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How to Talk to Your Chair and other reflections on a career in academic medicine



Lucky Jain MD, MBA

**Chair, Department of Pediatrics, Emory University
Chief Academic Officer, Children's Healthcare of
Atlanta**

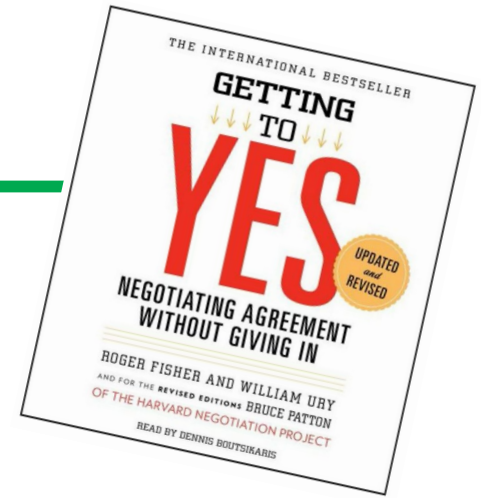


Future of Medicine

Pipeline of Clinician Scientists



Can I Talk with My Chair?



- **Faculty and staff are the most valuable resources of the Department**
- **Most Chairs have a relative “open door” policy and will find time to meet with you**

Why Faculty Ask to Meet with the Chair



- Periodic Updates:
 - Proactive – want to get to know the Chair and want the Chair to get to know you
 - Highlight accomplishments
 - Not asking for anything
 - No specific issues or problems to discuss
- Career development/mentoring:
 - Navigating work-life balance and the stress of an academic career
 - Advice about a change in career focus and/or a change in academic track
 - Request for a change in FTE or FTE allocation

Why Faculty Ask to Meet with the Chair

- Specific Requests:
 - Request for funds – a project; a short-term course to enhance career/skills; travel beyond TDJ
 - Letters of support – for a grant; nomination to a local or national committee or training program
 - To discuss salary and sometimes benefits
 - Help in resolving a conflict with a supervisor or peer

My Chair is Busy:

Will he/she be receptive to addressing a problem that is important to me but trivial in the Big Picture?

If you have a problem:

- Try to resolve with your Division Chief or other immediate supervisor before going to the Chair – follow “chain of command”
- Explain the issue clearly and outline what you’ve already done
- Project a problem-solving mindset:
 - Come to the meeting with potential solutions for discussion
 - Focus on issues rather than complaints about people
 - Discuss how the proposed solution will be beneficial to all parties

Meeting with Your Chair



Prepare for the meeting



Time with your Chair is valuable – use it wisely



Prepare a written agenda and send it to your Chair ahead of time



Will allow your Chair to think about the issues and have a more thoughtful discussion



Will ensure that you won't forget what you wanted to cover



Be present and engaged during the discussion; turn off your cell phone



Be positive/enthusiastic about your job

The “Don’t Do” for a Meeting with Your Chair



- Avoid the nasty letter or email or conversation that will never be forgotten
- We have all received the note that:
 - Presents an outraged, biased, one-sided picture
 - Is cold or sarcastic
 - Uses language such as “This is totally unacceptable”
 - Misses the big picture
- Don’t ever send these notes/emails
 - put them in the drawer and cool down

Thinking about Promotion

Part of an academic career is the desire to be recognized for excellence and to move up the academic ladder

Understand the promotion tracks at Emory and what this means for MD and PhD faculty in the SOM

Speak to your Division Chief first to determine the most appropriate track for you – mutually agreed upon (Div/Dept)

Set milestones for promotion; meet periodically with your Division Chief to assess how you're doing

Careers evolve; faculty don't always continue on the same path

You are not a failure if your career shifts and you decide to change tracks

How Do I Ask for a Raise?



- Be direct
- Make sure your Chair knows that the meeting is to discuss salary
- Know the salary guidelines for your Department
- Prepare your case – Why do I deserve a raise?
- Salary equity or market adjustment
- Unusual productivity
- Being courted by others – retention
- Summarize accomplishments that highlight why you think a raise is appropriate

How to Handle Personnel Issues: Faculty, Students, Staff

- Before you speak to your Chair:
 - For staff issues, seek guidance from your Department's head of HR
 - For student issues, seek guidance from people who know the student well, including the Dean of Students or Clerkship Director
 - For colleagues, seek guidance from your Division Chief
 - From the Chair's perspective, personnel issues are complex with genesis and solutions coming from both parties – not usually one-sided
 - Consider consultation with the Faculty Staff Assistance Program (<http://www.fsap.emory.edu/>)

Being Recruited by Another Institution: How Do I Tell My Chair?

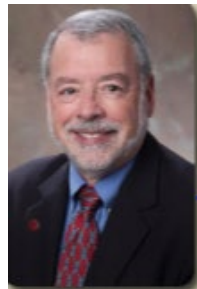
- Retention of respected and productive faculty is one of the most important jobs of a Chair
- Speak with your Division Chief/Chair early in the process – don't blindside them with a resignation letter
- Most Chairs will encourage you to explore and learn from other opportunities, but want the chance to retain you
- Be candid:
 - Discuss what attracts you to this opportunity and what might make you want to stay
 - Make a fully informed decision and involve your Chair in the process

Life and Career Cliff Notes: Early Years

- Born and raised in Jaipur, India
- 1985 - Came to the US as a Rotary Foundation Scholar after graduating from SMS Medical College Jaipur
- 1986 – Fellowship in Neonatology PhD Program in Pathology
- 1988 – Attending Neonatologist - Looking for research direction
- 1994-2004 - served as Director of the postdoctoral training program in neonatology at Emory
- 2003 – First encounter with Burnout: Sabbatical Year & EMBA
- 2006 - Medical Director, Emory Children’s Center/Executive Vice Chair DOP
- 2008 - Named to the Blumberg Chair in Pediatrics at Emory
- 2015 - Appointed Chief Academic Officer, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta
- 2018 - Named to the Brumley Chair in Pediatrics at Emory
- Found career mentors at Emory:



Dr. George Brumley

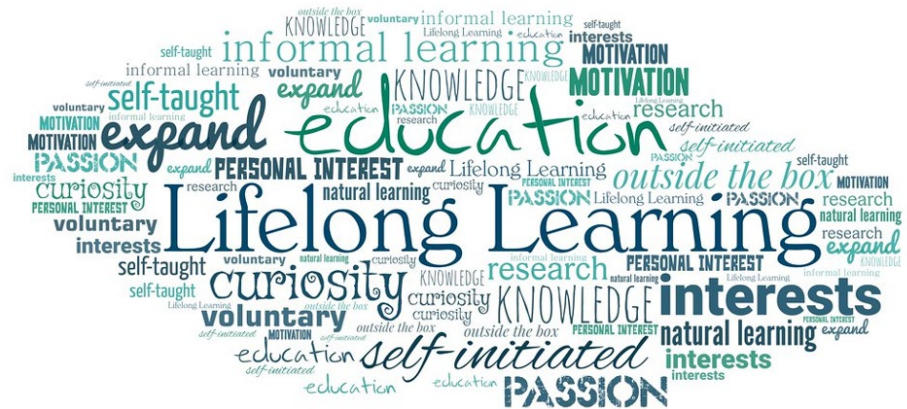


Dr. Doug Eaton



Lifelong Learner

- Neonatology training and lung biology
- Electrophysiology, patch clamping and ion channels
- Fork in the Road: 2003 MBA with Finance concentration
- 2009: MPH – Health Outcomes



Life and Career Cliff Notes: Leadership

- Opportunity to build an outstanding academic department and to partner more closely with Children's
- Orchestra director rather than virtuoso
- Focus on strengthening the institution, the department, recruiting and retaining talented faculty, finding resources; advocating for the faculty and department; making life/career better for others; serving as an ambassador for pediatrics and child health



5 Transformative events that will shape the next 5 years and beyond for Research & Academics at Children's:

1

Woodruff foundation \$90M gift to fund research plan and recruitment of 30 investigators

2

Marcus Foundation \$8.85M gift to fund the Society for Marcus Professors for 5 additional years, and the addition of a new professor for cellular therapies

3

Lettie Pate Evans Foundation multi-year gift to fund expansion of our GME program by 45 FTEs

4

The Marcus Foundation gift of \$35M to create a comprehensive Center for Cellular Therapies

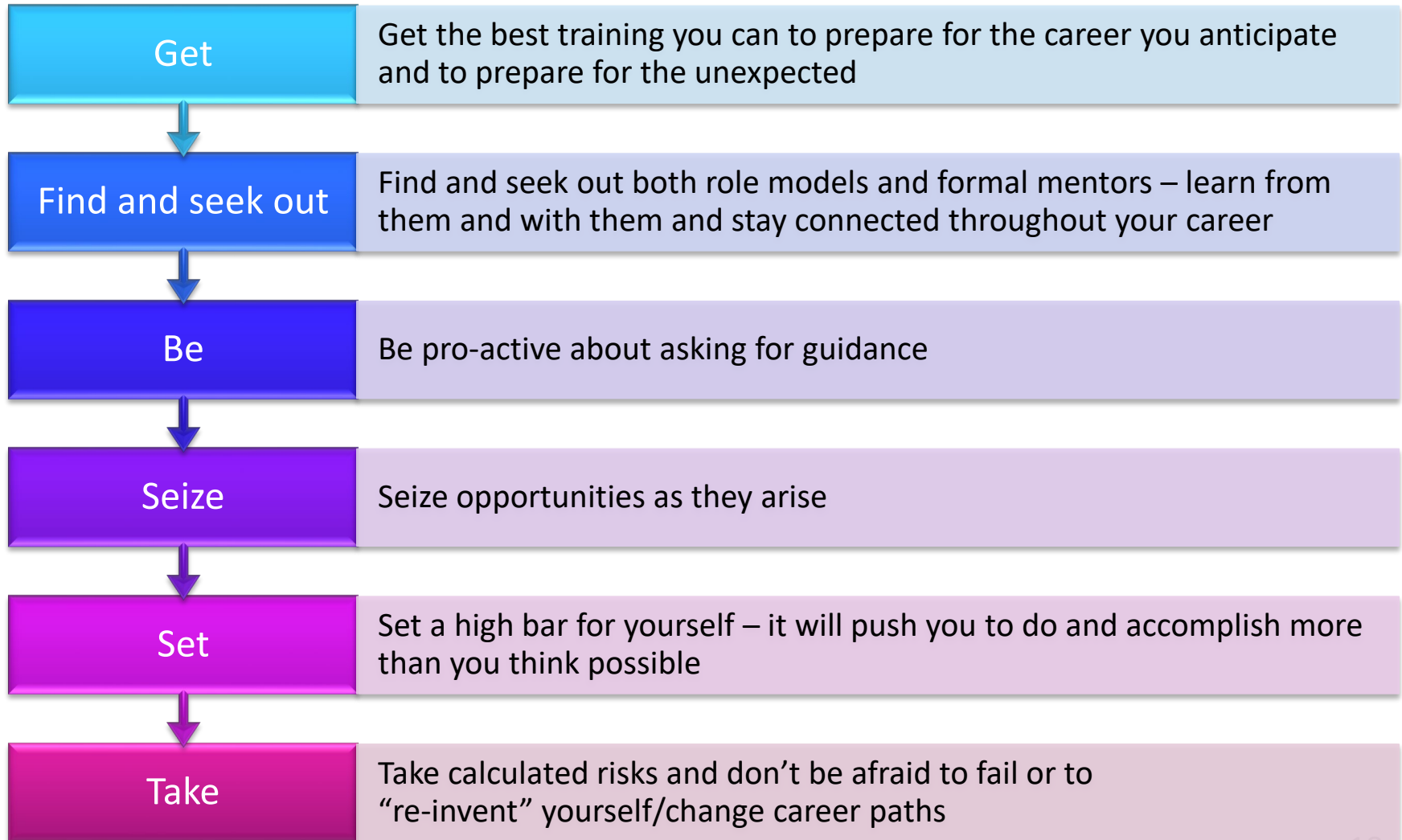
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Woodruff Foundation \$10M gift to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta to support mental and behavioral health

Lessons Learned from the Winding Road of Academic Medicine



Reflections from my Own Career in Academic Medicine: Lessons Learned



Reflections from my Own Career in Academic Medicine: Lessons Learned

- Find a niche (clinical, research, teaching): focus and develop expertise
- Aspire to be “the best” at something
- Set expectations/goals and work hard to achieve them
- Work for and with people you respect and like for their technical expertise, intellect, integrity, human qualities



Reflections from my Own Career in Academic Medicine: Lessons Learned

- Have fun at work – we spend a lot of hours “on the job”
- Don’t take on a leadership role too early – establish your own career focus and expertise first
- Work-life balance matters – your family and friends love you more than your job does
- Be passionate and optimistic about life and career





“There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children”

Nelson Mandela