

# Managing Your Relationship with Your Supervisor

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## AAAS

- International nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science, engineering, and innovation throughout the world
- Membership-based organization
- Publisher of *Science*
- Source for broad range of career advice and resources through *ScienceCareers.org*
- *Science Careers Outreach Program*
- Slides available at [sciencecareers.org/outreach](http://sciencecareers.org/outreach)



# Common Issues with Supervisors?

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- Number of hours spent in lab

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- Number of hours spent in lab
- Authorship
- Post-grad school or post-postdoc employment
- Funding
- General personality conflict
- Professional development

## 2008 Science Careers Postdoc Survey

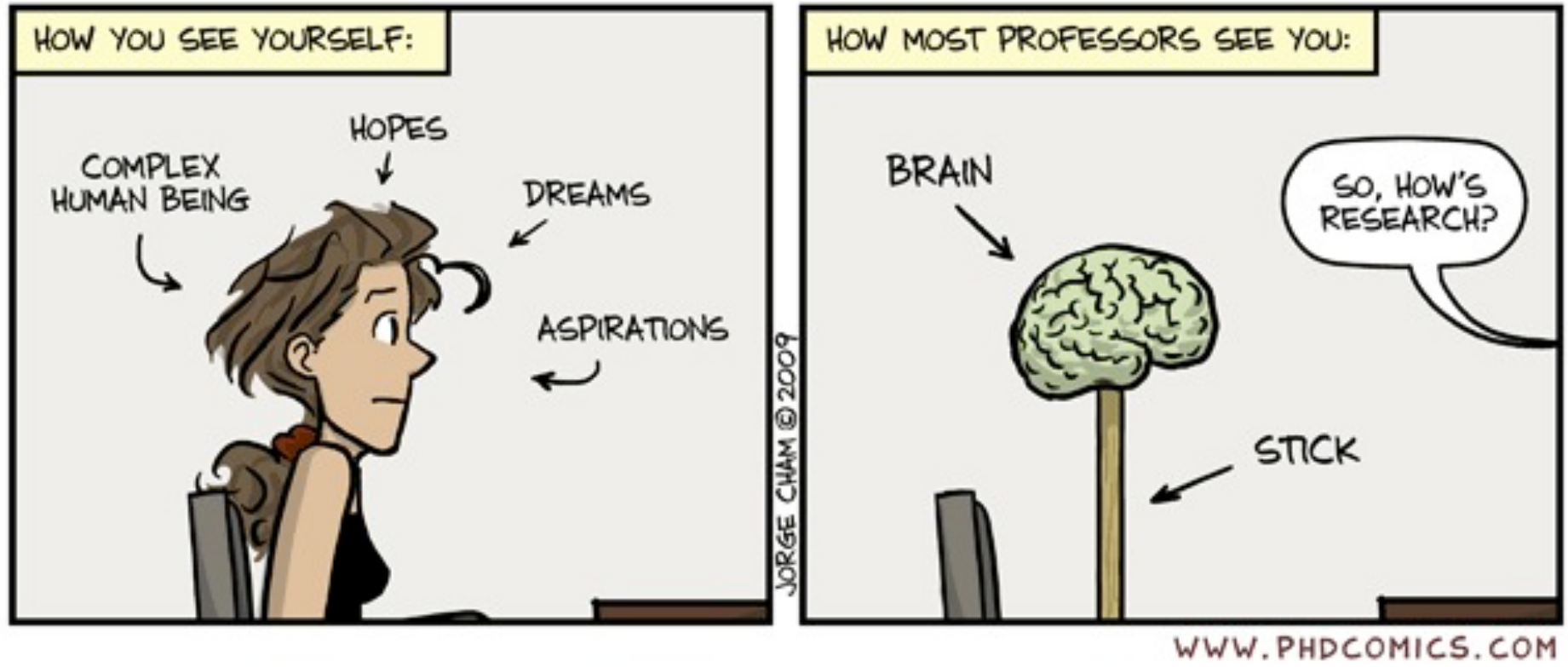
- $\geq 20\%$  reported problems concerning:
  - Career guidance
  - Job security
  - Gaining technical skills
  - Understanding expectations
  - Communication
  - Family-friendly workplace

## Managing Your Relationship with Your Supervisor

### Why do issues occur?

- High hopes
- Power imbalance
- Pressure on PIs

# Managing Your Relationship with Your Supervisor



"Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham

[www.phdcomics.com](http://www.phdcomics.com)

## Introduction

- Choosing a supervisor
- Setting goals and expectations
- Preventing and dealing with issues
- Leaving a position

# Choosing a supervisor

### Choosing a supervisor

- Your personal and professional goals
- Do your research
  - Talk to the PI, postdocs, grad students, lab techs
  - Visit the lab
  - PI's CV and publications

## Things to learn more about:

- Research projects
- Funding
- Philosophies
- Job placements
- Expectations
- Size of the group
- Availability of the PI
- Publications
- Duration of appointment
- Supervising
- Transferable skills

### Ask other grad students or postdocs about:

- Their research interests
- Help with career development
- Help with networking
- Work environment and lab morale

Managing Your Relationship with Your Supervisor

**HOW TO DEAL WITH FRUSTRATING FACULTY** EXASPERATED BY A PERCEIVED LACK OF INTEREST AND SUPPORT? A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE:



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## Setting goals and expectations

- It's never too late!
- Set your goals
- Determine your expectations
- Talk with your PI

# Goals for your training

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- Research
- Transferable skills and professional development
- Career goals

# Reasonable expectations of your PI

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- Available
- Knowledgeable
- Feedback and constructive criticism
- Preparation for the future
- Letters of recommendation

## Reasonable expectations of your PI

- Available
- Knowledgeable
- Feedback and constructive criticism
- Preparation for the future
- Letters of recommendation
- And yet... PIs are busy

### Talk to your supervisor about...

- Expectations of you
  - Work hours
  - Resources
  - Publishing
- Your goals and expectations
- Authorship and collaboration policies
- And?

## Putting it in writing

- FASEB Individual Development Plan
- GREAT Group Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors
- Mentoring contracts/agreements
- Policies on collaboration and cooperation

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### Your day-to-day relationship

- General communication skills
- Meeting with your supervisor
- Periodic evaluation
- Negotiation skills
- Other resources

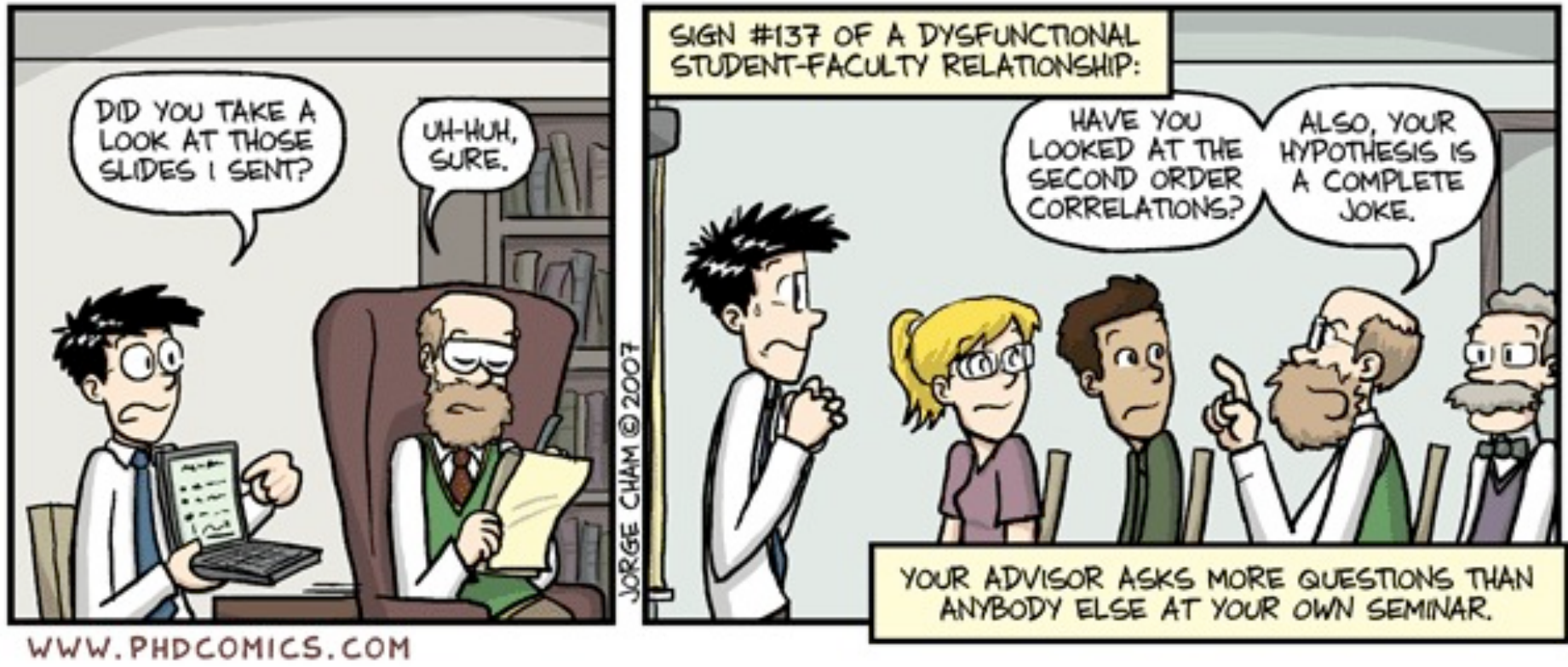
## Phil Dee's Rules for Managing Your Relationship with Your Advisor

1. Your boss is on your side
2. Keep your boss informed
3. Discover what makes your boss tick
4. Earn your boss's respect with your initiative
5. Assert yourself to find solutions that work for everyone
6. Write papers for your boss

## Managing Up

- Know what matters
- Focus on your boss' needs
- Talk like your boss
- Toot your own horn
- Connect with your boss
- Seek new responsibilities
- Be curious

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### Meetings with your supervisor

- Ensures regular communication
- Scheduling
- Prepare ahead of time
- Talk about:
  - Progress
  - Next steps
  - Other issues

## Periodic Evaluations

- Problem-solve and set goals
- One to two times a year
- Talk about:
  - Achievements
  - Goals
  - Changes that need to be made
- Find forms online

# Managing Your Relationship with Your Supervisor

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## NINJAS vs PROFESSORS

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS



**NINJAS**

- Experts in methods of subterfuge
- Employs assortment of lethal weapons
- Can kill you without remorse
- Always shown wearing the same outfit
- Wears a hood
- Hurls Shurikens 
- People think they're pretty cool
- Shrouded in mystery



**PROFESSORS**

- Experts in methods no longer used
- Employs a bunch of lazy peons (you)
- Can kill your career or worse
- Always wears the same outfit
- Wears a hood at graduation
- Hurls when you present your research
- They think they're pretty cool
- Shrouds you in misery

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

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# Negotiating through Conflicts

- Approach your supervisor when problems arise
- Principled Negotiation (From *Getting to Yes*)
  - Separate the people from the problem
  - Focus on interests, not positions
  - Invent options for mutual gain
  - Use objective criteria

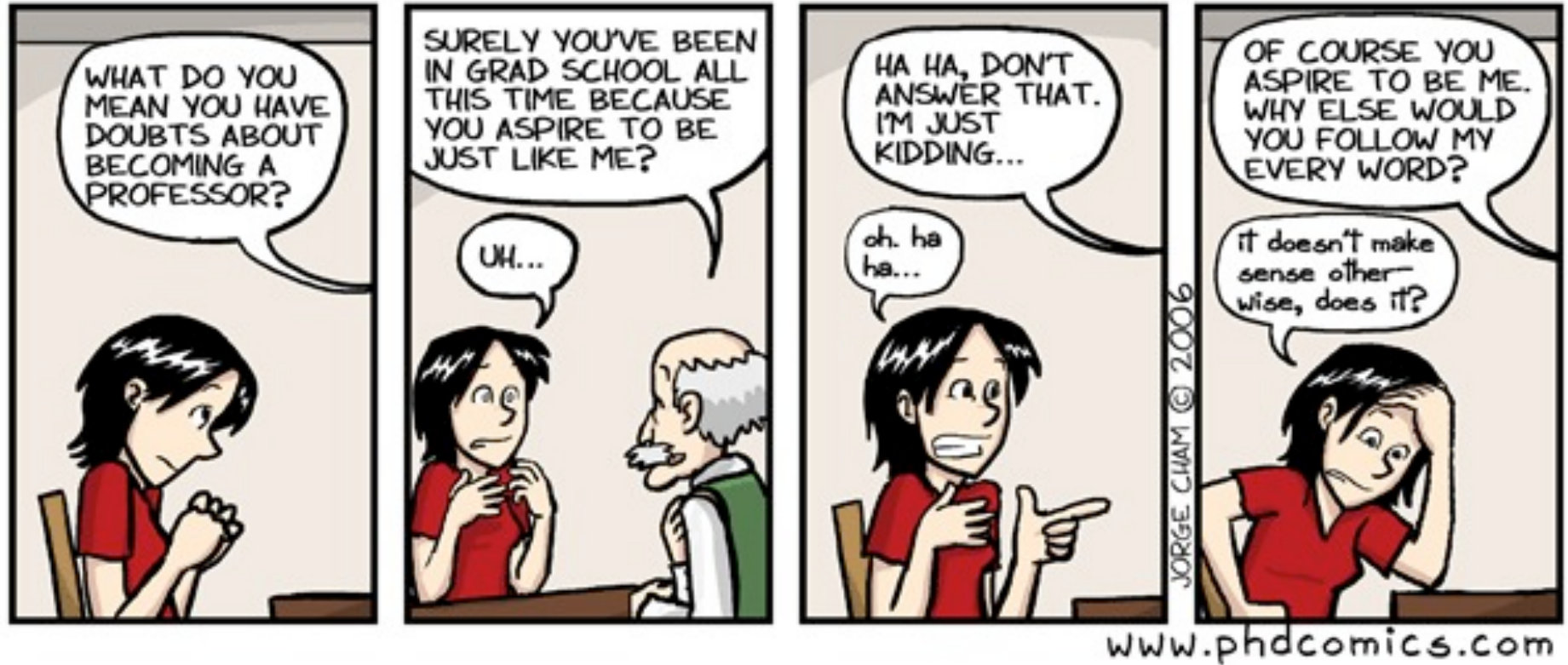
### Other resources

- Learn about resources for postdocs on campus
- Administrative staff
- Cultivate new relationships
- Additional mentors
- Filing complaints

## Graduating school or leaving a postdoc

- Communicate about your plans
  - Ask for assistance
- Letters of reference
  - Ask appropriately
  - Make it easy for them
  - Problems

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## Working with your own advisees

- Keep your commitments
- Be open-minded
- Treat people decently
- Listen
- Establish and stick to policies
- Be honest
- Pay attention to career development
- Treat information as confidential

### Case Studies

- Inspired by posts on the Science Careers Forum
- Divide into 5 groups.
- Take a few minutes to discuss your postdoc.

## Resources

Available at [sciencecareers.org/outreach](http://sciencecareers.org/outreach)

- These slides

Available at [sciencecareers.org/webinar](http://sciencecareers.org/webinar)

- Nontraditional Careers webinar
- Sept 30 – Job Search Essentials