

## **Book Review: Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relations**

As perpetual students in the University of Life, we learn from our experiences and the people we meet, how to survive in the scientific jungle. But the randomness and serendipity of this learning process often leave us wishing that we could have learned these lessons sooner, and less painfully.

"The Dangerous Book for Boys", bursting with tips on everything a boy needs to know, has been on the bestseller list since its publication in 2007, and has spawned a number of successful sequels including "The Daring Book for Girls". And now the wait is over for those of us struggling to understand how to succeed in careers as women in science with the publication of **"Getting the most of your Mentoring Relationships – A Handbook for Women in STEM"** (Springer, 2009) by Donna J. Dean, a former President of the Association for Women in Science.

Don't be misled by the book's rather dry title. This is survival handbook packed with juicy and practical advice on everything a woman scientist needs to know to build a successful and enjoyable career. Unlike many books on mentoring, this guide is intended for the protégée not the mentor and provides a roadmap to how to identify, engage and keep mentors. Dean encourages us to think outside the box when seeking mentors, and provides an extensive list of resources including e-mentoring websites.

The handbook is designed to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover and just like its author, is seasoned throughout with a strong dose of realism. How many books on mentoring caution that mentoring relationships are not perfect and provide a handy list of signs that indicate you should move on? Or include a chapter on the potential pitfalls of sexual harassment in mentoring relationships? The book is illustrated by numerous vignettes that describe the experiences of real women scientists of all backgrounds, ages, career stages and disciplines.

Much of the advice is equally applicable to both genders, although all the examples are from women. The book targets women readers, who may lack sufficient senior female role models or an "old girls' network" and therefore need to take a more deliberate and proactive approach to career development than their male peers. Male readers will find it enlightening.

Chapter 10 "Voices of Experience" (or "Things your professor should have told you") is a must-read for every scientist starting out on an academic career path. This goldmine of wise advice succinctly summarizes how to build a strong scientific reputation, from presentation tips, to wise prioritization of your time and energies, to obtaining funding.

Every woman scientist should get a copy of this book – it could be your stepping stone to a happy and successful career.

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