

Essential Science Conversations

The Science of Research Mentoring

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Shandol Hoover: Hi, everyone, and welcome. We're so glad you're joining us. I'm Shandol Hoover, APA science programs officer, and this program is part of an APA series called *Essential Science Conversations*, where panelists and audience members can engage in an open dialogue about emerging topics in psychological science. Before we get started, I want to share a few quick announcements. First, many thanks to those of you who submitted questions for today's program when you registered.

We'll try to get to as many of those questions as possible. You can also ask a question as a program is taking place in real time. There's a Q&A feature on the dashboard. Please enter your questions there. We'll be monitoring those questions throughout the program. Also, this program is being recorded, so once it ends, everyone who registered will receive an email with a link to the recording in about 7 to 10 days. Let's begin. I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Mitch Prinstein, APA's chief science officer.

Dr. Mitch Prinstein: Hi, everybody. How are you doing? Welcome to everybody from all around the world I can see here in the chat. So glad to have you here to join us for this essential science conversation. Today, we're going to be talking about research mentoring. Most of us who are researchers also are research mentors, but we rarely get any training on exactly how to become a research mentor. We're just expected to know how to do it when we start our positions as mentors.

Most of us might not be aware of the science of mentoring as well. I am so excited to introduce our panelists who will talk about the science of mentoring, and also, we want to talk about the science around mentoring scholars of color. I'm really pleased to introduce our panelists for today's discussion. First, I'm excited to introduce Dr. June Gruber, who's an associate professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of Colorado. She's also the director of the Positive Emotion and Psychopathology Lab.

She was previously a faculty member at Yale. She is a UC Berkeley person through and through receiving her PhD and her BA in psychology from Berkeley. Dr. Gruber teaches courses on topics, including emotion and effective science, psychopathology, the science of happiness, and has created a free online course in human emotion available through YouTube. She has over 100 articles and chapters, edited two books that focus on mental health and positive emotion, and a focus on bipolar and related mood disorders.

June is very invested in mentoring and in training. She has received awards for her mentoring and teaching of students. She's very invested in supporting and elevating the careers of underrepresented women in the sciences. She leads workshops, publishes papers, co-authors a column in science careers, and gives lots of talks to raise awareness about gender disparities in the fields and to chart a proactive path forward.

I'm also very excited to introduce Dr. Jessie Borelli, who is a professor of psych science and an associate director of clinical training at UC Irvine. She's also the clinical director of Compass Therapy, a private practice in Newport Beach. Jessie received her PhD from Yale University and completed her postdoctoral internship at UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. Her research focuses on the links between relationships and mental health across the lifespan.

With Stacey Doan, she's the author of a parenting book called *Nature Meets Nurture: Science-Based Strategies for Raising Resilient Kids*, which is published through APA press. She's very grateful for the mentorship she has received throughout her career. Dr. Borelli says mentoring trainees at all stages of their careers is an aspect of the work that she says she enjoys the most. At the same time, mentoring can be challenging and humbling in an area of work that needs constant reflection and attention.

Last but certainly not least, I'm very excited to introduce Dr. Mia Smith-Bynum, who is the senior director for Science Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion at the American Psychological Association. Dr. Smith-Bynum's portfolio at APA addresses policies and strategies for ensuring that the research derived by the psychological sciences and the human talent that produces the scholarship represent the full breadth of humanity from all walks of life.

Dr. Smith-Bynum is also a professor of family science in the School of Public Health at the University of Maryland, College Park. She was previously on the faculty at Purdue. She received her PhD in clinical psychology from UVA. She's the author of the theory of racial socialization and action for Black families. She's also the co-author of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity.

Mia specializes in mentoring students from underrepresented groups and students seeking to enhance their technical knowledge for working with marginalized communities. When it comes to mentoring, she follows two key principles. One, pay it forward and, two, lift as you climb. She has received formal recognition for her mentorship over the years but treasures most the nickname given to her by a former student, "research momma." She thanks all the fantastic mentors she has had through the years.

I am excited for us all together to have an essential science conversation. Welcome. Thank you all for turning on your cameras and joining us. It's so good to be with you here on this panel. I wanted to start by just asking you, what did you feel prepared for? What did you already know about mentoring? On the first day, you were asked to mentor any student. What have you been taught or how confident did you feel in your readiness to be serving as a mentor?

Dr. June Gruber: Mitch, I think that's a great question and it's one of the most complicated questions because, in many ways, we weren't taught anything concrete, but yet I think we had some sense of what we liked in the mentors that we worked with, that they were supportive, that they had our best interests in mind, and that we learned and felt inspired for them. Those are very big qualities. They're very vague. There's a feeling we had, but maybe for myself, not a concrete sense of, "How do you become that and what does that look like?"

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you. Mia, Jessie, any thoughts?

Dr. Mia Smith-Bynum: I'll say that I had to think back many years, but I'll start by saying I made mistakes with my first students. I think it's easier for me to talk about the lessons that I took because one of the questions I know that is on our list is giving negative feedback. I think that you really have to be thoughtful with how you do that. I made mistakes with that early in my career. For minoritized students, they put you on a pedestal that you didn't know you had climbed up onto. When you say something, it can have a big impact.

I learned that the hard way through some of the mistakes that I made and learning to dial it back and to really prepare students for negative feedback or critical feedback to help them grow. I think too, I learned that mentoring sometimes mirrors the relationship that the trainee had with their mentors. The closer, the more hands-on, the more involved, or the more distant that you were with the people who trained you, then that can also be the template that you draw upon. It's a lot like parenting, I think, in that way.

Dr. Jessica Borelli: Mitch, I think that's a really great question. I would say, thinking back to the very beginning, I did not feel prepared at all to be a mentor. I think I was terrified. As a new professor, I didn't feel very confident in my own skills, let alone my skills to mentor a student to do the work. I was scared that I didn't have much competence to share, let alone to scaffold someone to do this work that we were doing.

I did have a lot of reflections about my own experience being mentored, both in what had helped me grow and what had hindered me or what had not helped me or what I had wanted more of. That's one of the biggest conclusions I think that I'd like to share with people here today, is that I think being a really careful observer of your own experiences, both as a mentee and as a mentor, is probably one of the best gifts you can give your mentees. I do think that's something that helped me along the way is being really in tune with how I felt along the way.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you all so much for sharing that. I think lots of us feel not as well-equipped as we are for other aspects of the job. Thanks for sharing your experiences and vulnerabilities with that. I know that people are probably very appreciative of your candor. June, I wanted to ask you, what do you think are some of the common myths that people have about mentoring?

Dr. Gruber: I think there are some myths. I think these myths make you, like Jessie was saying, feel terrified when you're first stepping into the role because at least we tend to think that mentors should do and be everything, that they should be somehow put on a pedestal and be idolized that there are these figures, these almost like deities that we idolize, that they should be perfect.

Second is that they need to be all-knowing and that they should be able to answer all of our questions and point us in all the right directions. I guess the third thing that makes this a very intimidating image is that they need to somehow be transformative and that somehow this single person, this mentor, needs to do all these things. I think those are the myths that we have and the myths we carry.

They can lead us to feel like we're not doing enough. I think they can lead our mentees to be disappointed and maybe for all of us to wonder, "What can a mentor do and what is not their role?" I think we need to have more open conversations about what mentors can really be for us rather than having them as these mythical figures that no one person can be.

Dr. Prinstein: June, you talk about what is part of the mentor role, what might not be part of the mentor role. I guess, for everybody, what are some of the descriptors of who you are to your mentees that are encapsulated in the very broad umbrella of the word "mentor"? Are you merely their research manuscript editor? It's more than that. What are some of the other titles that fall under that mentor heading?

Dr. Gruber: It's so much more and that's the thing that's so powerful about it and humbling. I think the biggest thing is that you are their advocate and ally, that you have their back as they go through different things. That could be writing a paper. It could be getting concerning feedback. It could be having an existential crisis about what they want to do with their lives and careers but that you're there to support and advocate for them along the way. I think the other part is the relational part, right?

You're not just a feedback mechanism where they give you a paper and you give it back with track changes, or you write a letter for them for graduate school but that you're a person that they feel comfortable talking to, a person that they feel supported with, a person that they have a relationship that they know you as a human being. I think both of those, being someone's ally and having a relationship with them, those are pieces that we don't talk about

when we talk about how to be a mentor. At the end of the day, sometimes I think they're what makes students feel good or bad about their mentor.

Dr. Borelli: I think this is especially important for first-generation students or underrepresented minority students, who haven't had access to people in positions of power or people in higher education. Then you represent a whole other layer of importance. You represent maybe a statement about their intelligence or worth in this context and have the potential to provide important validating messages about whether they belong in this environment or whether they have potential to make a contribution to this environment. You can create a safe space for students within this environment too.

Dr. Prinstein: I'll say for first-generation folks, sometimes that might be a role that the mentor is serving that they may not be getting from family members who might not understand, "What are you doing and why are you doing this and what does it mean? You do research all day. Does that mean you're on Google?" The mentor is sometimes filling in for what one might not be getting from other folks in the same way that students might vary quite a bit in where they're getting different sources of support or validation or comfort. A lot of that then falls on the mentor. Mia, any thoughts?

Dr. Smith-Bynum: Yes, I was just thinking about that. What you were pointing out is that, to me, an effective mentor is also looking out for the student's well-being. It's not just the written feedback that you give or the professional guidance or direction that you give, but that one of the things I'll note for the whole academic life experience, and perhaps I'm jumping into the deep end of the pool. Mitch, pull me back. [chuckles]

Dr. Prinstein: That's all right. [chuckles]

Dr. Smith-Bynum: Our profession is so focused on individual accomplishment. It's very competitive. People who are in the role of faculty advisor may not always be a good faculty mentor because there are so many parts of the profession that incentivize behaviors that could be harmful to the students and protégés under our charge. Then the students can feel that pressure and like, "Oh, I'm dealing with my third bout of COVID, but I got to get my proposal written. My momma's sick and my daddy's sick, and I have to fly home," and all of that stuff.

I'm being a little facetious here, but we have all, I think, seen students in crisis, reminding them that you can't learn if you're not feeling well emotionally, psychologically, physically, so on and so forth, and really helping to guide students through that, figuring out what they can take off of their plate, and then helping them to navigate whatever policy borders come up when they're in crisis, or if they're just trying to figure out how to find their center as they move through a very competitive space.

Dr. Borelli: I agree.

Dr. Prinstein: Yes, please go ahead.

Dr. Borelli: I agree completely with that. Personally, I think that's one of the most important roles that mentors serve because we're seeing students when they're in a time of such heightened stress. Graduate school is, in a lot of ways, like basic training, except it goes on for a very long period of time. We're helping to give our students messages, really important socialization messages about the role of their own mental health and the prioritization of self-care in the midst of this context that, in many ways, is unhealthy. We can play a really powerful role in sending the messages that prioritize their sense of self and well-being. I just want to echo what you're saying, Mia.

Dr. Prinstein: I'm so glad that you mentioned that. Oh, sorry, June, go ahead.

Dr. Gruber: No, it's classic Zoom. I was just going to say, just echoing the echo of Jessie and Mia, I think such a big part is both what we do for our students to show them values and show them the importance of self-care. Whether we realize or like it or not, the way we're living our lives is serving as an image of the life that they may want or not want. I certainly remember looking at certain professors and thinking, "Could I be like them? Would I want to be like them?" Just being very self-aware that the choices we make when it comes to balancing our own work-life if we have children and letting them know when that comes up and how we do it, and just letting them see because they're watching and they're learning what a life can look like in this field.

Dr. Prinstein: I think that the points about balance and about modeling how to be balanced and take care of one's self professionally but also personally are so, so important. I think that they apply to folks across one's entire career. When it comes to mentoring, we're not always but very often, we're mentoring folks who might be in their 20s, let's say.

What do we know from the literature about some of the developmental challenges, milestones, experiences that might be happening in one's 20s that are probably going to make their way into your mentoring relationship or part of the discussions that would be good for mentors to know going in? This is probably going to end up being part of what you're talking about at some point. Anything you want to say about what we know about emerging adulthood literature as it pertains to mentorship?

Dr. Smith-Bynum: I think romantic partners and marriages, having babies. I think we had a student in our department who had a baby in the middle of-- and was already a mother of several children. I am a mere mortal. I couldn't have done it. One of the things I've learned when I see that is to not advise people not to do it or about these choices in their personal lives, but to figure out how to support them because they are taking what we say very, very seriously.

I learned that my own personal limitations are not an index of what a student may be capable of doing given what family supports they may have and how determined they may be. What I do try to do for them is to map out realistically how they're going to have to navigate that. We just have honest conversations about that upfront. I see a couple of questions in the chat about navigating visible and invisible disabilities and all of that.

I think having a conversation when the mentorship relationship commences that you say what your values are, your vision for how you'd like to see the protégés develop and opening the door and being responsive when they're bringing this personal matter score because every student is different. Some manage these things differently. They're a little more private, but you're in a position of power. I think that sometimes we forget that as faculty, what that means, and how that may impact the student's comfort with disclosing what particular challenges that they have. That's my two cents on it anyway.

Dr. Gruber: Mia, I really appreciate you saying that because I think that was one of the biggest challenges, I remember facing was being unaware of the power dynamic. We're all human beings. Let's just talk openly. Assuming that that space would just happen organically, I think you're right that we have to find ways to help our mentees be comfortable. This was a conversation that a student that I worked with, Sarah Hagerty, and some of our colleagues in biology talked about is, how do we support clear communication?

Because when our students can share what they're expecting, what their values are, and we can tell them where we're coming from, things can work a whole lot better than when those things are assumed or misunderstood. That was a lot of conversation we had about. That's

such a critical piece of things going well or not going well. One of the things we have spent a lot of time doing is really try to find ways to enhance the kind of transparency when you mentor.

We've created these little lab agreements where I sit down at the beginning of the semester with each of my students, whether it's undergraduate or graduate, and we map out, "What are their goals?" We map out, "What do I think?" Like, "Should we change that timeline, or should we do more or less?" We just talk openly by writing it down and having it almost like a syllabus for mentoring, something that's there in the open. It doesn't bind you to it, but it has certainly helped open the doors for students to feel the ambiguity of like, "What is my mentor thinking?"

At least be assuaged and at least for me to worry less about, "Am I mind reading correctly of where my students are?" At least try to get a little bit more towards helping understand both ways because I think it is that complication where you really want to understand where they're at, but sometimes it may be hard with the power dynamic for them to feel like they can share exactly what they want to need.

Dr. Prinstein: Good points. I think that, for many folks, this might be their first job. They may have been a student for a very long time. First full-time job for many. This is their first time being a teacher. In some cases, clinician, managing finances, parents getting ill, roommate disputes. There are so many things that are happening. Sometimes with undergrads in particular or with a post-bacc in your lab.

This might be the very first time I've had a full-time job and your mentoring is somewhat teaching them how to handle workplace issues. It's so many things that fall under that hat of mentoring, right? We're talking about development. I feel remiss if not also asking about our own development as we age through the mentoring process. I was 28, the first day of my first faculty job.

My graduate students who were my age are older than me. What I could say, how I said it, what I felt I needed to project was very different when I started getting a few gray hairs and whatnot. What's that experience like? How have you seen your mentor styles change or what's the feeling of starting off being a mentor when you might not feel very-- 10 minutes ago you, were a postdoc. Now, you're a faculty member. Suddenly, you have to be the mentor. What's that experience like?

Dr. Smith-Bynum: You're bringing back memories.

[laughter]

Dr. Prinstein: Yes.

Dr. Smith-Bynum: I will say, I think I became more skilled as I went along, and then also just some personal life changes. In my second faculty position, I became a single mom. I see some questions in the chat about work-family balance and setting boundaries with students and things of that nature. Even though I had studied Black families and studied Black single-parent families, boy, did I become much more humble when I became one? [laughs]

That has probably, more than any academic or professional credential, fueled my mentoring style because I knew as the only adult in my household that if momma goes down, everybody goes down, the whole system, like all of the things, dinner, running errands, taking my kid to sports practices and stuff like that. I realized I had to prioritize my own well-being if I was going to be able to do all the things expected of me.

Grace is probably the biggest thing that I infuse into my work. I can tell because of the culture that we're in that students don't always believe me when I say it because they're getting different messages from other places, but that particular lifestyle change has been huge and remains huge for me. Getting at some of the tensions that I see here in the chat like there's a question that says, "I'm experiencing a lot of pressure as a junior faculty." I want to look out for my students' well-being, but I feel so much pressure to produce.

I think the lesson from that is do what will make you feel comfortable looking in the mirror from day to day. We love our work. We put our feet on the floor every morning if we're blessed too that we get to go to work and do what we love. When it comes to your student's well-being, your own ethics, and values, keep that at the center. You will draw certain students to you because of how well you take care of them. Some of the questions we've been talking about is that climate.

For that post-bacc that Mitch was mentioning, if you've got good doctoral students who are fantastic academically and they're a great character, they're going to help you take care of that post-bacc. Creating that climate and you will attract the best of the best. Those students will often run to the ends of the earth for you. If you have to go take a kid to a doctor's appointment, that's the student who'll keep the lab meeting going when you step away. Live out your values as opposed to the ones that the academy drives forward and where you're supposed to be professionally is where you will land.

Dr. Prinstein: Great.

Dr. Borelli: I think in the answer to your question, Mitch, or did you want to switch?

Dr. Prinstein: No, I want you to keep going. That's great.

Dr. Borelli: I brought this up in my intro. I think that, in many ways, the beginning for me was the hardest because I doubted my own capabilities about mentoring, but I also think there was an advantage to being an early mentor because I really understood the graduate student experience. I was so close to it. I felt like I had more insight and empathy into what my graduate students were experiencing. Sometimes, now, I feel that I'm further away from it.

There are parts that I forget almost about what the day-to-day life of a graduate student is like. I'm just a little bit more removed. I feel like that remove hurts me sometimes. I almost need my graduate students to remind me a little bit more about, "No, wait, what are their lives like? What is the day-to-day life like?" It's easier to forget. There's a little bit of loss even though, now, I feel like I'm much more skilled at setting limits on my own time with graduate students or certain things that were hard for me in the beginning if that makes sense.

Dr. Prinstein: That makes great sense. Let me ask. I'm looking at some of the questions that are coming in as well. Let's talk about transparency. How much do you want to be transparent about your own experience, the things that you're questioning, the struggles that you're dealing with, the things that you're not short about, and when do you not want to be? How much do you want your mentees to-- how much do you want to encourage transparency from them or not? June, what do you think?

Dr. Gruber: Yes, I think that's a really interesting question because I think one of the core values I talk about with my students is transparency. We often talk about it in the context of our working relationship and what they need and what's going well or what's not going well and me giving them honest feedback about what's working, and as we talked about at the beginning, being comfortable with sharing feedback if things aren't working.

That seems to be a goal we all want to strive towards. I think the other layer though is like, how transparent do you want to be about your experience of the field and how you feel about everything? Are you sometimes feeling like it's too much when you've got two young kids? We were just talking about this. They're sick and you're trying to balance that. You feel like you're barely holding on some days to just getting through the day when you're trying to do it all.

I want to share that but also don't want to overwhelm my students with the details of that. I think they want to know those things. The things sometimes I wonder more about like, "Are these helpful and useful to students? Are some of the politics of academia, the stuff that happens in your department, or the stuff that happens in the field?" Because on the one hand, you want them to see everything and make an informed choice about what they want to do with their life and the field they want to go into. At the same time, I don't want to bog my students down.

They have enough on their plate like Jessie was saying. Our clinical students have a lot of courses, clients, research. Do they really want to hear that day-to-day drudgery that may happen politically in departments? That's the part I sometimes hesitate on. Is it something they need to hear? Is it even appropriate for them to know that level of transparency? I think the different layers make it complicated because you want to be open, but also have boundaries where you're letting them live their life. They don't need to know everything at every stage. I find that a struggle sometimes because I want them to know things and be aware as they navigate their career.

Dr. Prinstein: Other tips about transparency?

Dr. Borelli: I'm not sure exactly what the question was getting at, but I love the question. I like the way June answered it too. I think there's also transparency in terms of what your experience as a mentor is like in terms of working with your students. For instance, sometimes there are certain students, at least for me, for whom like I have a-- The experience of working with a student is quite frustrating. For example, reviewing draft after draft after draft. I'll experience that the writing is not getting much improved, right?

I'll express a lot of frustration with that. I'll give feedback and it won't get better and we'll work on it. At what point do you share that the writing is not getting better? Do you share that you have frustration around it, for example? Is there transparency around that? Now, I would probably argue that you maybe don't share the frustration, but you do share that the writing is not improving because is the transparency around the frustration going to be helpful to the student?

Maybe you do at a certain point. I don't know. I think that's an interesting question. I think there's a parallel with parenting too because in the parent-child relationship, you wouldn't necessarily think that the child should take on the burden of your emotions. It's not their responsibility to take care of your emotions, but maybe the dynamic that's causing your emotions is something to take care of. I don't know.

Dr. Prinstein: Well said. Great. I want to talk for a moment about gender. About 80% of graduate students in psychology right now are female. There's still a disproportionate number of males. I believe all of you identify as female, I identify as male, so let's talk about the difference in mentoring if there's anything that one would do different when mentoring a male, female, or someone that identifies as non-binary. Let's talk about the differences may be in how people are mentored if any are perceived by a male or a female.

Let's bring that to the fore because I'll just say, I think that we need to be champions and advocates for the experiences that those who identify as not male might experience in

graduate school, given that it's a setting that has been dominated by a male system for so long. I don't think we can just bury our heads in the sand about this. I think we need to talk about the ways we want to be sensitive to gender dynamics when we think about mentoring as well. Mia, any thoughts, any reactions to that?

Dr. Smith-Bynum: I think in my experience because I'm known for someone who works with students of color, first-gen students, first-gen students of color, and other marginalized groups, I was also just known as mice, which is a double-edged sword in academia because you get to do lots of things sometimes without appropriate credit. I think bringing in that humility to the process, I think people are often just looking to be seen and to be heard.

I like to bring up the examples. I had two really wonderful white male mentors. One during my assistant professorship and one when I was a doctoral student. They both had two things in common that I really appreciated. They were very competent, so at the top of their game professionally. I was lucky in that way. They were also friendly and curious in an appropriate way.

One of the things you learn to do as a person of color or a member of a marginalized group, I plant seeds to seeing, "Is this person ready for me to talk about the real experience of being a Black person, a Black woman in this white space?" I'll drop a bread crumb and then I'll watch like a good psychologist. I'm observing behavior. I'll say, "Well, yes, growing up Black in X city," and they'll be like, "Tell me more." I think in both cases, they lean forward with a warmth that I felt was genuine.

They put their chin on their hands and say, "Tell me more." I know that they would not know all of what it meant, but the fact that I could pull down one more layer of the mask with them helped me to benefit from their expertise and their guidance. As marginalized students and young professionals, we have to look for mentorship in multiple forms. Sometimes you can get fantastic technical mentorship from someone who is not a warm and fuzzy but a cold fish, right?

They're very technical. When students don't feel that warmth, they sometimes will mistake that as someone that they can't do business with. I always ask them, "Do they give you equivalent opportunities as to those for the majority of students on that team picking identity? Are they spending as much time? Are you getting plum assignments? Are they helping you grow with that critical feedback?" If the answer is yes, yes, and yes, stay with that cold fish and get your warm and fuzzy somewhere else, right?

That might be from momma. That may be from a faculty member across campus, or it could be digitally because you can do this digitally now. Really assessing the content of the feedback and shaking it off because it could sometimes sting, but then knowing that if I could stay in here and I'm not being mistreated, I'm just not getting the warm fuzzies. I can make it. Particularly when that training is very hard to get, it's very specialized, there are just not a lot of places to get it.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you for that. Jessie, yes?

Dr. Borelli: I think, for me, I really focus a lot on trying to address what I perceive to be one of the biggest barriers for women continuing in academia or science-related careers, which is not seeing a place for having a family within that career. I try to make space for my female students to talk about the way that they see family as part of their life and part of their career. I think this is even more of an issue for students of color or first-generation students.

I think it's actually an issue for all female students that they don't see this as a career that's welcoming or inclusive of their entire family. That was also the case for me. I had a time in

my life where I decided I wasn't going to be an academic because I was married to someone who was going to be in one location, so I gave up the idea of being an academic. It was only because I happened to find a job in one place that it worked out for me.

Otherwise, I would have gone the other path. I always make time with my students, with all of them, also with male students, but especially with female students to talk about, "How does this fit into your overall life plans if you want to have a partner, you want to have a family, you want to have kids? Is this going to be a good match for you and how can you think about incorporating that?"

Dr. Gruber: Jessie, I completely agree with that point too. I think as you said, I also had my doubts about being able to start a family and have it work out with my partner. A lot of these issues in academia and we have two body issues if our partners in academic are real. Part of me tries to support them through. If it's a partner complication or they're thinking about starting a family, how's that going to work?

I both try to share experiences of my own like, "This is how it has worked for me," and contrast that with some of my close friends who are not academics. What's it really like to have young children in a job like this where there are high demands, but a great degree of flexibility compared to other kinds of careers and where there may be a more clear-cut 9:00 to 5:00 and the pros and cons of all jobs and to think about what might work for them.

I think also the thing I try to spend a lot of time on and I know Jessie is similar to this too. We brought nearly 60 women together in our field and wrote a paper together a couple of years ago now, really pulling the blinds away from psychological science and saying like, "Where are issues of gender disparity in our field?" and being able to talk about those with my trainees, but also talk about it in a way that motivates us to make it better and stay in this field.

I think that's something I try to do too, is be honest about the limitations and about the challenges while saying, "But we can make it better." We have so much capability of psychological scientists who study gender and discrimination, who study behavioral change. If anyone can make it better, we at least ought to try. I think it's that balance of being honest about the field and about challenges for especially females.

Also, what can we do at a big-picture level and showing them if they want it, what can it look like to have a family in this kind of career, and just showing them what's a day-to-day life like, like actually seeing it? Because I think, otherwise, it can feel impossible. I felt that way too as a grad student. I don't see how anyone can make this work. It's hard to know until you have people then can just share what they've done and what's worked and what's been hard.

Dr. Prinstein: Thank you all. Okay, so let's say your mentee has done something not to your satisfaction. You need to deliver some critical feedback. This is something that every mentor feels a bit more scared about this kind of an interaction than other interactions. Dare I say that this is probably something where every mentor has had times, they feel that they've done it well and times they feel like, "That didn't go so well." What tips do you have, things to do, things to avoid when you have to deliver negative feedback to a mentee?

Dr. Smith-Bynum: I would say that the first foundation is they have to trust you, right? There's that power differential there. They're being vulnerable whenever they submit something to you or someone else in the program. If they trust you, it makes that conversation a bit easier because I'm relying on that trust factor to help scaffold that negative feedback.

The other thing that I will often do and I think this is really important for first-gen students and students of color who are trying to understand western norms of individual accomplishment is you got to start to translate the cultural norms that may be from their background versus what it takes to be in this profession. I often will tell my students getting a PhD if that is the focal degree.

Getting a PhD is not easy. A lot of other people would have it. I basically tell them, "The air is thin. This is not a nurturing experience." With that understanding, I always try to mentor my students so you can go toe to toe with any scientist that might question your credentials. In that way, I'm equipping them to perform in a way that they can go into any professional space, and so almost like preparing them for battle.

That's just infusing how I focus my work with my students. Then I lay out, "This is what you got to do. You got it here, there." Usually, if they trust you, they're like, "Darn, hell's rough," but they'll go back. If they don't trust you or if they're dealing with some deep imposter syndrome or some other things, you got to start to pull that apart a little bit more. Depending on what the circumstances are, it may be a bigger issue. If it's just one interaction, that's my strategy.

Dr. Borelli: I love those examples, Mia. I think that's really good inoculation against that. I can tell you some mistakes that I've made. I think the best that I've done is delivering really direct feedback. I think when I do it directly, it has the most success. The biggest mistake I've made is when I've delivered feedback in a way that I think was less direct or at least that the student didn't experience it directly enough and then, in another situation, delivered it with another colleague present.

The student perceived that as really the first time they received the feedback. I don't know if that's clear, meaning it has to come, I think, first in their interaction with you. I think this goes back to what Mia was saying. They're a trusted person in a more private environment so that they hear it from you before they hear it. For example, a defense or something like that. That's more optimal. I think my tendency is to deliver it too softly. Then if they hear me deliver it in front of someone else, that's not a good way to do it.

Dr. Gruber: Yes, Jessie, I resonate with that both. If it's delivered too softly or a little bit too roundabout, a message can get lost, and then it can be hard to then be direct. That can seem maybe aversive, or I once had to deliver feedback on behalf of a program. That can make them feel betrayed because it's like other people were part of this conversation.

I guess the lessons I've learned is to try to aspire towards reminding them like, "As your mentor, I'm your advocate, I'm your ally. Part of my job if I'm going to do my job is to give you all kinds of feedback and to just try to be as matter-of-fact about it so that it can feel like less high stakes." You're just telling them the way things are and then, "So what can we do?" "Here's the things to work on, so let's make some goals around it." As simple as the message can be, I think it can feel less threatening and more matter-of-fact. It's not easy to do either at the same time.

Dr. Smith-Bynum: Can I say a point about that? Because June really made a good point that one of the things to share because sometimes what'll happen is someone else gave my student negative feedback and they're coming to process it with me. I'm sure we all have had that conversation. I tell them, "In this environment, feedback is an investment in you." When people say, "You're great. You walk on water," that's actually a slap in the face.

You don't always know that if you were the straight-A student in your undergraduate program and you did walk on water at that place, but feedback is an investment. If they've taken the time like, "Do you know how long it took for them to go for this document? It took

four hours with all the line edits." They're like, "For real?" I was like, "Yes, a half a day." If they sat down, they see your potential. The way you respond is you go back, and you take this feedback. You give them something fabulous and I'll help you, right?

The other thing too, this tentative feedback too that I want to make sure that I say. A mistake I see white faculty do way too often is confuse a negative evaluation of a student with racism, right? This is what racial stereotypes have done through our country is we have horrible stereotypes about people of color and their intellect or with the exception of the model minority that is aimed at Asian Americans. The research shows that that compromises them as well.

When you read a piece of work by a student, you make your honest assessment. Then you do it compassionately, but you are direct. Again, it's that trust piece. If you're not sure that the student trusts you, that's sometimes where the gap comes in. This is where doing some more of your own reading, consulting with a trusted colleague. This is why we need racially, ethnically, and gender-diverse networks. We're not always having to rely on people who look just like us and had some of the same life experiences.

Even on the risk of having a student get angry, still telling the truth because that usually bears out when someone else reads the word anyway. Then reminding them if you send this out and it is not successful in this arena, how's that going to come back on you as the student? You walk them through that logic and they're like, "Oh yes." I said, "That's not going to be good. You care about this work, don't you?" "Yes, I do." That's the piece in terms of-- Critical feedback is not racist. [chuckles] It's honest. Let's just erase that, can we? One of my soapboxes.

Dr. Prinstein: That's awesome. Thank you. A lot of what you're talking about fits with some of the science of mentoring. There's not as much science on mentoring as there should be, particularly when it comes to mentoring psychology students or around tasks unique to our discipline. Nevertheless, what does the science say about pretty clear to-dos and to-not-dos? June, do you want to start us off on that?

Dr. Gruber: Yes. One of the things that first came to mind that the science talks about but then we don't really speak much about in practice are the benefits of multiple mentors. I feel like especially in clinical psychology, the way we even apply to graduate schools with a single person, that's going to be our sole go-to mentor, at least that's what we're supposed to believe. We know that the science says that what really helps us learn is having many different kinds of mentors who give us diverse perspectives, different skill sets, fill different needs we have. Maybe the more technical side of things, we need someone with more career professional development, et cetera.

I think we could do a better job following the science, both in terms of how we explain this to our students and in terms of how we set up their training experiences that, indeed, they should have in their plan and their expectations who are going to be the different people that are going to mentor them that semester. Even class instructors are a form of mentorship too, clinical supervisors. I think we could certainly improve and really disseminating that and making that really more of lived experience because it works.

Dr. Borelli: I can add a little bit to this conversation. Some of this, we've already been talking about here, so this won't come out as new information. What the research shows is that mentees need their mentors to provide them with different forms of mentorship, not just career or academic-related support but also the kind of psychosocial support that we've been talking about here.

Many of us have already given you this message. If you see mentors in your department or we know of people who just view their role very narrowly defined as, "I'm just here to mentor my students in how to be a psychological scientist just to do the work," that's really not what mentees benefit most from. They really do benefit from a more well-rounded approach that takes into account their mental health and psychosocial needs.

That's really the best approach. Within that, they also value things like how you model your role as an academic, communicating very effectively about your boundaries, things like not rescheduling meetings a lot, that's very stressful for students, and giving this honest and constructive communication and feedback, some of what we are already been talking about.

Dr. Prinstein: I want to mention, first of all, how much the advice and the experiences that you've had has been so incredibly valuable. I know from things that I'm seeing pop up in the chat and whatnot that folks are very appreciative. In fact, there are so many great questions. We may need a part two because there are so many great things to talk about here. For some information, I know that there was a paper on mentoring in psychology that appeared in what was then referred to as the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. We'll post that link to that article alongside this recording at the APA Essential Science Conversations website.

I also wanted to say just to tag on to the points that some of you made about so many of the different roles that you have to play. It was my own personal experience. Thank you so much, Shandol, for posting that in the chat. In academia, of trying to balance many of those roles by consistently talking with students about the different hats I felt I was wearing in that moment and just making them incredibly explicit and saying, "There's a part of me that as the PI of this grant that we need to collect the data on really soon." I wanted to have a conversation with you about how we can make sure we get moving on this job.

Then the part of me that as your mentor really is concerned about, if you're okay, and how can I help you, and this is a really stressful time. I want to put both of those on the table and let's talk about how we can find a way to help move both of these forward. Because I, at least when starting, found that if I didn't make that very explicit, what came out was a mishmash that was helpful to nobody. [chuckles] It was really helpful to try and be as clear about the multiple hats we wear as often as possible, right? I'm taking that away from what you're all saying today too because we do have so many hats. It is hard and we don't know how to do that once we get started.

Dr. Borelli: Well, that's something that is real quick to talk about, Mitch. It's called role-sharing. That's something that's very challenging for mentors is that we do play all these different roles, but one of the things that's really also in line with what the research shows is that being really reflective about yourself in all these different capacities helps to make you a better mentor. Sorry, I cut you off.

Dr. Prinstein: No, that's great. That's great. I want to say thank you so much to you all for participating today and for being so open and candid in sharing your experiences and your thoughts. For everyone listening, you may have heard about this series through the free newsletter called *Science Spotlight*. *Science Spotlight* is where we are constantly giving away money and more opportunities for free. You don't have to be an APA member to subscribe or for most everything that we talked about in there.

If you are not subscribed, you may be missing out. Check out the chat or simply google APA Science Spotlight and subscribe. Please tell other folks who may not have the opportunity to have taken this hour about that as well so they don't miss out on some of the scholarships and other kinds of experiences that we're offering. We want to make sure those are freely available to everyone. Drs. Gruber, Borelli, Smith-Bynum, I want to thank you so much for your participation.

I want to thank Shandol Hoover and other members of the APA staff for all of the work that it takes to make this come across so seamlessly and expertly. Thank you so much for that. I hope everyone enjoyed our conversation. It might take just one minute to fill out a survey that you'll get afterwards to tell us about what we're doing well and what we can do to be more useful to you throughout your scientific career. You can also email us at science@apa.org with any feedback. I look over all of those myself, so I'd be very excited to get your feedback too. I want to thank everybody for their time. Have a great rest of your day.