

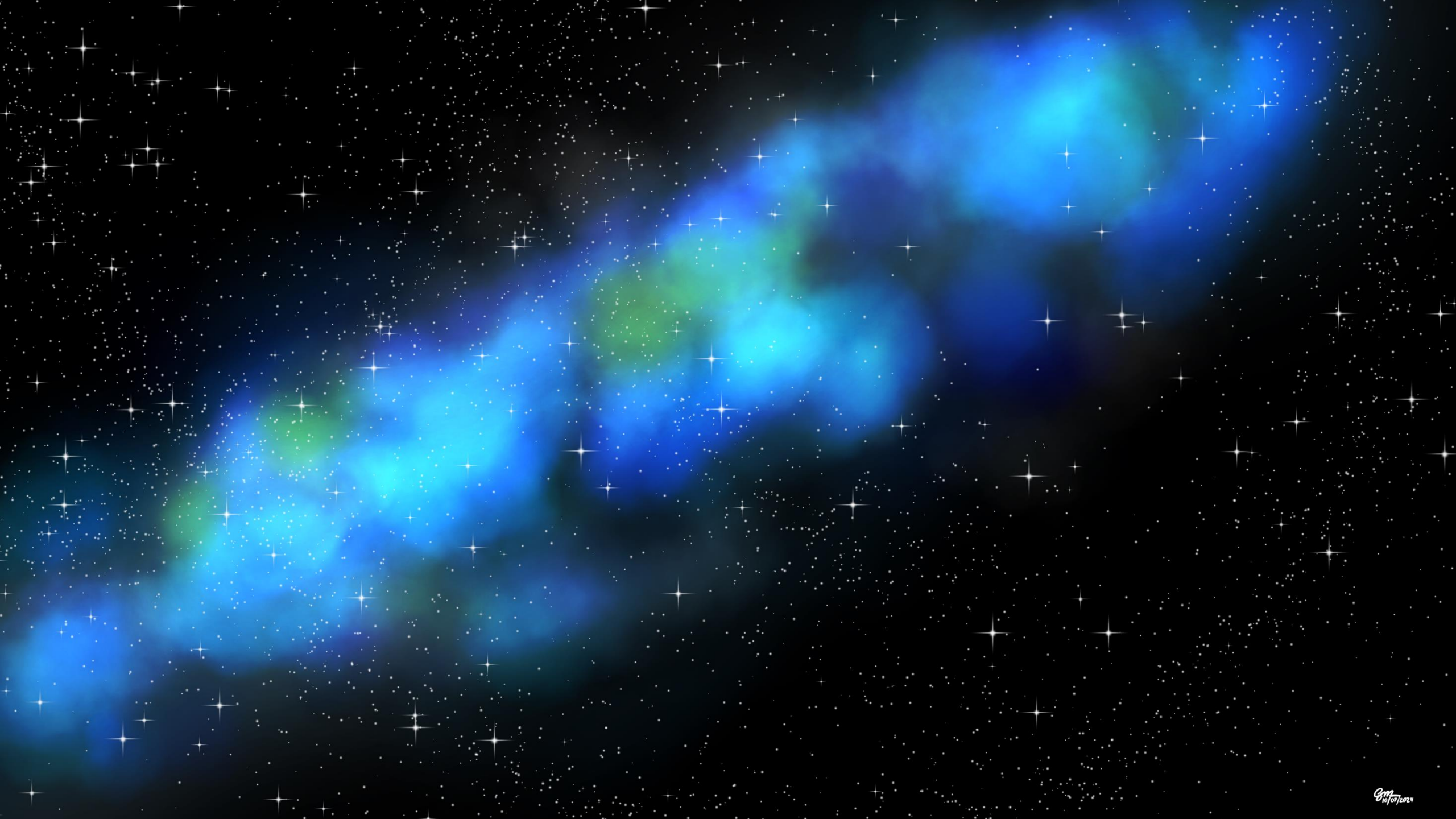


Sophia McKeever

As A Constellation We Shine:
Mentorship through the Lens of Shine Theory



THE FUTURE IS NOW
PNSQC.ORG **OCTOBER 14-16 2024**





As a Constellation We Shine

Mentorship Through the Lens of Shine Theory

Sophia McKeever • Pacific Northwest Software Quality Conference 2024

Mentorship as We Know It

Sharing Knowledge and Experience



Defining Mentorship

THE DEFINITION

- "Mentorship (noun) - the influence, guidance, or direction given by a mentor."
- Often seen as a one-way street – Mentor benefiting/teaching Mentee

COMMON TECHNIQUES

- Cloning Model
 - *Teaching exactly how the mentor would do something*
- Nurturing Model
 - *Mentor acts more as a parent and provides mentee space to experiment and fail*
- Friendship Model
 - *The mentor acts more as a peer*
- Apprenticeship Model
 - *The relationship is strictly professional*

Clarifying Mentorship

- Not "On the Job Training".
- Not done for incentives (pay raise, bonus).
- Intentionally support a mentee through providing advice or knowledge.
- Intended to help the Mentee learn and grow in a specific area of their career.
- Intended to provide knowledge sharing from one individual to another beyond typical coaching.
- An investment of time and effort from the mentor to the mentee.

Coaching vs Mentorship

COACHING

- Provide feedback on situations
- Provide tips on how to navigate a space
- Show someone "how" to do something
- Provide knowledge of how to find a given answer/solution to a given problem.

MENTORSHIP

- Provide knowledge from experience.
- Guide a mentee without 'giving' them the answer.
- Provide mentee space to try and fail
- Adjust relationship according to '*what helps*' and '*what hinders*'.
- Provide a space for the mentee to learn and grow in an area of their choosing.

Why Mentees Seek Out Mentors

- Mentees approach you often because they see a quality in you they want to replicate
- Sometimes they want to get to your level, sometimes they don't
- They want to learn a new skill that you already know
- They want a different perspective on things
- They admire your approach, your strengths, or want to learn from your weaknesses
- Sometimes they don't know why, but they want to learn

On the Subject of Shine

Shine Theory – “Intentional, Accountable, Personal”



The Origins of Shine Theory

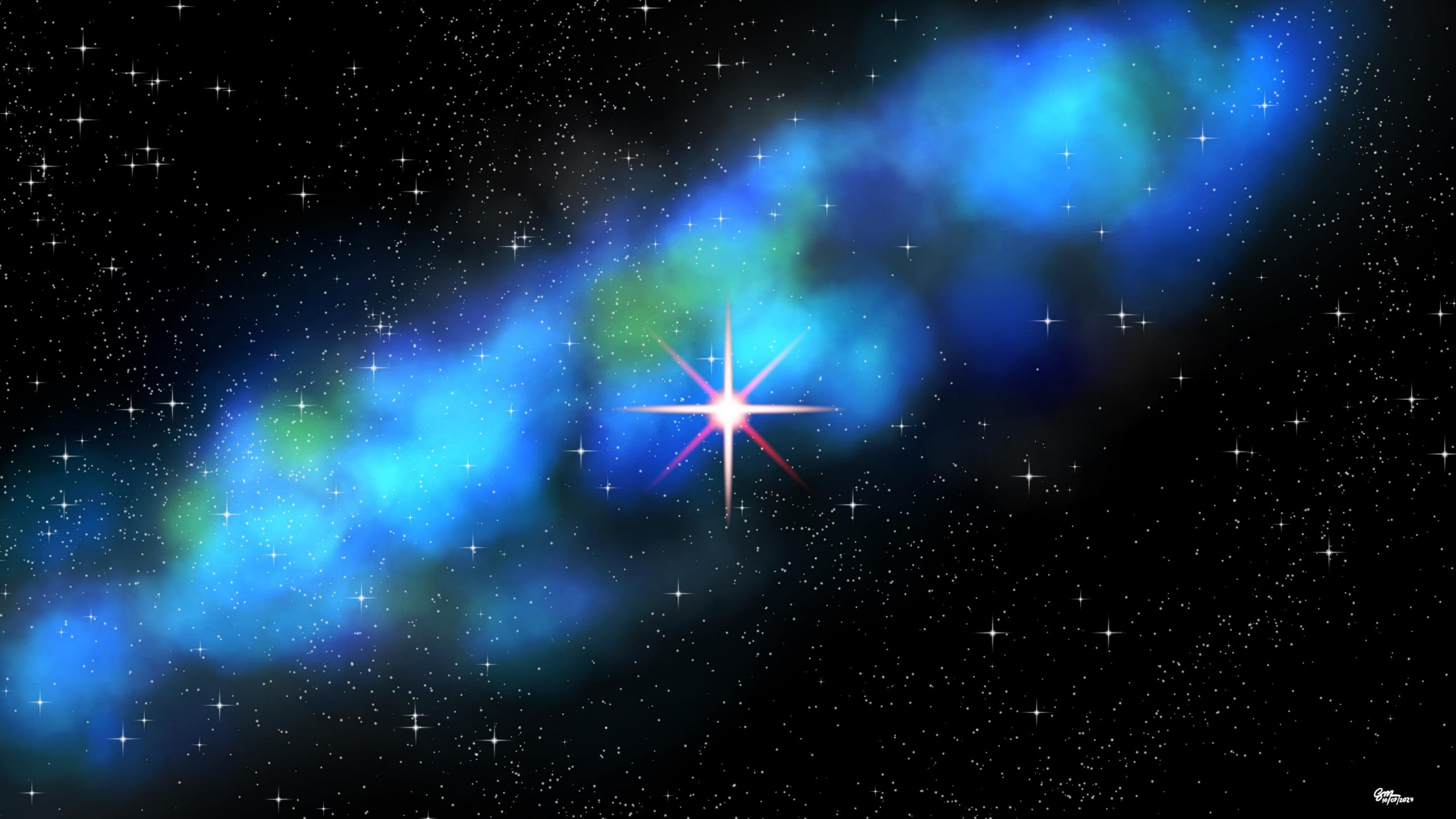
- Originally coined as a private concept by Aminatou Sow & Ann Friedman since 2010.
- They Began sharing it publicly in 2013
- Provided a means to intentionally invest in each other.
- Established as an exercise of trust and confidence building.

Defining Shine Theory

- "Shine Theory is a practice of mutual investment in each other." – ShineTheory.com
- *"Investment, over the long term, in helping someone be their best self—and relying on their help in return."* – ShineTheory.com
- Being happy when friends do well and being there when they're down.
- Instilling infectious confidence and genuine happiness when a friend 'shines'.
- Recognizing that being targeted means the individual who targets you lacks confidence or support.
- "I don't shine if you don't shine." – Words to live by
- "Shine Theory is intentional. It is accountable. It is personal." – ShineTheory.com

What Makes Us Shine

- Connection, closeness, respect
- Vulnerability - Allowing others to be vulnerable and being vulnerable in return
- True support - Being there for others and counting on others to be there for us
- Intentionality in word and action
- Bringing our true, authentic self to everything we do
- Those we bring with us along the way
- Giving others an opportunity to shine knowing we shine when shine.



Applying Shine Theory to Mentorships

"Take chances, make mistakes, get messy!"

- Ms. Valerie Frizzle, The Magic School Bus

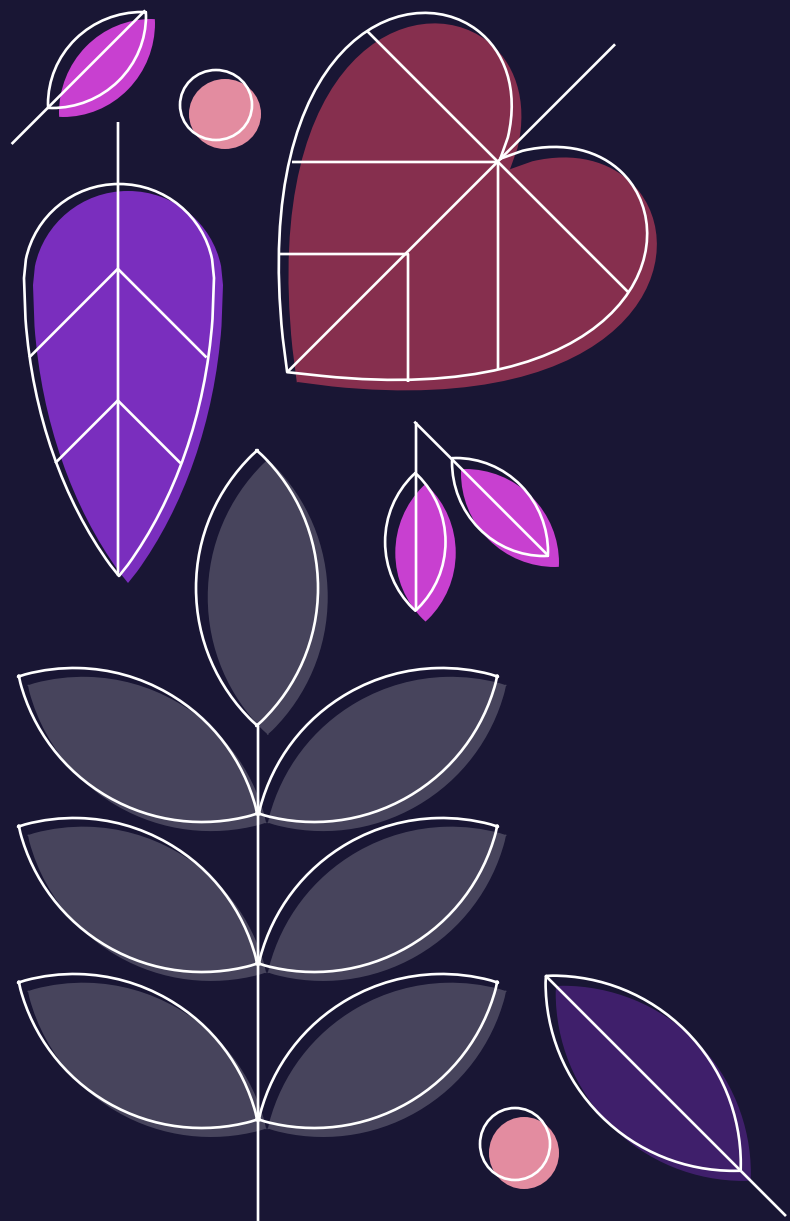


Intentional, Accountable, Personal – Shine On

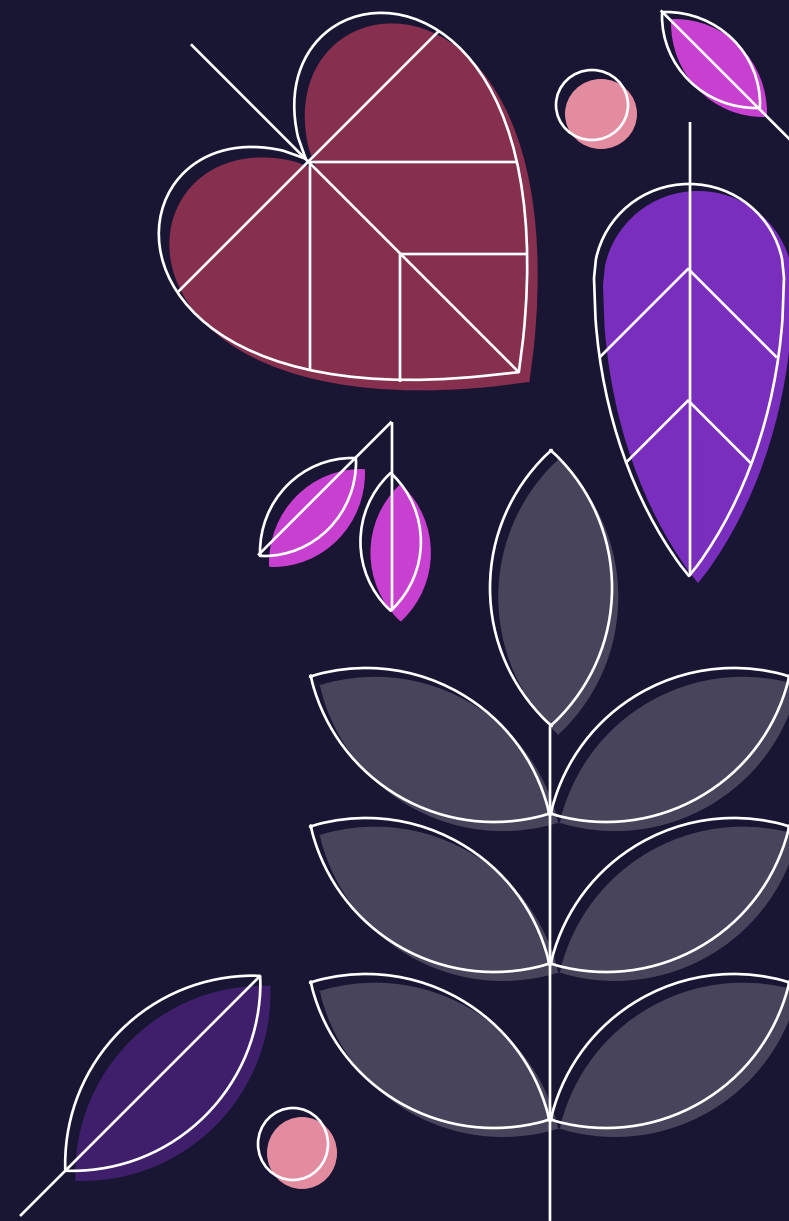
- Dedicate space for your mentee to feel and be heard
- Be intentional about the advice you give, tie your experiences to theirs
- Hold your mentee accountable to application of knowledge and prioritization
- Allow the mentee to talk about non-work items, get to know them
- Approach conversations with transparent vulnerability and honesty
- Show genuine excitement for your mentee's progress, growth, and success
- Support your mentee when they fail or need a person to confide in
- Engage in ad hoc conversations, create space when your mentee reaches out

Growing Others Through Radical Positivity

- Celebrate the Wins, big or small, to reinforce positive moments
- Constructive criticism through reinforcing what went well despite drawbacks
- Cheerlead, be the mentee's strongest advocate, even when they aren't there
- Provide growth opportunities, analyze results, rinse repeat
- Challenge how they think, spin with creativity
- Accept their thoughts and opinions, encourage them to pursue them
- Listen with an open mind, you will learn something too



Failure

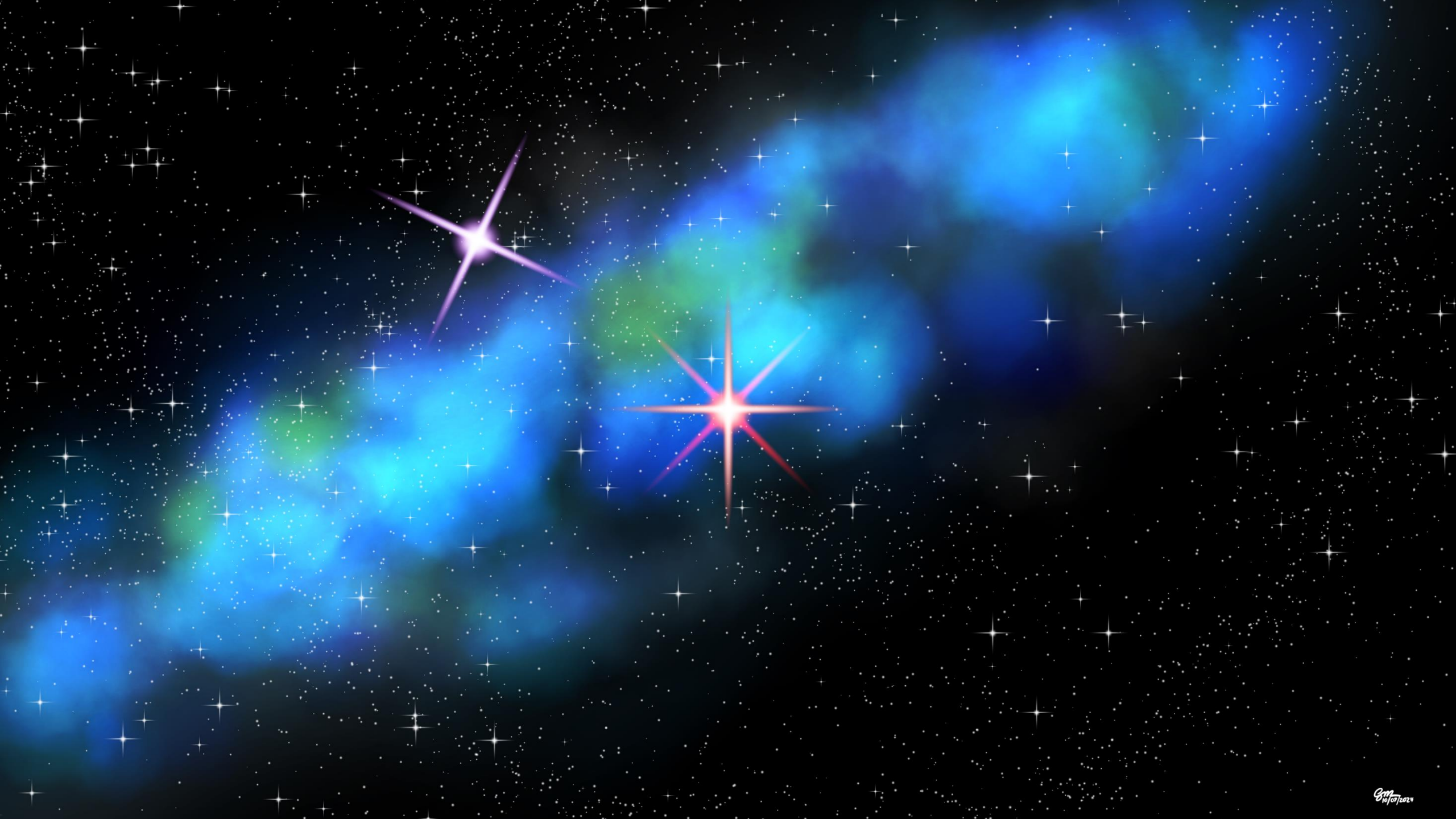


Failure as a Positive Experience

- Failure is a learning experience, an opportunity for growth
- Allow your mentee to fail
- Treat that failure with optimism – what did we learn, how can we do better?
- Allow the mentee to feel their feelings, process them, and return
- Plan for the future, ask them how they plan to improve
- Provide guidance from similar experiences but let them draw conclusions
- Encourage your mentee to forge ahead with new knowledge
- Never, but NEVER, point blame at them or anyone.

Shining Through Personal Connection

- Professionalism is not the be-all of mentorships
- Mentorship is not just about work, create space for the human connection
- Move beyond “how are you” and “how’s your day going” questions
- Get to know your mentee - what drives them, what excites them, what worries them?
- Share your life with your mentee, let them know the real you
- Personal conversations are okay to have (within reason of course)
- Listen to their beliefs with an open mind, share yours and expect the same



Navigating the Stars

"The dream scenario is not just knowing where someone wants to go, but also where they don't want to go. Constraints are more helpful than opportunities."

- Ben Goldsmith

Director of Online Services - Pokémon Trainer Club at The Pokémon Company International



When Silence Truly is Golden

DRIVING THE CONVERSATION

- You are a talking head
- Teaching not mentoring
- Simply propagating knowledge
- Prescriptive instead of educative
- Making the conversation about you
- Mentee is likely to lose focus

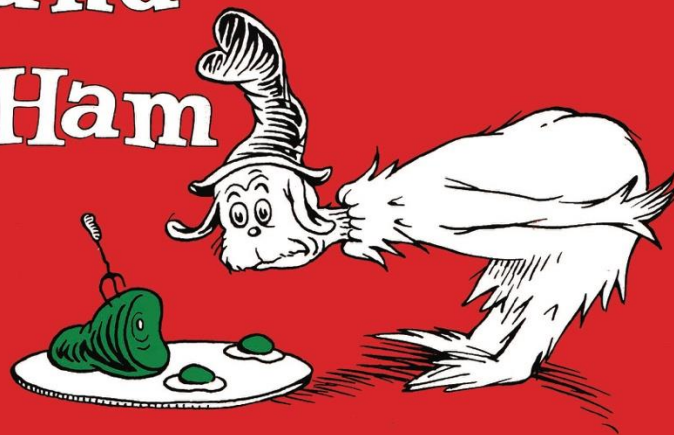
LETTING THE MENTEE DRIVE

- Learning through discussion
- Give them a nugget to chew on
- Allows them to draw conclusions
- Educative instead of prescriptive
- Giving them autonomy to grow
- Brings equity to the conversation

Of Growth and Comfort

- The end goal is the happiness and growth of the mentee
- Encourage them out of their comfort zone and get out of yours
- Be prepared for disagreement - disagree and commit
- They are the master of their destiny; you help them realize it
- Allow them to chase their dreams, even if it means leaving the company
- Allow the mentee to set constraints and decide what's "not for them"

Green Eggs and Ham



By Dr. Seuss

A Little Book With A Big Constraint

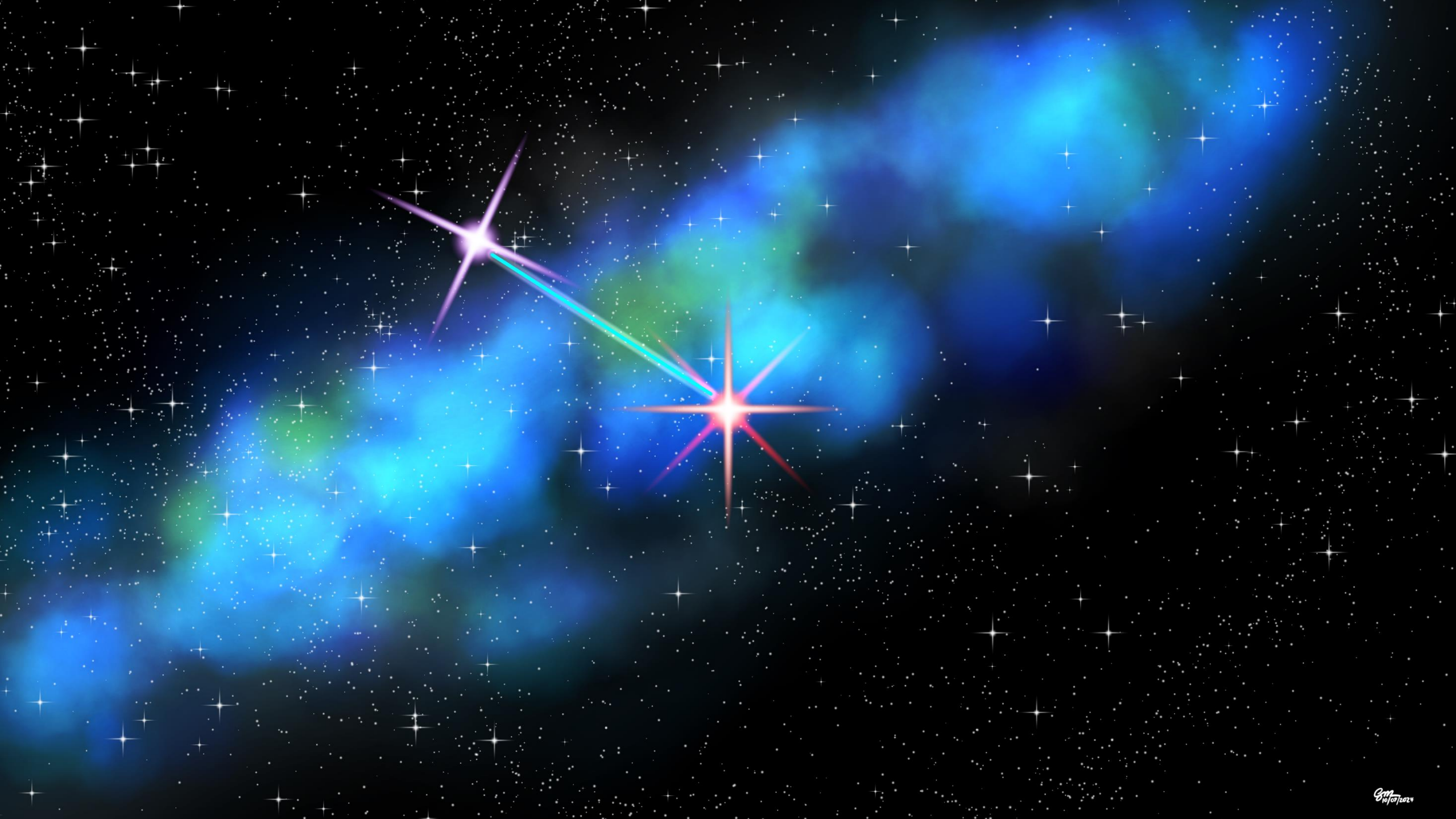
- Dr. Seuss wrote Green Eggs and Ham under a major constraint
- Founder of Random House publishing, Bennett Cerf, made a bet with him
- He could not write a successful book using only 50 unique words
- A year later he finished the book
- The book became the best-selling book Dr. Seuss wrote
- It is also the 4th best selling children's hardcover book

The 50 words of Green Eggs and Ham:

a, am, and, anywhere, are, be, boat, box, car, could, dark, do, eat, eggs, fox, goat, good, green, ham, here, house, I, if, in, let, like, may, me, mouse, not, on, or, rain, Sam, say, see, so, thank, that, the, them, there, they, train, tree, try, will, with, would, you

Constraints Solve the "Blank Page" Problem

- Rejoice in constraints, they can be the key to unlocking a mentee's full potential
- Constraints are more helpful than opportunities as they offer guideposts
- Knowing where not to go is often better than knowing where to go
- Accept when a mentee offers a constraint in their path
- Do not force them into a box they do not want to go into



When the Tide Turns: A Mentor Reborn

"Mentorship is a two-way street - every time we teach somebody something we are automatically redefining ourself, our system of values, or doubling down on something we already have."

- Nermina Avdic

Director of Technical Services Engineering at The Pokémon Company International



"Shine Theory is an investment, over the long term, in helping someone be their best self—and relying on their help in return. It is a conscious decision to bring your full self to your friendships, and to not let insecurity or envy ravage them. Shine Theory is a commitment to asking, "Would we be better as collaborators than as competitors?" The answer is almost always yes."

The Thesis of Shine Theory

<https://www.shinetheory.com/what-is-shine-theory>

Open Mind, Open Heart - Being One's Best Self

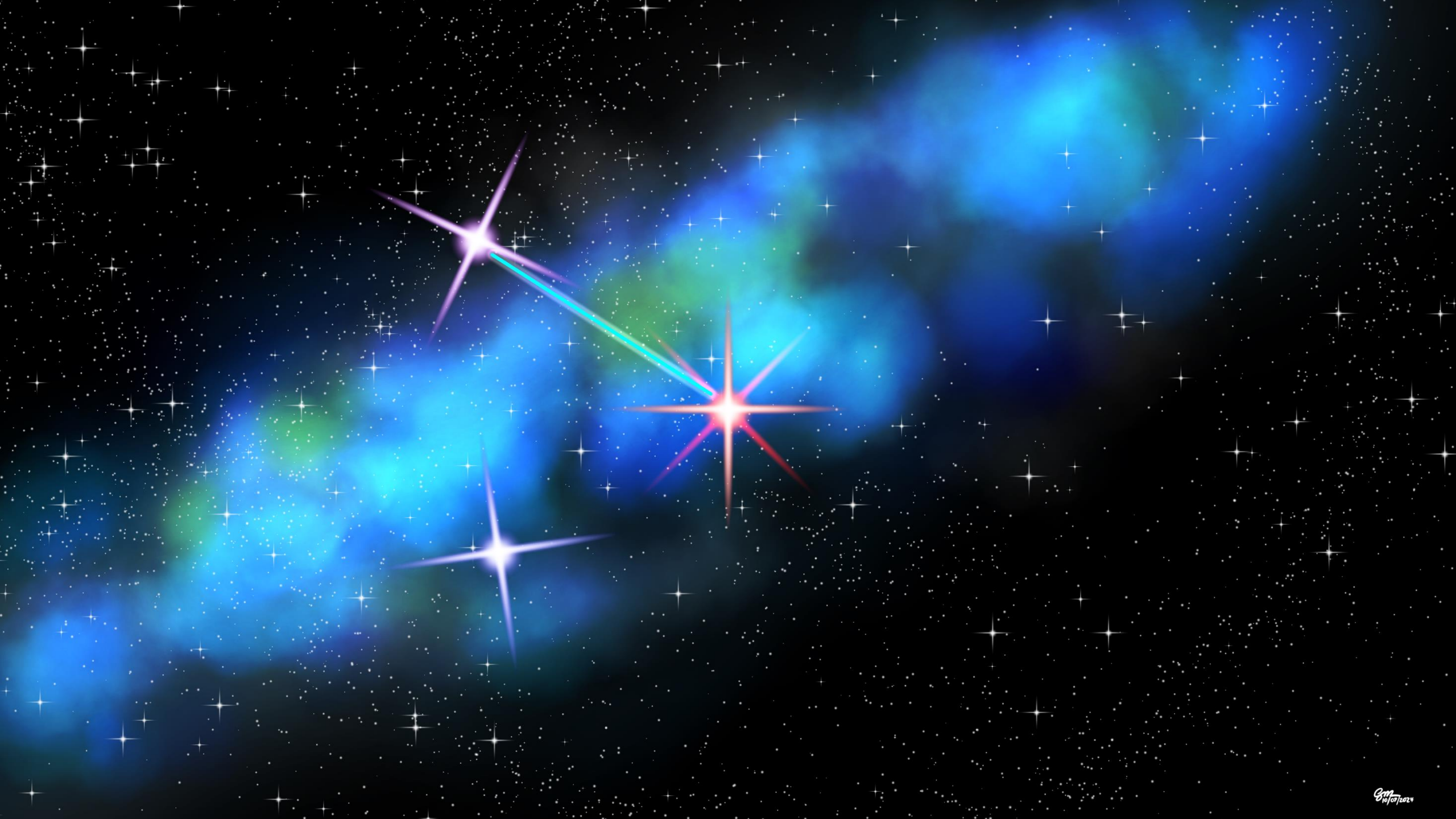
- You, dear mentor, should never stop learning
- Be self aware of your limitations and faults
- You never have ALL the answers, that's okay
- Learning from your mentee is the mark of a good mentor
- Approach the mentorship with an open heart and mind
- When they outshines you, notice what they bring out in themselves and others

The Mentor Becomes the Mentee

- Your mentee will put their own spin on things and its *BEAUTIFUL*
- Learn from their new approach
- Mentorship is a give and take relationship whether it's a conscious decision or not
- Be humble, be respectful, be grateful
- Consider what you learned while mentoring the mentee
- Ask them for advice, allow them to share their knowledge

As A Constellation We Shine

- Learn and grow from each other, bidirectionally
- Step out of your comfort zones and embrace the new perspective
- Learn as much as you guide
- Bring your full, best self to the relationship and let your mentee do the same
- When your mentee shines, you also shine
- Don't be afraid to flip the relationship, become the mentee or the mentor
- And most importantly – give yourself and your mentee or mentor grace





Special Thanks to My Shining Peers

Nermina Avdic - Mentor

Ben Goldsmith - Mentor

Tina Johnson - Mentee

liuri (Yuri) Zonar - Mentee



Meet the Artist

- Sophia McKeever (She/Her)
- Sr. SDET with 11+ years experience
- Employers Include:
 - *The Pokémon Company International*
 - *Apple Inc.*
 - *Microsoft Azure*
 - *DataSphere Technologies Inc.*
- Digital Artist, Code Poet
- Vintage Computing Enthusiast
- Transgender, Autistic



LinkedIn



Instagram

References and Citations

1. Sow, Aminatou and Friedman, Ann. "Shine Theory." Accessed August 10, 2024. <https://www.shinetheory.com/>
2. Oshin, Mayo. "The power of constraints: How Dr. Seuss used only 50 words to write his best-selling book of all time." Ladders, November 25, 2019
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3. Wikipedia contributors. "Mentorship." Wikipedia, July 6, 2024. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentorship>.
4. "Mentorship." In Merriam-Webster Dictionary, August 29, 2024. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mentorship>.

Thank You for attending, enjoy the rest of PNSQC

Shine On