

2004 Regional Training

# DESIGNING AND CUSTOMIZING MENTOR TRAINING

June 2004



Written By Elsy Arévalo

With Contributions By DeVone Boggan and Lynne West



Produced and Conducted by the Center for Applied Research Solutions, Inc.  
for the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs

Los Angeles • San Diego • Orange • Monterey • Sacramento

# TODAY'S AGENDA

9:00 - 9:15	Welcome
9:15 - 9:50	About Mentor Training
9:50 - 10:00	Ground Rules
10:00 - 11:00	Foundations of Mentoring
11:00 - 11:15	BREAK
11:15 - 11:40	Expectations
11:40 - 12:15	Talking About Difficult Situations
12:15 - 1:15	LUNCH (on your own)
1:15 - 1:45	Diversity / Communication
1:45 - 2:15	Setting Healthy Boundaries
2:15 - 2:30	BREAK
2:30 - 2:40	Going the Distance
2:40 - 3:10	Review of Policies and Guidelines
3:10 - 3:30	Putting It All Together
3:30	Evaluation Completion and Adjournment

The Mentoring Regional Trainings are a project of the Center for Applied Research Solutions, Inc. and are funded by the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs

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Produced and Conducted By:  
**The Center For Applied Research Solutions, Inc.**

June 2004



Welcome to **Designing and Customizing Mentor Training**! This is a project of the Center for Applied Research Solutions or CARS (formerly known as EMT Group, Inc.). We are excited about this year's program and hope you will find the day inspiring and informative.

## About Today's Training

One of the most frequently requested areas of technical assistance is the development of mentor training. Specifically, mentoring professionals request the hands-on tools needed to develop the content and exercises of a mentor training. This training will provide all of the necessary information for you to immediately begin to effectively prepare your mentors. The day will include:

- ▼ General information about mentor training
- ▼ Core content that should be included in any mentor training
- ▼ Information to help you tailor the content to fit the needs of those you serve
- ▼ Sample exercises and handouts

Thank you for your commitment to making a difference in the lives of youth. Enjoy the day and thank you for joining us.

*"Many things can wait; the child cannot. Now is the time  
his bones are being formed, his mind is being developed.*

*To him, we cannot say tomorrow; his name is today."*

*Gabriella Mistral, poet*

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# PRESENTERS

## Elsy Arévalo

**ELSY ARÉVALO** is an experienced trainer with firsthand knowledge of mentoring and effective mentoring practices. She currently serves as Director for the Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute as well as Mentoring Project Director at CARS (formerly known as EMT Group). Through these leadership positions, she provides vision and direction to technical assistance initiatives, serves as key presenter at statewide mentoring forums and conferences and develops mentoring curricula and training materials. She is the author of publications such as "Running a Safe and Effective Mentoring Program," "Mentoring Document Kit," and the online training "Developing and Implementing a Recruitment Plan." Ms. Arévalo serves on the board of the Silicon Valley Mentoring Coalition and has been instrumental in organizing the annual Northern California Mentoring Conference. Most importantly, Ms. Arévalo has directly worked with mentors and mentees through Friends for Youth Mentoring Services, a Bay Area program that has over two decades of successful mentoring experience. As a Program Coordinator and Recruitment Coordinator, Ms. Arévalo recruited, screened, trained, matched, and counseled mentors and mentees through the challenges of building a lifelong friendship. On a personal level, Ms. Arévalo is committed to volunteerism and is actively involved in her community. She has served as a mentor, worked with youth of all ages, assisted the elderly, supported terminally ill patients, and committed a year to the Jesuit Volunteer Corp.

## DeVone Boggan

**DEVONE BOGGAN** has an extensive background as a provider of technical assistance and training to mentoring and youth development practitioners. His experience includes developing and implementing effective mentoring strategies for youth traditionally underserved by mentoring programs. These programs include mentoring efforts that serve youth who have multiple contacts with the juvenile justice system as well as those who are incarcerated in youth correctional facilities. DeVone serves as a member of the National Mentoring Partnerships Public Policy Council and as a member of its Steering Committee responsible for authoring Mentoring's Elements of Effective Practice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Before creating dbMENTORS, inc.™ DeVone served as Executive Director of The Mentoring Center, a regional provider of technical assistance and training. He has been on the CARS consulting team for over six years.

## Lynne West

**LYNNE WEST** is a 17 year veteran of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ventura County. She is an expert in the mentoring field, whose primary interests are in program and board development. Ms. West has watched hundreds of matches flourish and had the honor of watching a "little brother" receive a \$20,000 scholarship from the Arby's Foundation. This little brother summed it up when he stated, "It really has made the difference between getting involved in gangs and heading down the wrong path and becoming successful." West states, "Mentoring makes a difference. It takes time, energy, and most importantly heart, on a consistent basis to help turn children's lives around." In addition to her years in the Big Brothers Big Sisters federation, she also directed several programs including the Ventura County CASA program, the Independent Living Skills program for foster teens, court-ordered parenting training, court-ordered supervised visitation for on-custodial parents, and McAvoy house, a group emancipation home for teenage boys.

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# ABOUT MENTOR TRAINING

*"You can only love me as much as you love yourself. I need a friend, and I need support. But in the long run, I'm not really looking for you. I'm looking for me."*

*Don Shaw, youth worker*

## **IN THIS SECTION**

- ▼ Purpose and goals
- ▼ Research to support its need
  - ▼ Before getting started
  - ▼ Assessment of content
    - ▼ Objectives

## notes

## Introduction

In the last twenty years, the field of mentoring has made tremendous strides in determining the most critical elements needed to create and support positive relationships between adults and youth. As research and clinical experience have advanced, the need for evidence-based mentoring practices has become clear - creating a drive to develop and sustain a core of mentoring practices which have demonstrated an effective and positive impact on youth. As strategies of these best practices are fleshed out, new models of education for old and new agencies can be developed in order to accomplish mentoring's primary goal: to safely and positively affect the lives of youth.

Contained within the elements of best practice is the recommendation for a comprehensive mentor training before any match or adult/child interaction. Research supports this recommendation and has clearly shown that proper training of mentors facilitates the development of close mentoring relationships. A study conducted by Private Public Ventures found that mentors who attended fewer than two hours of pre-match training reported the lowest levels of relationship quality, whereas those attending six or more hours of training reported having the strongest relationships (Relationship Development in Community-Based and School-Based Programs from [www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org)).

Beyond agreeing on the fact that a training is needed, however, there has been little written about what to actually incorporate into the training. There is tremendous variation between the content, length, and format of mentor trainings provided to mentors across programs. Some agencies do not require any mentor training at all. In fact, Carla Herrera in her national study of 700 mentoring programs found that 22% did not provide any training to their volunteers and that more than 50% of the programs provided less than two hours of training.

The purpose of this manual is to provide a research-derived framework for mentor training. It will begin by explaining the background, purpose, and need for such a training. It will then focus on the critical elements required for any effective mentor training session, including key principles of mentoring, skills needed, and mentor responsibilities. Having laid the foundations of mentor training, the curriculum will move to address individual needs of programs and help form a framework for dealing with unique challenges and opportunities. Finally, it will provide exercises and sample handouts for the application of the content and the development of an effective training program.

## Purpose and Goals

We've discussed the inclusion of mentor training in the current best practice recommendations; now, let's look at some of the reasons why it is such an important part of a mentoring program. A strong mentor training can have many beneficial effects:

- ✓ Mentor training serves to provide mentors a comprehensive understanding of mentoring.
- ✓ It gives volunteers information about the specific mentoring program's goals, requirements, and guidelines.
- ✓ It should provide mentors with information about the youth population they will be working with—their backgrounds, strengths, vulnerabilities, and needs.
- ✓ It gives volunteers an introduction to the common issues confronting mentors.
- ✓ Done well, it should inspire mentors and help them to commit to the process of mentoring and to the youth who they'll be serving.
- ✓ It can serve as a powerful screening mechanism.
- ✓ It establishes your program as your mentors' mentor - forming a relationship of guidance and support. It can instill confidence, trust and assurances for the trainee that the program can support him/her in the mentoring experience. (The reverse is also true: we have found that there are many potential mentors who have refused to participate in mentoring programs as a result of their lack of confidence in the program's ability to support their mentoring efforts.)

So, how can a program achieve all of these goals in an initial training session? Well, it's probably a misconception to think that it can. A pre-match mentor training helps to *set the foundations* on which all of these elements can be built. It prepares, educates, and familiarizes mentors with you and your program. It is the first step in your relationship with your mentors. It establishes you as a source of knowledge, support, guidance and friendship. It begins your mentorship of them and acquaints the volunteers with the basics of mentoring. It serves as a buffer to prevent surprise and mismanagement when the issues discussed in the training arise in their own mentoring relationships. Once they go through the pre-match training, volunteers will have the entire period of their mentorship to actually realize and re-learn the things you hint at in your introduction. Your ongoing support will be critical.

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## Before Getting Started

Before you can begin to train mentors, or even to recruit them, it is critical that your organization sets down the infrastructure necessary to effectively create, nurture, and support safe and positive mentoring relationships. Of particular importance to the implementation of a mentor training is the development of a program's guidelines, policies, and procedures to be followed by all participants. Some excellent resources for the development of your own policy and procedures manual include:

- ▼ *Generic Mentoring Program Policy and Procedure Manual* developed by Northwest Regional Laboratories offers everything your program will need to know to create a sustainable set of program rules, guidelines and procedures. You can find it by going to [www.nwrel.org/mentoring/policy\\_manual.html](http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/policy_manual.html)
- ▼ *How to Develop an Operations Manual* by Jerry Sherk. Based on the Recommended Best Practices for mentoring programs, this manual offers the basic framework to work from when developing your own policy manual. You can find it by going to [www.emt.org/userfiles/mentoringprogoperationsmanual.pdf](http://www.emt.org/userfiles/mentoringprogoperationsmanual.pdf)
- ▼ *Mentoring Essentials: Risk Management for Mentoring Programs.* by Dustianne North, M.S.W. and Jerry Sherk, M.A. This comprehensive curriculum can help your agency think through the critical issues involved in risk management. You can find it by going to [www.emt.org/publications](http://www.emt.org/publications)

Developing such guidelines will help your program and everyone involved to manage and reduce risk and liability. These guidelines should be included in a mentor's manual, discussed, and signed at the mentor training and finally, reviewed through ongoing training and mentor support.

# Assessment of Content

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As you address the issue of training mentors, the most important question is what information needs to be conveyed and how is it best to do so. This one question includes many others: Who is being trained? What are their specific needs? What will they already know about the subject? What do they need to know? How can you effectively fill the gap between what they know now and what they will need to know?

This manual is designed to answer these questions. Much of it will directly answer them by dealing with the "core content" of any mentor training. This core content will form the foundation of a mentor training. It will include sections on the foundations of mentoring, keys to success in mentoring relationships, skills development, etc . In addition to these critical steps, individual programs will need to tailor their own mentor training with information specific to their program. Additional areas to cover in a mentor training can greatly vary based on the population being served as well as the mentoring format practiced. For example, a program working with incarcerated youth will still need to understand the critical content of mentor training. However, they may also need specific training on dealing with the criminal justice system, juvenile hall, and an increased level of focus on dealing with youth with difficulties. For this purpose we have included a chapter on Working with Special Populations that covers the critical issues involved in working with diverse youth populations.

Before working on the specific content, however, it is important to formulate your own basic framework - to reconnect the program's needs and the needs of your mentors. Important questions to ask as you begin to develop your own, individualized mentor training program should include:

- To whom are we providing mentoring? Why do they need mentoring? What are the strengths and challenges involved with working with this population?
- Who are our mentors? What barriers must be addressed to prepare them for mentoring this profile of youth and in this type of mentoring?
- What outcomes do we hope to achieve as a result of our mentoring efforts?

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- If your program is already running: What have been your most common reasons for premature match closure? Who have been the most successful mentors in our program and why?
- What do we want to accomplish with the training?
- What timeline will structure the training?
- What resources will be necessary for accomplishing the training?
- Will external trainers and/or organizations be necessary?
- Will current mentees and/or mentors be included in the training as resources for potential mentors (or mentors in training)?

When you have answered these questions, you will be ready to begin establishing the content of your mentor training. You will be ready to utilize the critical content as well as ready to individualize your mentor training process.

Determining Session Content

*Source: Designing an Effective Mentor Training for Your Mentors. EMT Group*

Generally, time constraints will limit the amount of material that can be conveyed during the training session. To determine which material should be presented it is useful to set a "learning target" and to prioritize training material accordingly. One useful approach is to categorize student learning in terms of what participants "must know," what they "should know" and what they "could know." Material that participants "must know" serves as the "learning target," to which remaining material can be added.



# CORE CONTENT

*"If I have a problem, I'm the only one who can solve it—the only one who knows all the feelings and, background involved. You can help me get in touch with those feelings, and help me put them in proper perspective. I don't know of any way for you to do this except to listen. You're not a magician. You can't simply imagine how I'm feeling; you must help me tell you."*

*Don Shaw - youth worker*

## **IN THIS SECTION**

- ▼ Foundations of mentoring
  - ▼ Skill development
- ▼ Review of policies and guidelines

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# CORE CONTENT: Foundations of Mentoring

*“Some people demand to help, whether I want it or not. I am more likely to accept help gracefully from someone who doesn’t have to help. If you can just be with me without helping, I will know you really care— you really want to be with me. So, at first, visit me or let me visit you. Do something that we both enjoy doing.”*

*Don Shaw - youth worker*

## **IN THIS SECTION**

- ▼ History of mentoring
- ▼ Effectiveness of mentoring
  - ▼ How does it work
- ▼ Successful mentoring practice
  - ▼ Definitions

notes

# CORE CONTENT: FOUNDATIONS OF MENTORING

## History of Mentoring

Mentors have always been recognized as some of the most important influences on a young person's life. Mentoring's tradition and importance can be traced to the earliest myths and legends in written history. In fact, the term "mentor" is taken from Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Ulysses asks his friend Mentor to counsel and guide his son during his absence in the Trojan War. In ancient Greek, the word came to mean "steadfast" and "enduring." Throughout history, the relationship has been naturally duplicated and refined in hundreds of ways - in apprentice and master, student and teacher, and friend and counselor. The role has been highlighted in classical story after story - some even highlighting the negative effects a mentor can have. In Shakespeare's *Henry IV part I*, Henry defines himself as much by his realization of his mentor's faults as by his wisdom. The mentor relationship has always been a valuable one which allows a young person to experience new ideas, see a way of living outside his immediate reality, and define him or herself in the context of that relationship. In Western thought, the term mentor has become synonymous with anyone who is a wise teacher, guide, and friend.

Although the word mentor is now widely understood and the formal practice of mentoring widely acknowledged, only two decades ago the community at large was not aware of the term mentoring or how it could be applied to youth development.

This realization can be understood in the context of societal growth and change. First, changes in the familial structure and community definition in our society have left today's youth with limited access to adults. Extended families no longer form a core of adult relationships. Additionally, families no longer live near one another in tightly knit communities; instead, visits with relatives are often accomplished either by car or airplane visits and are often limited to special occasions. Additionally, the urbanization of America has led to more crowded and more dangerous environments for our youth, where frequently neighbors do not have the opportunity or desire to interact with one another simply

because they are total strangers. Suffice it to say here that changes in society have made it more and more difficult for children to have access to natural, spontaneous adult mentors. Children's home lives are also significantly different than in the past. There are eleven million children and teens home alone or spending time unsupervised during the high-risk hours between school dismissal and dinnertime. It is estimated that parents are spending eight to ten hours less a week with their children than they did in previous generations.

A growing body of research on youth development has also pointed to the benefits of providing youth with caring adults to help them navigate the challenges of growing up. The approach of youth development is to help youth become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. It concentrates on building strengths rather than working to diminish youth's deficits or risks.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that one common factor in the lives of emotionally healthy, resilient, well-adjusted individuals is the presence of a caring, nurturing adult while the individual is growing up.

The importance of the role of mentors in history, the change in society's availability of mentors, and the current research supporting their necessity, all point to a major gap in youth's development in modern society: relationships with caring and healthy adults. This means we must move beyond tutoring, teaching, coaching or goal based interaction with adults in order to support our youth's growth and development. In other words, what children need is not only to learn a subject or a sport; instead, they need the relationship with a caring adult to give them a life model by which they can define their personalities.

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## Effectiveness of Mentoring

Though mentoring is still a fairly young field, initial research findings have indicated that mentoring can have a statistically significant, positive impact in the lives of youth. The largest and most well known study conducted to date is a national evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters by Public Private Ventures. After an 18 month period, the study showed that compared to the control group, those youth who had a mentor skipped fewer days of school, were less physically aggressive, had more positive relationships, and had higher grades. As positive as this sounds, these initial research findings need to be understood with caution and within a proper context. First, the participants in the Big Brothers Big Sisters programs involved in the study had a high level of contact - approximately three hours per week. Second, the instructions the mentors received were to be a friend to the youth, not a tutor, a preacher, or a teacher. Third, the mentors and mentees were matched for 18 months - not a short period of time by any means. Finally, the programs included in the study included such critical components as a mentor training that included skills such as communication, limit setting, and tips on relationship building. (Source: *Making a Difference* by Joseph P. Tierney and Jean Baldwin Grossman) In other words, mentoring done right has been shown to be effective; one cannot expect that any mentoring effort will have the same results.

Here is a summary of the types of impact mentoring programs with a strong infrastructure and a sound mentoring philosophy can have in the lives of youth. (From MENTORING ADOLESCENTS: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? Cynthia L. Sipe ppv.org)

### *The Benefits of High Quality Mentoring*

#### One-on-one mentoring

- Less likely to initiate drug and alcohol use
- Less likely to hit someone
- Skipped fewer days of school
- Felt more competent about their ability to do well in school
- Received slightly higher grades
- Reported more positive relationships with friends and parents

One-on-one mentoring embedded in a broader academically oriented program

- Improved academic performance
- More likely to participate in college preparatory activities
- More likely to attend college immediately after high school graduation
- Remained longer in college

One-on-one mentoring embedded in a substance abuse prevention program

- Better attitudes toward school and the future
- Used substances less frequently
- Better school attendance

Group mentoring

- Better attitudes toward school, their family and communities

notes

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## How Does It Work?

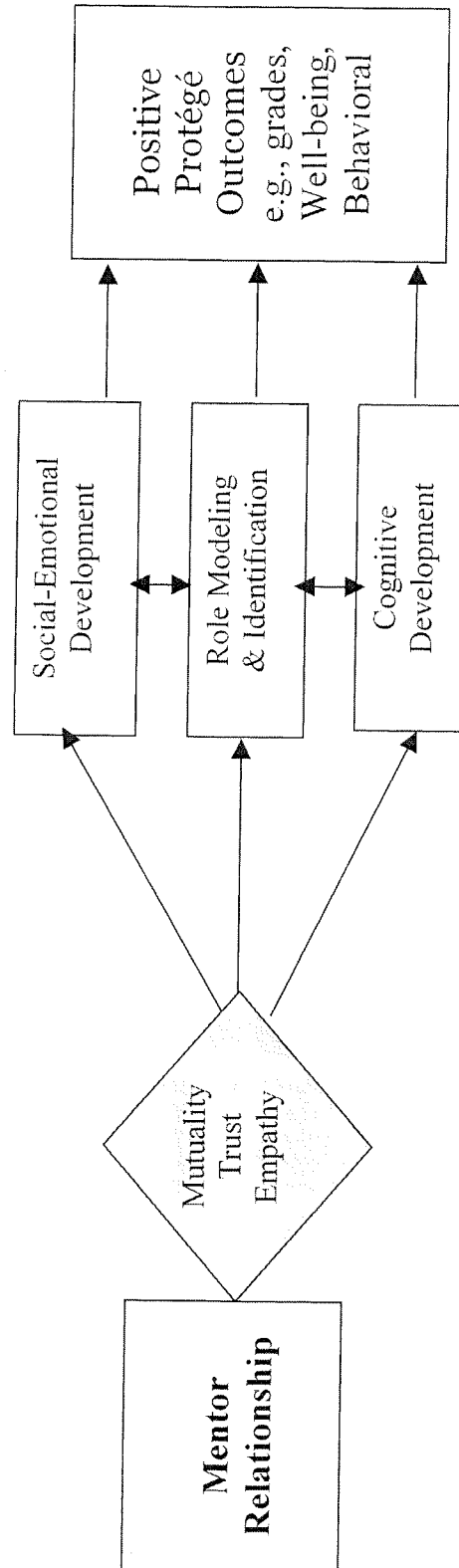
It is clear that safe and effective mentoring programs can positively impact the lives of youth. But how is it that mentoring can affect positive outcomes in school, violence, drug use, etc.? Jean Rhodes, in her book *Stand by Me*, points out that mentors can influence their mentee's development in several ways, including:

- Enhancing their ability to have positive relationships with their parents and their peers - Relationships are paramount for youth. Relationships with other adults can confirm or challenge a youth's perception of relationships. If their relationship with mentors are positive and healthy, they will learn how to form more positive and healthy relationships. If youth have had negative experiences with other adults, their positive experience with their mentor can challenge their beliefs and open them up to the possibility that not all adults are the same.
- Improving cognitive skills - Youth's mental and cognitive skills can be enhanced through meaningful conversations with mentors.
- Serving as a role model and advocate.
- Mentors can provide new perspectives, possibilities, and options for youth. They can help to broaden their horizons. On a fundamental level, they can help shape a youth's image of themselves through ongoing feedback.

Through the development of strong relationships, mentoring can enhance a youth's ability to build positive relationships with others, improve their cognitive skills, and provide new perspectives for the future. This in turn has implications for improvements in grades, reduction of drugs use, and many of the other positive effects that mentoring has been shown to have on youth.

# Pathways of Mentoring Influence

By Jean Rhodes



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## Successful Mentor Practices

It is imperative to understand that the success of a match is dependent upon the strength of the relationship between mentor and mentee. Research has shown mentoring is effective if youth understand that they - not their performance or achievements - are the number one priority. Once a child feels supported and is able to build a strong bond with their mentor, then and only then, can we expect improvements in areas such as academics or behavior.

A follow-up study to the National Big Brothers Big Sisters evaluation sought to identify the characteristics that helped mentoring relationships to form, last, or break up. They sought to identify the distinguishable traits associated with positive relationship development and relationships that ended prematurely. They examined 82 matches across eight different Big Brother Big Sister sites. They found two broad differences in approaches to mentoring which they classified as developmental relationships versus prescriptive relationships. (From Building Relationships with Youth in Program Settings: A Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters by Kristine V. Morrow and Melanie B. Styles May 1995)

### Developmental Approach: The Unconditional Friend

- Initial efforts concentrated on establishing strong relationships with youth first
- Efforts were centered on building trust
- Once relationship was established and the youth were receptive then mentors moved onto other goals
- Incorporated youth on the decision-making process
- Volunteers were flexible
- Volunteers were satisfied with the process and the relationship
- Youth felt supported, wanted to continue the relationship long-term, and felt they could talk to their mentors about anything

### Prescriptive Approach: The "Rescuer," "Savior" or "Reformer"

- Initial efforts were outcome based
- Time was spent primarily setting goals and working towards those goals
- Volunteers had their own goals or agenda as the priority

- Volunteers reluctant to change their agenda or to change expectations for relationship
- Unrealistic expectations
- Out to “transform” youth
- Expected equal responsibility from youth
- Both volunteers and youth felt frustrated with the relationship

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In recent years, we have come to learn that ineffective mentoring relationships can have damaging effects on the lives of youth. In order to avoid duplicating a failed or broken relationship, it is imperative that we begin our mentor trainings by clarifying the most successful mentoring practices.

Research on successful mentoring practices has pointed to five key areas as critical in developing healthy relationships with youth. (Source: *MENTORING ADOLESCENTS: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?* Cynthia L. Sipe)

#### 1. The Relationship is the Intervention

Again, those mentors who take the time to develop trust and get to know their mentees are able to create a nurturing environment for the youth to take positive steps in their growth. Successful mentors focus on relationship building and not the outcomes.

#### 2. Take Responsibility for the Relationship

Maintaining a relationship in a normal setting is hard enough as it is. Maintaining a relationship in a contrived setting with an individual who is often going through a great deal of change and internal turmoil is even tougher. Successful mentors need to be consistent, persistent and dependable. They need to be able to follow through on their commitment even when things get tough.

#### 3. The Longer the Duration of the Match the Greater the Impact

It takes time to develop trust and to establish strong bonds. If that bond is essential for mentoring to have a positive impact then it is easy to see why the longer a relationship lasts, the more likely it is the relationship will make a positive impact in the lives of youth.

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A further study reiterates the importance of this step. (From ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS Jean Baldwin Grossman and Amy Johnson)

Students in relationships more than twelve months:

- Felt more confident about doing their schoolwork
- Skipped fewer school days
- Had higher grades, and
- Were less likely to start using drugs or alcohol

Students in relationships lasting six to twelve months:

- Skipped fewer school days

Students in relationships lasting three to six months:

- No significant impacts

Students in relationships lasting less than three months:

- Felt less confident about doing their schoolwork
- Had substantially lower sense of self-worth

#### 4. Respect youth's viewpoint

Mentors who pay attention to what the youth wants to do during meetings seem to do better than those who just want to impose their own agenda for the match. In fact, one of the research findings pointed to the importance of engaging in fun social activities.

#### 5. Rely on Program for Support

Finally, though mentoring is generally a one to one relationship, it takes a whole team of committed individuals to make it work. Mentors should feel comfortable seeking support from program staff and program staff should really mentor the mentor. Without this support, mentors are more likely to encounter frustration and have a negative experience. A mentor training is an excellent opportunity to deepen your relationship with your volunteers and

to help them see you as a source of knowledge, experience, and support.

Other studies have duplicated these findings. In a longitudinal study of six urban youth programs, McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman (1994) interviewed youth in order to identify the traits of adults who made a positive impact in their lives. The research team concluded that adults motivated by “loving agendas” and positive purposes stood apart from those who came with an aim of controlling young people or a focus on their problems. Five specific characteristics emerged. The caring adults most trusted and respected by young people:

1. Were clear that they saw the potential, not the faults or problems in the youth they encountered.
2. Were clear that the young person, not the activity, was their priority.
3. They conveyed a sense of purpose for themselves and for the young people around them.
4. They were described as real, not fake.
5. They wanted to give back to the community in gratitude for what they had received.

## INEFFECTIVE MENTOR PRACTICES

On the contrary, research has found that ineffective “mentor practices that lead to disappointing relationship can have an adverse effect, eroding a youth’s self-esteem and trust in adults.” (Source: Grossman and Rhodes, 1999).

Some of these ineffective practices include mentors who are not consistent, who try to impose their own values, who place the outcomes before the relationship, or who are authoritative in their approach.

The BB/BS study, found that over 70 percent of the matches that included volunteers who took these ineffective mentoring approaches met only sporadically, and nearly 70 percent ended within the nine months. In contrast, for matches whose volunteers adopted the effective approaches described previously, more than 90 percent met on a regular and consistent basis, and only nine percent of these relationships had ended after nine months.

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## Definitions

### WHAT IS A MENTOR?

Defining the role of a mentor can be a powerful tool in helping volunteers understand the parameters of the relationship and in helping them to begin to have more realistic expectations about their role.

It is not uncommon to hear many slogans that read something like: "Change a life, be a mentor." These well-meaning advertisements can create a misguided image of what a mentor is supposed to do. Dispelling those misconceptions is critical. Let's begin by defining what a mentor is not:

- **A mentor is not a parent**- this should make your volunteers and youth both very happy. A mentor is not there to take over the role of a parent; no one can take over the role of a parent no matter how difficult a home life can be for the child. Not being a parent allows the volunteer to have a very different relationship with youth.
- **A mentor is not all knowing**- no one but the youth knows what it is like to wake up every day in their home, go to their school, walk in their neighborhood, or handle the realities of their daily life. A mentor who comes in with an "I know best" agenda runs the risk of losing the trust of his mentee or offering ineffective advice.
- **A mentor is not a tutor**- it is so tempting for volunteers who see their mentees failing in school to want to turn themselves into super tutors. A mentor can be there to offer resources and to provide help, but only if and when the mentee wants it.
- **A mentor is not a provider**. Mentors have an important role in a child's life - it is not as a source of financial support. This is a value which needs to be addressed to both the mentor and the mentee. By freeing the relationship from monetary dependency, it can allow it to grow without undue pressure or expectation. This does not mean that a mentor cannot occasionally foot the bill of an outing or activity; it does mean that mentors should not feel obliged to intercede in familial situations which are not their place. If asked, mentors may be able to help find other resources for support and even serve as advocates, but taking on the role of direct financial support can seriously jeopardize the relationship.

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- **A mentor is not a savior**. We've already discussed the prescriptive vs. developmental approaches to mentoring. It has been clearly shown that it is much more important to focus on the relationship than on goals of salvation, enrichment, or betterment. Goals come only after relationship - and you never know exactly what those goals might be. For one child, a positive relationship may inspire him to go to college, become a doctor, or find a productive career goal. For another, it may simply give him the comfort of knowing that there has been one source of support in his life - just that feeling can have powerful impacts.

## SO WHAT IS A MENTOR?

A mentor is a caring guide, a wise advisor, a partner on the journey, and a trusted friend. A mentor is one who can serve as a mirror for the youth - showing them both who they are and who they can become. Moreover, this mirror can help the youth see themselves from a positive and empathetic perspective, allowing the youth to see their own strengths and future possibilities. A mentor is one who can help the youth feel comfortable in their own skin and appreciate their gifts while at the same time exposing them to new opportunities and modes of thinking. Finally, a mentor is ultimately one who can establish a strong connection with their mentee and can in turn use that connection as a catalyst for positive change and growth.

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

*Mentoring is a relationship over a prolonged period of time between two or more people where the mentor provides constant, as needed support, guidance, and concrete help to the protégé as they travel through life.*

- Mentoring helps fill the gap of adult relationships which is absent from many youths' lives. It can expose youth to new information - and this may help them make better decisions about their current or future lives.
- Mentoring is about believing in the unlimited potential of each and every youth served. It maintains high expectations for those youth while allowing them to reach those expectations in their own unique time frame.
- Mentoring is about time and patience.

**Foundations of Mentoring**

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- Mentoring is about empowering youth, not creating replicas of our own ideals of personalities.

Mentoring can be difficult. Relationships can bring up our own insecurities; relationships require commitment and hard work. Mentoring, just like any other relationship, is not always easy. However, it is this relationship which is the foundation of mentoring and the foundation of its effects on youth.



# CORE CONTENT: Skill Development

*“Don’t let me push you around and take advantage of you. It’s pretty easy to do. After all, I have a problem, and I’ll probably take advantage of it. I find it easier to receive from you if I know you’re taking care of your own needs, and I’m not dominating your life. If you don’t take care of yourself, you only burden me with guilt.”*

*Don Shaw, youth worker*

## **IN THIS SECTION**

- ▼ Realistic expectations
- ▼ Talking about difficult situations
  - ▼ Diversity / communication
  - ▼ Setting healthy boundaries
    - ▼ Going the distance

notes

## CORE CONTENT: SKILL DEVELOPMENT

### Expectations

*John, a 33-year-old Latino male, attended a corporate presentation on volunteerism. There, he learned about Change a Life, a mentoring program serving Latino, adolescent boys. He was inspired both by the video and by the very articulate program coordinator who clearly had a passion for her work. John had been thinking about giving back to his community for a while but the timing had never been quite right. Now that his career path was on the right track, he was ready to commit. He told his wife and friends about his decision to volunteer and all those he talked to were not just supportive of his decision, but mostly in awe of his commitment and determination to help others. He went through the screening process, during which he learned more about the program and heard about the wonders of mentoring. He attended the training and again felt more excited and determined than ever to make a difference. After three months of preparation, John finally met Luis, a 16 year old young man who came from a rather turbulent home life and had an "attitude" problem (as stated by the school counselor). The first meeting was far from the Hollywood story he had unconsciously imagined. As the relationship developed he wondered if Luis even wanted him to be there at all and he realized then that they would definitely not be walking hand in hand into the sunset.*

It is not surprising to see why John, after three months of escalating excitement and preparation, would feel disappointed after the first meeting. Most volunteers sign up to mentor with the best of intentions to both fulfill their time commitment and make a difference. In fact, making a difference is the number one reason volunteers state as their motivation to mentor. Unfortunately, often their ideas of what it means to make a difference will look very different from how they actually do make a positive impact.

Unrealistic expectations can serve as barriers in the development of healthy mentoring relationship. Common, misguided expectations include:

- I know what the mentee wants and needs

- I will always know what to do
- I will notice positive change
- I will be thanked for my service
- We will get along splendidly
- My mentee will not cancel appointments
- My mentee will show up for every meeting
- My mentee will be thrilled to see me each time
- We will like each other right away
- It will be fun and not much work
- I will like my mentee all the time

Of course, all of these expectations are present at such an unconscious level that the volunteer will probably end up blaming the youth, the lack of chemistry, or the bad match making skills of the program if things do not work out “as expected.” Responsible pre-match training is important not only in painting a more accurate depiction of what to expect, but also in helping them to determine what they actually think will happen in their mentoring relationship. It is important to remind volunteers that challenges do and will come up with their mentee; if the mentee did not need mentoring they would not be in a mentoring program. Crises should be seen as opportunities and most importantly, as calls for volunteers to fulfill their job description.

In this section we will:

- Review three important expectations mentors SHOULD have about their relationship. These are:
  1. Mentors should take responsibility for the relationship
  2. Mentors should get to know their mentee first before they move on to assisting in any of the academic, emotional or behavioral challenges their mentee will likely face
  3. Mentors will need a larger network of support to be successful
- Finally, we will review sample reflective questions that can be incorporated in a mentor training to help volunteers take ownership of their expectations.

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**TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RELATIONSHIP**

*Erika and her mentee had a successful first meeting. Everything seemed to click. The two of them agreed to spend time together the following week and the date was set. As the week went by, Erika found herself excited about the next get-together. The night before, she made the confirmation call as agreed and everything seemed to be in place. The next day when she arrived, her mentee was nowhere to be found. She waited a substantial period of time until it became clear that she had been stood up. Her mentee's parents could not provide her with any answers. Erika was certain that everything had been clearly arranged. Over the following three weeks Erika attempted to reach and reconnect with her mentee without success. She felt concerned, confused and surprised. In week four, they finally connected via phone. The mentee acted as if she was oblivious to the circumstances and made excuses that didn't make sense.*

Most mentors will likely experience difficulties scheduling meetings. Mentors must be reminded that the majority of youth are probably not used to making "appointments" to meet with adults. Many of them have never seen an organizer or a palm pilot. In addition, they are still very much dependent on other people in their lives to get them places or simply pass on phone messages. Furthermore, for those who are living in very chaotic environments, consistency may be a whole new concept. "Testing" the mentors commitment and resiliency can be common to a mentee that has had unstable relationships with adults. As a result of the subconscious fear of being let down again, relationship sabotage by the mentee (a survival skill) can instinctively set in.

It is important that mentors are directed to expect similar types of challenges at different stages of the relationship. These times of testing should be seen as opportunities for "mentee security building." The mentor should not get caught up in or frazzled by the testing; instead, they should be focused on consistent follow through.

Mentors must be reminded that they are making a commitment that is not restricted by or predicated on the mentees' actions or responses. The mentor agreement does not read "I will commit to mentoring a child for a minimum of one year at a rate of two hours per week — as long as the mentee acts right." Those mentors who contribute the most to the positive development of youth are those who, in spite of their mentee's behavior, do what they said they would do and act in

ways they say they would act. Ultimately, mentors must understand that it is their responsibility to continue trying to meet with their mentee.

Mentors who walk away prematurely and lose sight of their commitment forget what mentoring is all about. It's about the kids. It is about helping youth through the very issues that challenge mentors the most about their mentees. If they did not have these challenging issues, mentors would not be required. More often than not, that which has caused mentors to walk away prematurely, represents the very essence of why the youth needed a mentor in the first place.

Cancellations or missed appointment can provide the mentor with the opportunity to show youth how conflict is handled in a healthy relationship. It can serve to demonstrate that there are adults out there who do follow through on what they promise. It can also demonstrate that they will not be abandoned when they make mistakes. Remind volunteers that they may be the very first adult who provides unconditional support and guidance to their mentee. Having access to this type of support system can change a jaded perspective into a hopeful one.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOUTH BEFORE OFFERING SOLUTIONS

*Mary is a student who has been assessed by the school she attends to be a "slow learner." Her D average grades communicate this apparent truth. Mary's academic potential has been assessed by her teachers and counselors and all agree that she should be held back for a year. Her mother doesn't feel that these assessments provide a correct measurement of her daughter's current condition or potential. Before finalizing the decision to keep her daughter from moving to the next grade level, her mother asks the school to consider her daughter for the school's mentoring program by providing her a mentor for a semester. The school agrees to do so and a mentor (Sharon) is identified. Everyone at the school has informed Sharon that Mary is a slow learner and that she should focus on helping Mary improve her grades in school. Sharon, not knowing much about Mary, focuses her mentoring on tutoring Mary during and after school. After a few weeks of mentoring/tutoring, Sharon finds that Mary is a bright student. What she has been told by the school and what she is finding out about Mary and her intelligence level is inconsistent. However, during these few weeks Mary's grades and classroom performance have not improved. After a couple of*

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*months more, Sharon is convinced that Mary is not a slow learner, however she finds herself puzzled by the fact that Mary continues to underperform in the classroom.*

*Sharon decides that what she has been doing (tutoring) hasn't translated into Mary doing better in school. Believing that Mary has great academic potential, Sharon decides to "go back to the drawing board" to determine a new or different strategy and approach to mentoring Mary. During this process, Sharon determines that she needs to know more about Mary. After a visit to Mary's home for the first time, Sharon finds out that Mary lives in a two-bedroom 800 square foot apartment with her mother and nine other family members. Upon this revelation, Sharon decides that Mary's academic challenge may be a result of a socially challenging circumstance and not an academic one. Sharon then decides to identify community resources to support Mary's academic growth based on Mary's social reality. Sharon identifies a library within Mary's community that has a study hall program for the area's youth. After making Mary and her mother aware of this resource, Sharon facilitates Mary's use of the study hall. A couple of month's later Mary's grades begin to improve dramatically.*

It can be very disconcerting for volunteers to see their mentees going through difficulties. It is easy for them to become overwhelmed by the youth's hardships and many, in fact, will think they can fix it all. However, if mentors do not stop to really understand the youth and the realities they face first, they will probably provide inadequate answers.

Our ideas are the substance of our behavior. Mentors must remember that they are first required to believe in their mentee's potential in spite of the different reports they may receive by other authorities in the youth's life. The mentor's beliefs will create what the mentor sees and hence how the mentor behaves.

Mentors must be willing to go back to the drawing board rather than find fault with the mentee when what the mentor is doing isn't providing the sought after results. It is important for mentors to understand that what may have worked for them as they were growing up may not work for their mentee. When a mentor's approach doesn't bear fruit, it may not mean that something is wrong with the mentee, it may mean that another strategy may be required.

Mentors must also remember that the challenges that the youth they mentor face don't come in nice neat boxes. That is to say that a

mentee who faces academic challenges may be very smart, therefore tutoring (an academic focused approach) may not help the academic challenge. The mentor may be required to help address a social, physical, or emotional void to get at the academic issues.

When Sharon realized and acted on a new paradigm, she was able to find a new answer to the old question of Mary's bad grades. Mary's academic challenge was a result not of her academic capacity, but her social limitations. With this knowledge and with help in this area, Mary's academic life was changed significantly in a relatively short period of time.

## RELYING ON A SUPPORT NETWORK

*A mentor is having some serious difficulties with his mentee. He decides that because he is a parent and professional, he can or should be able to figure out this apparent challenge on his own. He attends the ongoing mentoring support sessions and never speaks up or seeks guidance for what he is going through with his mentee. When surveyed by the program manager about the state of affairs of his relationship, his response is often one that conceals the fact that he is in desperate need of guidance or help. He has taken this approach often because of his expectations about his own capabilities. To ask for help would provoke a public indictment on his ability or what he perceives to be his inability to successfully help the mentee negotiate or work through his challenges. As he continues to attend the ongoing support sessions and continues to be silent about his apparent challenges, his confidence grows even more faint by the good reports shared by his fellow mentors about the positive progress of their relationships with their mentees. He begins to compare himself to the other mentors and his mentee to the other mentees. As the relationship spirals out of control and disconnection between the two grows stronger, he surrenders to the idea that he just doesn't have what it takes to be a mentor compared to his peers in the program, or that his mentee is just more difficult than the others.*

Mentors should understand the importance of taking advantage of program staff, group activities, and ongoing training opportunities. In the context of helping youth, this can be critical - particularly if the mentor is challenged and/or perplexed by the mentees behavior and challenges. It is important that mentors be prepared and reminded that each mentoring relationship is different, because each youth and

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each mentor are different. It is important that they not compare themselves or their relationships with those of their peers.

Mentors will need to rely on a larger network of support to get the reinforcement and support they need. It is very unlikely that a youth will directly thank the volunteer for his or her time. In fact, both the mentor and the youth may be unaware of the growth that is taking place. This is where a program's role becomes critical in giving the volunteer the proper context and the right lens through which to look at a mentoring relationship.

It is also important that mentors be reminded that mentoring is about helping the youth. When mentors don't allow themselves to get help when they need it, they cheat themselves and the youth from experiencing the very essence of what mentoring is designed to accomplish. They also potentially stifle the chances that they will reap the personal rewards from mentoring that had prompted their involvement.

## **TAKING OWNERSHIP OF EXPECTATIONS**

It is very likely that mentors will be stretched and pushed out of their comfort zone. Self-reflection can serve as a powerful tool in guiding volunteers to take ownership of their own conscious and unconscious expectations. Important questions to help volunteers reflect on include:

- What outcomes do you think will come about as a result of your mentoring relationship?
- What activities do you envision yourself doing with your mentee?
- What do you think being a mentor will be like?
- How do you think you and your mentee will interact together?
- What do you think your mentee will look like, act like, and be like?
- What challenges do you think will come up in your mentoring relationship and how do you think you will handle them?
- What do you think would challenge your ability to continue serving as a mentor?
- What strengths and needs do you bring to other relationships?

It is not uncommon to hear volunteers say that they can be matched with anyone when asked about their preferences. The truth of the

matter is that whether they realize it or not, they DO have expectations. It is those very expectations that drew them into your program. A thought provoking training that helps volunteers reflect upon their own expectations, clarifies misguided expectations, and demystifies mentoring can help volunteers be better prepared to build a long-term, positive mentoring relationship.

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## Talking About Difficult Issues

Difficult issues do and will come up in any mentoring relationship. Mentor training provides an excellent opportunity to help volunteers be aware of the types of issues that youth are dealing with and that may be brought to their attention. It can also give them the tools necessary to effectively support their mentees.

Difficult issues can be presented to the volunteer in the form of scenarios. This can give them an opportunity to role-play how they would react to different situations as well as get ideas from the group and the leader of appropriate ways to react to situations.

The issues that mentees face range from academic difficulties to pregnancy or drug use. Of course the types of issues your mentors will have to know how to deal with will be highly dependent upon the population you serve. In order to get started, it is important for you to think about the population you serve and the issues you can see coming up in their mentoring relationships.

Consider:

- What brings the youth you serve to your program?
- What challenges do the youth you serve face:
  - ◆ Academically
  - ◆ Emotionally
  - ◆ Behaviorally
  - ◆ Socially
  - ◆ Physically
- Based on your analysis, what do you think would be critical issues mentors must be prepared to handle?

In this section you will learn to:

- Identify the types of difficult issues that may come up in a mentoring relationship
- Review general guidelines for dealing with some of the issues that of most concern for mentoring programs
- Finally, review three steps that mentors can follow when dealing with difficult situations

## WHAT ARE SOME DIFFICULT ISSUES?

*(Source: This section was adapted from RESPONSIBLE MENTORING: Talking About Drugs, Sex and Other Difficult Issues and FOSTER YOUTH MENTORSHIP TRAINING FOR PROGRAM MANAGERS by EMT Group)*

Difficult issues can be thought of as belonging to three broad categories:

1. Delicate topics
2. Crisis requiring intervention
3. Issues of concern

### Delicate Topics

- Sex
- Peer pressure
- Hygiene
- Behavior
- School performance
- Self-image/personal insecurities
- Class/cultural/sexual identity

The topics listed here are likely to emerge during discussions between mentors and mentees. Mentors should be trained to handle these topics directly with youth; however, caution needs to be taken since these topics can be touchy and strongly affect the relationship. Generally speaking, delicate topics should be discussed when initiated by the mentee, and confidentiality takes on greater importance. While mentors should be adequately trained to deal with these topics on their own, they should be encouraged to seek support and feedback from supervisor and other mentors when these issues come up.

### Crises Requiring Intervention

- Child abuse and neglect
- Abusive relationships
- Chemical dependency
- Severe violence
- Arrest/extensive delinquency

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- Depression/suicidality
- Mental illness
- Other trauma

The crises listed here are of grave concern and may require direct and immediate intervention. Some, like child abuse and neglect, are mandated by law to be reported to the county. Others may require a referral or a direct intervention by the mentor program. Mentors should never be expected to handle crises alone. Many of these situations will require collaboration with families of mentees. This should be handled by the mentor program manager.

## Issues of Concern

- Unsafe sex
- Fist fighting
- Delinquent behavior
- Gang affiliation
- Drug and alcohol use

The issues listed here may have significant implications for the life of the mentee, and therefore mentors need to report these concerns to the agency. However, these issues do not necessarily require direct intervention. Many of these issues are ongoing conditions that mentees face, and mentors may need to be trained and supported to accept these aspects of the mentees' lives without judgment. It is important that mentors and programs do not focus too heavily on changing

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## Are You Prepared?

### A CHECKLIST FOR MENTORING PROGRAMS

To be prepared for delicate issues and crisis situations, agencies should:

- Have adequate resources and personnel, including access to a human relations expert.
- Provide adequate training for mentors about youth issues, communication skills, and the boundaries of confidentiality.
- Provide clearly stated agency values and positions on issues.
- Provide action plans and policies for every type of crisis.
  - What can be handled by mentor alone?
  - What requires supervisor support?
  - What requires family involvement?
  - What requires agency intervention?
  - What requires referral?
  - What requires reporting?
- Provide adequate monitoring and supervision of mentors that includes careful delineation of what issues mentors can handle alone versus those that require agency support and/or intervention.
- Develop strong relationships between agency staff and mentees (and families when possible).
- Develop relationships with referral agencies.
  - Know what services they provide
  - Check their references and visit their facilities
  - Maintain regular contact
  - Follow up on any referrals
  - Continue to network and expand base of available agencies
  - Participate in mentor program networks and coalitions

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behavior when these issues arise; however, they should be aware of the challenges their mentees face, and over time they may be able help mentees to ameliorate them.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES**

Here are some general guidelines for dealing with issues which are of greatest concern for most mentoring programs. These difficult situations should be handled with the utmost concern and always with the support of program staff.

*Past Traumas*

Needless to say, these can be some of the most difficult things for mentees to talk about, or even think about. Mentors need to be aware that treading carelessly into trauma issues has the potential to trigger very extreme reactions. A mentor in conversation should not bring up these issues—mentees should be allowed the privacy and space to broach these subjects only if and when they are so inclined.

Traumatic topics may include:

- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Abandonment
- Sexual Abuse/Incest
- Rape
- Emotional Abuse
- Loss/Bereavement
- Extreme Injuries or Illness
- Family Disruption
- Community Violence
- Poverty
- Natural Disasters
- Violent Death/Terminal Illness/Major Illnesses/Surgeries of Parents

*Substance Abuse*

All youth can be considered at risk of using and/or abusing substances. It is very important that mentors remain as non-judgmental as possible

in discussing substance abuse with youth—the quickest way to get a young person to stop talking openly is to tell them that it is wrong. The quickest way to get them to rebel is to tell them not to do it. They need to be listened to, and they need support in coming to their own conclusions. One reason for this is that in many cases, youth use illegal substances as a way of self-medicating wounds and issues that are plaguing them.

### *Sexual Activity*

Youth engage in sexual activity for a number of reasons. This is another topic that is very difficult for youth to discuss with adults, and therefore should be handled with tremendous respect, care, and confidentiality. Mentors can show their appreciation of mentees' openness on the subject by avoiding judgment and respecting that a youth's sexual experience is a very personal matter. Mentors may provide the safest help for mentees with their sexual issues by:

- Staying open and listening to what mentees have to say about their sexual experiences
- Encouraging safety and caution
- Seeking the help of program staff when necessary

### *Mental/Emotional Problems*

A mentor is not the therapist for the mentee. This does not mean that a mentor cannot talk about mental or emotional issues that a mentee brings up. However, mentors need to be aware when they are beginning to cross the boundary and entering into the domain of a therapist. This is not always easy to do. If a mentor notices that conversations are becoming more and more focused on mental and emotional issues, then it is likely that they are crossing the line. Mentors should be encouraged to call program staff so that the agency can provide the appropriate counseling referral resources for the youth. It is always okay for mentors to listen to anything mentees want to talk about; however, they need to avoid giving advice or trying to manage their mentee's life. Gentle re-direction on the topic and help with a good referral will maintain the appropriate role of the mentor.

### *Risky Behaviors*

When a mentor is exposed to the risky behaviors of a youth, it can feel overwhelming for the mentor. It is important for the mentor to know whom to contact for advice and support. If the mentor and mentee are on an outing/activity and the mentor feels that the behaviors are

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placing either the mentee or the mentor at risk for injury, either physically or emotionally, the mentor can terminate the outing or activity. The mentor needs to contact the program staff for support and inform either or both about the need to end the activity and why.

## STEPS TO HANDLING DIFFICULT ISSUES

### *Putting the Mentee at Ease*

Telling an adult about a difficult issue can feel like a very risky thing for a child or youth. The mentor's ability to help the mentee feel safe in sharing personal information is key to both the development of trust in the relationship and to offering the best possible support for the mentee in his/her situation. These concerns should take precedence over attempts to change the mentee's behavior or to influence their decisions.

Below are some tips that can assist mentors in putting the mentee at ease. Without these, the mentee may be likely to shut down or stop wanting help from their mentor. If, on the other hand, the mentor is able to communicate acceptance and use a calm approach, the mentee is likely to continue to accept the mentor's assistance.

- Stay calm
- Use body language to communicate attentiveness — maintain eye contact, sit at same level, etc.
- Avoid judgmental statements like "Why would you do something like that?" or "I think you know better..."
- Be honest if you are getting emotional or upset, but never accuse or berate!
- Let the mentee know that you are glad (s)he came to you.
- Reassure the mentee that his/her confidentiality will be honored.
- Use tact but be honest.
- Allow the mentee to talk at his/her own pace — don't force an issue.
- Don't pry — allow the mentee to bring up topics s/he is comfortable with.
- Don't collaborate with mentee's family to provide discipline — to do so compromises your role as a neutral and supportive party.

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*Honoring the Mentee's Right to Self-Determination*

Self-determination is the right that every human should have to make decisions for his or herself. Of course this concept becomes tricky and confusing when youth are involved since many decisions are made for minors with or without their consent. This is because they are not seen as old enough to be trusted with such decisions. So youth live in a world where it is often difficult for them to feel they have a right to make decisions. Further, their decision-making skills may be limited because of the fact that they are offered little opportunity to exercise them. So while teachers, parents, probation officers, and other adults in their lives must focus on managing behavior and determining what is best for a child's welfare, a mentor's job is to help his or her mentee develop these skills and learn to make their own choices.

Below are some tips for promoting and respecting a mentee's right to self-determination. The idea is to process with the youth so that they understand what the implications might be of any particular course of action, and to help them discover what is truly important to them. This process is important to the mentoring relationship as it communicates respect and trust; it is also important to the mentee's development in that it builds healthy decision-making skills. These concerns should take precedence over a focus on changing behavior or influencing the youth's course of action.

- Focus on his/her feelings and needs rather than jumping to problem-solving.
- When issue has been talked about, ask, "What do you think you would like to do about this situation," and "How would you like for me to help?"
- If you are not comfortable with what (s)he wants to do, ask yourself why before you decide whether to say so.
- If what (s)he wants to do is not possible, explain so gently and apologize.
- Ask what alternative solutions would make him/her comfortable.
- Encourage critical thinking through questions and reflections.
- Use the words, "I don't know — what do you think?"

*Referrals and Resources*

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Once the mentor has successfully addressed the mentee's feelings and has processed with the mentee in a way that honors their need for self-determination, the mentor can further assist the mentee in locating resources and options. It is important at this stage not only that the mentor be prepared to assist, but that the agency be prepared for any interventions that are needed. Ideally, this should be a team effort, a team of which the mentee his or herself is the key player. The mentor, the program staff, the mentee's family, and any other adults who are relevant to the mentee's life or situation should ideally work together so that the mentee has the best support available. However, it is equally important that the mentee participate in the development of this team and that his or her needs and feelings be addressed at every turn.

- Know your appropriate role as a mentor.
- Be honest with the mentee if confidentiality does not hold.
- Suggest that your supervisor may have some thoughts if you don't know what to do.
- Ask the mentee if s/he would like to talk to the agency with you if necessary.
- Provide information if the mentee is unaware of resources or options.
- Brainstorm with the mentee and be creative in finding a solution — there is usually more than one way to handle a situation, and this process is educational for the mentee.
- Offer to accompany the mentee if s/he is uncomfortable with something s/he has decided to do.
- BE COLLABORATIVE — you are a team.
- FOLLOW THROUGH WITH ANY AND ALL COMMITMENTS.

# Exploring Diversity: Creating Understanding Through Effective Communication

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In the state of California, diversity is a topic which almost needs no introduction. Each of us works and lives in one of the most diverse cultures ever known. One in three immigrant children in the United States lives in California. One in three children in the state speaks a language other than English at home. Since 1990, the number of children and adolescents in immigrant families has risen seven times faster than the number of those born in U.S. born families (From "Children in Immigrant Families: Issues for California's Future." CPRC Report). Moreover, the issue of diversity does not simply deal with cultural differences or different languages. It also deals with the related but distinct issues of socio-economic status, age, educational differences, etc. There is perhaps no greater issue of diversity than that which is intrinsic in every mentoring relationship - that of age and experience. Forming relationships with youth on an intimate, daily level involves a constant interaction of worlds which can collide, overlap, intersect, or intertwine. In mentoring, we are often called on to deal with all of these issues within an individual friendship. Our mentors will likely be challenged with issues of diversity which they probably did not imagine when they first signed up. It is our duty to prepare them as best as possible for the culture shock which they WILL encounter as well as to serve as constant sources of guidance and support throughout the process.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES DIVERSITY?

Diversity within mentoring can be defined as any significant, personal or cultural difference which has the potential of affecting the development of the mentoring relationship. It is important to realize that diversity is broader than simply an ethnic distinction. Instead, there are many elements and components of diversity. These include:

- Country of origin
- Socio-economic background
- Level of education
- Level of acculturation in the US
- Religion
- Generation
- Age
- Color of skin
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Marital status
- Sexual orientation

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**WHY IS DIVERSITY TRAINING RELEVANT?**

*A 14-year-old mentee is two hours late to her meeting with her mentor. The mentor asks why the mentee is late and the mentee says her mother's car broke down. The mentor, thinking of the mentee's future, tells her that she should have called. To keep a job, to succeed in college, and out of just plain politeness, calling is the right thing to do—that her success in life depends on her ability to handle these situations appropriately when they occur. The mentee, feeling like she has failed again, apologizes and says nothing more. Had the mentor explored the situation further, she would have discovered that the mentee had been looking forward to their meeting together and had actually left home quite early. After the car broke down, the mentee walked two miles to a gas station to make a call while her mom waited in the car. When she got to the phone, she used her only change to make a phone call. She called her brother, who is good with cars, because the family has no roadside assistance insurance and can't afford a tow. She then walked the two miles back to the car to wait there with her mother for her brother. It was a long wait because he doesn't have the kind of job where you can leave early. Not wanting to miss the meeting altogether, she asked her brother to drive her over and drop her off. (Source: Barbara Webster, *Blisters and Bright Stars*, EMT Group)*

Diversity training is not only relevant because we live in such a diverse community; it is relevant because it can affect every aspect of a mentoring relationship - from before it begins to how it progresses and develops. Issues of diversity deal with fundamental issues of human understanding and interaction. When people meet someone new, it is a natural part of our process of learning and understanding to immediately inquire: Who are you? Where are you from? How old are you? Where do you live? These questions occur naturally and immediately, whether or not we acknowledge them. There is a natural need to understand the world and each other by organizing information into categories that make sense. The danger is that we categorize based on our limited experiences and understanding of the world. This can obviously lead to erroneous conclusions which can hurt the mentoring relationship.

The goal of including diversity in a mentor training should be to prevent diversity from becoming an obstacle to relationship development. It should alert mentors to their own values and biases. Introduce them to areas of possible conflict and give them tools to address the issue. Moreover, it should introduce them to communication skills which can help develop their relationship in spite of and perhaps because of differences.

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“THE SINGLE MOST important aspect of promoting understanding across differences is understanding oneself —one’s own values, beliefs, perspectives, choices and early messages about people who are different. Often we unconsciously judge others according to our internal assessments of what we did or would do in similar circumstances. We extrapolate how we would feel and what our priorities and values would be. When we become conscious of how our own experiences inform our judgments, we can critically test our assumptions about others.”

By Barbara Webster

The goals of a training on diversity should be to:

- 1.) Help mentors to become aware of the importance of diversity as an issue in mentoring
- 2.) Help mentors assess and become aware of their own culture - who they are, what they bring to the relationship, what expectations they have about their mentee, etc.
- 3.) Helping mentors debunk any erroneous assumptions about those they will be serving by giving them a thorough understanding of the specific youth population with which they will be working - this may include at risk youth, youth of specific ethnic background, or youth of a particular age, sexuality, etc.
- 4.) Helping mentors develop a strategy of communication which will allow them to bridge diversity gaps and turn diversity issues into opportunities for growth instead of barriers to relationship.

In the module titled “Mentor Training Tools,” we have included sample exercises and handouts you can utilize to both highlight the importance of diversity as well as to help them become aware of who they are and what are their values. In the module entitled “Tailoring Your Training” we have included resources to help you give volunteers appropriate information when working with special populations (i.e. adolescent development, working with the poor, etc.). In this section, we will discuss communication tactics that can help your volunteers successfully bridge the diversity gap.

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## Communication

Training in communication skills is always difficult; the reality is that each person has their own communication style. Moreover, a style of communication that works for one mentor might miserably fail another. Imagine an older white mentor trying to communicate with his young, black mentee by speaking to him like one of his friends does - trying to adopt local slang, turns of phrase, or even cadence. It just wouldn't work. Similarly, one mentor might be able to tease, cajole or "mess" with a mentee while still getting across a sense of caring and respect. Another mentor might be able to speak softly and caringly to a mentee while that same mentee might take that tone of voice askance from a different person. The point is, in communication there is no one right way; instead, there are a variety of styles which may be effective.

As difficult as it is to train styles of communication, several principles of effective communication can be enumerated.

- 1) Self-awareness and self acceptance greatly facilitate communication. This issue is especially important when trying to bridge gaps in culture or diversity. As already elaborated, it is essential to understand our own beliefs before trying to reconcile them with those of others.
- 2) Having a developmental approach to mentoring. As mentioned throughout this manual, in mentoring it is the development of a stable and supportive relationship which is the most important goal - teaching, motivating, or inspiring are all secondary to positive reinforcement and caring attention. Moreover, negative communication styles will likely only damage the relationship.
- 3) Developing communication skills. Some helpful tips to pass on to mentors on communicating with mentees include such skills as active listening, paraphrasing, using open ended questions, and using "I messages".

## DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Mentors can and should encourage their mentees to talk about their fears, dreams and concerns. A mentor may, in fact, be the only adult in the mentee's life that truly listens. That's another reason it is so important for them to be able to communicate effectively. By listening, mentors can help their mentee to build self-confidence, self-esteem and cultural pride by focusing on their talents, assets and strengths.

Most people agree that talking and communicating are not the same. Oftentimes we can hear, but don't really comprehend or "get" what the other person is actually trying to tell us. Three basic communication skills can help.

- Listening
- Looking
- Leveling

Three more specific communication techniques can also help (*Source: Critical Mentoring Skills, EMT*):

- Use "I messages"
- Paraphrasing
- Open-ended questions

### ***Listening:***

Listening does not have to be passive. Done correctly, it can be as active as talking. To listen effectively:

Pay Attention...

- Try not to think ahead of what you or the other person will say next
- Don't interrupt
- Listen for the feeling underneath the words
- Keep a clear and open mind, avoid or postpone making judgments
- Encourage the speaker to continue or clarify what has been said utilizing reflective listening – this is often referred to as "mirroring" or "paraphrasing"

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**Good Habits**

Opening your mind to new perspectives...

Listening to the whole message

Listening with understanding

Asking for clarification

Getting the message without judgment

Not interrupting

Listening for facts and feelings

Listening rather than pretending to listen

Creating a positive, comfortable environment

Reflective listening

Identifying and replacing negative words

**Bad Habits**

Closing your mind before hearing all the facts

Hearing only part of what is being said

Making instant assumptions

Thinking you know what is being said

Putting the speaker down

Interrupting before the speaker is finished

Listening for facts only

Faking attention

Creating or allowing distractions

Ignoring feeling words

Reacting to trigger words without thinking how they are meant by the speaker  
reaction ahead of time

***Looking***

People communicate with verbal and non-verbal language. Pay attention to the whole person by doing the following:

- Watch the speaker's expressions (smiles, frowns, wrinkled forehead)
- Watch the speaker's body language (crossed arms, tapping fingers, eyes, looking at a watch)

- Make eye contact
- Show you are interested by YOUR body language

(keep in mind that in some cultures, eye contact and moving closer are not always acceptable or comfortable. Some cultures and individuals have different comfort levels about personal space)

### **Leveling**

Leveling means being honest about what you are feeling and thinking.

- Be honest in your response or disclosure (however, keep in mind the age of your mentee)
- Speak for yourself using “I” statements
- Accept and/or ask for clarification on the speaker’s feelings. DO NOT ASSUME you are sure of what they are trying to say.
- Don’t try to change the feeling or give advice without being asked and/or before you hear and evaluate all that is being said both verbally and non-verbally

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#### Be a Good Listener by Reflecting and Clarifying Thoughts

Reflecting means sending back a person’s message to help an individual clarify if the content of the message is accurate. You can ask a person, “I heard you say... is that what you said?” or “It sounds like ... is really making you feel angry”. Reflecting and clarifying will only be helpful if done in a sincere manner by someone who really cares. (See attachment for a list of reflective words.)

### **Use “I” Messages**

Most of the messages we send about behavior are “you” messages... messages that are directed at other people and have a high probability of putting them down, making them feel guilty, making them feel their needs are not important, and generally making them resist change. Examples of “you”: messages are usually orders or commands (i.e., STOP doing that!, Put that down NOW) Other messages are in the form of shaming or blaming (i.e., YOU are making a mess, Your chewing gum like that drives me nuts, You are such a slob, I am ashamed to be with you). Other statements give solutions (i.e., You should forget

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that idea. You'd be better off doing this). In doing this, the responsibility for behavior change is taken away from the other person. And, the worst of all, a "you" messages is the threat, "if you do this, - then...)

An "I message" allows a person who is affected by the behavior of another person to express the impact it has on him or her and, at the same time, leave the responsibility for modifying the behavior with the person who demonstrated that particular behavior.

In the case of a mentoring relationship, the open "I" message is one that allows the mentee to see how their actions affect others, how they themselves can be empowered to make their own decisions so that they can grow with the experience.

***Paraphrasing***

Paraphrasing is an active listening skill which bears elaboration. It focuses on listening to the mentee first, then reflecting back both the content and feeling of what they've said. Identifying the speaker's feelings are often a challenge to active listening; however, identifying them correctly can greatly facilitate a continuing conversation. It can make the speaker feel respected and listened too. Even when a feeling might be misidentified, the simple act of trying to understand the speaker can encourage them to clarify their feelings.

Paraphrasing often begins with a phrase that turns attention back onto the speaker and the content or underlying message of what they are saying :

- So you're saying that...
- You think that...
- So the problem is...
- You're feeling that...
- And that made you feel...

Paraphrasing is a helpful device in understanding mentees as well as developing a relationship.

***Open-Ended Questions***

Open-ended questions are those to which a young person cannot default to "yup" or "nope". (And they'll want to.) They are questions

which require a greater length of response and a greater investment of energy from the mentee.

Examples:

- How do you feel about that situation?
- What are your reasons for...?
- Can you give me an example?
- How does that affect you?
- What do you want to do about it?

Advising the use of open-ended questions does not mean that close-ended ones should be avoided. There are many times when a simple yes or no session - a common theme when dealing with adolescents - can be an easy and relaxed way of breaking the ice with youth. Mentors need to remember that youth have a tendency to want to be as brief and non-invested as possible. That does not mean the youth is not paying attention or does not want to be in the conversation.

Advise mentors to try interspersing open-ended questions with close-ended ones - it will draw out info and allow the mentee to throw in a few comfortable "yups."

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## TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

### *Put Yourself in Another Person's Place*

Try to actually step into the other person's shoes for a moment to feel and see the situation from his or her point of view. Remember that cultural diversity, life situations and experiences all combine to acculturate your mentee's point of view.

### *Suspend Judgment:*

Try to be as objective as possible as you really listen to what your mentee has to say. Be sure to include body language and other non-verbal information the person is sending to you. Ask questions to clarify whatever you do not understand, rather than making assumptions.

### *Non-Verbal Communication:*

At times this method of communication can tell you as much or more than anything being said. Look for clues in your mentee's body to see what he or she is really saying.

### *"Own" Your Problem:*

By owning your own problems, you encourage the mentee to do the same. For example, if your mentee missed an appointment with you, it would be important to tell him/her how this made you feel without using "blame or shame" communication styles. Utilizing "I" messages, you can own your own feelings. An example: "I was disappointed last week when you did not show up to meet me".

### *Address the Situation:*

Don't feel afraid to say what is really on your mind. Side stepping the issue will only postpone it until later. Encourage your mentee to talk to you about how they see a situation without screening their feelings to make it "palatable" for you. Don't interrupt them or put words in their mouths or interpret the situation for them.

### Roadblocks to Effective Communication

1. Ordering, directing, commanding
2. Moralizing, preaching, should's or ought's
3. Teaching, lecturing, giving logical arguments
4. Judging, criticizing, blaming
5. Withdrawing, distracting, sarcasm, humoring, diverting

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## Setting Boundaries

Some mentors may find the idea of setting boundaries to be harsh, mean, or controlling. In reality, boundaries are important in helping youth feel safe and protected. Boundary setting is important so that each person in a mentoring relationship is clear about his or her role. They help to establish and nurture trust in a relationship. Most significantly, they help to protect not only the youth, but also the volunteers and the program.

It is important to review and discuss boundary setting in the pre-match mentor training in order to avoid confusion, miscommunication, and possibly premature closure of a mentoring relationship. A discussion on appropriate boundary setting will help volunteers start on the right foot and avoid having to change things later once a strong pattern of behavior has been established.

Common areas where boundaries are needed include:

- Time
- Money
- Working with parents
- Self-disclosure

### *Time*

*After meeting for six months, Julia finds out that her mentee is failing all but one class. It is the beginning of the second semester at school and Julia wants to do everything she can to help. She begins to meet with her mentee three to four times a week for long periods of time. Her mentee, in turn, cannot get enough of her. She calls her at work, home, and on her cell phone. Julia is glad her mentee is relying on her so much, but she is beginning to feel tired and overwhelmed.*

Boundary setting and unrealistic expectations seem to go hand in hand. A mentor's role is not to solve all of the mentee's problems single handedly. Appropriate boundaries in regards to the frequency of meetings and phone calls will help to protect the volunteer's ability to be there for his mentee long term. General guidelines to review during a mentor training in regards to time spent together include:

- Consistency and frequency of meetings are important elements of a successful mentoring relationship. However, spending too much time together can create dependency and it will lead to the development of unrealistic expectations on behalf the youth and the family about what a mentoring relationship can and cannot do.
- Do not feel like you have to solve all of your mentee's problems. Seek help from staff and community resources often.
- A child that calls too often or tries to cling to the relationship too hard may be worried about being abandoned. Several meetings are not going to satisfy their needs or quench their fears. However, setting regular and consistent meetings will help assure them that over time, the mentor will be there. Mentors and mentees can create a calendar of activities together by scheduling their meetings and the days they will talk on the phone. If a mentor does not set boundaries in regards to their personal time, they can unknowingly create the very conditions that will lead them to burn out and a pre-mature ending.

### **Money**

*Connie and Josie have been matched for almost six months. During one of their weekly outings Connie notices that her mentee Josie looks worried and uncomfortable. When Connie asks her if she is okay,, Josie begins to tell her about her family's financial difficulties. She explains that they will probably be evicted from their apartment and she is worried they won't have a place to go. She mentions she needs a couple hundred dollars to help pay rent and goes on to ask her mentor for financial help.*

Boundary setting, in the abstract, seems simple and easy to do. When mentors are told that they are not to act as their mentee's ATM machine they chuckle and say "of course." However, in the complexity of day-to-day interactions, setting boundaries around money issues is not so easy. Should a mentor help in a financial crisis? Should a mentor provide for his mentee's basic needs? When should a mentor give gifts and how much is a reasonable price to spend on a gift? Who should pay for outings?

These are all questions that will likely come up in mentoring relationships around issues of money. It is important that you spend time prior to the mentor training thinking about these issues and agree as a staff on a course of action. Of course, many of the situations that come up in mentoring relationships are not black and white. However, it will help your volunteers review different scenarios and get feedback from staff on general guidelines when dealing with money.

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Here are some general suggestions:

- **A mentor's role is not that of provider.** If a young person is going through financial difficulties, it is important for mentors to remember that they can help by connecting their mentee to the appropriate resources and by being supportive of their emotional needs through their friendship. Creating financial dependency will only end up causing a rift in the relationship. Mentors who take on financial responsibility for their mentees tend to feel used, overburdened, and end up resenting the relationship. Trying to solve all of the mentee's problems can create in the youth a sense of guilt and dependency. It also sends the wrong message to the youth that they are in fact helpless, weak, and unable to solve their own problems.
- **Gift giving should be reserved to special occasions (i.e. birthdays, holidays, graduations, etc.).** Gifts should also be kept to a reasonable amount. Excessive gift giving takes attention away from the relationship. For many youth who come from chaotic environments, buying things is sometimes used as a way to compensate for the lack of relationship. Volunteers need to send out the strong message that the time spent together is the gift. The gift of their time and friendship is more valuable than any material thing they can give their mentee. RED FLAG: It should also be noted that excessive gift giving from a mentor can signal inappropriate, even predatory behavior.
- **Mentors should keep their activities simple and reasonable.** Though many youth love grand activities like going to amusement parks, many say that the most significant time spent with their mentor involved simple, day-to-day activities. Going on expensive outings can detract from relationship building and it emphasizes an inappropriate role of a mentor as the entertainer. Mentors should be encouraged to set a budget for their activities. Since most mentors take on primary responsibility for paying for outings, it is important for them to pre-plan and to set a budget. This should ideally be done with the help of their mentee. Doing so can teach youth valuable lessons about money management, but most

importantly, it solicits their input for the types of activities they would like to do with their mentor.

### **Self-disclosure**

*Josh, a 45-year-old mentor, was matched three months ago with a 14 year old boy. Josh is currently divorcing his wife and is in the middle of court custody proceedings. Needless to say this is a stressful time for him. His mentee, Joel, is a bright and articulate boy whose parents are also divorcing. As soon as they met they got along splendidly. They had a lot in common and lot to talk about. Josh is the only person who seems to understand what Joel is going through. In turn, Joel has begun to express to program staff how much he admires Josh for his ability to handle all the things he is going through. Joel mentions he is glad he is able to be there for his mentor.*

Mentors need to be careful about the type of personal information they share with their mentee. When disclosing personal information, it is important for mentors to ask themselves: What purpose does it serve to share this information? Am I doing it because I need the support? Or do I think this information will serve a higher purpose? Will sharing information about myself cut off communication or lead to more open communication?

Here are some general guidelines to lead your mentors through when discussing the topic of self-disclosure:

- Mentors should be careful not to burden their mentee with their own life problems. Though mentors greatly grow and benefit from the mentoring relationship, this growth should not take place at the expense of a reversal of roles. A mentor's primary responsibility is to be supportive of the youth and listen to his/her concerns. The motives for sharing should always be youth centered not self-centered.
- Mentors should be careful not to disclose information that may be inappropriate. The specifics of volunteer's sex life or the intricacies of their marriage may be information that can be shared with other adult friends, but not with a child. Although mentors do offer friendship to their mentees, they are not just a friend.
- Mentors should be careful not to shut down communication by talking about personal experiences instead of listening first. If a mentee asks, did you have sex before you got married? An appropriate response would be to say, "Are you asking because you are wondering what age is appropriate to have sex?" This approach

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might get youth to think about their own life and concerns, rather than divert attention by talking about oneself. If a young person really wants to know about their mentor's personal past and experiences they will ask again.

- When self-disclosure is done in the appropriate context and to an appropriate extent, self-disclosure can be a powerful way to connect with youth and build trust. Appropriate sharing combined with genuine interaction can empower youth to open up and help them to reap the benefits of learning from the experiences of someone they respect.

***Working with Parents***

*A mentor phones the home of his new mentee to introduce himself and set up a time to meet. When he asks for the parent by name, the person answering the phone on the other end responds that the parent is not available, but requests to take a message for her. As the mentor begins to communicate who he is and why he is calling, the person on the other end abruptly interrupts and conveys that she is the parent. The mentor can tell that the mother is obviously hiding from something.*

Situations like this can appear very bizarre to a new mentor. It is important for mentors to remember that the realities of the families of those they will be mentoring may be very different from their own. Mentors must be very careful not to judge, be appalled by, or appear uncomfortable in these differences. These idiosyncrasies can provide insights into why a child coming from such a family may handle certain uncomfortable or challenging situations similarly (by hiding, running away, avoiding, etc.).

At the same time, it is also imperative that mentors set clear boundaries with families about their role and their responsibilities. The mentor's role is not to try to be a parent or to take over the parent role, but rather to provide an additional and very different source of support. If those boundaries are not clear, parents may begin to feel threatened and that in turn can jeopardize the relationship.

Here are some general guidelines to introduce to your mentors at the initial training:

- It is important that mentors remember that the relationship is between them and the mentee- not the parents or other siblings. Extending this relationship to other family members usually jeopardizes the friendship. Many times the very reason why a youth is in

a mentoring program is because they lack the one-to-one attention they need. Advise mentors not to get caught up in an unhealthy cycle by becoming involved in the family's problems. This will lead a mentor to feeling used and it will create unrealistic expectations on behalf of the part of the parent. Most importantly, it will take the focus away from the youth.

- Unless it is part of the program structure, siblings should not be part of mentoring meetings. Even if the mentee should ask the mentor if his sibling can come along, he could be doing it because he has been pressured by his parent or sibling, not because he really wants to be inclusive. Mentors need to be the one to say NO and to explain that it is not recommended by program rules to include another child on the outing. (It is important for programs to review the limits of their insurance and liability coverage with their mentors. This will help to protect volunteers in case something happens during one of the outings).
- It is not a mentor's responsibility to be the family's babysitter or to give the parent "a break." In general, activities should be planned outside the child's home and should not include other family members or friends, except for very exceptional occasions.
- Mentors should discourage confidence by the parent, whether about the child or other family problems. If the parent needs help, suggest she contact the office.
- It is important that the child always be present during any contact the mentor has with other family members. Mentors should not give reports on the child to the parent or listen to a parent's complaints about the child. This can cause mentees to feel "ganged-up" on. Advise mentors not to let a parent/guardian get them

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No matter what has gone on in a child's family, it is important to remember that all youth love their families as much as anyone else. The ongoing difficulties that unfold in a child's life are very sensitive subjects for most youth. Some of them may talk openly about their families; others may not be so forthright. Regardless, mentors (and program managers) need to be very careful never to criticize the mentee's family, or otherwise comment on any personal feelings they may develop about the family. Some mentors may find this difficult—as they connect with their mentee, they may develop feelings of protectiveness, anger, or fear about the family because they may be unable to provide a safe situation for the child. Instead, mentors should strive to support mentees as they sort out their own feelings about their family and life circumstance.

*(Source: Adapted from FOSTER YOUTH MENTORSHIP TRAINING FOR PROGRAM MANAGERS by Dustianne North, M.S.W. and Brenda Ingram, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.)*

## notes

## Going the Distance

*James has been a big advocate of mentoring for quite a while because of the impact that mentoring has had on his own life. James has been mentoring Kevin six months. For much of this time, Kevin has been very difficult to mentor. As a result, James' attitude about mentoring has taken a 180 degree turn. James' friends and family has noticed his dramatic change in posture and feeling. He has been becoming more and more gloomy. As a result, they are encouraging James "to get out of it" and to "ask for another mentee". He finds little encouragement from people in his life to "hang in there" or "to give it more time." James is considering the advice of those closest to him and will most likely end the match.*

Most youth involved in formal mentoring programs have very little access to healthy relationships with adults. This is what brings them to our programs. It is important that we take this into consideration as we facilitate mentoring relationships. The last thing we want to do is provide an environment that duplicates that which prompted the need for mentoring in the first place. This should be discussed and reflected on during the mentor training.

Those who decide to be mentors often have strong reasons for volunteering. Mentors should always be asked why they decided to mentor, and encouraged to ask themselves if their answer is strong enough to be their bridge over troubled waters. If the follow-up answer is no, they may want to reconsider. Although mentor support is very important, the most successful mentors are those who have an armor of resilience or self-sustaining energy built-in to their motivation for mentoring. A mentor's purpose for mentoring needs to be stronger than any of the challenges that may tempt them to accept defeat.

It is important for mentors to understand that you as staff will do your best to support them during difficult times. Moreover, they should expect that others may not always understand the context of mentoring and as a result, during difficult times, they may encourage match separation. Most people will not understand a mentor's covenant with the mentee, nor will they understand the importance of their resolve to be a stable and fixed part of the youth's life during difficult times in the relationship. Mentors who do not come to the relationship with their own sources of strength may "opt-out" of the relationship prematurely, often duplicating what the mentee has faced in the past with regard to relationships.

Mentors must bring a sustainable level of enthusiasm and resilience for helping youth through the issues they encounter and confront. It is important for mentors to understand that there is very little immediate gratification in mentoring. Unlike other volunteer opportunities, the impact mentors have in the lives of mentees will be difficult to discern. Mentoring requires a leap of faith and a deep sense of commitment. It also requires support from the mentoring agency.

#### Helping to Build Relationships that Last

1. Emphasize the difference between being relationship centered versus outcome centered. The latter can be very discouraging as progress and change is often difficult to perceive.
2. Help your mentors to rid themselves of unrealistic expectations. They are not required to be all knowing or saviors. Believing they can solve all of their mentee's problems will only lead to disappointment and burn out.
3. Encourage mentors to set clear boundaries.
4. Emphasize the importance of their time commitment and the potential harm that can be done by ending a relationship prematurely.
5. Encourage volunteers to invest in their own emotional well-being. Mentors must have access to a wealth of internal resources that they can draw from when difficulties arise.

notes





2004  
Regional Training

# CORE CONTENT: Review of Policies and Guidelines

*"Lots of people may have dropped out on me — my teachers, my family. Don't you do it. That doesn't mean that you can't ever leave. I understand that you have other commitments and other things to do. But at least be my friend. Sit down and explain to me why you can't be with me any more. Don't just desert me. If you're not willing to stick with me when I'm obnoxious, don't start in the first place."*

*Don Shaw, youth worker*

## **IN THIS SECTION**

- ▼ Managing risk
- ▼ Mentor responsibilities and code of conduct

notes

## CORE CONTENT: REVIEW OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

### Managing Risk through Mentor Training

Adapted from *Mentoring Essentials: Risk Management for Mentoring Programs*. (2002).  
Dustianne North, M.S.W. and Jerry Sherk, M.A., The EMT Group, Inc.

Developing and implementing a mentor training is critical in reducing and managing risk. Here are some practical things you can do to help your program manage risk:

#### *Develop A Mentor Training Manual with Comprehensive Subject Matter*

It's a hazardous practice to not have a central document that explains all aspects of the program — a "mentor manual" or "handbook." This document should become the central guide to your program. A mentor manual should include a full spectrum of relevant subjects. Mentors can follow the manual during the initial training and it can also be used as a reference during the mentoring cycle. Length of training for the initial or basic training for most programs is anywhere from three to twelve hours. Programs with high-risk populations obviously need more comprehensive trainings.

- Include a crisis plan in mentor training manual  
Lack of a crisis plan or map can elevate danger and liability. Those programs that don't address these issues and present them in written documents during trainings are putting themselves at high risk. The plan should address what to do and who to contact in case of any problem or emergency.
- Include confidentiality and child abuse reporting issues in mentor training manual  
Handling information about the private lives of mentees and their families is tricky business and rife with risk factors. Violating the

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confidentiality of the mentee means liability for the program and the mentor, as well as emotional or life damage for the mentee and/or their family. At the same time, knowing how to respond when there is an abuse allegation is equally important. Mentor programs are mandated to report child abuse; failure to do so properly can jeopardize the match, the child, the mentor, and the program. Staff should strive to learn more about this critical area whenever they can, as it is so important.

- Include “boundary issues” in manuals and trainings  
Solid education on boundary issues promotes safety. The personal safety of program participants, liability of the agency, and the mentee’s emotional development are all at stake in a mentoring situation, so it is important that proper boundaries be discussed and explored at length with program staff and mentors. Many boundary issues have to do with safety. Gifting is one example. If a mentor is allowed to give the mentee expensive gifts, it could potentially be a strategy for sexual advances. Even when mentors’ intentions are pure, improper boundaries in a match can lead to unhealthy dynamics between mentors and mentees. Touching is another example of a boundary issue, along with giving favors, maintaining personal space, etc.
- Child sexual abuse issues  
Even briefly addressing this issue in mentor training can potentially keep a child predator from striking, as they are alerted that you will be watching for them. Let mentors know that staff monitors the matches, frequently talks to mentees, and that any child sexual abuse will be punished to the full extent of the law.

### *Provide Ongoing Trainings As Needed*

Ongoing training helps to support mentors by solving problems and by creating a mentor network. Mentors often need support especially early on in the match. It’s a good practice to conduct ongoing trainings on a regular basis. This provides a wonderful avenue for advanced training on topics relevant to mentoring the population served by your program. Providing ongoing training reduces risk not only by increasing the skill level of mentors, but also by providing a forum that is likely to bring issues in matches to the surface before they become crises.

notes

*Mentors Sign A "Mentor Participation Agreement" and "Code of Conduct Agreement"*

Mentor participation agreements promote accountability. Within your manual, after you have explained the policies and procedures of your program, it's a good practice to include the "Mentor Participation Agreement" and a "Code of Conduct Agreement."

# Mentor Responsibilities and Code of Conduct

notes

A volunteer training is an excellent opportunity to emphasize and reinforce the guidelines and procedures that must be followed by volunteers. Two critical components to discuss at a mentor training include:

1. Mentor Participation Agreement – clarifies and details mentor responsibilities
2. Volunteer Code of Conduct – addresses appropriate and inappropriate behavior

## *Mentor Participation Agreement:*

Volunteers should review and sign the agreed upon volunteer responsibilities or tasks to be accomplished during the mentor training. A review of volunteer responsibilities helps to remind volunteers of the goals of the program and of the importance of their commitment. Critical areas to review include:

- Length and frequency of commitment to youth
  - How often are they required to meet with their mentee?  
How long should they spend together during each visit?  
How often should they contact the youth? How long should the match last?
- Importance of taking responsibility for the relationship, reliability, and completion of commitment
  - ♦ Remind volunteers to take the initiative of arranging contacts with their mentee. Most children will not take the initiative to call first. Taking responsibility for the relationship will provide youth with continual reassurance of a mentor's interest and commitment.
- Number of expected contacts with program staff
  - ♦ Mentors should be encouraged to rely on program staff for ongoing support. This is especially important as the relationship is on its beginning stages. Remind volunteers of your expertise and experience.

## notes

- Process to be followed when arranging meetings and communicating with parents or guardians
  - ◆ Parents or guardians should be informed ahead of time of all meeting arrangements. (An exception might be if the mentoring takes place at a school site at a pre-determined time). Mentors should also call the day before to remind youth and their families of each meeting. Mentors should avoid relying on youth alone to relay information for parents.
- Process to be followed when handling confidential information
  - ◆ Mentors should not share their mentee's confidential information with anyone. There are only a few exceptions to the confidentiality rule.
    - ★ If the youth is being abused, neglected or if their life is in danger in any way
    - ★ If the youth is going to hurt themselves or another person
    - ★ When talking to program staff to check in and keep track of mentoring relationship
- Policies in reporting abuse or neglect
  - ◆ By law, volunteers are not mandated to report child abuse or neglect. However, in the state of California any paid staff working with youth is considered a mandated reporter. Mentoring programs should ask volunteers to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to their assigned program coordinator. Staff should in turn take appropriate action.
- Other program requirements
  - ◆ This includes activities such as the number of support group meetings mentors must attend or type of activities the match is required to fulfill
- Transportation policies
  - ◆ Can the mentor drive their mentee to activities? If so, under what circumstances? Emphasize the importance of following driving laws, use of seatbelt, etc.
- Gift giving policies

- ◆ This provides a good opportunity to remind volunteers about setting boundaries with regards to money. Can they buy their mentees gifts? How much should they spend?
- Evaluation policies
  - ◆ What is the volunteer's role in helping the program documenting the progress of the relationship?
- Policies on home visits
  - ◆ Can mentors take their mentees to their home? Under what circumstances? Is it recommended?
- Acceptable and unacceptable activities
  - ◆ Does your insurance coverage limit the types of activities mentors and mentees can do together? Can they go snowboarding, skiing, skydiving, etc.?
- Policies when leaving child in somebody else's care
  - ◆ Can the volunteer leave a youth with her spouse? What role do mentor's friends and family play in the mentoring relationship?
- Overnight visit and out of town travel policy
  - ◆ Can a mentor and his mentee go out of town together? Can the youth spend the night at his mentor's house?
- Process to be followed if volunteer is out of town or has to cancel a meeting
  - ◆ Life happens. Sometimes mentors might not be able to meet with their mentee on their scheduled time. Ask volunteers to inform their mentee. If traveling, encourage them to send a postcard or call.
- Process to be followed if relationship needs to be terminated prematurely
  - ◆ Volunteers should let you know as soon as possible if they are feeling frustrated, dissatisfied with their match or if they think they will not follow through on their commitment. Emphasize the necessity for having a closing meeting to help minimize the negative effects such termination can have on the youth.
- Process to be followed once commitment is fulfilled

notes

## notes

- ◆ Closure is also important when the mentoring relationship fulfills their commitment. It is an important opportunity, for both mentors and mentees, to process their experiences, decide on next steps, and say thanks to one another.

*Volunteer Code of Conduct*

It is not safe to assume that a volunteer will know what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior within the constructs of a mentoring relationship. Issues that may seem common sense from a program's standpoint may be new and unknown areas for a volunteer. A review of code of conduct should help volunteers think about how they should act or behave while in the presence of their mentee. It also serves as a reminder to the volunteers that your program is vigilant and will take necessary action if volunteers act inappropriately. This form should also be signed and copy of the agreement should be kept in the volunteer files.

Key areas to cover include guidelines and policies on:

- Use or possession of alcohol or other drugs while in the presence of mentee
- Sexual abuse
- Use of firearms or dangerous equipment
- Romantic involvement with any of the youth's family members
- Use of corporal punishment or physical discipline
- Use or display of suggestive or pornographic material
- Appropriate vs. inappropriate physical contact
- Appropriate vs. inappropriate activities
- Sexual innuendos or inappropriate jokes
- Degrading, sexist, or racist comments
- Cursing or using bad language
- Self-disclosure



# TAILORING CORE CONTENT

*“Look, if you’re going to be working with just with me, you can’t afford the luxury of identifying me with a group. Don’t assume that because I’m a high school student, I’m going to be interested in what to do after I graduate, or that I even want to graduate. Don’t stereotype me by your own prejudices and statistics.*

*Deal with me and nobody else.”*

*Don Shaw, youth worker*

## **IN THIS SECTION**

- ▼ Addressing the needs of adolescents
  - ▼ Addressing the needs of youth from low socio-economic backgrounds
  - ▼ Addressing the needs of foster youth
- ▼ Addressing the needs of children with incarcerated parents
  - ▼ Addressing the needs of youth with multiple risk factors
    - ▼ Addressing the needs of LGTB youth
  - ▼ Addressing the needs of youth in gangs

## notes

## TAILORING CORE CONTENT

Now that we have laid the foundations or core content of a mentor training, we are ready to move to address the individual needs of programs. It is imperative that individual programs tailor the information presented in this curriculum into their own mentor training.

Critical information to add includes specific information about your program:

- What are your program's goals?
- Who do you serve?
- How can your population benefit from your program?
- What are their needs and strengths?
- What additional information do mentors need to know when working with this particular population?

Clearly, additional areas to cover in a mentor training can greatly vary based on the population being served as well as the mentoring format practiced. For this purpose we have included resources that cover the critical issues involved in working with diverse youth populations. We hope that this will provide you with a framework for training your volunteers to deal with your agency's own unique challenges and opportunities.

Resources included are:

- Addressing the needs of adolescents
- Addressing the needs of youth from low socio-economic backgrounds
- Addressing the needs of foster youth
- Addressing the needs of children with incarcerated parents
- Addressing the needs of youth with multiple risk factors
- Addressing the needs of LGTB youth
- Addressing the needs of youth in gangs

These and other great resources can be found on the enclosed CD.



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# MENTOR TRAINING TOOLS

*"If you're really going to be with me, you must take care of yourself. You must know your limits and be willing to touch your own feelings. I don't expect you to do this endlessly or effectively. Let me know when you've had too much, but also let me know that you'll be back. If you can express your limits to me, I won't be afraid you'll desert me. I know you'll take care of yourself well enough that you can continue to be around."*

*Don Shaw, youth worker*

## **IN THIS SECTION**

- ▼ Training tips and guidelines
  - ▼ Sample exercises
  - ▼ Handouts

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MENTOR  
TRAINING TOOLS:  
Training Tips and  
Guidelines

notes

# TRAINING TIPS AND GUIDELINES

## Training Tips

(Source: *Designing an Effective Mentor Training*, EMT Group, 2001.)

### **PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING**

Knowledge of the basic principles that underlie the learning process can guide staff in developing a training curriculum that optimizes participants' learning. What are these basic principles?

#### ***Learning is most likely to occur when . . .***

*Training material is relevant to participant needs.*

When individuals recognize the benefits of training, they are more motivated to learn. The role of the trainer is to identify specific ways that material can be applied to the participant's role as a mentor. Adults learn new materials in relation to what they already know. It is difficult for adults to "unlearn" what they already know or believe to be true.

*Trainers give and receive feedback.*

The use of constructive feedback opens lines of communication between trainer and trainee and helps to reinforce learning. Adults want guidance not competition - they do not want to be put on the spot.

*Trainers use multi-sensory teaching approaches.*

Individuals process information through different perceptual styles, including auditory and visual. Using a variety of activities to create multi-sensory training can accommodate different learning styles and can help to reinforce skills or knowledge acquired through other senses. Adults learn best when they are comfortable –psychologically and physically.

*Participants are actively engaged in the learning process.*

The notion of “learning by doing” suggests that individuals will learn more effectively if they actively participate in the training process. Participant involvement has many benefits. It can help to improve retention, generate interest in material, and enrich the learning experience by offering opportunities for individuals to share relevant knowledge and experiences. Involvement techniques are a must for the mentor adult training session.

Participants have opportunities to practice and review material.

When participants practice or repeat new information, they are more likely to retain what they have learned. Asking questions, summarizing often, and providing exercises are tools that trainers can use to encourage learning.

*People Are Visually Minded*

Individuals retain approximately:

- 20% listening
- 50% sight and sound

Individuals understand:

- 70% of what we repeat and up to
- 90% of what we SEE, SAY AND DO.

*(Source: Mentor Training Curriculum, 1991.)*

*People learn in blocks - or step side process.*

Learning is not a straight line process from receiving information to a change occurring. Rather a change occurs as the result of individuals processing small blocks of information, “owning it” which then can lead to the adoption of a new skill or changes in behavior or procedures.

*Principles of Adult Learning*

Adults...

- learn because they want to
- feel they know what they need to learn

notes

NATIVE AMERICAN QUOTE

Tell me,  
and I'll forget.  
Show me,  
and I may not remember  
Involve me,  
and I'll understand.

notes

- learn by doing, like children
- learn when they are comfortable
- want guidance, not competition
- learn new material in relation to what they already know

## YOUR ROLE

Your role is to serve as the facilitator of the group's learning. A good facilitator should:

- Be a neutral servant of the group
- Focus the group on an agreed upon task (agenda)
- Suggest methods and procedures for achieving the task
- Protect group members from personal attack
- Remain non-defensive and accepts feedback with good will
- Help the group to reach win/win decisions or consensus

## METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

There are several methods of instruction you can utilize as a facilitator. They include:

### ▼ Lecture

The lecture method is the most traditional form of training instruction. In a lecture format, the trainer presents material to a passive audience. When using the lecture format, trainers should try to vary content and make use of training aids to maintain interest and momentum.

### ▼ Modified Lecture

A modified lecture is similar to the lecture, but involves some level of group participation. Trainers will generally prefer a modified format over straight lecture to allow participants to actively engage in learning.

### ▼ Group Discussion

Group discussion can encompass a variety of formats. One form is the structured discussion which involves guided interactions among

training participants. The trainer plays the role of the facilitator by setting the direction and tone of the discussion and keeping the group on track.

#### ▼ Panel Discussion

Panel discussions more closely resemble the lecture format in that group participation is limited. The panel is comprised of topic “experts” who each present a portion of the training content. Panel discussions typically conclude with a brief question and answer period to allow participants to raise additional questions or issues.

#### ▼ Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a commonly-used training approach that allows participants to actively contribute to the training process. In a typical brainstorming session, the trainer will pose a question or problem to the group and will ask participants to generate as many ideas or responses as possible. The trainer records each response, and at the conclusion of the session discusses each idea with the group. Brainstorming is an effective method of both generating participant involvement and drawing on the resources of the group to enrich the learning experience.

#### ▼ Role Play

Role plays are situational examples that involve the trainer and one or two training participants. The trainer provides participants with a script or scenario that requires them to act out a designated role, using previous experience or new skills acquired through the session. At the conclusion of the role play, trainers will hold a debriefing session to provide feedback and to focus discussion on issues that arose during the exercise. Role plays are excellent tools to promote multi-sensory learning and to engage participants by allowing them to “experience” learning first-hand.

#### ▼ Group Exercises and Games

Group exercises provide opportunities for participants to practice what they have learned and to apply new learnings to real-world examples. Games are one form of exercise that can be used to reinforce key content points. In some cases, the relevance of the game to the topic may not be revealed until after the game has been completed and participants discuss outcomes.

notes

## notes

Based on the guidelines for adult learning, which learning methods do you think will be most effective for your mentor training?

## **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION AND FACILITATION**

Prior to the training event:

- Provide participants with a brief overview of the workshop that includes a summary of the content, and the date, time, length, and location of the training.
- Familiarize yourself with the characteristics and experience level of training participants.
- Select an appropriate meeting space. Consider the size of the space, desired room arrangement, ambience, accessibility, and acoustic or background noise.
- Check any needed equipment.

Before the training begins:

- Prepare participant materials including handouts and other information before the workshop begins.
- Arrive early to allow time to set up the room and make last minute preparations.
- Provide a registration sign-in sheet and name tags.

During the training:

- Introduce yourself to the group, providing a brief overview of your training experience and mentoring background.
- Use icebreakers at the beginning of the session to ease tension to allow participants to become acquainted (see the resources section for a sample icebreaker).
- Provide clear instructions and time frames for activities.
- Follow the agenda and designated time frames to the extent possible. Avoid exceeding the amount of time allotted for the training session.
- Demonstrate your knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject matter.

## notes

- Allow for informal breaks in instruction throughout the session. Any session lasting for two hours or more should include a formal break.

After the training:

- Thank participants, summarize key learning points, and evaluate training.
- Debrief the training with the facilitators and other leaders.
- To reinforce learning, mail participants something (e.g., tips generated by the group during the combined sessions).

## MEASURING TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

One of the most challenging aspects of training mentors and mentees is determining ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the training experience. Despite its challenges, evaluation is a critical component of the training design and should not be overlooked.

Evaluating a training program involves two basic components:

- Measuring participants' reactions to the training session.
- Measuring participant achievement as an outcome of the training.

## MEASURING PARTICIPANT REACTIONS

Participant reactions to the training experience should be measured immediately following the training session or at the conclusion of a multi-session training event. While generally participants will react favorably to a well-designed and well-managed training, measuring specific reactions provides constructive feedback that can be used to shape future training programs. The following are potential issues that might be covered on a participant evaluation form:

- Did training content build on participants' previous knowledge?
- Were there topics not covered in the training that you feel should have been?
- Were there topics covered in the training that you believe were not relevant to your work?
- Were there topics covered in the training that you wish would have received more time or attention?

notes

- Were the methods of instruction appropriate to convey information or build necessary skills?

Additionally, trainers may ask participants to assess their overall satisfaction with the training facilities, materials, services, and any other component of the training experience.

*Measuring Participant Achievement*

Measuring changes in participant achievement is the truest test of training effectiveness. What kind of achievement needs to be assessed?

- Changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes of training participants.
- Changes in behavior as it relates to the role of mentoring.

When should achievement should be measured?

- At the conclusion of the training event to assess immediate changes in knowledge or ability.
- After the participant has returned to the real world to assess whether the training experience led to desired outcomes.

# Guidelines for Training Topics and Length

From FOSTER YOUTH MENTORSHIP TRAINING FOR PROGRAM MANAGERS by Dustianne North, M.S.W. and Brenda Ingram, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.

## TRAINING AND PRE-MATCH PREPARATION

### *For Low Risk Programs/Populations*

Should last three or more hours depending on level of supervision and support once matches are made. Should cover basics of mentoring, describe program and populations served, instruct in program protocols and practices, etc. A similar training for mentees is recommended to increase the quality of matches.

### *For Moderate Risk Programs/Populations*

Should last six or more hours to address specific program procedures for unsupervised outings and specific issues that are likely to arise depending on populations served and intent of program in addition to everything covered in a low risk training. Programs should consider involving a clinician in the training of mentors. A similar training for mentees is recommended to increase the quality of matches.

### *For High Risk Programs/Populations*

Should last 15-30 hours depending on the populations served, the responsibility levels given to mentors in the program, the level of supervision offered, and the setting in which the match occurs. Training should cover all topics in low and medium risk trainings, and also issues related to systems that serve youth in the program, crisis response, and should carry a heavily self-reflective component so that trainers and clinicians can elicit personal issues that may become a problem once a match is made.

notes

notes

## **SAMPLE AGENDA**

- Welcome!
- Introduce Self
- Review Agenda
- Review Goals
- Ice-breaker
- Foundations of Mentoring
  - .. History
  - .. Why is it needed for the youth in your program?
  - .. What is a mentor?
  - .. What is a mentoring relationship?
  - .. Successful mentor strategies
- About Youth in Program
- Skill Development
  - .. Creating Realistic Expectations
  - .. Exploring Diversity and Communication
  - .. Dealing with Difficult Issues
  - .. Setting Boundaries
  - .. Going the Distance
- Guidelines and Procedures
  - .. Mentor Responsibilities
  - .. Mentor Code of Conduct
- Closing



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# MENTOR TRAINING TOOLS: Sample Exercises

notes

## Role of a Mentor

Exercise Duration: 20 minutes

Materials Needed: Flip chart and markers

Before being matched, volunteers need to understand the role and definition of a mentor. This will help to dispel misconceptions and to guide them in the development of a healthy mentoring relationship.

### *Exercise Directions:*

1. Ask volunteers to list all the words and images that come to mind when they think of the word mentor. Write them down on one side of the flipchart.
2. Ask volunteers to turn to the person next to them and share about someone who they consider to have been a mentor in their own life.
3. After the individual sharing, bring the group back together. Now ask them to share with you all the images, thoughts, feelings, and words that came to mind when they thought about their own personal experience with a mentor. Write them down on the other side of the flipchart.
4. Ask volunteers if they see any differences or similarities between the words that were written about the idea of a mentor and their actual experiences of a mentor.
5. Debrief by defining the word mentor and emphasizing the importance of the relationship.

### *Key Debrief Points*

- A mentor is a caring guide, a wise advisor, a partner on the journey, a trusted friend.
- A mentor can serve as a mirror for the youth. They can show youth who they are and all they can become.
- A mentor is one who can help the youth feel comfortable in their own skin and appreciate their gifts while at the same time exposing them to new opportunities and modes of thinking.
- What makes a mentor “a mentor” is not that they are perfect or always know exactly what to say, but rather that they are able to form a strong connection with their mentee. This connection can serve as a catalyst for positive change and growth.

# Successful Mentoring Practices

notes

Exercise Duration: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Flip chart and markers

Volunteers should also understand the key characteristics of successful mentors. This process can begin by helping volunteers reflect upon their own positive and negative mentoring experiences.

## *Exercise Directions:*

1. Ask volunteers to sit in small groups of 4 or 5 people. Request that they pick someone to be the secretary and someone to be the presenter.
2. Ask volunteers to think about, discuss, and list both positive and negative experiences they've had as mentees.
3. After everyone has shared, ask the group to come up with the three most successful characteristics of successful mentors or if they prefer the top three characteristics of ineffective mentors.
4. Bring the groups back together and have each group representative share with the larger group.
5. Debrief highlighting the characteristics of successful mentors as shown by research.

## *Key Debrief Points*

(See Overview of Mentoring chapter for more complete information on this topic)

- **The Relationship is the Intervention.** Successful mentors focus on relationship building and not just on achieving outcomes.
- **Mentors Must Take Responsibility for the Relationship.** Successful mentors need to be consistent, persistent and dependable. They need to be able to follow through on their commitment even when things get tough. They need to understand that they are ultimately responsible for staying in touch with their mentees.
- **The Longer the Duration of the Match the Greater the Impact.** Spending time together is essential in developing trust and establishing a strong bond.

notes

- **Respect Youth's Viewpoint.** Mentors who pay attention to what the youth wants to do during meetings seem to do better than those who just want to impose their own agenda. If a mentee is having a hard time coming up with what they would like to do encourage the mentor to always give their mentee three or four options of things they could do together.
- **Rely on Program for Support.** A mentor training is an excellent opportunity to deepen your relationship with your volunteers and to help them see you as a source of knowledge, experience, and support.

# Building Trust in Mentoring Relationships

notes

Exercise Duration: Varies depending upon how many scenarios are reviewed and on the number of participants

Materials Needed: Flip Chart, Markers

## *Introduction:*

### Scenario 1:

Carol brings her mentee Lucy over to her house to bake cookies. Carol takes off her heirloom ring and puts it on the kitchen windowsill while they bake so that she doesn't lose it. After they finish baking, cleaning the kitchen and packing up the cookies, Carol takes Lucy home. When she gets back, she can't find her ring anywhere. She is frantic and isn't sure how to handle the situation.

- A) How should Carol handle the situation?
- B) What are some of the reasons that a mentee MIGHT take something from a mentors home, office, car

### Scenario 2:

You and your mentee have been matched for 3 years, ever since she was 13. You are very bonded and have a deep, trusting relationship with one another. On a Saturday night, your mentee calls at 1 a.m. telling you that she is at a party, her boyfriend has been drinking and she doesn't want to get into the car with him. She is afraid to call her mother because if she comes to get her, she knows her mother will realize that there has been alcohol at the party and she is afraid of the consequences and finally admits to you that she herself is slightly drunk.

- A) What should the mentor do right then?
- B) Should the mentor tell the parent?
- C) What should the mentor do the next time she sees her mentee?

## notes

## Scenario 3:

You have been matched with a 14 year-old boy for the past six months. One night driving home from McDonalds he tells you that he is planning to "go all the way" with his girlfriend on Saturday night. After all he says, "everyone is doing it" and he doesn't think he needs to be the only virgin in his crowd.

- A) What should the mentor say at this point?
- B) Should the mentor inform the parent that his mentee is planning on having sex?
- C) Should the mentor provide information on birth control, or discuss STD/HIV info?

## Scenario 4:

You are matched to a fairly unattractive 15 year old girl. She tells you that the only way to be popular at her school is to have sex with the boys. She tells you she hasn't done IT yet, but is seriously thinking about it because she thinks no one will invite her to the prom unless she does. She gets teased a lot about her skin, hair, clothes and has a very low opinion of herself, even though she is an honor's student with top grades in her class.

- A) How should you discuss this situation with her?
- B) What questions should you ask this mentee?
- C) What types of things can you do to help boost her self-image?

*Debrief*

Building trust takes time and effort and can be a very fragile thing. Once trust is broken, it is almost impossible to mend the rift that will happen in the relationship, and most times, the match will end.

## Things to keep in mind:

1. Never promise a mentee that you will keep everything they tell you as confidential. Qualify it by stating, "I can keep this confidential unless it is something that involves your health, safety, or the safety of someone else."
2. If something comes up that you are unsure how to handle, it is OK to say, "Hmm, great question, I want to be able to give you a really

complete answer, so let me think about it and call you back tomorrow." This is a good opportunity to call the agency staff and get additional feedback on how to handle a situation.

3. Never accuse your mentee of something unless you have 100% proof of wrong-doing. If you accuse and are incorrect, your relationship is probably over.
4. If you suspect drug or alcohol use, teen pregnancy or other situations you feel are detrimental to your mentee, contact your agency IMMEDIATELY. Let the case management staff contact the parent and make decisions on how things should be handled. You are NOT alone.

notes

notes

## Owning Our Expectations

Exercise Duration: 20 Minutes

Materials Needed: Paper and Pens

### *Introduction:*

It is necessary to help mentors realize that they have conscious and unconscious expectations about their mentoring relationship. It is only natural that they would. Having expectations is not the problem, but rather what we do when those expectations do not match reality.

### *Steps:*

1. Ask volunteers to spend 5 minutes journaling their answers to the following questions:
  - a. Imagine it is match day:
    - i. What are your feelings leading up to the match?
    - ii. How do you react and feel once you do meet your mentee?
    - iii. What does your mentee look like?
    - iv. What happens during the first meeting?
  - b. Imagine that it is now the end of your assigned mentoring time commitment:
    - i. What happened during your year together?
    - ii. What did you and your mentee do together?
    - iii. What did you enjoy and liked most about the relationship?
    - iv. What challenged you?
2. Once the participants are done writing, ask them to get together with a partner and take 5 minutes to answer the following questions together:
  - a. Imagine that you are a youth participating in this mentoring program. Now, look at the questions listed above and answer them from their perspectives.
3. Bring the everyone back together and discuss as a group:

- a. Was there anything that surprised you about your own hopes and desires for the relationships?
- b. Was there anything that stood out for you when you looked at the relationship from a mentee's point of view?
- c. Were there any differences or similarities between the two points of view?
- d. Why do you think it was important to spend time doing an exercise like this?

*Debrief:*

- Whether we like to acknowledge it or not we do have definite ideas, hopes, fears and wishes for our mentoring relationships.
- It is important to realize that there is another person on the other side with his or her own set of ideas, hopes, fears, and wishes.
- Remind volunteers that if at times they feel disappointed or discouraged with their mentoring relationship, it is not necessarily because there is anything wrong with them or their mentee. Rather, they may feel disappointed because their expectations did not come true. Staff support is essential.

notes

## notes

## Boundary Setting

Exercise Duration: 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Scenario's on index cards, white board or flip chart and markers

Boundary setting is important so that each person in a mentoring relationship is clear about his or her role. Boundaries that are clear, concise and understood at the beginning of a relationship will save a lot of confusion, miscommunication and possibly early closure of a mentoring relationship. One of the important steps in setting boundaries with mentors, parents, or mentees is to have things in writing prior to the match taking place. For example, creating a DOs and DON'Ts list for parents that they sign and that the mentor reads will avoid some of the common pitfalls in a mentoring relationship.

### *Exercise Directions:*

Split group into 4 or 5 members for small group discussions. Give each group a different scenario and ask them to role-play it for the group. Give them 15 minutes to discuss the scenario and then bring the group back together.

### Scenarios:

1. You go to pick up your mentee and the mom meets you at the door in a robe and slippers, sniffing and sneezing and asks you if you wouldn't mind picking up a few things at the drug store while you and your mentee are out. What should you say and why?
2. You have set aside Saturday afternoons for your meeting with your mentee. Mom calls and asks if you wouldn't mind switching your time to Friday night as she has an important meeting to attend. What should you do?
3. The mother of your mentee calls you and says that your mentee has been getting into trouble at school and she thinks that he might be gang involved. What is your role? What do you do?
4. You go to pick up your mentee and he isn't home. You had previously called to let him know what time you would be there. You had both agreed on what to do and you had spent a significant amount of money on getting tickets to a sporting event. What should you do?

5. Every time you and your mentee go to the mall she whines and asks that you buy her things. When you say NO, she has a temper tantrum and says that you are mean, you have plenty of money, and she doesn't know why you are being so selfish. What do you do?
6. A mentor and mentee have decided to go to a nice dinner because they have been working hard on a project and it is completed. When the mentor goes to pick up the mentee, the mom tries to hand the mentor money for the evening out, saying she feels that she wants to help with expenses. What should you do?
7. You go to pick up your mentee at his house and his mom meets you at the door. Behind her is your mentee's younger brother who has the biggest brown eyes you have ever seen and has this puppy dog look and asks if he could PLEASE come with you two just this ONCE??? Mom looks at you and whispers that it really would mean a lot to him to be able to spend some time with you like you do with his older brother because he feels really left out. He is currently on the waiting list for his own mentor, but so far, none has been found. How should you handle this situation?

*Debrief: 30 minutes*

Bring the group back together, have them role play their scenario and discuss what they felt the boundary issue was, how they decided to resolve the issue and what significance they felt it had on the mentoring relationship. Get input from others who had not been part of that group as to how they might have handled it differently and why.

*Key Points: 15 minutes*

Have the group input on what they felt were the key points of this exercise and put phrases on the flip chart. Points to elicit are:

1. Do not let a mentor get caught up in the parent's personal situation. It will lead a mentor to feeling used if it continues on an ongoing basis and sets an unrealistic expectation on the part of the parent that the mentor should be there for them.
2. The relationship between the mentor and mentee is between them. Scheduling needs to be approved by the parent but should be changed only with the consent of all parties. If the change

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makes it inconvenient for the mentor then they should not feel pressured.

3. Certain time limits should be set early on in the match establishing some guidelines as to how long one party will wait for the other, calling ahead of time if something comes up, (i.e. bad traffic, stuck at the office, needing to stay late at the library to finish a school project, etc.)
4. Never let the parent/guardian get you involved in something that is strictly a family situation or allow them utilize you as a disciplinarian.
5. If a mentee throws a temper tantrum the best thing to do is remove yourselves from the situation. Always be mindful of safety issues and what might have been done to avoid the situation in the first place. Does this happen often? Is behavior a problem in this match?
6. Money is always an important issue to have boundaries around. In most situations, it is always the responsibility of the mentor or program to provide the funds necessary for an activity. The danger with allowing the parent to pay for your time with your mentee, is that you will then come under the same classification as others in their lives, i.e. being paid to be there for or with them. However, sometimes it helps the families feel good to be able to help out even with a little bit of the expense of an outing.
7. It is important that the relationship is between you and your mentee. One of the reasons that your mentee is in the program is to spend some quality one to one time with an adult role model. Even if the mentee asks that his sibling be included, he could be doing it because he has been pressured by his parent or sibling not because he really wants to be inclusive. YOU need to be the one to say NO and to explain that it is against program rules to include another child on the outing. Remember it is not your responsibility to give this parent "a break". You can emphasize how it will give the parent some one on one time with this child while you are out with the other. When all else fails, call your case manager and let that person be the conduit between you and the parent.

# Working With Parents

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Exercise Duration: Varies depending upon how many scenarios are reviewed and on the number of participants

Materials Needed: Flip Chart, Markers

## *Introduction:*

Whenever you are making a match between a mentor and a mentee, an important ingredient to the match is always the parent/legal guardian. The relationship that exists between the staff person who works with the parent is often the key to a successful match. It is equally important when looking at the characteristics and personalities of the mentor and mentee when making a match, as it is to look at the parent.

## *Are you prepared?*

- Does your agency have a set list of Guidelines for Parents?
- What should it include if you do not?
- When should you discuss this with the parent?
- Should the parent sign the form?
- How binding is it, even if it is signed?

## *Exercise:*

Give each group a different scenario to work with.

### Scenario 1:

The mentor is extremely frustrated and wants to end the match. The last two times he has gone to pick up his mentee, he has been told by the parent at the door that the mentee is grounded and cannot go on their planned visit. The mentor politely reminds the parent that it is against the agency rules to ground the mentee from their weekly outings, but the parent is adamant. The mentor feels extremely put out because he had made specific plans and bought tickets to a local event being held that weekend.

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## Scenario 2:

There are three siblings in a family. Only the middle child is matched at this time, the others are still on the wait list. It is almost time for the three youth to go back to school and the mentor decides (without telling the parent) to take their mentee shopping for back to school clothes to help out the parent, who they know is having problems making ends meet. The mentor buys their mentee designer clothes, shoes, jackets and school supplies. When they come home laden with all the bags from the local mall mom can barely contain her anger and the mentor is confused. The mentor and the parent both call the case manager, and each exhibits anger and hurt feelings.

- A) Discuss this scenario from both the parent and the mentor's views.
- B) Was the mentor correct in what he/she did in buying clothes for a child who needed them?
- C) What type of rules/boundaries should there be, and how can this be established so that the parent doesn't feel disrespected/disregarded, etc?
- D) What can the mentor do after the fact (i.e. they have already bought the clothes)? Should the clothes be returned?

## Scenario 3

One of the program rules is that a parent/legal guardian must be at home when a mentor drops off their mentee. The parent is often late and the mentor and mentee often wind up sitting in the car waiting. The parent does not have a cell phone to call them on and the mentee gets really anxious and keeps pleading that it is okay for him to be home alone. The mentor is getting so frustrated he is ready to end the match. Mom's version is completely different. She states that the mentor is often late in picking up the mentee, that she has told the mentor that she needed to do errands and that she had an approximate time to be home.

- A) What do you think is going on here?
- B) What can be done to improve the communication skills between the mentor and the parent?

*Debrief:*

- It is important to remember that the relationship is about the CHILD. Having clearly written guidelines and ground rules can help, but it is clear communication between all parties concerned that will make or break a match.
- Each party in the match must be heard. It is important to hear not only what is said, but what underlies it, what fears it is bringing up for the person you are speaking too, and what you can do to calm the waters.
- Emphasize importance of healthy boundary setting with parents and guardians.

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## Dealing with Difficult Situations

Source: Responsible Mentoring: Talking About Drugs, Sex and Other Difficult Issues

Exercise Duration: Varies depending upon how many scenarios are reviewed and on the number of participants

Materials Needed: Flip Chart, Markers

*Exercise:*

Handout sheet of paper with this scenarios to small groups and have them discuss how they would deal with each of the following situations:

- Your mentee says it would be easier to commit suicide. Should you consider the remark serious, or should you change the subject? Is counseling appropriate?
- Your mentee has been missing school lately and seems lethargic; grades suffer. The counselor feels you would have some influence on this student. Should you have the mentee talk about his/her problems? Should you share responsibility for his/her being at school regularly?
- Your mentee shares with you that s/he is experimenting with drugs; just "recreational" drugs. Do you refer the problem, or ignore it? Do you confront the student in a way that ensures your continued support?
- Your mentee confides in you that she is three months pregnant, and "the school will not let me continue if they find out." Do you involve a counselor or parent? Can you identify support for this girl?
- Your mentee needs transportation to work. Do you loan him/her a car or money, or assist in arranging transportation?
- You and your mentee are in your place of employment. The student makes a tasteless remark to a customer (or one of your co-workers). Should you confront the mentee in front of others, discuss it in private, or ignore it?
- After many unexcused absences and tardiness, the principal contacts you to say that your influence might bring the mentee back to school. The principal also believes s/he is an abused child. In calling the mentee, you reach the suspected abusive parent who suggests that you "leave them alone." Do you confront the parent and child, or contact a caseworker in Social Services?

*Debrief:* See section on Dealing with Difficult Situations.

# Becoming a Better Mentor: Developing Cultural Sensitivity Through Self-Awareness

notes

*(Written by: Lecia J. Brooks, Principal Consultant, Diversity Matters)*

Duration of workshop: 90 minutes

Materials: Blank paper, Poster Paper (not necessary if a chalkboard is available), Markers, Pens/Pencils, Nametags, Communications Guidelines

Room set up: Set chairs in a circle so all participants can see one another

Being a mentor is a life changing responsibility, and being mentored is finding support and connection in ways and with people we may never have imagined. A mentor can greatly ease the task, meet the responsibility, and be receptive to support if they have the opportunity to develop cultural sensitivity. This workshop is an introductory experience in cultural sensitivity and diversity. The workshop provides participants the opportunity to tap their own knowledge and experiences so as to improve their awareness of self and of others, specifically as they relate to notions of diversity and inter-cultural interaction.

*20 minutes Welcome and Introductions*

Invite the participants to introduce themselves to one another for the next 5 minutes. Instruct them to share their name, one thing about themselves, and to meet as many people as possible. 6 MINUTES

Invite participants to take a seat and ask a few (2-3) participants to share in response to one or two of the following prompts: How did you enjoy the introductions? What did you choose to share about yourself? Did you share the same thing? How many people did you introduce yourself to? 5 MINUTES

Go around the room and ask each participant to share their name. 5 MINUTES

*10 minutes Workshop Guidelines*

## notes

The facilitator will draw the participants' attention to the COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES POSTER. Ask a participant to read the communication guidelines—Respect, Actively Listen, Patience, Honesty, Confidentiality, and Sensitivity to Different Communication Styles. Ask the group if they agree to these guidelines and ask the group if there are any guidelines for communication that they would like to add for the purpose of increased safety and improved communication. Record the additional items.

*20 minutes Handprint Activity*

FACILITATOR SHOULD COMPLETE A HANDPRINT IN ADVANCE TO MODEL FOR THE GROUP.

"Our hands are as unique as we are, each one different, and no two alike, not even our own. By a show of hands, how many used a handshake or some touch or gesture with the hand as part of your introductions?" Give participants a sheet of blank paper and a marker or other writing instrument and ask them to trace one of their hands on the sheet. Ask them to place their name in the center of the palm. Instruct the participants that this is an individual activity, that there is no right or wrong way to do it, and that how they represent their handprint today may be different than they would tomorrow or even 3 hours from now. Ask them to self-select 5 identity characteristics, one for each appendage, which describes who they are. The facilitator should offer a few identity characteristics to the group—race, gender, age, interests, etc—and draw attention to the Handprint they made for themselves to model for the workshop. 5 MINUTES

When the group has completed their 5 identity characteristics, ask them to look over what they have written and to highlight, place a star or other mark, on the 2 identity characteristics they most closely identify with. Now ask the participants to reflect on a time in their life when they felt someone was insensitive to them with regard to one of the 2 identities they had highlighted. Ask them to make a quick notation on their handprint sheet about the event they had recalled: time, place, person/s, etc. 5 MINUTES

Ask them to find a partner (complete the instructions before the participants form their pairs) and with their partner to share the 2 identity characteristics they most closely identify with and to share the time in their life that they felt someone was insensitive to their identity. Each partner should have time to share. 10 MINUTES

*20 minutes Group Sharing*

Invite participants to share their identity characteristics (read: categories) and poster the responses. Place a check by each identity characteristic that is repeated by the group rather than rewriting the characteristic/category. 3-5 MINUTES

Invite participants to share what they learned about themselves and others from the Handprint activity. 10 MINUTES

Ask participants to look around the room and take notice of the individuals they introduced themselves to in the first activity. Ask participants to silently reflect if in their introduction they had shared their highlighted identity characteristics? If they had shared any of their Handprint identities? Ask them to silently reflect on why they did or didn't share these identities? Now ask them to look around the room again, to take note of the people they introduced themselves to, to take note of the persons who introduced themselves to them, and to take note of anyone they didn't share an introduction with. Now ask them if they think that their Handprint characteristics, real (as made by that individual) or imagined, may have had anything to do with how they experienced the introduction activity. 5 MINUTES

*15 minutes Developing Cultural Sensitivity and Appreciation for Diversity*

Define Diversity, and Identity.

To develop cultural sensitivity one must first be aware of their own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values in regards to diversity and difference. Simply put, diversity is difference, or according to Webster it is "the quality, state, fact, or instance of being diverse; difference; dissimilitude; unlikeness; as a great diversity of human constitutions or 2) variety; multiformity; as, a diversity of ceremonies." Diversity is all around us and it is also in us. You were asked to choose identity characteristics, descriptors of you and your identity. But, because our identities exist in a social context, who we are, how we define ourselves, is both a private or individual definition, as well as a socially constructed one. Identity is both how we see ourselves and how the world sees us, and this identity can change depending on time, place, experience, and politics.

Look at the Diversity Wheel handout. At the core of the wheel is the person and their personality, the first circle are the characteristics of identity that are most immutable or those we are born into, the second

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circle are those that can be changed or fluctuate, and the outer circle are those that are defined by our relationship to or roles in institutions or organizations. Provide the group with the group with some examples from each circle to demonstrate the degree of fluctuation.

Compare your Handprint with the Diversity Wheel. Where do your identities fall? Did you notice anything? Is there a pattern? Invite a couple of responses.

It is safer, and more respectful; to never assume how a person experiences themselves. The cultural identity that may be important to you in a mentoring relationship may not even be on the other person's screen. Also, what may be an instance in need of cultural sensitivity can easily be overlooked because it isn't one of the readily identified categories. Reference the poster list of the identities the group created from the Handprints. Ask which identities are missing? Add them to the list. For example, age, ability, income may be ones that could be added and which could impact a mentoring relationship.

If time allows, draw a connection for the participants between cultural sensitivity and diversity by suggesting that our thoughts, feelings, values, and beliefs are shaped by culture—traditions and ways of being and believing that are shared by a group of peoples—you will find that when people talk about cultural sensitivity that they are often talking about cultural differences, about cultural diversity. The sensitivity part is developing an appreciation for one another's' different ways of being and doing, and this appreciation can be developed by honestly revisiting what we have been taught, what we have experienced, and/or what we have come to believe about an identity group and its culture.

*5 minutes*      *Closure*

Ask them to take one last moment to silently reflect on what they learned about themselves during the workshop and how their learning will help them to be a better mentor. Inform the group that you would like to invite those you haven't had a chance to share. Take one or two responses and thank the group for participating.

# Becoming a Better Mentor: Cultural Sensitivity and Communication Skills

notes

(Written by: Lecia J. Brooks, Principal Consultant, Diversity Matters)

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials: Poster Paper, Communication Guidelines Poster, Animal Signs—Tiger, Turtle, Hawk, Rabbit, Markers, Nametags

Set chairs in a circle so that all participants can see one another

The examination of one's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about race, gender, ability, age, etc., can be a gateway to developing cultural sensitivity. To have awareness of self is a good jumping off place to understanding our interactions with others, be they like us or different from us. As addressed in the first module of this workshop, diversity is all around us and we ourselves are diverse beings. An understanding and appreciation of difference can help us in our interactions with one another.

Communication, the sending and receiving of information or understanding between people, is a dynamic process and the "rules" for communicating are not universal. Ways of communicating and rules for communication are as varied as the identities that we experienced in the first module. In this module, we will explore this cornerstone of human interaction, communication.

## *10 minutes Welcome and Introduction*

Facilitator will briefly introduce workshop and inform the participants that the workshop will be interactive and dialogic, based on dialogue (an open and honest sharing and listening about what we truly believe, think, feel, and experience). The facilitator will introduce her/himself to the group and share one thing about themselves that is not job related (personal, hobby, family, etc). Next, invite participants to introduce themselves by name. 10 MINUTES

## *10 minutes Communication Guidelines*

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The facilitator will draw the participants' attention to the COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES POSTER. Ask a participant to read the communication guidelines—Respect, Actively Listen, Patience, Honesty, Confidentiality, and Sensitivity to Different Communication Styles. Thank the participant.

Ask to the group, "Which of these is most important to you in communicating? And why?" Take 2 or 3 responses.

Ask the group if they agree to these guidelines and invite any guidelines for communication that they would like to add. Record the additional items. Remind them that the guidelines are for the purpose of increased safety and improved communication in the workshop, but that they are applicable anywhere.

*30 minutes Animal Communication*

Before the workshop begins the facilitator should post each of the animal posters in 4 different areas of the room, leaving enough space between posters for the groups that gather under them to be easily demarcated.

Ask the whole group to stand and gather at the center of the room, pushing chairs to the edges and out of the way. Point to and read each of the four animal signs assuring that participants can see the signs. Ask the participants to think about the characteristics they associate with each animal or how they would describe each animal. Now ask the participants to SILENTLY move to the animal which best represents the way that they communicate. Once everyone has chosen a sign, ask them to find a partner from within their group and discuss why they chose this animal. For anyone who is having difficulty choosing, ask them to choose one that they would like to examine right now during the workshop and acknowledge that there can be overlap. Allow 3-4 minutes for dyads. Refocus the group and take one or two share-outs from each animal group on why they chose their group.

Now ask, "Which animal would be easiest for you to communicate with and why?" Take one or two responses from each animal group. Be attentive to which group speaks first and which are hesitant, make sure there is balanced representation from each group.

Now ask, "Which animal group would be most difficult for you to communicate with and why?" Take one or two responses from each animal group. There may be jokes and quips and banter, but use the

comments to your advantage (Someone may say, “The turtles are boring.” This is a value judgment about communication. You can follow up and maybe ask the turtles how they felt about that statement, is that something they really encounter about the way they communicate, what about their communication are people reacting to when they say “boring” etc. Go with it and have fun but keep the point alive.)

Draw the group’s focus to you and thank them for their participation and great comments. Ask them to take a moment and silently look at the people in their own group, do they notice anything? Ask them to silent look at the people in the other animal groups, do they notice anything, any patterns? Take one or two responses. There may be recognizable groupings—gender, race, ethnicity, age, class—acknowledge that there may be cultural communication norms associated with these groupings that resemble the styles of communication that were discussed, but there are no hard and fast connections, simply generalizations or patterns. To further explore communication differences and similarities and to build self-awareness, tell the group that we will be moving into another exercise that will provide them an opportunity to learn more about one another.

### *30 minute Wagon Wheel*

Ask them to find a partner. Have them determine a partner A and a partner B. Have all the partner B’s form a circle facing inward and all the partner A’s form a circle facing outward toward a partner B. You will have two concentric circles of people and they will be facing one another. Now ask them to get a chair and re-create the circles. Explain that this formation resembles a wagon wheel and like a wheel it turns. Ask them to thank their partner and have the inside circle rotate 4 people to the left. Once everyone is situated, instruct the group that this is a timed exercise to assure that everyone gets to share. Inform them that you will give them a statement and they will have X minute/s to respond. KEEP TIME.

Round One: Partner A speaks first and Partner B listens. Then switch, Partner B speaks and A listens.

- 1) Share with your partner which animal you chose and why. ONE MINUTE EACH.
- 2) Talk about a time that you experienced good communication. Why do you think it was effective? TWO MINUTES EACH. Total time for round one is 6 minutes

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CHANGE PARTNERS, have partner B's rotate 3 or 4 people to their left.

Round Two: Partner B speaks first, A listens, then switch.

- 1) Share which animal group you are from and share which group you thought would be most difficult to communicate with. ONE MINUTE
- 2) Talk about a time you felt listened to, what happened and how did you know that you were being listened to? TWO MINUTES EACH  
Total time 6 minutes.

CHANGE PARTNERS, have B's rotate 2 people to the left.

Round Three: Partner A talks first, B listens, then switch.

- 1) Share your animal communication group and talk about which group you thought would be easiest to communicate with. ONE MINUTE EACH
- 2) Talk about a time that you experienced miscommunication, what happened? What do you think created the miscommunication? TWO MINUTES EACH. Total time is 6 minutes.

*Debrief:*

Thank the group for participating and ask for general responses to the wagon wheel activity. Suggested prompts: What did you learn from this activity?

What did you learn about yourself as a communicator? As a listener?

Was it easier to talk or to listen?

Were any of the prompts difficult to respond to? Which and why you think that was?

Did anyone partner with someone of their own animal group, with someone different from your animal group? Were there any differences in the way you communicated? How did it feel communicating with someone from your group as compared with someone from a different animal group? What adjustments did you make, if any?

Invite the participants to review the communication guidelines, ask which of the guidelines seemed to come easily to you when sharing with your partners, which were more challenging?

*10 minutes Closure*

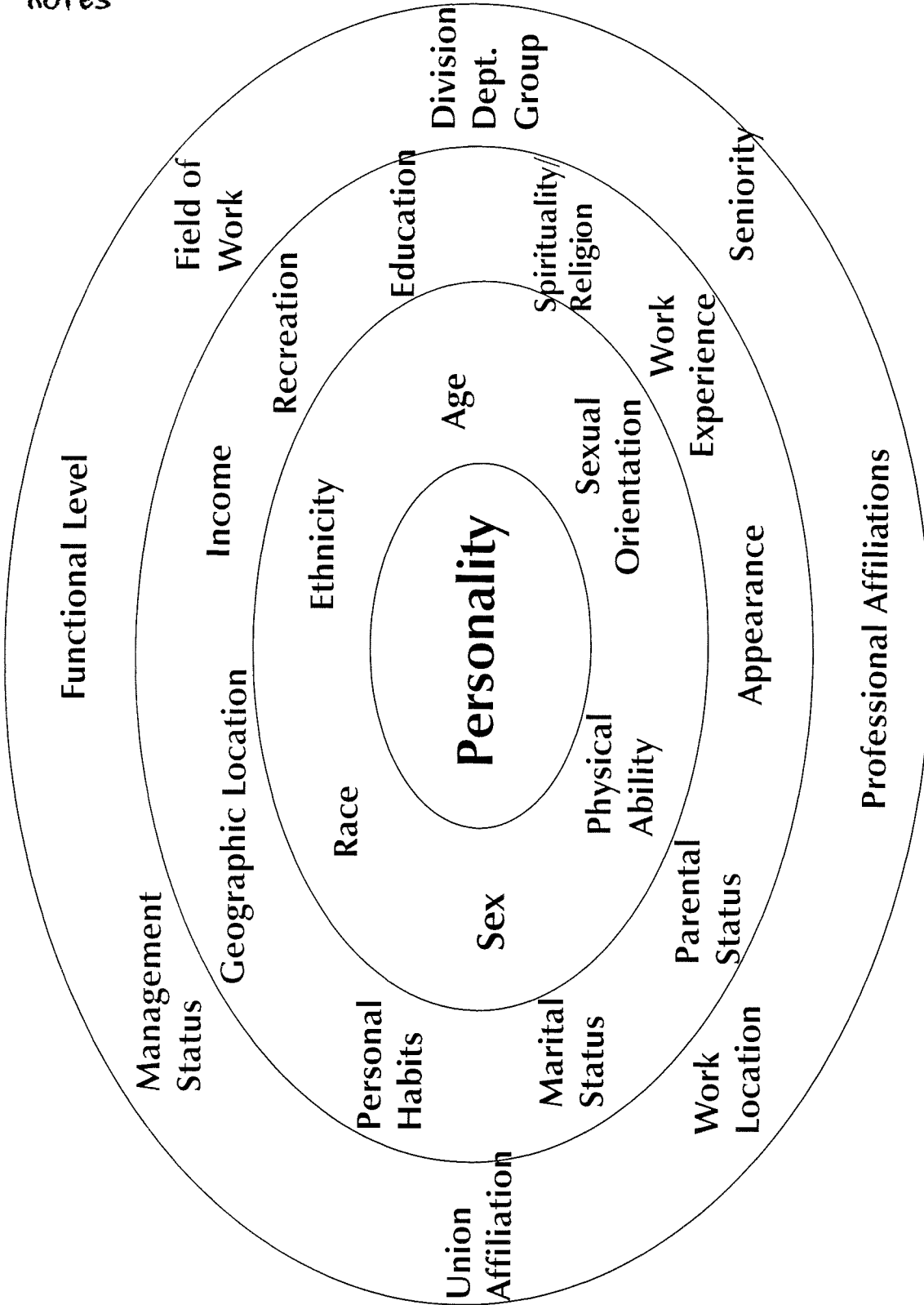
Close the module with a recap of what the participants have experienced, including the communication guidelines, the animal communication exercise, and the wagon wheel.

This module was an exploration of communication and how it can impact our interactions as we build intercultural sensitivity and competence. Invite participants to share ONE WORD that describes how they are feeling about themselves as a communicator or one thing they learned about communication. Start with yourself or a volunteer. Allow people to pass if they are not prepared. Thank the group for their participation.

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# Diversity Wheel



Source: Leticia J. Brooks, Principal Consultant, Diversity Matters



2004  
Regional Training

# MENTOR TRAINING TOOLS: Handouts

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## STAGES OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Source: Designing an Effective Training for Mentors, EMT 2001

### *Stage 1: Developing rapport and building trust*

This is the most critical stage of the relationship, the “getting to know you” phase. Things to expect and work on during Stage 1 include:

1. Be predictable and consistent.

During the first stage of the relationship, it is critical to be both predictable and consistent. If you schedule an appointment to meet your mentee at a certain time, at all costs it is important to keep it. It is understandable that at times things come up and appointments cannot be kept; however, in order to speed up the trust-building process, remaining consistent is necessary even if the young person is not.

2. Be prepared for “testing”

Young people generally do not trust adults. As a result, they use testing as a coping or defense mechanism to determine whether they can trust you. They will test to see if you really care about them. An example of how a mentee might test the mentor is by not showing up to a scheduled meeting to see how the mentor reacts.

3. Establish confidentiality

During the first stage of the relationship, it is important to establish confidentiality with your young person. This helps to develop trust. The mentor should let the mentee know that whatever s/he wants to share with the mentor will remain confidential, as long as (and it is important to stress this point) what the young person tells the mentor is not going to harm the young person or someone else. It is helpful to stress this up front, within the first few meetings with the mentee. That way, later down the road, if a mentor needs to break the confidence because the information the mentee shared was going to harm someone else or themselves, the young person will not feel betrayed.

#### 4. Goal setting

It is helpful during Stage 1 to take the time to set up at least one achievable goal together for the relationship. For example, what do we want to get out of this relationship? It is also good to help your mentee set personal goals. Young people often do not learn goal setting, and this would provide them with the opportunity to experience how to set goals and how to work toward achieving their goals.

#### *Stage 2: Building the relationship-reaching goals*

Once trust has been established, the relationship moves on to Stage 2. During this stage, the mentor and mentee can begin to start working towards the goals they set together during the first stage of the relationship. Things to expect during Stage 2 include:

##### 1. The relationship develops a closeness

Generally, during the second stage, the mentor and mentee can sense a genuine closeness to the relationship.

##### 2. Affirming the uniqueness of the relationship

Once the mentor has reached this stage, it is helpful to do something special or different than the mentor and mentee did during the first stage. This helps to affirm the uniqueness of the relationship. For example, go to a museum, sporting event, special restaurant, etc.

##### 3. The relationship may be rocky or smooth

All relationships have their ups and downs. Even once the relationship reaches the second stage, there will still be some rough periods. Mentors should be prepared for rough periods and not assume that something is wrong with the relationship if these periods occur occasionally.

##### 4. Rely on staff/resource support

If the rough period continues or if a mentor feels like they have never reached the second stage, s/he should not hesitate to seek out support from the mentor program coordinator. Sometimes two people, no matter how they look on paper, just don't "click" together.

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*Stage 3: Closing the relationship Stage*

Some mentor/mentee pairs do not need to worry about this stage until far down the road. However, at some point, many relationships will come to an end whether it is because the program is over, the mentor is moving, or for some other reason. When this happens, it is critical that the closure stage not be overlooked. Young people today often have many adults come and go in and out of their lives and are rarely provided the opportunity to properly say goodbye.

1. Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial, and resentment.

In order to help mentees express their emotions about the relationship ending, mentors should model the behavior. The mentor should first express his or her feelings and emotions about the relationship ending, and then let the mentee do the same.

2. Provide opportunities for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful, and affirming way.

Mentors should not wait for the very last meeting with their mentees to say goodbye. The mentor should begin to slowly present the issue as soon as s/he is aware that the relationship will be coming to a close.

3. Address appropriate situations for staying in touch.

Mentors should check with the mentor program coordinator to find out what the policy is for staying in touch with their mentees once the program has come to an end. This is especially important if the program is school-based and mentors/mentees meet during the school year, but the program officially ends before the summer starts. If mentors and mentees are mutually interested in continuing to meet over the summer, they may be allowed to, but with the understanding that school personnel may not be available should an emergency arise. Each mentor program may have its own policy for future contact between mentors and mentees. That is why it is best for mentors to check with program personnel during this stage.

# Realistic and Unrealistic Mentor Expectations

©Jerry Sherk, 2001

Unrealistic: My mentee's overall functioning and success is dependent upon the mentoring process.

Realistic: Even though I will go to great lengths to help out, my mentee's success depends on his or her own choices and behaviors.

\* \* \*

Unrealistic: My mentee will surely make changes in his or her behavior after being with me for a few times.

Realistic: It will most likely take time for the mentee to make changes in his or her life (if at all). I should not expect someone to transform because I have spent a few hours with them. They have had "X" number of years being who they are. Assuming that they will make drastic changes after being with me for a short time would be presumptuous on my part.

\* \* \*

Unrealistic: If the mentee's behavior does not change immediately, that's proof that nothing is happening.

Realistic: The mentee may not appear to be benefitting from the relationship, but that doesn't mean that he or she is not getting something good out of it. Mentoring is like "planting seeds."

\* \* \*

Unrealistic: If I do not see extensive change in the mentee's functioning, it's a negative reflection on me.

Realistic: Not seeing changes in the mentee does not mean that I am a bad mentor. Mentoring is not a contest, and it is not about me.

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Unrealistic: My mentee should always act like an adult. He or she will always be responsible, return phone calls, show up on time, etc.

Realistic: My mentee may or may not act responsibly. If my mentee doesn't return my phone calls on time, I won't lose my cool. I will always take the mature adult stance, and I won't get into hurt feelings and manipulation.

\* \* \*

Unrealistic: If I don't keep my commitment to my mentee it won't matter. The mentee should be able to handle it if I miss a number of sessions, or if I forget to call them. Young people these days are flexible, and they can go with the flow.

Realistic: If I make a commitment to mentor a young person, I should keep to my word. Young people in mentoring programs often have carry intense feelings of betrayal and abandonment, and if I let them down it may serve to damage them even more.

\* \* \*

Unrealistic: The only thing my mentee will understand is if I stress discipline and I am tough on him or her.

Realistic: My mentee wants to be treated like I want to be treated — with kindness.

\* \* \*

Unrealistic: I need to be a perfect, "mistake-proof" mentor.

Realistic: It is okay to make mistakes as a mentor. I may take the wrong approach or say things the wrong way from time to time, but my mentee will be resilient as long as he or she knows I have their best interests at heart. (Studies show that professionals and lay people have about the same results when trying to assist individuals who are in the midst of conflict.)

\* \* \*

Unrealistic: My mentee will be appreciative and thank me for my efforts.

Realistic: My mentee may or may not thank me. Some young people don't know how to even begin to show appreciation. The bottom line is that I will give my efforts as a gift, expecting nothing in return.

## TRY TO . . .

*Source: Document Kit created by the Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute. The kit contains close to one hundred forms that assist in the implementation of best practices. For more information go to [www.friendsforyouth.org](http://www.friendsforyouth.org)*

*Meet with your mentee regularly.*

Building a relationship takes a lot of hard work and a lot of time. The easiest way to help your mentee develop trust in you is by making and keeping regular appointments.

*Let the friendship develop at its own pace.*

It will take time for your mentee to understand your role, develop trust in you and open up. Mentors who try to speed things up by probing and pressuring their mentees to talk about things they're not ready to talk about yet (school, family problems, etc.), usually wind up slowing things down.

*Make decisions together with your mentee.*

Some mentors and mentees take turns deciding on outings; others choose together from a list made together; sometimes mentors present the mentee with several options and allow the mentee to pick the final choice. No matter how you plan outings, it is important to consider your mentees input.

*Appreciate the value of fun.*

Sometimes mentors become concerned that they are not "helping" their mentees because they are only "having fun". Many of our kids do not get lots of opportunities to go out, try new things and have fun. Also, learning how to slam dunk can give a young person more confidence. Buying ingredients and following a recipe can teach important skills for daily living.

*Do different things with your mentee.*

Varying your outings will help you and your mentee get to know each other better. It will give you a chance to see each other in different circumstances and discover each others' interests, skills, and strengths.

*Set limits early on.*

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Your mentee may try to test you in the beginning by asking to see you a lot, asking you to spend lots of money, or asking to bring a friend or sibling along. You'll fare a lot better in your friendship if you let her/him know early on that you have other responsibilities and time constraints, a limited budget for outings, or that you are there to spend one-on-one time together.

*Participate in Group Activities!*

When asked what advice they'd give to new mentors, veteran mentors frequently recommend participation in group activities, especially early on. It's a great way to meet people and save money.

*Contact your Counselor Regularly.*

Your counselors are there to help and support you, troubleshoot difficulties you are having and intervene when necessary. They can also provide resources for you, your mentee, and your mentee's family.

*Be Flexible.*

Be prepared to change your plans and expectations as you get to know your mentee or as things come up.

*Be Non-judgmental.*

This tip applies not only to your mentee, but also to her/his family and their lifestyle.

## TRY NOT TO . . .

*Source: Document Kit created by the Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute. The kit contains close to one hundred forms that assist in the implementation of best practices. For more information go to [www.friendsforyouth.org](http://www.friendsforyouth.org)*

### *Be Inconsistent*

Be inconsistent in your weekly activities, in your telephone calls, and in your commitments to your mentee, and you reconfirm their feelings that the world doesn't really care about them.

"No, I didn't get in touch with Jessica this week. We always get together on Tuesdays, but I got busy with my relatives and didn't make it over to her house. I'm really sorry about it, but I'll give her a call this weekend and see how things are going."

### *Expect Equal Responsibility*

Expect equal responsibility from your mentee for the friendship and your activities and you can expect to be disappointed.

"I left a message with his brother, but he never called back. He didn't have any ideas for our outing this week anyway. I don't think he wants to be in the program."

### *Impose Values*

No one likes to be told what to think or feel. Unlike footwear, values are not something you simply put on. When it comes to placing your values on others Just Don't Do It.

"I really think she could use some more exercise in her life, and I think she has the coordination and height to play basketball. I told her that I signed her up for a basketball clinic, but she didn't seem that excited about it."

### *Attempt to Transform*

Attempt to transform your mentee into something s/he is not, and you deny who s/he really is and who s/he can become.

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"I don't understand him. I keep telling him he needs to take his studies more seriously and spend his time better. If he doesn't, he's never going to get into a good college. He should know that but when I tell him he just gets sulky."

*Talk Without Listening*

We have two ears and only one mouth. There's a reason for that.

"I don't get it. He never mentioned anything about it to me, and we were talking up a storm during the time we were together." Hmm . . . who was talking?

*Be Pushy*

Be pushy, and you may push your mentee right out of the friendship.

"Felipe is very agreeable, and I've never heard him complain when I tell him what we'll be doing for the afternoon. That's why it's so strange that he forgot about our last two meetings."

*Be a Pushover*

Being a pushover doesn't push friendships in positive directions.

"Well she looked like she was going to cry, so I told her I would buy her a sweater. I mean, I don't want her not to like spending time with me."

*Do It Alone*

Many hands make the work light.

"Sorry I didn't call you, but I was having difficulty trying to figure out what was up with Megan. I guess I should have called you or her teacher to see what was going on."

# Communication Roadblocks

notes

Thomas Gordon, in his book *Parent Effectiveness Training*, identifies twelve styles of communication which discourage and cut off communication. These are often styles exhibited between parents and their children. These same patterns can develop in mentor-mentee relationships. Attention should be paid to communication style, to avoid such occurrences. Here are examples of each style:

1. Ordering, directing, commanding – telling the person what should be done: “Don’t stay out past midnight!”
2. Warning, admonishing, threatening – pointing out the consequences that will occur if the young person does something s/he is not supposed to do “If you stay out past midnight, you’ll be sorry!”
3. Moralizing, exhorting, preaching – telling a person what s/he should do “You ought to be more like this . . . ”
4. Advising, giving solutions or suggestions – giving a person the answers or the solution to a problem without allowing the person to come to their own conclusions “What you need to do is . . . ”
5. Lecturing, teaching, giving logical arguments – using facts, information, or logic to influence a person “Most young people your age don’t know what it means to work.”
6. Judging, criticizing, disagreeing, blaming – giving negative judgment or feedback “That’s a very immature way of looking at things.”
7. Discounting feelings with feigned compliments – giving misleading, distracting feedback “I think you are good looking. I don’t know why having braces bothers you.”
8. Name calling, ridiculing, shaming – embarrassing a person, putting a person down “You are acting like a jerk.”
9. Interpreting, analyzing, diagnosing – telling a person you have him/her figured out, that you know what is wrong “You are acting that way because you got into an argument with your teacher.”
10. Reassuring, sympathizing, consoling, supporting – trying to make a person feel better by denying his/her feelings or convincing the person that the situation isn’t as bad as s/he thought. “Everyone goes through this sometime. It’s not so bad.”

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11. Probing, questioning, interrogating – searching for causes, motives, reasons to help you find a solution to another person’s problems  
“What’s going on in your classes? Are you worried about your grades? Are you thinking about dropping out of school?”
12. Withdrawing, distracting, humoring, diverting – trying to get a person to forget about whatever is bothering him/her. “Forget about your broken date. Come with us to the game this weekend.”

# How to Build Communication

notes

Communication is the probably the most important tool we have to build any type of relationship. Mentor's can and should encourage their mentees to talk about their fears, dreams and concerns. A mentor may, in fact, be the only adult in the mentee's life that truly listens. By listening, mentors can help their mentee to build self-confidence, self-esteem and cultural pride by focusing on their talents, assets and strengths.

## **BUILDING COMMUNICATION**

### *Suspend Judgment*

Try to be as objective as possible as you really listen to what your mentee has to say. Be sure to include body language and other non-verbal information the person is sending to you. Ask questions to clarify whatever you do not understand, rather than making assumptions.

### *Put Yourself in Another Person's Place*

Try to actually step into the other person's shoes for a moment to feel and see the situation from his or her point of view. Remember that cultural diversity, life situations and experiences all combine to acculturate your mentee's point of view.

### *"Own" Your Problem:*

By owning your own problems, you encourage the mentee to do the same. For example, if your mentee missed an appointment with you, it would be important to tell him/her how this made you feel without using "blame or shame" communication styles. Utilizing "I" messages, you can own your own feelings. An example: "I was disappointed last week when you did not show up to meet me".

### *Non-Verbal Communication:*

At times this method of communication can tell you as much or more than anything being said. Look for clues in your mentees body to see what he or she is really saying.

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*Confront the Situation:*

Don't feel afraid to say what is really on your mind. Side stepping the issue will only postpone it until later. Encourage your mentee to talk to you about how they see a situation without screening their feelings to make it "palatable" for you. Don't interrupt them or put words in their mouths or interpret the situation for them.

Be a Good Listener by Reflecting and Clarifying Thoughts

Reflecting means sending back a person's message to help an individual clarify if the content of the message is accurate. You can ask a person, "I heard you say... is that what you said?" or "It sounds like ... is really making you feel angry". Reflecting and clarifying will only be helpful if done in a sincere manner by someone who really cares. (see attachment for a list of reflective words)

## COMMUNICATION TIPS

Most people agree that talking and communicating are not the same. Oftentimes we can hear, but not really comprehend or “get” what the other person is actually trying to tell us. Three basic communication skills can help.

- Listening
- Looking
- Leveling

### *Listening:*

Listening does not have to be passive. It can be as active as talking if done correctly. To listen effectively:

#### Pay Attention...

- Try not to think ahead of what you or the other person is going to say next
- Don't interrupt
- Listen for the feeling underneath the words
- Keep a clear and open mind, avoid or postpone making judgments
- Encourage the speaker to continue or clarify what has been said utilizing reflective listening

### *Looking*

People communicate with verbal and non-verbal language. Pay attention to the whole person by doing the following:

- Watch the speaker's expressions (smiles, frowns, wrinkled forehead)
- Watch the speaker's body language (crossed arms, tapping fingers, eyes, looking at a watch)
- Make eye contact
- Show you are interested by YOUR body language

(keep in mind that in some cultures, eye contact and moving closer are not always acceptable or comfortable. Some cultures and individuals have different comfort levels about personal space)

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*Leveling*

Leveling means being honest about what you are feeling and thinking.

- Be honest in your response or disclosure (however, keep in mind the age of your mentee)
- Speak for yourself using "I" statements
- Accept and/or ask for clarification on the speaker's feelings. DO NOT ASSUME you are sure of what they are trying to say.
- Don't try to change the feeling or give advice without being asked and/or before you hear and evaluate all that is being said both verbally and non-verbally

*Good Listening Habits*

**Good Habits**

- Opening your mind to new perspectives...
- Listen to the whole message
- Listening with understanding
- Asking for clarification
- Getting the message without judgment
- Not interrupting
- Listening for facts and feelings
- Listening rather than pretending to listen
- Creating a positive, comfortable environment
- Reflective listening
- Identifying and replacing negative words

**Bad Habits**

- Closing your mind before hearing all the facts
- Hearing only part of what is being said
- Making instant assumptions
- Thinking you know what is being said
- Putting the speaker down
- Interrupting before the speaker is finished
- Listening for facts only
- Faking attention
- Creating or allowing distractions
- Ignoring feeling words
- Reacting to trigger words without thinking how they are meant by the speaker reaction ahead of time

# MENTOR CODE OF CONDUCT

notes

*Source: Document Kit created by the Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute. The kit contains close to one hundred forms that assist in the implementation of best practices. For more information go to [www.friendsforyouth.org](http://www.friendsforyouth.org). This and all sample forms should be tailored to fit the needs of your particular program.*

THE FOLLOWING IS A CODE OF CONDUCT REQUIRED OF ALL MENTORS. PLEASE READ AND SIGN THIS CODE. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT YOUR *Program name* COUNSELOR.

1. Never use alcohol or drugs when you are with your mentee. Never offer your mentee alcohol or drugs.
2. You and *Program name* staff members are the only individuals allowed to operate the car in which your mentee rides. Always ensure that your mentee is wearing a seatbelt in the car, and obey all traffic laws. You may only take your mentee on a motorcycle if you have obtained permission directly from the parent/legal guardian. If your spouse/partner would like to drive your mentee, s/he must submit her/his driving record and proof of auto insurance to *Program name*.
3. Maintain liability insurance on your car throughout the duration of your commitment as a mentor.
4. If you suspect abuse or neglect of your mentee, discuss this with your counselor immediately.
5. Corporal punishment and physical discipline of your mentee are not permitted even if the parent gives you permission. Discuss an appropriate means of setting goals and limits with your counselor.
6. Respect the privacy and personal boundaries of your mentee. Inappropriate behavior, such as sexual relationships, abuse, or molestation, is not permitted.
7. *Program name* does not allow overnight visits with the exception of *Program name* supervised group activities such as ski trips and camping.
8. Never ask your mentee to keep a secret. Make sure you forewarn your mentee that you can not keep any secrets that may endanger his life or that of somebody else.
9. If you are running late, call your mentee to let her/him know what time you will be there.

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10. Always inform the mentee's parents of your plans and what time you expect to return the mentee home. If you are running late, call the parents as soon as possible.
11. Make sure the parent knows what time the mentee will be home, so the parent can arrange to be there when you arrive. Let the parent know that you cannot drop the child off at an empty house. Discuss these arrangements with the parent when you pick up the child.
12. The child is never to be left in anyone else's care, including boy-friends, girlfriends, husbands, wives, and friends.

I agree to abide by the *Program name* Code of Conduct.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

# Volunteer Responsibility After Placement

notes

You have assumed a relationship with a mentee for a period of time that you and your agency has decided upon. At the end of that period, the relationship can be terminated or continued. Some relationships last a lifetime.

You are directly responsible to the staff of the agency that made your match.

You are responsible to communicate with your mentee on a weekly basis. If you are going to be out of town, tell your mentee ahead of time, and if possible call from the road, and/or send postcards.

It is recommended that you telephone your mentee at least once a week. This phone call should express interest in the well-being of the mentee and make certain that plans are understood for the next visit. If the mentee does not have a telephone, make it understood at what specific time that he/she can call you.

You are responsible for informing the office promptly of any change in your address or phone number (don't forget-we need to know when your work phone changes also) or that of the child with whom you are matched.

You should call your Case Manager at any time a problem or suspected problem begins to emerge with your match. Do not wait until a little problem becomes a big one.

You should call your Case Manager if you suspect child abuse or if your mentee tells you they have been abused.

You are to keep in strict confidence all personal information regarding your mentee.

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**GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS**

The journey through childhood to adulthood is not an easy one even under the best of circumstances. But for a child who has lost one parent and/or whose mother is unable to give him/her the attention and nurturing every child needs, growing up can be overwhelming. The role of a mentor is a very special one; providing understanding, acceptance, support and guidance that will help enable a child to develop and reach his/her potential. The nature of this friendship involves a moral commitment to a child, along with fun and great personal satisfaction. These guidelines are intended to outline the specific responsibilities of a mentor and provide some helpful pointers on how to build the foundation for this friendship.

*Be reliable about contacting your mentee!*

See him or her at least once a week whenever possible. At the end of each visit always let the child know when he or she can expect to see or hear from you next so that the child has something definite to look forward to. Always keep planned appointments with your mentee unless it is absolutely impossible. If it is necessary to cancel an appointment, or if you will be late, let him or her know as far in advance as possible and reschedule your visit at the earliest possible time.

If a business trip, vacation or long-term illness will make weekly contacts impossible for some period, let your mentee know this as far in advance as possible. Such a disruption can be very unsettling to a child and can bring forth half-forgotten feelings of insecurity, hurt, anger, confusion and distrust about important adults letting him/her down. Of course, reactions vary with each individual child, but letters and telephone calls can be very reassuring at this time.

A child's sense of continuity is more fragile than an adult's, and his or her sense of time is less developed. It is the responsibility of the mentor to take the initiative in maintaining a sense of continuity in the relationship. Only if contact is frequent, consistent, and reliable, can your mentee develop confidence in you and security within the friendship.

*Stay in touch with the staff!*

At the beginning of your match, your Case Manager will be contacting you on a regular basis to discuss how the match is going. After a time, these contacts may be reduced. The Case Manager will also be in

touch with the parent to get his/her impression of the progress of the match. If at any time between contacts with you, a large or small problem should arise, it is the responsibility of the mentor to contact the Case Manager to discuss it. Do not discuss problems with the parent before contacting the office!

You need not wait until you have a problem to contact the office. Feel free to call any time you would like to discuss your match with the Case Manager, or make an appointment to come into the office. We are very anxious for you to have a good experience with your match and are always interested in how things are going.

Be careful about your level of involvement with the child's family! Remember you are there to mentor the child NOT the family.

Your relationship is with the child, not his/her family. Extending this relationship to other family members usually jeopardizes the friendship. Get acquainted with the parent enough so that he/she feels comfortable leaving his/her child with you. In general; however, a good rule concerning the mentee's home is to enter, be courteous, and leave. It is important that the child always be present during any contact with other family members. Discourage confidence by the parent, whether about the child or other family problems. If the parent needs help, suggest she contact the office. Do not give reports on the child to the parent. Your mentee may feel "ganged-up" on and may become jealous. If during an outing the child discusses a problem that he/she is having with the parent, listen with empathy, but do not criticize the parent.

Do not take over areas for which the parent should be responsible; i.e., disciplining the child, conferring with school personnel or arranging for medical diagnosis or treatment (except in an emergency). In general, activities should be planned outside the child's home and should not include other family members, except for very exceptional occasions.

All this does not mean that your mentee should not be involved with your family. When the two of you begin to feel at ease in your friendship, you might want to occasionally include the child in your own family activities. For some children, this will be their only exposure to a home not dominated by apathy, anger, or fear.

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*Enjoy your first contact!*

At the time of introduction, begin to get to know your mentee by showing an interest in his/her activities and experiences. Go slow. Let the child set the pace. You may suggest going for a walk or drive, or out for a snack. Before and during this time, here are a few questions you might like to ask:

- What activities does he/she like best? What kinds of things does he/she like to do with his/her hands?
- Has he/she ever gone camping; fishing; backpacking?
- Does he/she belong to any groups, such as scouts, sports teams, school clubs?
- Does he/she have any pets? Does he/she like animals?
- Has he/she ever had a chance to earn his/her own money (paper routes, mowing laws, etc.)?
- Does he/she like to read? If so, what?
- Where does he/she attend school? Like it? Favorite subjects?
- Do you have any career goals?
- Does he/she have a special friend or buddy? Girlfriend or boyfriend?
- Compliment him/her on appearance, hair, accomplishments, attitude, etc.

Outings should be fun activities, but in general should be inexpensive or free. Making a habit of going places that requires the volunteer to spend money can develop in the child's mind the idea that your main function is to keep him/her entertained. Occasional extravagant outings are fun if you can afford them, but are not necessary. On all outings, the emphasis should be on simply being together, developing the quality of friendship.

*Be patient!*

Don't expect overnight miracles. When things have been going wrong for years for a child, they cannot be corrected in a few weeks, months or even years. The positive impact of your work may not have a decisive effect until long after you have stopped working with the child. Even if slow progress is visible, there will be setbacks; be ready for them. Develop the ability to deal with your own disappointment

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and frustration, but never vent these feelings on the child. We all like to achieve success with a youngster, but avoid falling into the unconscious trap of feeling he or she “owes” it to you. The child may not talk about his/her problems until he/she begins to know you really accept and like him or her. Be cautious about asking probing personal questions, especially early in the relationship. The child may resent such intrusions until the friendship can support discussion of personal material.

*Give attention and affection!*

Sustained attention and affection from an adult (especially from a man in the case of a boy) may be an experience a child has rarely or never had before. Especially in the beginning, he or she may not know how to handle it in a healthy way and may pretend not to notice it or may explicit thanks or gratitude from the child or the parent. Even if a child feels it, he/she may not know how to express or communicate it and may actually be embarrassed by it.

*Follow through on what you say!*

This applies to promises you make, as well as to discipline. Set clear and firm limits of acceptable conduct for your mentee. He/she needs to know what your standards are. Always mean what you say and never make a promise unless you have thought it through thoroughly. The child may test you to see if you will follow through on limits you have set and promises you have made. This is an important part of learning to trust you.

*Do not try to mold the child in your image!*

If your friendship has a firm base, your behaviors, values, ideas, interests, attitudes and even personal style will have a great impact on your mentee. He/she may adopt certain aspects of your personality and values. Such modeling is a part of your function as a role model. At the same time, the child needs your support in developing independently his or her own values and best potentials. Express your honest feelings about the child's behavior, including disapproval where warranted, but make it clear that it is the behavior that is unacceptable; not the child. Remember too, the enormous value of praise and appreciation for desirable behavior. Try to “catch them” doing something right.

## notes

*Listen with understanding!*

Often a mentor is a child's first exposure to someone who will really listen to his/her feelings and observations about the world around them. Most children have been "talked at" plenty, but have never learned to listen, because they have never been listened to. Patient and understanding listening from you, along with some encouragement to think about his/her own actions and goals, can give a child the self-awareness necessary for responsible and satisfying behavior.

*Develop trust and acceptance!*

Be dependable in what you say by respecting the child's privacy and allowing him or her to set the pace of the relationship. By giving your unconditional acceptance you will gain the child's trust. It is important, too, that you convey your respect for and trust in the child and his/her potential, so that he/she can learn self-acceptance and confidence. Without such acceptance, a child wastes much energy on rebellion, self-justification and/or self-criticism. Paradoxically, the more accepted and self-accepting a child feels, the freer he/she is to grow and change.

*Evaluation*

The primary goal of mentoring is to provide a relationship for two persons to become actively involved with the following goals set forth:

1. To provide a "model for identification" for a child.
2. To enrich the lives of both persons involved.
3. To assist the child in broadening his/her exposure to the various facets of life.
4. To share acceptable patterns of behavior.
5. To provide guidance, understanding, love and patience as the child develops into maturity.

The above goals give us some rationale for becoming involved. It is the intent of our program that every volunteer accomplish as much as possible during the time spent in the program. Some of you may become impatient – not realizing that the chance for growth and development is highly limited for many of the children in our community. Others of you may be able to see movement and change in a short period of time. It is important that each of you understand that each relationship is different – thus progress will be different for each

## notes

volunteer. It is our desire that your progress and your gains be maintained.

It is always helpful to evaluate your relationship. This can be done by you and the child you are matched with in an open-ended type of conversation about what has happened since the beginning of your relationship. This type of conversation will help both of you understand more fully the depth of the relationship and any significant gains. It is a way of reminding each other that this type of experience is meaningful. Often it is helpful for the two of you to periodically make a list of all the things you have done, all the places you have visited, and all the activities you have shared. This will remind both of you of how much you have shared together.

You will be contacted by the Case Manager for a brief discussion regarding the progress of the match. Every twelve months a more in-depth evaluation will be made and goals past and future will be reviewed. Of course, at any time you may initiate an evaluation with the Case Manager by request.

### *Closure*

It is inevitable that all relationships end. The reasons vary and may include the following:

1. Transfer of volunteer – leaving town
2. Personal reasons (volunteer) – marriage, change of employment, health, financial problems, lack of time, new baby, etc.
3. Changing situation of child or his/her family – moving, family problems, remarriage of parent, institutionalization of child, etc.
4. Indications that such a relationship is no longer needed
5. Unsatisfactory relationship
6. Mutual agreement of volunteer, child, and staff
7. Graduation – when the child reaches maturity

Whatever the reasons for closure of the relationship, feelings are involved and must be dealt with. Some of the feelings of the volunteer and/or child may be:

1. Affection and dependency: Either or both the volunteer and child may share a degree of affection for each other and may be dependent upon each other.

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2. Understanding and impatience: Throughout the relationship, we hope some degree of understanding has been achieved between the volunteer and child. Unfulfilled expectations may have been handled with impatience.
3. Guilt: The volunteer may feel that he/she has not succeeded in everything he/she had hoped to accomplish and may feel guilty or unsuccessful.
4. Anger and frustration: The volunteer may have experienced some frustration during the course of the relationship, i.e., an inability to manage or control the relationship, too many phone calls from a child, or a feeling of being "used" by the child and their family.

The feelings experienced when closure is discussed are very real. The child may be wondering, "Why are you leaving me?" All of these feelings, and many more, indicate some deep emotions of regret and/or anger.

The closure process is significant because it is vital that we deal openly with feelings involved. If we avoid or deny these feelings, we are in essence denying what has been built by the relationship. It can be a learning experience for the child to realize that in life some relationships do end. To deal openly with the feelings and questions which are evoked by the closure is one of the most important parts of the entire relationship.

Because each relationship is different, the gains and successes are different, the feelings involved are different and the closure process will be different. Here are some important guidelines to remember in closing your match.

1. Each closure must be done with consent and supervision of the staff.. There are more people involved in the relationship than just the volunteer and child. There are parents, siblings, teachers, other agencies involved with the child's family, and staff. **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU NOT END THE RELATIONSHIP ALONE!** Discuss your decision first with the agency Case Manager
2. Give yourself a minimum of four weeks to close. Begin to involve yourself and the child in a discussion of closure as soon as the need is recognized.
3. **BE HONEST.** Discuss the reasons for ending the relationship honestly. Admit your feelings of affection, guilt, disappointment, etc. Give the child an opportunity to discuss his/her feelings.

4. Don't rush it. Do not attempt to initiate and conclude the closure process too fast. It is advisable to merely mention it the first visit – then discuss it in more detail on successive visits.
5. Close the file or Rematch? Work with the staff. Make recommendations with your Case Manager as to whether the child should be terminated from the program or placed on the waiting list for a new mentor.
6. Keep the Case Manager informed of any information regarding the closure process.
7. Even though your relationship has been officially closed, try to contact the child (telephone or postcard) every few months to let him/her know that the relationship has not been forgotten.

The staff and child must be involved in the closure process. Ask their help in making alternative suggestions. Let them tell you what they might do if they were in your situation. The child must be a part of this process, after all, he/she is directly affected by it.

You have shared many positive experiences during the length of the friendship...let the closure of the match be another one.

notes





2004  
Regional Training

# REFERENCES

*“Children have never been good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”*

*James Baldwin - Civil Rights Activist*

## notes

## REFERENCES

- CARS Publications- The following publications produced by CARS can be found by going to [www.emt.org/publications.html](http://www.emt.org/publications.html)
  - Designing an Effective Training Program for Your Mentors
  - How to Develop an Operations Manual for Your Mentoring Program
  - Introduction to Youth Gangs
  - Mentoring Essentials: Risk Management for Mentoring Programs
  - Responsible Mentoring: Talking About Drugs, Sex and Other Difficult Issues
  - When Stakes are High: Research-Based Mentoring for Youth with Multiple Risk Factors
- Building relationships with youth in program settings: A study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Morrow, K. V., and Styles, M. B. (1995). [www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org)
- Caring Adults Support the Healthy Development of Youth by Joyce Walker and Lonnie White (from <http://www.fourh.umn.edu/resources/Center/PDF/Center-Story3.pdf>)
- Designing An Effective Training Program For Your Mentors. (2001). The EMT Group, Inc. A one day workshop concentrating on the how to's of developing a mentor training manual and program. [www.emt.org/userfiles/DesigningAnEffectiveMentorTraining.PDF](http://www.emt.org/userfiles/DesigningAnEffectiveMentorTraining.PDF)
- Document Kit. Published by the Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute. Contains close to 100 sample forms programs can use in their mentoring programs. [www.friendsforyouth.org](http://www.friendsforyouth.org)
- Foundations of Successful Youth Mentoring: A Guidebook for Program Development.  
Written for program administrators, board members, mentoring staff, and others interested in establishing or improving youth mentoring programs, this 110-page guidebook lays the foundation for a mentoring program's long-term success and the safety and well-being of the youth they serve. The guidebook identifies five critical foundations of successful youth mentoring and delivers specific guidance on how to optimize them in new and existing mentoring programs. Includes self-assessment questions, listings of other key resources, detailed checklists, and planning timelines. <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/foundations.html>

- Running a Safe and Effective Mentoring Program. Published by the Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute and written by Elsy Arevalo and Becky Cooper. This manual takes programs through a step by step process of understanding and implementing best practices into their services. [www.friendsforyouth.org](http://www.friendsforyouth.org)
- Same-Race and Cross-Race Matching. (Technical Assistance Packet #7). National Mentoring Center. [www.nwrel.org](http://www.nwrel.org)
- Training New Mentors. (Technical Assistance Packet #5). National Mentoring Center.  
An excellent resource for program coordinators and staff trainers, this training outline contains a dozen activities for new mentor orientation. The guide is divided into two sections: Mentors' Roles and Expectations, which focuses on the basics of mentor/mentee relationships, and Speaking of Trust, which highlights listening skills and communication development. All activities come with facilitator notes and handouts, and many contain role-playing exercises to help new mentors understand the relationship from a variety of viewpoints. Download File
- Volunteer Training. Mentoring Institute, Newsletter: Connections. [http://www.homestead.com/prosites-ffy/files/Copy\\_of\\_Summer\\_2002.pdf](http://www.homestead.com/prosites-ffy/files/Copy_of_Summer_2002.pdf)
- Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner City Youth  
by Milbrey W. McLaughlin (Author), Merita A. Irby (Author), Juliet Langman (Author)

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