

Mentors and the Environment of Research

~~Academics~~



Alan Dardik, MD, PhD, FACS
Section of Vascular Surgery
Yale University School of Medicine



Disclosure

- Nothing to disclose

31 postdoctoral fellows

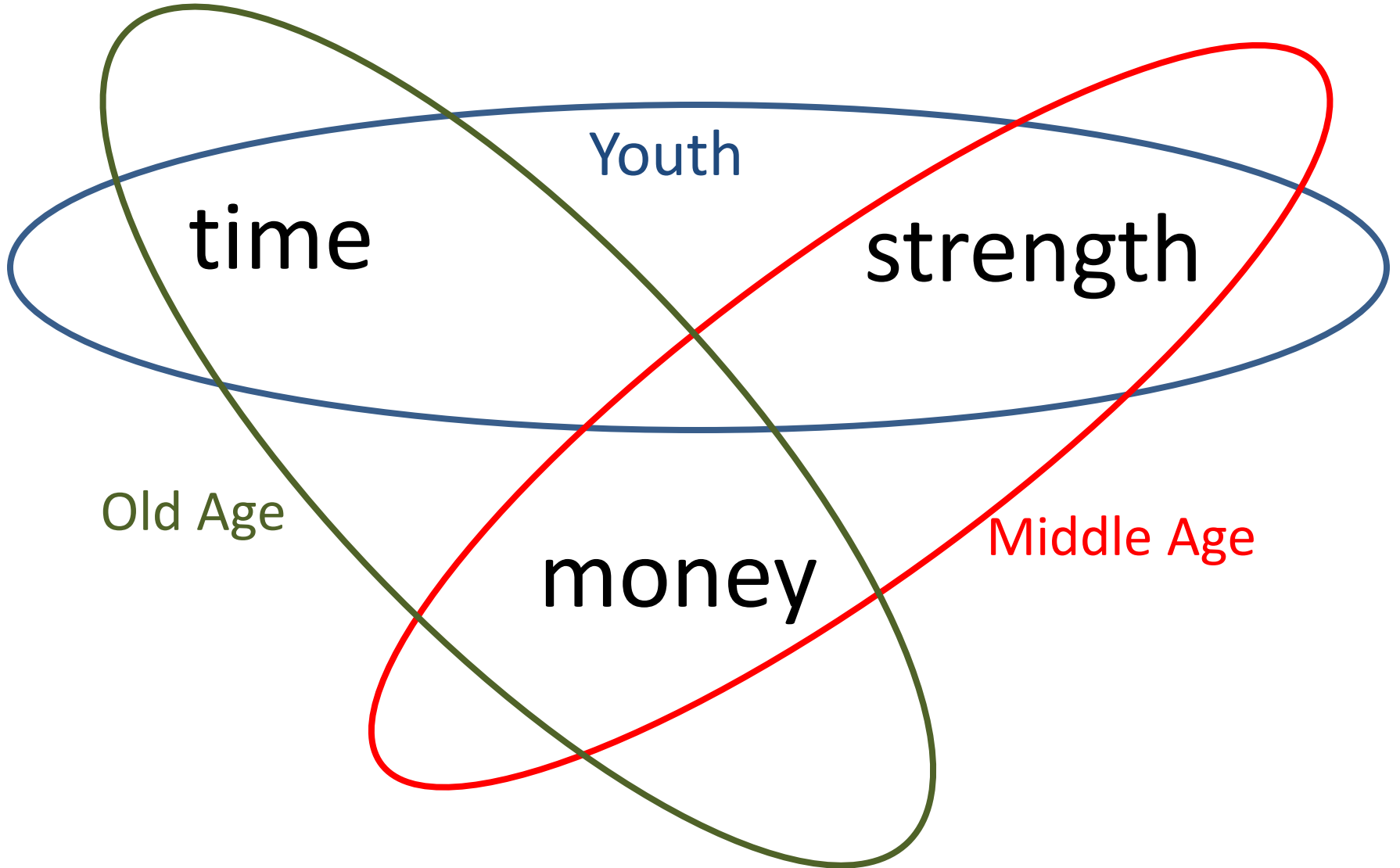
5 medical student M.D. theses

4 masters M.H.S. theses

4 graduate Ph.D. theses

12 vascular surgery fellows

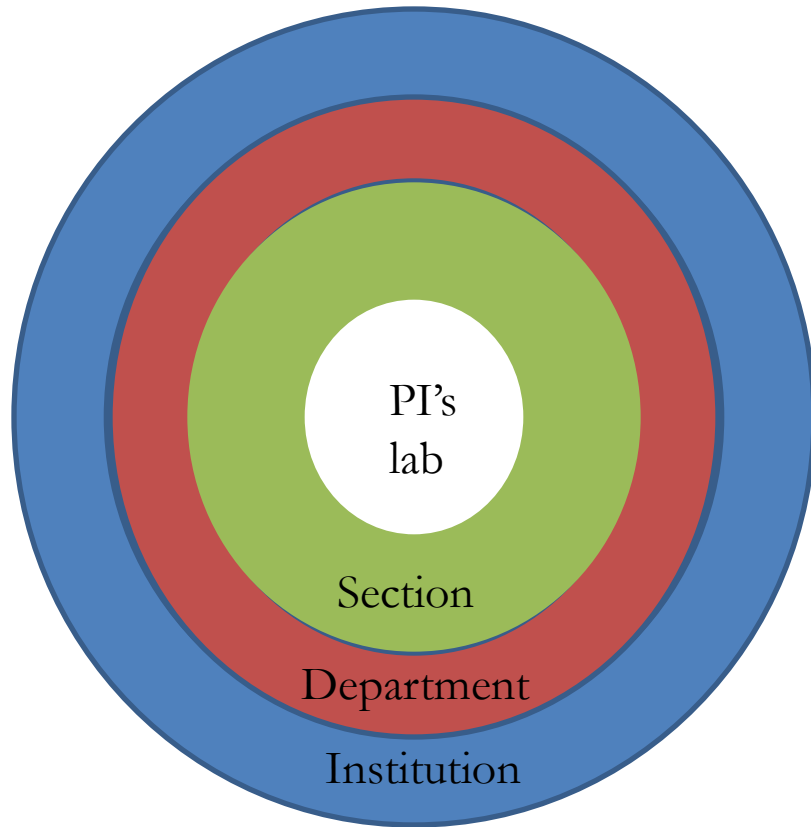
The Balance of Life



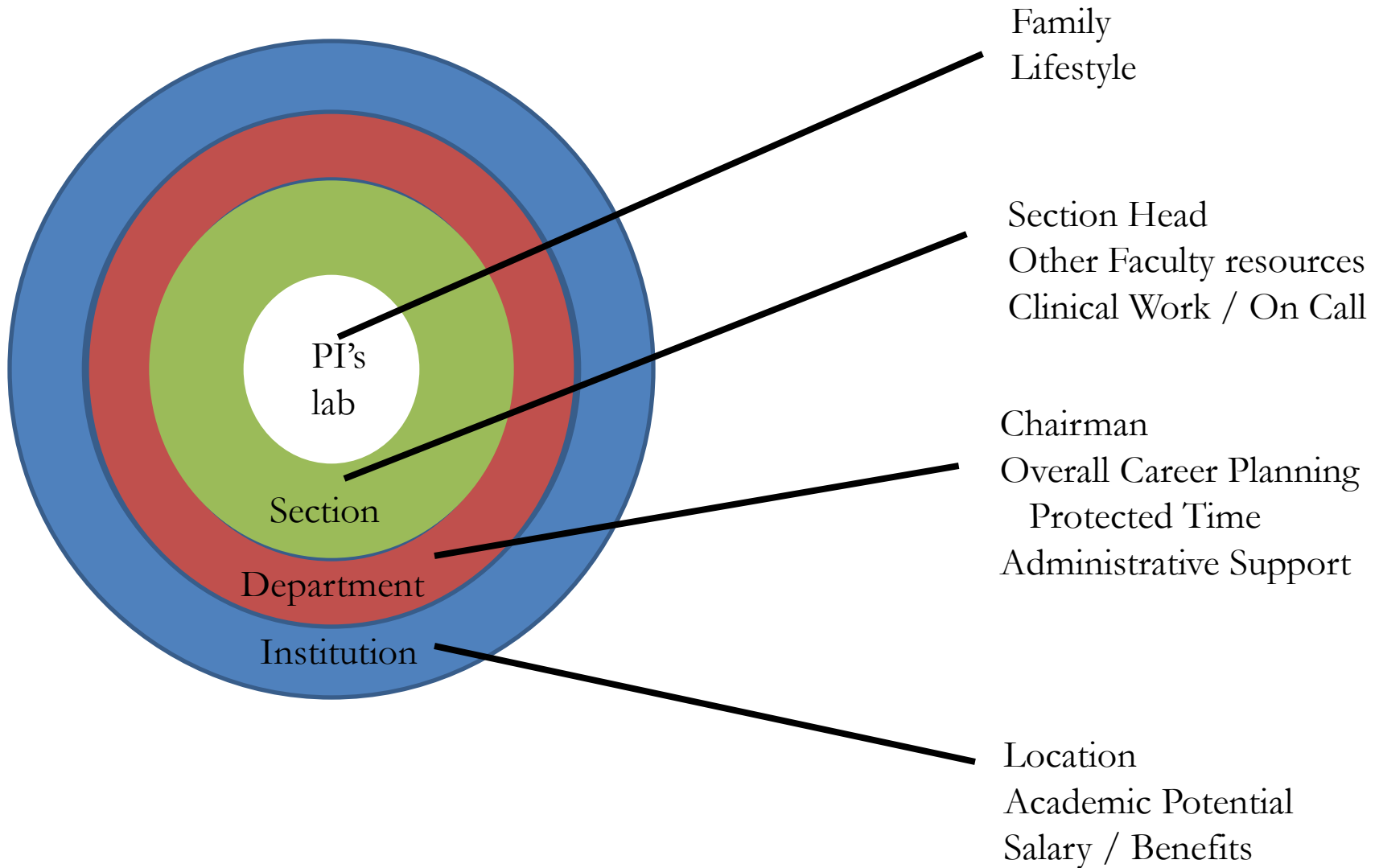
The environment of research

- University
- Industry
- Private institutions
 - Hospitals
 - Foundations
- Quality of research space
- Colleagues
- Effective work environment
- Job satisfaction and performance
- Branding
- Efficient use of resources

Structure of University Research



Resulting Forces

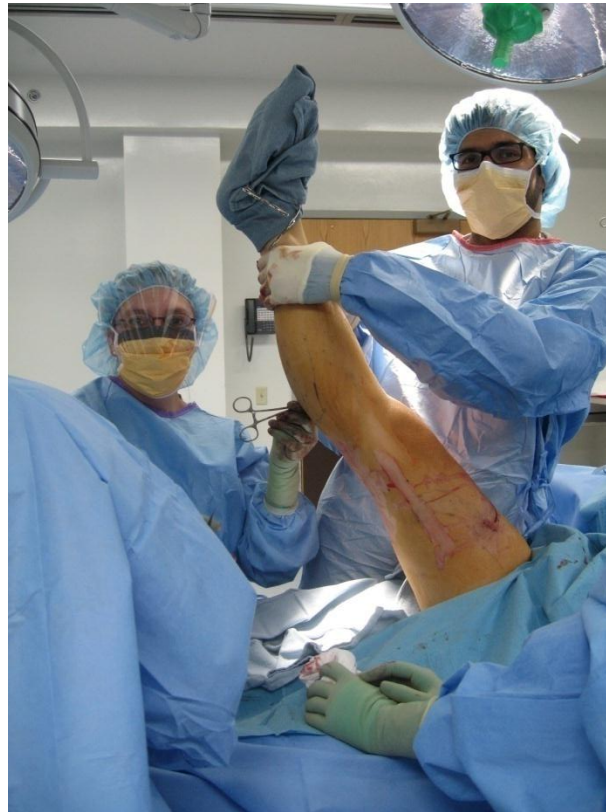


Congratulations!

- You have a
 - First position
 - New position



You want to succeed But what is success ??



Failure

Problems

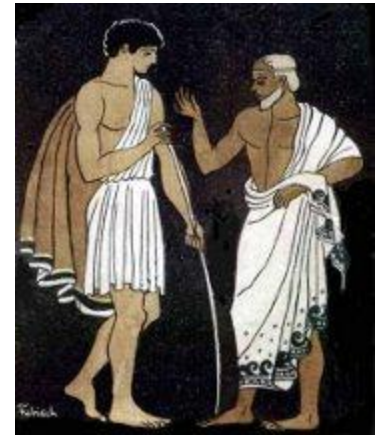
- Not being true to yourself
 - Know what you want
 - Know what you need
- Accepting a poor position
- Not having advice

Solutions

- Know thyself
 - Spend time thinking, talking
 - Spouse, peers
- Investigate (negotiate) well
- Find mentors



What is a mentor?



- Greek mythology
- Mentor (*Μέντωρ*) – son of Heracles and Asopis
- Friend of Odysseus
 - When Odysseus left for the Trojan war, he placed Mentor in charge of his son Telemachus
 - Athena disguised herself as Mentor to encourage him and give him practical plans for dealing with personal dilemmas
- Someone who imparts wisdom to and shares knowledge with a less experienced colleague

Why a Mentor?

- Offer guidance and advice, clarify thinking
- Provide opportunity
- Help you take the right steps, make the right moves
- Advocate for you locally and nationally

Mentors for Research

- How to plan a scientific experiment
- How to actually perform the work of an experiment
- How to work in / set up a laboratory
- How to collaborate
 - Which colleagues to avoid
- Where and when to publish – or write grants
- Writing skills
 - Papers vs. Grants
- Advice regarding aptitude for science
 - Should my career path include scientific investigation?
- How to ask and answer a question

Types of Mentors



The Godfather



Big Brother



Patron



Parent



Godfather



- Powerful
- Connected
- Provides for your needs, at a cost
- Gives clear direction
- Your priorities and goals are the same



Godfather



- Advantages
 - Clear, efficient access to power and connections
 - If you deliver you will likely succeed
- Disadvantages
 - The godfather's priorities are first
 - It may be tough to become independent

Big Brother



The Beaver



Wally Cleaver



- Helpful person slightly more senior than you
- You are following in his/her footsteps
- A trusted person who you can turn to for advice.



Big Brother

- Advantages
 - Trustworthy, open, honest
 - You do not always have to look good
- Disadvantages
 - May not have the best answers
 - Does not have resources, power
 - May have the same struggles as you



Parent



- Advantages
 - Trustworthy, open, honest
 - The parent is committed to your best interest
- Disadvantages
 - May not have the answers
 - May not have connections, power, resources
 - May be dysfunctional



Patron



Jennifer Jones-Simon
Norton Simon

- A distant supporter
- You may have projects together, but you do not work for her/him
- Successful, connected
- Willing to help you and receive little in return



Patron

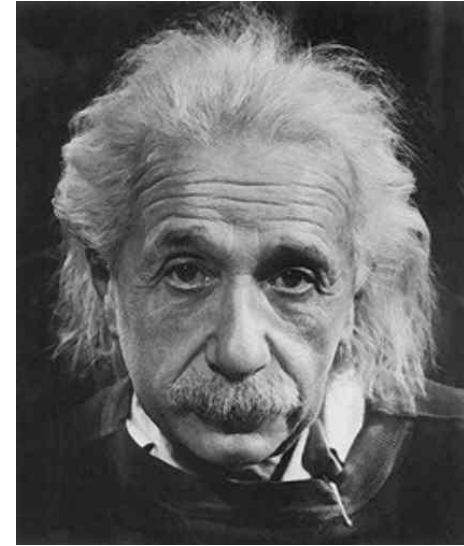


Jennifer Jones-Simon
Norton Simon

- Advantages
 - You are not wholly dependent
 - The patron has connections and insight
- Disadvantages
 - Limited time
 - Limited loyalty
 - May not engage deeply in your development

- What do you need from a mentor?
 - What is your goal
 - This month
 - This year
 - Long term
- How should you get what you need?
 - Is there a local godfather, sibling, parent, or patron?
 - Are you connected to the right types of mentors?

Some advice



- Know thyself
 - Spend time thinking, talking
 - What kind of position do I want?
 - What kind of institution do I want to be a part of?
 - Who are my ideal colleagues and partners?
 - Spouse and Family
 - How much time can we spend together?
 - What area of the world do we wish to live in?
 - Do we need all the money in the world?
 - Peers - friends, committees, societies, editorial boards
 - What advice do they have for me?
 - How did they avoid problems?
- Investigate the position carefully
 - You are your own best advocate – this is your life !!
- Network, Find mentors
 - Local
 - National / International / Societies

Thank you very much!

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

If I am not for others, what am I?

And if not now, when?

- Rabbi Hillel (30 BC - 9 AD)