

150th Video:

Throughout our nation's history, APHA has been there. We've been on the ground, fighting for the public's health, since 1872, taking on diseases, poverty, and sanitation at the turn of the century. We were there when Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. called for equal rights and continue today, fighting to end racism and counter all of its devastating health effects.

We were there encouraging auto safety standards and calling for seatbelt laws. Since then, we continue to support work to make our cars and roads safer and reduce injuries. APHA was there when women made their voices heard and supports their ongoing fight for equality and control over their own health. We fought for access to care as AIDS spread across the country and continue working to ensure easy and equal access for all to vaccines for COVID-19, the flu, and other infectious diseases. We've been sounding the alarm about climate change's impact on human health by raising awareness, and the world is listening. Change is happening, but these next years are so important. We need your help to shift the tide.

By advocating for safe work, home, and school environments, access to care, nutritious food, and reducing gun violence, we've strengthened our nation's public health, and APHA continues to develop and advocate for policies and programs that support the public's health and the public health workforce. We were there and we're here today, and together we are moving forward.

Join us as we celebrate APHA's 150th anniversary and look to an even brighter future. Together, we will continue to improve health and achieve health equity for all.

Holly Plackmeier:

Hi everyone. I am Holly Plackmeier, Affiliate Affairs Manager at the American Public Health Association, and welcome to National Public Health Week Student Day. We are so thrilled to have you here for a day dedicated to supporting and uplifting the next generation of public health leaders. So for anyone new to us, new to National Public Health Week, just so for your awareness, each National Public Health Week we celebrate has a different theme. So this year's theme is public health is where you are. So in that theme, we celebrate the interconnected nature of public health and all of us. And then within National Public Health Week, each day has a different daily theme. So since today's daily theme is public health workforce essential to our future, what better way to get together today than to discuss the important topic of mentoring? So, very excited to have you all with us today.

You can expect to hear from our expert panel about how to get started in mentoring if this is completely new to you, how to foster these relationships, how our panelists have fostered their own mentoring relationships, and much more. And I also want to give a very special thanks to our Student Day sponsor, Walden University, for helping make this event possible. And I also want to thank our event collaborators, the Student Assembly, for helping us strengthen this event.

So as you may have seen in our intro video, if you hopped on the webinar a little bit early, all of us at APHA are very excited to be celebrating our 150th anniversary. And with our 150th, we're celebrating events throughout the year, so different events happening every month, and then culminating with our annual meeting happening in November in Boston. So if you want to know a

little bit more about our 150th, different ways to get involved, how to participate in the events, and then making plans to attend the annual meeting, you can check out APHA.org.

And of course, if you want to check out more about National Public Health Week, all of the different events that you can take part in, both the ones that APHA is sponsoring, and then also the ones happening across the country, so you can see the different events happening in your state, you can check out NPHW.org.

So with all of that being said, I am thrilled to introduce our event moderator today, Tiara Scott. Tiara is a certified health coach through the American Council of Exercise and is currently pursuing her master's of public health degree at Walden University. She received her biological sciences degree with a minor in microbiology from Clemson, and Tiara is also the APHA Student Assembly mentoring co-chair. So we are very thrilled to have her with us today and to help lead this discussion. So Tiara, I pass it to you to introduce our panelists.

Tiara Scott:

Good afternoon, everyone. And so I'm going to start with Dr. Bryan Buckley. Dr. Buckley is a fellow with MedStar, with the MedStar health Institute for Quality and Safety. He is also an assistant professor at the Georgetown University School of Medicine. He's also on our executive council with APHA. Fun fact about him: he is a first generation American with Caribbean roots. That just really shows mentoring just runs deep in his Caribbean roots.

Jean Dolan is a first generation college student and he's also a mentee of Dr. Buckley. He's a recent graduate of the Immigrants Lead Boston, a program from the Boston mayor's office for immigrant advancement that trains Boston immigrants to take civic ownership and leadership roles in the community.

Dr. Ngina Lythcott is a former Dean at Dartmouth and Swarthmore Colleges and the schools of public health at Columbia and Boston Universities as a public health activist. She also has a background in nursing and clinical social work.

And Dr. Jennifer Perkins, she is currently a Director of Public Health Practice at Walden University, and she is both a certified health education specialist and a certified sexual health educator. Dr. Perkins is also active in APHA, the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, and the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists.

So they are all joining us today to have a wonderful conversation about mentoring and mentoring relationships. And so we actually have three generations of mentors and mentees on our panel here today with Dr. Lythcott, Dr. Buckley, and Jean. And so I thought it would be great to start with just them talking about how those relationships formed and what they look like for them today. And let's start with Dr. Lythcott. Dr. Lythcott, you're muted.

Ngina Lythcott:

I am a 40 plus year member of APHA, and I have tried multiple sections, and I found that I could not develop or grow or anything in those. So I've moved for the third time. And I went to CHPPD. Ooh, what a good decision that was. And in that section of Community Health Planning and Policy Development, I met a number of young public health people, either in school or are young

professionals, who were dynamic. They wanted to learn. They wanted to grow. They wanted to...

And I kept seeing this guy who was called Bryan. Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan with a Y. And I am somebody that keeps my eyes and ears open for people that have enormous potential. And so my philosophy is that my job, no matter what I'm paid to do, is to identify potential leadership, to whisper in their ear, whether they like it or not, and to invite them to offer myself as a potential mentor, which they can say no to and it still doesn't change the fact that I see a winner and that winner is going to be going some place because that's part of my job, and that's my part of it. Mr. Bryan?

Dr. Bryan Buckley:

Ngina started us off so well. So, since I'm in the sandwich here, because I have both my mentor here and also one of my mentees, I'll start with Ngina. And so when I first joined APHA, and for many folks, especially students, like you go to APH and you're like, "I don't know anybody." I remember in Ngina and Elena were like some of the first people I met at APHA. And as Ngina mentioned, I am a proud member of the CHPPD section, and also I had the opportunity of being the chair of the section. And when I first met the folks in CHPPD, Ngina was one of the first people I met, and specifically seeing her at the governing council, I just saw her passion for health equity. This is when we were talking about health equity before it became the buzzword in society right now.

And Ngina's been such a powerful person in my life because, and we'll talk more about this on this idea of mentors, of being able to see something I didn't see in myself. And a quick story here on how Ngina really helped shape some things. When I was debating on working on my doctorate, I'm looking, she's like, "Hey, I'm hearing you're talking about doctorate. Where are you thinking?" I'm like, "Yeah, I mean, I see Harvard University, but I don't think I'm going to make it. You know, I'm not good enough for that." And I remember she looked at me and was like, "You are good enough for that." And literally walked me to the Harvard table. At the time, Vincent James was the head of recruitment, and she looked at him and said, "This is Bryan Buckley. He's going to be one of your DRPH students in the future. Remember him."

And about a year or two later, I ended up going to Harvard in the DRPH program. And then fast forward now, shifting to my wonderful mentee, Jean, I can give you a kind of a case of how we first met. But one of the things that I always find very important with mentorship is be able to pay it forward. I was lucky to have an amazing mentor like Angina, which I consider one of my big APHA mentors, but this is how you pay it forward. And Jean and I got to meet, and I saw the same thing that I think Ngina saw in me, and I want to see that blossom and become something even greater. And so I get the wonderful opportunity of being here in the sandwich of two amazing people. And so I think from there, I'll pass it on to Jean.

Jean Bolin:

Thank you. Hello everybody. I'm very honored to be here. And it's such a pleasure to meet you, Ngina. I'm hoping that I'm saying this right?

Ngina Lythcott:

Yes.

Jean Bolin:

I met Dr. Buckley, Bryan, through a scholarship program. I had been selected for that scholarship doing my bachelor's program, and one component, as a

recipient for the award, was to get access to a mentor. And they did such a great job matching me with Bryan. At the time, he was getting his doctorate in public health. I was working administration at a public health advocacy group. And so I think it was really a gift that the organization gave to me because they gave me what I often refer to as the older version of myself, because I think a lot--not I think--I know a lot of things that I'm doing right now Bryan has done before and he has been providing me a lot of resources and frameworks to think about, to work on that has allowed me to be successful in the work that I do. And so that's how we met, and this relationship started in 2018 and it's growing strong and I'm sure it will be one of a lifetime.

Tiara Scott:

Wonderful, wonderful. So just overall, so they've all shared just different aspects of what it looks like to have that relationship or even just stumble upon a mentor it seems, but just, in general, I'm going to open up to the panel, just how has exploring mentor relationships shaped your career trajectory? I'll start with Dr. Perkins.

Dr. Jennifer Pe...:

Unmute. That's a great question. I will say that when it comes to mentorship, one of the things that has been most valuable to me, both as a mentor and as a mentee, is finding someone that sees something in you that you don't see in yourself, to have someone truly listen to what you want to accomplish, as chaotic or crazy as it may be and unstructured at that point that you meet them. They see that you have the passion, you have the drive. You may be uncertain about your skills at the time, but having someone that truly listens and is going to push you out of your comfort zone, sometimes kicking and screaming, is very valuable.

I will say that my mentor, Dr. Mary Shaw, is one that I met my very first year in my doctoral program. She was my major professor. She hired me as a graduate student. She knew what I wanted to do, and she constantly put me in places and in rooms that those conversations were taking place so that I felt comfortable to be able to stay in the room long after she was gone.

And I'll give a short story. We were working on a project and it was a part of the Texas statewide coordinated statement of need. We were to fly to Lubbock, Texas and do a great presentation and training on conducting focus groups and interacting with the community, which is something that, at the time, I was doing, but at a very small scale. And so it was three of us that were flying there from the Dallas area. We get to the airport. She's not there. She's just like, "oh, I have to catch a different flight. I'll see you guys in Lubbock." No problem. We get to the facility. She calls, she said, "Just so you know, you got this." And I was like, "Excuse me?" She was just like, "I'm not coming. You know everything that you need to do."

And I was just aghast and shocked and stunned and all of the emotions that you can imagine. She never had intentions of coming because she knew that if she was there, that I would not step up and facilitate this training, that I would shrink into the background. And as traumatic, in my mind, as I want to say that was, the training was wonderful. I did a fantastic job. But she had to push me out of my comfort zone because I was most comfortable in being in the background.

So as I work with students in the masters of public health program at Walden and now in the DRPH program, one of the most valuable things I can do is sit and listen to what they want to accomplish, and then help them and put them in rooms and places that they can thrive and that they can get the lessons that they need. I think mentorship is really a vertical and horizontal playing field. And that has probably been the greatest lesson for me: is to understand what they want to accomplish and help them see the greatness in themselves, even when they find it a challenge to do.

Tiara Scott: You said a lot there. I felt that. So Bryan. Oh, Dr. Ngina. [crosstalk 00:16:44]

Ngina Lythcott: Yeah, I just wanted to say that it's not only horizontal and vertical, but it's two-way, that it is so clear to me that I get extraordinary gifts when I have this interchange with a young person. And I say a young person because I'm already 76, and I will never be able to retire unless I have a field of people to replace me. So I get nurtured by being able to recognize leadership or a voice or a commitment or a passion in somebody else and being able to tell them about it because often, they don't realize it. And then to sit and listen. Listening is a really important skill. Listen for dreams and then encourage them. "Well, how are you going to get there?" To think about how you're going to move from A to B to Z in your lifetime. And to stand ready to mentor or empower them to achieve that dream.

Tiara Scott: [crosstalk 00:18:06] No, go ahead, go ahead.

Dr. Bryan Buckley: I'll add onto that since when it was a global. At first, I want to start off with a quote, which I think gives context, because some people might be wondering how do I even find a mentor? How do you see this potential? And so my grandfather always used to tell me this one quote. He was like, "Bryan, we're on this earth for two reasons. One, to make the world a better place with whatever talents and expertise we have been given. And two, is to coach and mentor the next generation to build on in that work." And just to what Ngina had talked about when people were like, "how do I find a mentor?" First, focus on that first part. B) Be exhaust your talents as a nexus for change. And people will start to notice when you start to do make certain moves.

And so that's how you start getting those. Focus on that part and the mentors, they'll see. They'll see the people that are making those moves and they'll start to reach out. And know that you have mentors for many different reasons. You have life mentors, spiritual mentors, career mentors, industry mentors. And so just know that you don't also have to limit it to just one person, but there might be a multitude of giants that you will be standing on their shoulders and you can learn from them. And so that's why I also want people to know that you don't have to have everything figured out. Some mentors are there for a season and some are there for a lifelong, and know that that's okay, and you will be able to kind of find them and they'll be able to find you as you go to certain events, whether it's being part of APHA, being part of sections.

As Ngina mentioned, I met her through the Community Health Planning and Policy Development section, which is a section of APHA. But find your home in APHA and start volunteering, start getting involved. That's when those section leaders and section folks will start to see you and be like, "Hey, I want to invest in you as a person." So the that's what I would add on how it can shape your

trajectory, because I would've never thought I would've been doing all the things I've been doing in APHA or in the world if it wasn't for my mentors kind of having that, feeding my cup for me to actually be able to actually feed other people's cup moving forward.

Tiara Scott: Jean, do you want to add anything to that? Or...

Jean Bolin: One I want to add would be that I think, and I only know this because Bryan has done this for me, if you want to be a great mentor, is to listen to what your mentee want to accomplish because if you do, you will be able to where the lacks are and what you might be able to contribute or offer. Whether that's an advice, whether that's a connection, whether that's a resource or an additional course, whatever it is. I think when you listen as a mentor, you'll be able to realize this is the kind of thing I think I could offer them that would help them move forward. And that's the same advice for the people that are looking for mentors as well. You have to be willing to share what you want to accomplish because only that way they can lead you forward.

Tiara Scott: Okay. You have all talked to some degree about how these mentoring relationships are two-way street, they're vertical, they're horizontal. I know that, to start with that, you have to be able to kind of see the value in a person. Someone in the audience asked how do you ease someone into seeing that potential? Or how do you encourage them to develop or see that potential without being too aggressive or not aggressive enough? So I think that kind of goes hand in hand and being able to know what your role is or can be as a mentor. How do you identify that potential or groom that potential when you see it?

Jean Bolin: I'll say this. I think a lot of people, and I include myself, what we struggle with is not feeling heard or not being seen. And we get those feelings or we struggle with this feeling because oftentimes, I know that's how I feel, that people are not listening and that's why I want to center the ability to listen, to listen attentively. So I think as a mentor, if you want to give an advice, you don't want to be too aggressive enough, but you want to make sure that you are holding your mentee accountable, is to listen. Not just to listen to what you want to hear or what they're doing in their career. And I don't think that's an easy job. Maybe Bryan can speak more to that.

But one thing that I've been so grateful for and amazed by my mentorship relationship with Bryan is that he takes a holistic approach to who I am. He doesn't just ask me, "What are you doing academically? What are you doing professionally?" It's all around. "What's your plan for the year? What is the family like? What are your responsibility outside of school? What is your financial situation?" And so once you're able to look at the person as a whole, not just a professional or not just as a student, you will be able to see where you can apply pressure and where you can really let go.

I give you this for context. I'm an immigrant, I'm from Haiti. And so how I show up, how I'm able to navigate this country, navigate this system, is different from somebody who might be born in the country. And so the moment I shared that with Bryan, it was sort of obvious because he also has a Caribbean background and with my accent. But once I share my immigration background and my immigration stories with him, he'd been more helpful with giving me resources,

with giving me advice and frameworks, to think about groups to be connected to and the best way to network. And so I would say it in order to be a great mentor, you have to be able to listen to them and see them as a whole, not just in one part.

Tiara Scott: I think that's a great value add is that you do want someone and want to be someone who's going to listen and actually look at it holistically because a lot of times, I know from my experience in having mentors, it's not just about where you meet that person professionally. You may need assistance in all aspects of life or one area always influences the other, so if you're not balanced, you can't really thrive in that area that you want to thrive in. Dr. Ngina, I see that you have your hand up. And you're muted. I wish I could unmute you myself. Dr. Ngina, you're muted.

Ngina Lythcott: Okay.

Tiara Scott: There you go.

Ngina Lythcott: Okay. So I think that observing and listening are two of the very most important things that a mentor can do. All of us want to be seen. All of us want to be heard. I'm sort of a believer that God has a bag of 40 million gifts. He gives three or four to this one and two to six to that one. He gives one to this one, but this one is going to end up being a president. It's such a big thing. And nine to this one. And some people get voices. As for me, I sing loud and wrong. I love to sing, but I can't sing worth nothing. So people have different gifts. And what happens is that you spot somebody who has the courage to raise his or her hand and say something, does it with a little humor, does it with a lot of purpose.

And as for me, I am trying to, as a pan Africanist, I am trying to build the black community anywhere it is in the globe. And so when I hear somebody with, one time, we had a physician that came to Columbia School of Public Health from Nigeria. And as it happens, my family lived in Ghana and Nigeria at different times in my youth. And so everybody was calling him Dr. Some Fun, S-O-M-E-F-U-N. And I sent him a message and said, "Come to my office and come to meet me." He came to the door and I said, "Oh, Dr. Somefun, is that you?" And he, "Ah, where am I? Lagos?"

And that was us connecting to each other as African people who care about each other, that have skills, that see each other and want to make ourselves available. You need me to be a chair? I'll be a chair. You need me to be a table? I'll be a table. I'm going to be for you because I am going to die. That is part of the way the species goes. And I have a lot of work to do before God is going to let me die. So I am out there trying to identify people that can lead us forward, knowing that my gifts, I've already passed on. I am looking for people that I think have the gifts for the next eon of black people moving forward. Okay. I'm going to stop talking now.

Tiara Scott: Thank you, Dr. Lythcott. Dr. Perkins?

Dr. Jennifer Perkins: So I just wanted to add to that conversation that it's really imperative of us as mentors to include our mentees in meetings that we think they would benefit from listening to the conversation and then having the meeting after the

meeting, "What did you hear? What did you see? What did you think? What was the dynamic?" Because a lot of times, we are in these meetings and our mentees don't have the ability to know that those meetings are even taking place. So including them in those meetings and listening to what their response to that particular meeting or an interaction is, as well as listening to the unheard, the unsaid, the unseen things, making sure that we are getting a holistic picture of them, not just the, "Well, you said this in class, but your eyes did this, or your expression did this." So making sure that we are really having those meaningful conversations and dialogues in the appropriate settings that are meaningful for that mentee. They may not be comfortable speaking up and speaking out in an executive meeting, but they have thoughts about it because they were able to sit in on it.

Tiara Scott:

Thank you. Thank you. So you guys all talk a lot about just creating opportunities for mentees and really just connecting with them on a personal level. So my next question is when you do identify someone to be a mentee or mentor, what steps do you take to build those relationships? How are you intentional in that space to do that so that you can get to the space where you know what that person needs and how to kind of push them forward?

Dr. Bryan Buckley:

So I guess I can start off on that part. So it's different for every single situation when it comes to when I'm looking for a mentee. It's not like I'm out here actively looking for mentees per se. And each person, you can just feel when it's right. And there are certain organic things that you can just see that. For some people, if you're looking for a mentorship, sometimes there are different programs, APHA and there's the speed mentoring program that the Student Assembly does. Those are opportunities to meet people and they can connect with you and kind of figure things out. And sometimes it's just organic.

So I have two, as I like to say, I have two official mentees that I have a long-term standing relationship, but I've also had people that I can just talk to. And they might only talk to me once a year. But that is my mentorship for that moment. Or I see them at APHA at the annual meeting and that's our reunion to be able to show my appreciations and then fill them up in those moments. And so I think when it comes to how you kind of find those situations, it's just really organic. So my philosophy, as I just told you from my grandfather, is when you see an opportunity to coach or to mentor, you just kind of take that opportunity. Some people reach out and I might only have 30 minutes to talk to you. That is considered a good mentorship session. And that's why I said earlier before, there is so much variation into mentorship. And I mean, sometimes if I see someone that I think really needs me, I'll say, "Hey, let's keep this conversation going."

I don't think I've ever said, "Do you want to be my mentee this time around?" It's more of an organic conversation. We talk once a month, we talk twice a week or whatever it might have you. And I think for myself, kind of looking in the other way, when I've looked at people that have been my mentors, I think we've just naturally occurred. I don't think I ever went to Ngina and was like, "You are my mentor." She just knows that when I need to talk to her, if I need to call her, I know she has me. And so I don't really get as structured, but just know there are formal structures of mentorship and there's those informal ways of mentoring as a whole.

Tiara Scott: Thank you, Dr. Ngina?

Ngina Lythcott: So if I was going to put down some strategies... First of all, what Bryan said is absolutely right on. It requires a bit of spontaneity between who you are and noticing what's in the room with you, what the possibilities are. It's important to make time to have each other, to see each other. It can be in any one of the billions of communication tools that we have. It has to be at the least once or twice a year, but sometimes it needs to be an intensive. It needs to be once a week. Each of you shares what's going on with you professionally and personally.

I like what Jean said about the whole person. I think that that's crucially important. I knew that Bryan had a wife, but Lord have mercy. It took me about five or six years before I ever got to see her. And he made a good choice. You have to listen carefully to what is said, and you have to listen carefully for what's not said because that's where you come in to ask the question, "Well, what else do you do with your time? Do you have a family? How do you manage that? Does your spouse share that dream with you? How are you supporting her dreams?" So what you're doing is you're listening carefully to what's said and what's not said, you're asking questions, and you're listening for dreams, dreams where you might be supportive and/ or empowering.

Tiara Scott: Thank you. Dr. Perkins, I didn't if you had anything you wanted to add to that about how you build relationships with your mentees.

Dr. Jennifer Perkins: I'm more of an informal, kind of casual conversation, is trying to get to know that person and learn a little bit more about their story and how they ended up to where they are. The one thing I will say is when you have someone that's reaching out to you and you can tell that they're very cautious, I always take extra time at that point because they are already stepping out of their comfort zone to even have that conversation with me. So for them to be vulnerable and reach out and, "Hey, can I talk to you? Do you have a moment? Do you have time? If you're busy, that's okay."

I always try to stop and have, even if it's not a long conversation right then, to at least take the time to have a short conversation with them and then schedule time that's dedicated just for them. That is very important. And as far as how people can reach out, I think, like Bryan said, it's different for everyone. I too don't think I've ever just sat down and said, "Today is the day I'm going to find a mentee. Where shall I look?" It's very natural. It's very organic. And a lot of times it's completely unexpected.

Tiara Scott: Wonderful. So we actually have a lot of questions in the chat about just the best way to acquire a mentor or how to reach out to someone that you would like to be your mentor. And before I turn over to the panel, I would just like to throw out a shameless plug for the student assembly and APHA, because I am one of the mentoring co-chairs. We are basically in the process of planning and just trying to host as many events as possible throughout the year to put students in front of mentors. I can say from my personal experience being a part of Student Assembly this past year, when we do our webinars that we have mentors come together like we have in the panel today, usually contact information is dropped. I've actually reached out to Dr. Buckley after seeing his information at a session just to ask questions.

And I think he pointed out a good point that sometimes mentoring relationships aren't necessarily extended ones, but sometimes it's just reaching out to a person to ask questions that may help you along the way on your journey. And I haven't had the chance to talk to Buckley since, but he dropped some gems in that meeting where we talked that definitely helped me kind of decide, "Okay, this is what I want to do next."

So I would say, as a mentoring co-chair, we are very intentional about trying to make sure we share that information. Every person that's on this panel, their information is available. If you have someone that you come across [inaudible 00:36:48], reach out. Don't be afraid to reach out. A lot of our seasoned professionals do believe that their jobs are to reach back and to uplift us students and to make sure that we are progressing in the direction that we want to go. So I would say just operate not in fear, but I definitely think that you guys probably have a lot more. There you go, Jean. Come on through. Jean, sorry. You're muted. There you go.

Jean Bolin:

What I would say to folks that are looking for mentors, and I'm not just preaching, I'm taking my own advice. Literally this morning I sent an email to one person saying I would love to steal some of your time for a mentorship session in regards to some project that I'm working on. Get to doing. You can do anything. It would be much easier for you to attract mentors if you are doing something that sort of aligns with their work or with their mission because they'll be able to see your picture. And I'll take a minute here to say, if you are into public health advocacy, you look at what your state legislature is working on. If you just translate that bill into different languages and pass that onto communities. If you want to build a page on Instagram to talk about that bill, what it means for communities.

If you are into environmental justice, you want to have a conversation just talking to people. Once you have that work you're doing, you have that project you're working on, it is easier to reach out to someone and say, "Hey, Dr. Bryan, I've been translating legislative bills that are on the Hill in regards to this project, and I would love to talk to you about it." Versus just saying, "I'm a public health student. I would love to talk to you." I've found that it's much easier if you have a program, a project, something concrete, even if it's not your full picture, but something that shows them your intention, that you've been putting the work. It is easier for you to connect with them that way. And once you connect with that person, be intentional. Be truthful. Tell them exactly what you need and tell them you would appreciate whether they are able to provide it to you or if they can connect you to someone can provide it to you.

Right? I've learned that mentorship takes time. Sometimes me and Bryan can go for a two hour conversation. Sometimes it's just a quick 35 minutes. Sometimes I'm like, "I need three hours today." Because he's not just a mentor; he's my therapist. He's my big brother. He's every other thing that I need. Right? And so you can tell them the truth. "This is what I need from you, but I would also appreciate, if you're not able to, please connect me with someone that can." And so I think being truthful, being intentional, be concrete, get to doing, do something so you can show your passion.

Ngina Lythcott:

Wonderful.

Tiara Scott: Dr. Buckley. I know you're going to give a wonderful response. I want to narrow up that question a little bit. So someone in the audience is a first generation MPH student, which we all know, as first generation students, I'm a first generation student, it is a little bit harder to kind of navigate the college space when you don't have someone to guide you. So that in itself qualifies you for a mentor. They said that it feels harder to put yourself out there and to gain connections, and so they want to know also, is it more important to look internally within your institution or externally when they're trying to find a mentor as well? So I just wanted to kind of throw it out there in addition to the other question.

Dr. Bryan Buckley: For sure. So one, I think to the latter part, it's both. I don't think you should limit yourself to internal or external as a whole. But I definitely hear the first generation. I think the question's kind of come up on how do these mentorship relationships begin? And oftentimes, at least for of me, I can only speak for myself, I do it based off of, a lot of times, just affiliation and things that I saw and mistakes that I made. And I see a person might be making that same mistake or they might be in the same pathway that I was. So for both of my mentees that I have formal relationships, Jean and Sebastian, they're both Caribbean. And for me, that's always been a passion, my Caribbean heritage and being able to pay it forward.

But then even more globally, just BIPOC populations have always been a very big passion of mine. And I always tell people I try to be the example of the things I wish I had seen for myself back in those days. And I think one quote I've always said is the cost of life tuition is way too high, so where can I drop scholarships to people of knowledges of moments that they can avoid so they don't have to go through the same exact situations as I did? And so it can be hard, but if you are a first generation, there are a lot of amazing resources, one at your university or wherever you are at, that can help you.

But in addition, I always say kind of look for the people doing similar things that you want to aspire to. And I think Jean said it really well in the sense of if you can relate that. When I think of people I really like to mentor, I think of people that have that reflective practice, that know what the skill gap is that they need. And they have a specific role that they need me for. Because oftentimes people will come to me like, "Hey, Bryan, just give me advice." And it's very hard like to say, "Well, what's important to you? I don't know." You don't feel as useful to some degree because you just want a blunt instrument. I can't read your mind and know exactly where to point you. And so people that have that reflective practice and show vulnerability of, "Hey, I'm struggling with X, Y, and Z. And I saw that you have done X, Y and Z. Is there any advice that you can give me around these?"

The more you can concentrate it on one to three things that the mentor can kind of focus on, that's when you get the richness of our experience versus just, "I just need help." And that's a lot for a mentor to take on. I can only have capacity to kind of, as Jean mentioned, be the therapist, be the big brother. And there's only a couple people I can do that with, but for other people it's like, "Hey, you honed me down." Just like how you did, Tiara, of saying, "Hey, there's a specific question. Let's hone it down." That helps when it comes to being a mentor, and I'm more likely to want to respond to people and be able to help

them when they kind of make it more focused. And I think you're muted there, Tiara.

Tiara Scott: And I'm muted. Oh goodness. Dr. Ngina, Dr. Perkins, I didn't know if you guys had any insight on finding a mentor or approaching someone that you would like to be your mentor.

Ngina Lythcott: Well, I don't know how I learned these things except that gifts that I was given as a new human being. And I take it as my job to identify people who are floundering, identify people who are running down that runway as fast as they can, but they don't know that they have to tip their wings at just a certain level in order to take off, or people who are flying and as tired as they can be, they just want to get, and they need to go to school at that point. They're just worn themselves out. They've given everything they've gotten but they need to go back to school. And so for me, it's being vigilant in my job as identifying and nurturing people who are going to move us as a people, as a species, as black and brown, BIPOC people, as human beings, they're going to move us forward.

And I'm very confident of in saying to people I don't know, "Hey, I heard you say such and such. I really liked that. I saw how the audience was moved by what you said. Where did you get that? Where did you learn that?" So I try to engage people that I am moved to engage with into conversation based upon what I see, what's going on, how they're doing. It's something that's innate in me to reach out to them, but in order to do that, I have to pay attention. I have to listen. I have to notice what's going on and how they are interacting or not interacting. And do I have a gift that I can share with them?

Dr. Jennifer Perkins: The only other thing that I would add is accountability on both parts. If you know that you do not have the capacity to really dedicate to a mentee that needs all of the things like Bryan was saying, then you need to be honest with yourself about what you can provide and the capacity you have as well as with that potential mentee.

And as a mentee, you have to hold yourself accountable for what you really want from your mentor and how you communicate that to them. If you know that you are super flaky, you're going to schedule time with this person that is very valuable but you are not going to show up on time, you're going to be 30 minutes late and all of those things, then you really need to be honest with yourself and then honest with that potential mentor. "This means a lot to me, but these are some of my weaknesses. These are some areas for improvement that I really want to work on." But I think that while we're listening, we really need to hold ourselves accountable on both ends as well.

Ngina Lythcott: Right, and I wanted to say something about accountability too. Am I muted? No, I'm not. What a change.

Tiara Scott: Not this time.

Ngina Lythcott: Okay. So what is hard for me is when I've mentored somebody for a long time but I haven't heard from them in a couple of years, and then they want me to write a letter reference. I can write a letter about who you were, but a more memorable letter for me will be about who you are.

So I need for us to spend some time with each other and talk to each other about where you are in your dream. Did that dream bifurcate? Did it change? Are you on a different path and how did you get there and what do you think about it? And blah, blah, blah. And in addition, I tell people when you're asking me to write a letter for you, especially if you've been out of touch, I will need a few paragraphs from you about what this position means to you and how you see it impacting your career. I'll want a copy of your applicant cover letter, and I'll want the job description for the job or program to which you are applying. And don't ask me to show you my reference letter. I am going to write a hellified reference letter, and I'm not going to let you see it. But you can count on it being something that's going to take you off to the Netherland. But staying in touch is an important thing if you're going to want a letter from that person.

Tiara Scott: Thank you.

Dr. Bryan Buckley: Do you mind if I add one more thing?

Tiara Scott: Go ahead.

Dr. Bryan Buckley: And I guess this is going more specific, because I started reflecting on what you just said about kind of, I think folks are looking for those practical little nuggets. And so one thing is the worst that can ever happen when you reach out to someone is they'll say no. And so there's no loss right there. But when you do reach out to someone, and I think going back to Jean's point, 1) keep it short, because some people have sent me their whole entire bibliography in an email. I ain't got time to read a whole entire email. So keep it short. And oftentimes it's best to act like, "Hey, do you have 30 minutes?" Thirty minutes is easier for me to say yes to than, "Hey, I want an hour." Because especially if it's hour during the day, people that are working, it's just really hard to fit that in. And so just to even say, "Hey, do you have 30 minutes?" and being flexible on the time. And just, "Hey, can we talk?" And then kind of see how it goes from there.

Also another thing I think, and I mean, maybe because I'm on the executive board of APHA, I have to show this up. There is so much wealth of mentorship within APHA. And so if you are in a specific career, whether it's maternal-child health or health administration or community health or HIV, is kind of your passion area, we have so many sections across APHA. Reach out to the chair. Reach out, know the leadership of that. Most people are highly likely to talk to you. When I was the chair of CHPPD, anyone that was in my section I was willing to talk to for 30 minutes.

And so take advantage of that because that's the low-hanging fruit right there. For the folks that aren't part of APHA, if you're part of any other organization, whether it's ACHE, AHA, find those same networks, because many of them have their specific small groups.

And then also LinkedIn messages are a great way to just also network to see, "Okay, who has?" And do your research because you can tell the people that do their research, knowing exactly what they're asking me, and that's sometimes very important and it helps me at least stay focused. So I hope those are some small little nuggets that, if you're looking to transition from one field to another, did that person transition from one field to another? Because if you ask me a question, I have no idea about, I'm not going to be as useful to you.

And so that's another way that you can really focus that effort to make 1) the relationship more meaningful, but then also just maximize that person's connection with you. Because if we feel like we're really engaged with you on that one thing, we might get curious about some other things. And then that could develop into organic, natural mentorship, but know that it doesn't always have to. And those are the great opportunities of both networking, but then also getting those one-time mentors. And I agree with Ngina, there was one situation where someone talked to me two times. It was 30 minutes each. And then they asked me for a letter of support. Don't do that because if I don't have a story about you, it's very hard for me to say things. And usually when I tell people, I either say no, or "If I write this, it may not work for you because it's not going to be a good letter of support."

And so making sure that you're really accountable to understanding what's important and what you need this person for. And then last thing I'll end with, because I know I'm going to go on here, is I think, just to something I think Jennifer said, is value time. That's my pet peeve. If someone's late, when I say 30 minutes, if you're late to that, your stock goes down in my mind because I'm also looking for people that are dedicated. You're serious and I will honor the relationship as you honor it as well. So if you show up and communicate often. You're running late? Let me know because there have been some moments where people have reached out, we set up an appointment, and then they just don't show up or they show up 10 minutes late and I'm just like, "What's going on?" And so making sure that just some of those professional skill sets you really master early on. So I'm done.

Tiara Scott:

Thank you. And so just students, so you know, drop your questions in the chat. We're seeing them, we'll get them answered as best as we can. And so we have two right now about relationship building. And so how can students be intentional about building relationships, being open to building relationships, and just making sure that they keep in contact with previous mentors and professors without it feeling forced? Because I think that is a very tricky part. You want to build those relationships, you want them to be organic so that hopefully it is mutually beneficial, because I think mentors can get great assets from mentees as well without it being forced or it seems like, "Hey, I'm just keeping in contact with this person," or "I'm trying to build this relationship with this person just so that I'm able to ask them for a letter of recommendation in the future." Dr. Perkins?

Dr. Jennifer Perkins:

So one thing I will say is in valuing time and accountability that the connection, if it's natural and organic, you will want to constantly be in contact when you see that your mentor's doing something new and interesting. "Oh, I see you published a new paper. Oh I see you're doing some new research," or "Congratulations on that grant award. Is there a way I can be involved or can you tell me a little bit about it? What made you go that way?"

The mentor-mentee relationship, like we said in the beginning, is horizontal and vertical, but it goes both ways. So I don't want to just constantly pour into someone and they take, take, take. I want to also know what they are doing with the information that I'm giving them and know without a shadow of a doubt that they are interested in this relationship for the relationship, not just for what they are gaining from it. So if I am working on a new project and I share that in a mentoring session and then the next time we meet, it's no follow up or

questions or anything about how that project is going, lessons that I've learned with that project, then the relationship just seems extremely self-serving and, at least for me, we want to make sure that the person's interest in the work and in the relationship is genuine and not just so they can get a letter of support six months later.

Tiara Scott: Jean?

Jean Bolin: Yeah. The offering that I would like to make, I think I saw earlier somebody posed a question about, what should we look for in a mentor? And I think I've made that mistake earlier in my twenties and believe I'm already there. But your mentor is not going to show up in your preconceived notion of what a mentor is, right? They're going to show up as who they are with the resources that they have, and it's up to you whether you want to take that on or not. I think many of us would love to have Tim Cook or Jeff Bezos or Anna Wintour as our mentor, but the reality is that's not what's going to happen. And as you network around, remember you may aspire to have the directors, the chair, and the executives to be your mentor, but always remember to network across. It is the people that are in the same level as you that would know what's happening.

They would have more time than Bryan will, than Ngina will, or more than Jennifer will. It's the coordinators that will tell the directors, "You should speak to so-and-so. I've met this person. I think it'll be terrific if you talk to them." So what I want to say with that is network across. You should talk to your peers, what they are doing, how they get there, be honest in saying, "I saw that you were working on this project. You've done this research. You're working with this team. You're part of this coalition. I would love to do that. I've done that before. I would like to build on that. How did you go about it? What can you tell me?" Right?

But in the same hand, when you have a relationship with your mentor, even when you don't meet with them regularly or it's every six month or every year, there has to be something that you connect with them about. LinkedIn is there, there are papers being published, there are webinars being held, conversation are being hosted. So those are ways for you to stay in touch on a regular basis.

Tiara Scott: Dr. Lythcott, got before you respond, I just wanted to kind of throw out there because I saw someone asked, how can you connect with someone if you're not currently doing anything that relates to their future ambitions? I think Jean just made a great point If you're actually looking and doing research, and I think Dr. Buckley said it earlier, if you're doing research on a person and you know that they are participating in things that you're interested in, sometimes that's enough to reach out and make that connection and ask a very intentional question, so don't let that stop you if you're not already walking in that space that you want to aspire to get to. That's why you need that mentor to help you get to that point. Dr. Lythcott?

Ngina Lythcott: I just wanted move us beyond the academic setting to say that much of my life has been spent recognizing, identifying out loud, supporting, and then empowering talented people around me at each of the four colleges where I have worked as a Dean or an Associate Dean. I learned after I left those places that I was known as hiring the best staff that was hired in that period of time. To me, working with staff, supervision, is at the heart of our relationship. It's where

I learn more about them and they learn more about me. It's where professional dreams are shared. It's where commitments are made to support professional development. In other words, as a supervisor, I help entering employees and medium level--medium, that's not a good idea-- the next level employees think about what educational experience do they want that year in order to take them to the next level, and how can you support them in that?

I had a philosophy when I was at Dartmouth, Swarthmore, BU, and...I'm someplace else... Columbia, that for every hour you took in school, I gave you an hour off to study and I still paid you full time. So if you're carrying four hours, you get eight hours off, and you work full time because you are bringing that richness into the workplace. You are starting your flying, and if I can help you pay for that, I can help you pay for that, if I have the capacity. So I'm just saying that supervisors make a mistake in thinking they're just in charge of their team. No, you are responsible for the developing that team, for growing that team.

Tiara Scott: Thank you. I just want to throw out one last question, and I know we're right at 1:00, but I think it's important to answer this one before we close up. Are there any mentoring resources that you guys would recommend for anyone interested learning more about mentoring, whether they're a student or professional at any level, to gain mentorship? Anyone?

Dr. Bryan Buckley: I'll just end. For the folks that are part of a APHA, find those affiliation groups. Those are some of the best ways to find mentors. And whether you're a part of student assembly, those are the ways. It's the networking piece of making sure you can connect to those affiliations. And I would say that's one of the best tools for finding resources.

Tiara Scott: I would add your state public health affiliate as well. Because I just joined mine and it's been very helpful. And Bryan gave me that idea. So...

Dr. Bryan Buckley: See, I'm paying it forward right there. And actually [crosstalk 01:02:13], one last thing, I know on time, but I know someone asked is also how do you keep track of everything? Make sure you keep a spreadsheet.

Ngina Lythcott: Yeah.

Dr. Bryan Buckley: I mean, just a contact list. That's a good way of knowing, I told you there's many different mentors for the season. And so keep that track. See when's the last time you talked to them and that gives you a lot of indication on when you need to do a follow up. And also understanding what type of relationship it is. Is it a quarterly relationship, a semi-annual, and figuring it out from there. So that's also another practical skill set.

Ngina Lythcott: And also pay attention in either your workplace or in your school, who are the guidance counselors who may have ideas for you or resources for you to explore. And just show up. Show up. Show up at events, show up at meetings, show up. And as Jean said, have your professional interests up to date and that you're participatory in it so that you have something to talk about and you're exploring, you're looking for somebody who can mentor you in a specific area. As Bryan said earlier, no one person... I'm trying to step away from my Bajan roots.

Okay, stop it, stop it, stop it. All right. So no one person is going to be the best mentor for you all the time. So you've got to just be polishing your fur, standing up tall, putting your shoulders back, being able to talk about things that you're passionate about and interested in being able to show somebody that you know how to read, quoting something that you read or something that you saw. "Did you see that article in the such and such and such and such?" It is a two-way street that is full of engagements of being who you are and noticing who other people are and where the connections might take place. And see an opportunity and step into it. You can do it.

Tiara Scott: Thank you. Dr. Perkins, I saw that you were unmuted. I didn't know if you wanted to add anything real quick or before I turn it back over to Holly.

Dr. Jennifer Perkins: I was just going to address this last question about if the individual isn't a student. Everything that we're discussing can be applied in the field, in the classroom, at a university. If you're going to a local public health advisory meeting or you're going to a university advisory meeting, the skills and the tools that we're giving you are the same.

Tiara Scott: Thank you. All right, Holly, take us home.

Holly: All right. Thank you all so, so much. I really hate to close this down because that was such an incredible conversation. And I don't know about everyone listening to us at home or wherever you happen to be, but I could listen to this group talk for another couple of hours. So that was very incredible, very inspiring.

I have a couple of thank yous that I want to close us out with. So thank you so much, Tiara, for being our moderator, for guiding us in this discussion. Thank you to our panelists who provided your incredible perspectives. Thank you to Walden University for helping make this event possible. Thank you to the APHA Student Assembly for being our event collaborators. And then also thank you to all of you joining us at home and for your interest in helping support the next generation of public health leaders. So thank you all again for being here, for helping to support the next generation, and we hope you have a great rest of your day. Happy National Public Health week. Bye.