

Three research-based lessons to improve your mentoring

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Some scientists are truly extraordinary mentors. Take, for example, professor Charlotta Turner, a chemist at Lund University in Sweden, who in 2014 [received a text](#) from her Ph.D. student telling her that he might not finish his thesis in time. When she learned that her student, Firas Jumaah, was in fact hiding with his family in an Iraqi factory as armed members of the Islamic State group roamed the streets outside, she leapt into action and worked with the university's security chair to arrange a daring rescue operation.

But for every heroic mentor, there are just as many [horror stories about bad ones](#). Unfortunately, most mentors don't always have the tools or training to provide the proper support to their mentees (and, unfortunately, some just don't care).

One way to address this issue is by learning the science behind great mentoring, as Jay and colleagues discussed on a [panel](#) recently. Instead of relying solely on personal anecdotes or their own gut intuitions, the panelists described theories and research on how to manage the most important relationship in science: the one between a mentor and mentee. Here, we share three lessons from that event.

Becoming a better mentor should be a central concern for new faculty members starting their own labs, but also for graduate students and postdocs mentoring research assistants—and even for more senior faculty members who are continually striving to improve their mentoring. Our capacity for growth as mentors is a lifelong journey.