



THE FACILITATOR-MENTORING MODEL: A Mentoring Approach and it's Application with Drug Abuse Researchers

April 2006

INTRODUCTION

The term “mentor” originated with Homer’s poetic epic, *The Odyssey*. In Homer’s story Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, sails off with his army to go to war with the Trojans. Before leaving he entrusts his faithful friend, Mentor, with responsibility for caring for and educating his son, Telemachus. The war lasts for ten years, and Odysseus’ journey home lasts another ten years. Throughout this time, Mentor bestows his efforts on the young Telemachus, who ultimately demonstrates his worthiness to inherit his father’s great legacy. Based on this tale, “mentor” has become synonymous with a loyal and trusted friend, advisor, or teacher.

In my professional life as a researcher, the story of Telemachus and his tutor has led me to view mentoring as the responsibility for creating an environment within which students/trainees/protégés can learn the necessary elements to become independent researchers. I see this role as one of a facilitator who promotes the mentoring process by nurturing the environment within which successful mentoring can take place.

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The mentoring process begins with the identification of individuals who have shown signs of passion and potential for research in their previous academic programs or employment. Such students/protégés seek to enter a research environment in

The traditional concept of mentoring focuses on the relationship that evolves between two individuals working to promote the development of the less experienced person. But it is also important to note that this relationship blossoms in an environment that is conducive and supportive to mentoring, thus contributing to the success of the partnership.

order to enhance their skills and knowledge in the field (e.g. to learn to observe and document day to day interactions and activities in community sites such as schoolyards, churches, drug markets, and shooting galleries.) It is the mentor’s responsibility, then, to ensure that the environment meets the student’s learning needs.

**RESEARCH AND MENTORING:
PERSONAL NOTES**

I would like to share some experiences from my own career with you because I believe that learning how professionals chose their career paths and found their mentors can benefit others in the field, especially those just starting out.

During my years as a student in Puerto Rico, a group of social scientists from a prominent American university began conducting research on Puerto Rico's changing social structure. Through these studies the researchers published, lectured, and interacted with well-known investigators. Yet, while a number of Puerto Rican university students worked in the field alongside the American staff, these students were never given the opportunity to participate in some of the most valuable aspects of the research process. Meanwhile, the island's scientific community continued to work on its own, without the availability of the necessary resources to expand its own research possibilities. As I witnessed these circumstances and was impacted by them, I challenged myself to never again be involved in a project which contributed little to the development of junior researchers on the island.

When I continued my studies at Columbia University, I sought out caring teachers and mentors. While enrolled there, I had the opportunity

to study with and work as a protégé of Jack Ellinson, the Director of the Socio-Medical Research Program at Columbia's School of Public Health. I also had the privilege to study with Robert Merton, considered the father of American empirical sociology; William Goode, a scientist who contributed significantly to the understanding of the American family; and with Amitai Etzioni, who helped inspire my passion for the empirical study of complex organizations. These exceptional academics helped me realize how invaluable good professors and mentors were to my career. These experiences instilled in me the knowledge, strength, and personal security to believe I could take on a leadership role to provide students with an environment conducive to their development as researchers.

Soon after returning to Puerto Rico I was invited to join the faculty of the School of Public Health at the UPR Medical Sciences Campus. Two great leaders in the regionalization of the health care system movement were my mentors at the School of Public Health, Drs. John Grant and Jorge Arbona. These two physicians were highly committed to science-based health care and to training public health professionals. They entrusted me to develop a social science curriculum for the school, and to address their health care questions with scientific data. With the mentoring support of Dr. Ellison, I wrote my first proposals for federal funding: to support the introduction of a social science specialization at the Medical Science campus and to assess mental health care needs in Puerto Rico.

Both proposals were approved for funding, and I soon had the opportunity not only to help my mentors advance the role of social science in medicine, but also to answer some of their research questions. The research proposals enabled us to open a laboratory for training young investigators, helping to fill the great need for research on the

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island's changing health care environment. At the same time, with the help of my students-in-training, we developed a new Socio-Medical Research Center and a Master's degree program in Evaluation Research at the UPR School of Public Health. Both structures continue to serve Puerto Rican students in their career development, and to enhance the island's scientific community.

THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IN PUERTO RICO

In 1981 the first AIDS case was detected in Puerto Rico, and it very quickly revealed an AIDS epidemic that was devastating young drug users on the island. I was invited to submit a competitive grant funding proposal for the NIDA NADAR Cooperative Agreement Project. The proposal sought to arrest the HIV/AIDS epidemic by educating drug users who were not in treatment on strategies to prevent HIV/AIDS infection, and was housed within the Puerto Rico Department of Drug Abuse Services. This first research initiative was followed by others and, in addition to the highly important research objectives, they provided me with the opportunity to continue developing the Facilitator-Mentoring Model that I had begun earlier with students at the School of Public Health.

THE FACILITATOR-MENTORING MODEL

The Facilitator-Mentoring Model is based on the premise that mentors do not primarily teach; rather, they provide the environment, role models, and role modeling that enable students to learn and develop. Specific assumptions of the model are:

1. Contrary to what many leading thinkers in the field may believe, science and research are endeavoring vocations that are open, to a greater or lesser degree, to any individual whose curiosity is aided by a resourceful and inquiring mind and a supportive environment.

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2. Conducting research is an inherently exciting process and students should feel stimulated by their research environment. An uninterested researcher is not likely to be effective or to develop new ideas.

3. Peer interaction and mutual help are significant elements in the creation of a facilitating environment within which new scientists can develop.

4. While research is often regarded as the application of scientific methods, I prefer Estelle Brodman's view that "research is nothing more than codified common sense." Common sense must, however, be honed within a theoretical research environment. A further premise of the Facilitator-Mentoring Model is that research is not a tidy process, since the unknown cannot be accounted for with great precision.

5. Information regarding research methods, strategies, and processes, as commonly shared by researchers, is not enough to guarantee the means for discovery. Students with intuition, experience, curiosity, good judgment, and inquiring minds are most likely to benefit from a facilitating research environment.

6. An appropriate theoretical framework is vital for forming research questions and raising hypotheses prior to beginning research observations.

*“Six hours in the library
may save six weeks in the
laboratory.”*

7. Practicing translation science is critical and relies on our use of knowledge for the continuous improvement of practice, developing further research, and conveying the need to continue exploring the unknown. The processes of discovery, integration, application, and mentoring are highly interdependent and should be incorporated into the mentoring model.

THE PROCESS OF THE FACILITATOR- MENTORING MODEL

Successful mentoring begins with a dynamic research environment comprised of committed individuals with great enthusiasm for the scientific process. Newly selected participants must have a passion for the scientific process and proven potential for research as displayed in their previous work. They must also have the potential to work with populations that include drug-addicted individuals, mental health patients, and homeless people living in shelters, and research in drug market areas, homeless, shelters, mental health centers, hospitals, and other sites.

From the beginning of the mentorship process the importance of reading is continually impressed upon trainees, in adherence to the maxim that, “Six hours in the library may save six weeks in the laboratory.” Weekly meetings are also an

important component for discussing the specific problems that students may encounter in their research projects and for determining any new issues to be addressed. At least four times per year local and national consultants are invited to join in this process, to lend their expertise to this crucial aspect of the model. In these meetings and throughout the entire process it is essential to ensure an atmosphere that encourages informal counseling and consultation among participants. The strength of the Facilitator-Mentoring Model and its network ties depends on an open intellectual and professional exchange between mentors and protégés.

Another important element of a prosperous mentoring environment is the ability to provide protégés with connections to external resources such as expert mentors in specialized research areas, e.g. sampling methods, data analysis, qualitative measurement, integration of basic clinical and behavioral sciences, and addressing health problems in special populations (homeless persons, the elderly, mental health patients) as well as providing multiple opportunities for trainees to network with the health research community at the local, national, and international levels. Opportunities provided to trainees include preparing poster or oral presentations for the International AIDS Symposium, CPDD conferences, American Public Health Association annual meetings, the NIDA Hispanic Science Research Network meetings, and participating in dissemination activities with the SAMHSA/CSAT Addiction Technology Transfer Centers.

Each trainee that participates in the Facilitating Mentorship Model at the UCC School of Medicine also serves as a peer counselor for incoming students, to help them envision undertaking graduate studies and understand the potential consequences if they choose not to pursue this goal. Experience has shown us that incorporating

graduate studies into the student's career is a responsibility carried by each trainee, and one that is imperative for success in the contemporary research community.

CONCLUSIONS

This model has successfully served in the training of mental health and drug abuse researchers [in Puerto Rico?]. The model could also be applied to working with various groups within schools, churches, community settings, and other venues through which knowledge and support can be imparted. The Facilitator-Mentoring Model can also help foster improved relationships among children and adults within families, to promote open communication, increase sibling support, and help provide the potential for each family activity—from eating together to driving around the neighborhood—to be an enriching experience in the lives of both the children as protégés and the parents as mentors.

The strength of the Facilitator-Mentoring Model and its network ties depends on an open intellectual and professional exchange between mentors and protégés.

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About the Author: **Rafaela R. Robles EdD**

Dr. Robles has a doctorate degree in Sociology from Columbia University. She has been a pioneer in HIV/AIDS and substance abuse research in Puerto Rico. She is currently directing the Caribbean Basin and Hispanic ATTC and the Center for Addiction Studies, which are soon to become the Institute of Education, Research, and Services of Addictions (IRESA), homed at the Universidad Central del Caribe in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. Dr. Robles is also in the review board for NIDA and is currently mentoring over 15 staff members in multiple disciplines including, epidemiology, anthropology, psychology, social work, etc.

UP-COMING ACTIVITIES FOR 2006

MAY

6

1st Ponce Summit on the Prevention and Treatment of Psychoactive Substance Addiction.

For: Psychologists, Social Workers, Nurses, and Health Educators
Location: Ponce's Head Start Activity Center
Speakers: Angel Gonzalez, MD; Jorge Nogales, MS; Luis Betancourt, MD; and Rafael Diaz, MD

15 thru 19

CBHATTC Leadership Institute Immersion Training.

For: Professionals in low and middle management positions related to the addiction's field
Location: El Faro Resort in Aguadilla, PR
Presented by: CBHATTC, Partners for Recovery, and USDA Graduate School

25 & 26

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: ASSMCA employees in Ponce
Location: Ponce, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

JUNE



Leadership Institute, coming up on May 2006

1

Addressing the Needs with Co-Occurring Substance Use and Mental Health Disorder Patients.

For: Staff of Partners in Recovery US Virgin Islands
Location: Department of Health, Division of Mental Health, Alcoholism & Drug Dependency Services in St. Croix, USVI
Speaker: Raul Benitez, MD

1 & 2

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: ASSMCA employees in San Juan
Location: San Juan, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

8 thru 10

Universidad Central del Caribe, Substance Abuse Academic Program Faculty Retreat.

Location: Westin Rio Mar Resort, Rio Grande, PR

15 & 16

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: ASSMCA employees in Mayaguez
Location: Mayaguez, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

22 & 23

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: Community Based Organizations
Location: TBA
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

JULY

23 thru 25

National Conference for Leaders of Addiction Services (NCLAS): Leadership in Action.

For: Leadership Institute Graduates
Location: Wardhand Marriott Hotel in Washington, DC
Speakers: TBA
Hosted by The SAMHSA, CSAT's Addiction Technology Transfer Centers and Partners for Recovery Initiative

AUGUST

10

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: Community Based Organizations
Location: TBA
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

17

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: ASSMCA employees in San Juan
Location: San Juan, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

24

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: ASSMCA employees in Mayaguez
Location: Mayaguez, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

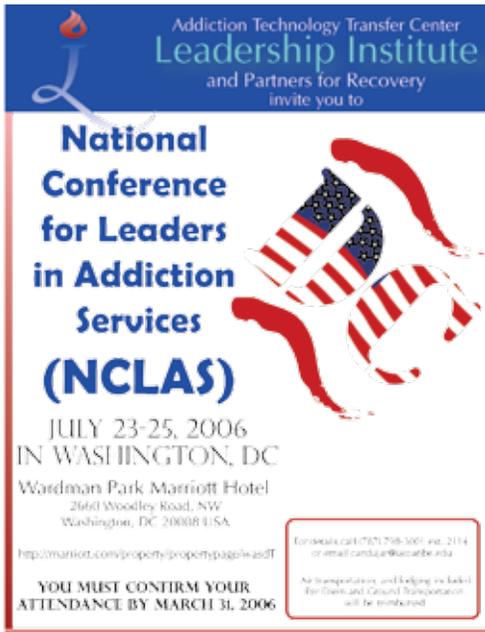
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Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance.

For: ASSMCA employees in Ponce
Location: Ponce, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

SEPTEMBER

7



Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: Community Based Organizations
Location: TBA
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

14

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in San Juan
Location: San Juan, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

21

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in Mayaguez
Location: Mayaguez, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

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Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in Ponce

Location: Ponce, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

OCTOBER

5

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: Community Based Organizations
Location: TBA
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

19

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in San Juan
Location: San Juan, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

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Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in Mayaguez
Location: Mayaguez, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

NOVEMBER

2

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in Ponce
Location: Ponce, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

8

Recovery Management Conference: Motivational Interviewing
Location: TBA

Speaker: William White, MA

9

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in Mayaguez
Location: Mayaguez, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

9

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: Community Based Organizations
Location: TBA
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

16

Motivational Interviewing Technical Assistance. For: ASSMCA employees in San Juan
Location: San Juan, PR
Speakers: TBA
A NIDA Liason Activity

For more information about the Leadership Institute activities, please contact Ms. Carmen Andujar at (787) 798-3001 ext. 2114.

For information about any other activity, please contact Ms. Carmen Rivera at (787) 798-3001 ext. 2118

You may also find more information by visiting our website, <http://cbattc.uccaribe.edu>



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At the time of this printing, Charles G. Curie, MA, ACSW, served as the SAMHSA Administrator. H. Westley Clark, MD, JD, MPH, served as the director of CSAT, and Karl D. White, EdD, served as the CSAT Project Officer.

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Directory

Caribbean Basin and Hispanic ATTC
Universidad Central del Caribe
PO Box 60-327
Bayamón, PR 00960-6032

Phone
(787) 785-4211

Fax
(787) 785-4222

e-mail
prattc@ucclaribe.edu

Departments
(787) 798-3001

Rafaela R. Robles, EdD
Director
ext. 2109/ 2116
rrobles@ucclaribe.edu

Wanda Rodríguez, JD, LLM
Administrator & Legal
Advisor
ext. 2109/ 2116
wrodriguez@ucclaribe.edu

Héctor Colón, PhD
Research Unit Director
ext. 2122/ 2123
hcolon@ucclaribe.edu

Evelyn Feliberty, MA
Academic Program Coordinator
ext. 2112/ 2111
efeliberty@ucclaribe.edu

Maria del Mar García, MSW,
MHS
Continuing Education
Program
Coordinator
ext. 2113/ 2118
mgarcia@ucclaribe.edu

Carmen Andújar, BA
Educational Resources
Coordinator
ext. 2114/2115
candujar@ucclaribe.edu



Universidad Central del Caribe
Caribbean Basin and Hispanic ATTC
PO Box 60-327
Bayamón, PR 00960-6032