work together:
  - Regularity & location
  - Modality (in-person or online)
- Build trust through active listening. Ask your mentee about their lived experience.
- Reflect upon their own identity as an individual with or without a disability. How will that impact their strengths and limitations as a mentor?

# Mentors can ... (continued)

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- Recognize the importance of role modeling
- Educate themselves about:
  - Best practices in mentorship (mentorship education)
  - Types of disability – mentee's disability if disclosed
  - Career and other professional development resources
  - Special accommodations
  - Disability etiquette
    - Person first and identity first language

## Mentors can ... (continued)

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- Keep whatever their mentee discloses confidential unless they are given permission to share
  - E.g., disability status
- Remember that mentees are dealing with multiple challenges regarding academic, health, work



# Roles for Mentees

# Mentees can ...

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- Understand the concept of mentoring and value of having mentors with or without disabilities
- Find the right mentors
  - Explore network, school alumni groups, organizations
- Learn to disclose their disability
- Prepare their elevator talk
  - Your story, experiences, and work/career goals



# Mentees can ... (continued)

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- Listen to advice, recommendations from mentors and practice them
- Ask questions if they do not understand something
- Set SMART short and long term academic and or career goals
  - Seek feedback from mentor(s)
- Meet regularly to sustain the mentoring relationship
- Lead the relationship – take responsibility for the agenda and plan



# Roles Educational Institutions or Employers

# Educational institutions or employers can ...

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- Provide services that will provide individuals with disabilities access to networks
- Support student and/or employee resource groups to promote peer mentorship
- Create a culture of disclosure:
  - Make sure they have a policy visible on the website
  - Create and disseminate a document that will specifically let people know what their disclosure will mean for the university or employing organization
  - Make self-disclosure attractive to those in leadership

# Educational institutions or employers can ... (continued)


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- Publicize and create programming around National Disability Mentoring Day
- Consider the role of mentors and mentorship during critical transitions
  - Admissions/Hiring
  - Orientation/Onboarding
  - Advancement & Evaluation
  - Graduation/Next Steps for Employment

# Educational institutions or employers can ... (continued)

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- Create mentoring awards
- Use data and research for broader conversations about inclusive mentoring
- Educate employees/students on disability etiquette
  - How to communicate or write about individuals with disabilities
  - Develop and adopt a style guide
- Provide reasonable accommodations



# Roles for National Organizations

# Examples of National Mentoring Organizations

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- National Disability Mentoring Coalition  
<https://ndmc.pyd.org/>  
Aims to raise awareness about the importance and impact of mentoring in the lives of people with disabilities.
- Mentor  
<https://www.mentoring.org/>  
Aims to expand opportunities for young people by building a youth mentoring field and movement.

# Examples of National STEM Professional Associations

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- American Public Health Association Disability Section Mentoring Program (<https://www.disabilitysectionmentoring.org/>)
- American Psychological Association Disability Mentoring Program (<https://www.apa.org/pi/disability/resources/mentoring>)



# National organizations can ...

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- Create mentoring opportunities for all people including individuals with disabilities
- Increase awareness of inclusive mentoring
- Recognize mentors and mentoring programs for their contributions towards inclusive mentoring
  - E.g., National Disability Mentoring Coalition's Susan M. Daniels Hall of Fame
- Promote evidence based best practices that increases quality of mentoring relationship for all people, including individuals with disabilities



# In conclusion ...

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- There is a science of mentorship and it should inform our conversations about disrupting ableism in STEM
- Individuals with disabilities face unique challenges in mentoring relationships and share challenges with their peers without disabilities.
- The challenges individuals with disabilities face vary based upon intersectional identities.
- Mentors, mentees, educational institutions/employers and national organizations all have a role to play in building a robust mentoring ecosystem that disrupts ableism.

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# Thank you!

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