

## 1 Unintentional Mentors

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Medicine has a long tradition of mentorship. Mentor-mentee relationships have been known to enrich the lives of both mentors and mentees, further maturing the mentors at one end and developing the mentees at the other. However this is not so common today as one would have wished. It takes a strong desire on the part of the mentor because it is the hard work and not an obligatory part of one's duties. It needs a matching of the wavelengths of the mentor and mentee, which does not happen with every batch of students. It also needs a strong wish on the part of the mentee to be molded into perfection by the mentor. Not all persons can accept such a control from anyone. The mentor has to be willing to let go when his job is done. Perhaps it is a good thing that there are teachers and students rather than mentors and mentees. That at least ensures that the training of the students is more or less standard. One can just imagine the lot of a mentee if the mentor passes on a lot of his undesirable traits to the mentee, however unintentionally.

Mentor-mentee relationship is a conscious relationship. Both are aware of the interactions. Both are willing to be involved. Both enjoy it. Who benefits more is a debatable question. The mentee becomes a fully qualified professional at the end of it, and owes a lot of it to the mentor. The mentor gets the satisfaction of not only having done something good but also of having created something worthwhile. The feeling is somewhat akin to having a baby .

But a majority of the students learn partly from their teachers and partly by themselves. Learning by oneself involves a lot of reading and some observation of others at work. This is where the unintentional mentors come in.

The concept of unintentional mentors is opposite of conventional mentors. These persons are in the position of teachers. They often hold responsible positions. They usually lack the devotion and energy required to be good mentors. They almost never try to be mentors. They possess some, sometimes quite a lot of behavioral traits which a mentee would do well not to pick up. These persons occupy important positions so that their actions affect a lot of people often adversely. A large majority of the affected people express dissatisfaction, frustration, and sometimes anger in response to the actions of such persons in power. There is a small group of affected people that actually derives benefit from such actions. It is true that they too suffer like the others. But they notice the wrongful actions, remember these actions in a positive way, and meticulously avoid repeating them when they themselves occupy positions of power. They are the mentees of those unintentional mentors. A conventional mentor teaches the mentee to do the right thing and avoid doing the wrong thing. An unintentional mentor does the wrong thing which an observant mentee notices and trains himself not to do it. It takes no effort on the part of the unintentional mentor in this relationship. In fact, he is unaware of the relationship. The mentee needs to be sensitive and wise enough to find out what was done that should not have been done. He needs to be able to get above the emotions that arise from the unintentional mentor's action so that he can mold himself not to behave in a similar manner when in a position to do so. He needs to be conscientious enough to stop himself from erring when the time comes.

Perhaps it would be too much to ask there be no people who are unintentional mentors, but it is quite reasonable to pray one can rise if the label of an able mentor. It is

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perhaps wishful thinking that one will find a mentor of one's dreams, but it is possible to develop oneself by watching unintentional mentors, and about all it is quite possible to see that one does not become an unintentional mentor oneself.