

Mentors and Intrinsic Motivators: A Quick Reference Guide

In my experience (as mentee and mentor), identifying a good mentoring match begins with understanding the various styles mentors adopt and why. If you're evaluating a prospective mentor, a key to anticipating mentoring style is discerning the person's primary intrinsic motivator as a scientist.

Similarly, if you're seeking to improve an existing relationship with a mentor you find especially challenging to work with, take time to discover his or her primary motivator - and then reflect on how best to appeal to that. (Ideally, both mentee and mentor need to find out what motivates each other.)

Once you understand the mentoring style you're dealing with, you have to strategize about how to work most effectively with that person - or consider alternatives. You do have the final option, ultimately

Here's a list of primary motivators that distinguish scientific mentors, and tips on optimal approach to each

Mentor's Primary Motivator	Mentee's Optimal Approach
Papers	Only talk about this and not much else. Not interested.
Feeling helpful	Get items 95% prepared and ask for their help and guidance in completing it