

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.

Janet White, PhD

Kirin Pharma USA



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

There are a growing number of opportunities for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields to create mentoring relationships with women already working in the subject areas; however, establishing the relationship is just the first step. In a recent book, "Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relationships: A Handbook for Women in STEM," by Donna J. Dean offers readers insight into how to expand these contacts into better learning experiences.

An update of the 1971 Association for Women in Science (AWIS) *A Hand Up: Women Mentoring Women in Science* (1995, 2nd edition), this book is organized to be the ideal field guide for recent graduates, postdocs, and young women moving into the professional realm. The volume is broken into three major sections addressing what individuals can do to be ready and open for the advice of a mentor; how to create a strong and conducive mentor-mentee relationship; and how to put the plan that the mentor-mentee establish into action. The book is full of insightful how-tos and what-to-look-fors. Additionally, each chapter contains "Points to Ponder" which direct mentees to consider ideas that might not have originally been apparent or encourage them to try new things.

Combining personal stories and advice from the women who blazed recent trails in STEM fields and her own experiences helps to make "Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relationship" not only a comprehensive look at mentoring, but also at times a joy to read. An indispensable reference guide for every young woman trying to make it in fields so historically dominated by men, Dean offers insight in negotiating your way through the process and helping to avoid pitfalls such as missing out on key opportunities for growth or poor relationships with your mentor. Additionally, the book can help first time mentors offer their mentees better advice by recognizing some of the traps they themselves might not notice they are walking into.

"Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relationships: A Handbook for Women in STEM" can be purchased directly from Springer Publisher (ISBN 978-0-387-92408-3) at the website below for \$32.95 plus shipping. This book is part of the Springer Science+Business Media series *Mentoring in Academia and Industry*, which "aims to promote the progress of scientific research and education by providing guidelines for improving academic and career building skills for a broad audience of students, teachers, mentors, researchers, industry, and more."

On the Web: <http://www.springer.com/new+%26+forthcoming+titles+%28default%29/book/978-0-387-92408-3>

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