Mentor Training Manual

Building a Bridge to Kids

Merrymeeting Bay Mentoring Coalition

As an old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man picking up a starfish and flinging it into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this.

The young man answered that the starfish would die if left stranded in the morning sun.

“But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish,” countered the old man. “How can your effort make any difference?”

The young man, as he threw another starfish into the safety of the waves replied, “It makes a difference to this one.”

2008 – 2009 Academic Year
Updated 9/18/2007
The Merrymeeting Bay Mentoring Coalition

Our Mission

The Merrymeeting Bay Mentoring Coalition is a partnership of local mentoring and youth service organizations as well as local businesses to educate, recruit, train, and evaluate local mentors. The goal of the partnership is to create a stronger connection between the adults, children, and youth in our communities. We believe that every child has the potential to grow into a successful, caring adult — though not all children have access to the support needed to do so. By providing quality mentoring services in the Merrymeeting Bay area, the Coalition hopes to help our young people succeed in life and become positive contributors to our communities. The Partnership was initiated by Riverview Foundation in Collaboration with the Communities for Children and Youth VISTA Project.

Partners Include

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bath / Brunswick
Bowdoin College
Brunswick High School Connections
Communities for Children and Youth
Energy East
Maine Mentoring Project
Maine School Administrative District #75
Riverview Foundation
Sweetser
Volunteers of America NNE
United Way of Midcoast Maine
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MENTORS WANT TO KNOW

Logistics:
- How is a match made?
- What things are considered?
- How much time/how often do I spend with my mentee?
- Will there be training so I know what activities I can do with them?
- What if the match doesn’t seem to go well?

The Mentees:
- What are the mentees like?
- What challenges do they face?
- What are their backgrounds?
- Why are they in this program?

The Relationship:
- What roles will I play – parent, teacher, friend?
- Am I doing or saying the right things?
- Why am I not feeling satisfied with my work with this mentee?
- What do I do if I’m going on vacation?
- Can I give my mentee money or a gift?
- How do I answer questions about sensitive issues (e.g. sexuality, drug use, etc.)?
- What should we talk about?
- Why doesn’t my mentee open up to me?

The Family:
- How do the parents feel about their child getting a mentor?
- How might the family respond to me?
- Do I contact the mentee’s parent?
- How can I know I’m helping them when I feel their parents are telling them the opposite of what I am telling them?

This manual should provide answers to these questions and more. You can always contact your mentoring program representative with any other questions that might arise!

So let’s jump right in!
MENTORING

**Definition:** Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee. ¹

Mentors encourage their mentees to think, act and evaluate while also helping them to identify and develop their potential. A mentor praises, listens, and encourages their mentee to use their strengths, follow his or her dreams and accept challenges.

Mentoring can occur in several different formats:

- **Traditional One-to-One Mentoring:** One-to-one mentoring places one adult in a relationship with one youth. The mentor and mentee meet regularly for the length of time determined by the organization that establishes the match.

- **Group Mentoring:** Group mentoring involves one adult mentor forming a relationship with a group of up to four young people. The mentor assumes the role of leader and makes a commitment to meet regularly with the group over a long period of time.

- **Team Mentoring:** Team mentoring involves several adults working with small groups of young people, with an adult-to-youth ratio no greater than one to four.

- **Peer Mentoring:** Peer mentoring provides an opportunity for a caring youth to develop a guiding, teaching relationship with a younger person. For example, a high school student might tutor an elementary school student in reading.

- **E-mentoring:** (also known as online mentoring, or telementoring). The pair communicates via the Internet; often, the mentor serves as a guide or advisor in school- or career-related areas. For example, helping the mentee complete a school project or discussing future education and career options.

Mentoring can also take place in a wide array of settings, such as these:

- Workplace
- School
- Faith-based organization
- Juvenile corrections facility
- At the mentee’s home
- Community setting
- Online
Regardless of the location or type of mentoring, the most important part of the mentoring relationship is that the mentor possesses a few key qualities:

- **Personal commitment to be involved with another person for an extended time — one year at minimum for many programs, six months for others.** Mentors have a genuine desire to be part of other people’s lives, to help them with tough decisions and to see them become the best they can be. They have to be invested in the mentoring relationship over the long haul to be there long enough to make a difference.

- **Respect for individuals and their right to make their own choices in life.** Mentors should not approach the mentee with the attitude that their own ways are better or that participants need to be rescued. Mentors who convey a sense of respect and dignity in the relationship win the trust of their mentees and the privilege of being advisors to them.

- **Ability to listen and to accept different points of view.** Most people can find someone who will give advice or express opinions. It’s much harder to find someone who will suspend his or her own judgment and really listen. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions and giving mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with a minimum of interference.

- **Ability to empathize with another person’s struggles.** Mentors can feel with people without feeling pity for them. Even without having had the same life experiences, they can empathize with their mentee’s feelings and personal problems.

- **Ability to see solutions and opportunities as well as barriers.** Effective mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by their mentees with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of a seeming jumble of issues and point out sensible alternatives.

- **Flexibility and openness.** Mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their mentees, to learn new things that are important to their mentees (music, styles, philosophies, etc.), and even to be changed by their relationship.

Think you can handle these? Then you have what it takes to be a great mentor!

First you might want to know a little bit about the mentees and how they come to be referred into a mentoring program.
THE MENTEE

There are many reasons why children are referred to a mentoring program. Typically, either parents, social workers, or school representatives such as teachers and guidance counselors make a request for a specific child to have a mentor.

Although every child is unique and no two children have exactly the same reason for needing a mentor, there are some common risk factors and characteristics of some, but not all, children and youth that are recommended for mentoring programs.

Some of these may include:

- Substance abuse
- Exposure to criminal behavior
- Divorce
- Family death
- ADHD, ODD, ADD, etc.
- Low Self-esteem
- Little Exposure to positive adult role models on a daily basis
- Disinterest in academics/school

In general, students that are “high risk” often posses some of the following characteristics:

- Feel they do not “belong” at school
- Are very quiet/withdrawn
- Exhibit disruptive behavior and rebellious attitudes
- Have a low level of self-esteem
- Are below expected grade level for their age
- Exhibit language difficulties
- Are gifted or talented and perhaps bored with school
- Have poor home–school communications
- Are frequently absent or tardy
- Request frequent health referrals
- Are invisible dropouts (present in body but not in mind)
- Are parents
- Have difficulty relating to authority figures or structured situations.

When matching mentors with their mentees, programs take into consideration the individual characteristics of the mentee as well as things like:

- Common Interests - Vocational, educational and recreational.
- Background - Childhood upbringing, culture, religion.
- Life Experience - Absence of parent in household, growing up as the oldest child in a large family, death of a parent, raised by a grandparent.
- Strengths and Weaknesses of Mentor and Mentee - Personality types, academic level, open-mindedness, energy level.
- Mentee and Mentor Ability to Travel

In doing this, mentoring programs strive to provide a mentee and mentor with the greatest chance for developing a successful and meaningful relationship.
THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS

It’s important that you understand where the parent’s fall in all of this. Often, parents are asked to agree to some ground rules relating to their child being in a mentoring relationship. The following are some basic guidelines asked of parents in order to make the mentoring relationship a success. Try to remember that you should not take on the role of a parent to your mentee and should always be respectful of a parent’s wishes.

- Please do not ask your child’s mentor to provide transportation, buy presents, be the disciplinarian or baby-sit for your family. The mentor is a companion to the mentee.
- Please don’t discuss your child with the mentor in the presence of your child. If you think there is something the mentor should know, call him/her when your child is away.
- Try to let the mentor know, once in a while, that his/her efforts are appreciated, and please help your child be considerate of the mentor (e.g., remembering his/her birthday, making occasional phone calls).
- Forgive minor mistakes in judgment. The mentor is neither a trained professional nor perfect. You will probably disagree with him/her sometimes.
- Please don’t deprive your child of the weekly visit with his/her mentor as a means of discipline.
- The mentoring relationship needs time to develop — at least three months — so don’t judge it too quickly; give it time.
- Notify the agency when you have a change of phone number or address.
- Please keep in mind that all information is confidential and should be shared only with your child’s guidance counselor or social worker.
- The success or failure of a match depends, in part, on the cooperation of all the individuals concerned. It is important to maintain open conversation with program representatives to provide feedback on how the match is working for your child.

Common Questions and Answers from Parents

What should I do if my child cannot attend a meeting with the mentor?
To encourage responsibility in your child, have him/her call the mentor when a meeting must be rescheduled. If your child is very ill, you may want to call yourself. Advance communication will help avoid misunderstandings.

If my child has misbehaved, should I allow him/her to see the mentor?
The mentor’s weekly meeting should not be used to discipline your child. Punishing your child by denying time with the mentor puts you in opposition to the mentor instead of emphasizing your mutual concern to build your child’s competence.

What if the mentor says things with which I do not agree?
No matter how carefully we match mentors and mentees, you may find some areas where your beliefs or ideas differ from your mentor’s. If these are important to you, let the mentor know.
DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

We’ve covered what a mentor is and a little about the young people that become mentees. The next step is to learn a little about the theory behind mentoring and learn exactly why mentoring is such a great way to promote the healthy development of children and youth. The Developmental Asset approach is one way to begin to understand this; the following is a brief introduction to the “asset approach.”

The assets focus on the strengths of young people, not their deficits. For decades, adults in our society have concentrated on identifying and “fixing” the problems that surface in youth and youth cultures. An asset approach, like mentoring itself, recognizes that prevention is only one element in a more integrated approach that looks at what all youth need to grow up healthy. The asset framework is aimed at developing the wholeness of each young person. This approach does not ignore or downplay the critical role of prevention and intervention in addressing the risks and deficits that many youth face. Instead, it highlights the strengths in and around young people that are critical to their well-being. Mentoring programs, which are based on building relationships between mentors and mentees, provide a prime opportunity to build assets.

Based on Search Institute’s surveys of more than 200,000 students in grades 6-12 in 318 U.S. communities during the 1999-2000 school year, these charts show that the more assets young people experience, the less likely they are to engage in a wide range of risky behaviors, and the more likely they are to engage in positive behaviors.

The Power of Assets to Promote Positive Attitudes and Behaviors

The Power of Assets to Protect from High-Risk Behaviors

        Succeeds in School                      Maintains Good Health

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        Problem Alcohol Use                      Violence

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Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. The percentages of young people who report experiencing each asset were gathered from the administration of the *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey in 318 communities and 33 states.

| Asset type | Asset name and definition | Percentage
|------------|---------------------------|-------------
| Support    | 1. Family Support - Family life provides high levels of love and support. 70% |
|            | 2. Positive Family Communication - Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. 30% |
|            | 3. Other Adult Relationships - Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults. 45% |
|            | 4. Caring Neighborhood - Young person experiences caring neighbors. 40% |
|            | 5. Caring School Climate - School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 29% |
|            | 6. Parent Involvement in Schooling - Parent(s) is actively involved in helping young person succeed in school. 34% |
| Empowerment | 7. Community Values Youth - Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 25% |
|            | 8. Youth as Resources - Young people are given useful roles in the community. 28% |
|            | 9. Service to Others - Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 51% |
|            | 10. Safety - Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood. 51% |
| Boundaries & Expectations | 11. Family Boundaries - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person’s whereabouts. 48% |
|            | 12. School Boundaries - School provides clear rules and consequences. 53% |
|            | 13. Neighborhood Boundaries - Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior. 49% |
|            | 14. Adult Role Models - Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 30% |
|            | 15. Positive Peer Influence - Young person’s best friends model responsible behavior. 65% |
|            | 16. High Expectations - Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. 49% |
| Constructive Use of Time | 17. Creative Activities - Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 20% |
|            | 18. Youth Programs - Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 58% |
|            | 19. Religious Community - Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 63% |
|            | 20. Time at Home - Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week. 49% |
| Commitment to Learning | 21. Achievement Motivation - Young person is motivated to do well in school. 67% |
|            | 22. School Engagement - Young person is actively engaged in learning. 61% |
|            | 23. Homework - Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 53% |
|            | 24. Bonding to School - Young person cares about her or his school. 54% |
|            | 25. Reading for Pleasure - Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week. 23% |
| Positive Values | 26. Caring - Young person places high value on helping other people. 50% |
|            | 27. Equality and Social Justice - Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 52% |
|            | 28. Integrity - Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 68% |
|            | 29. Honesty - Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy.” 67% |
|            | 30. Responsibility - Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 63% |
|            | 31. Restraint - Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs. 47% |
| Social Competencies | 32. Planning and Decision Making - Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 30% |
|            | 33. Interpersonal Competence - Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 47% |
|            | 34. Cultural Competence - Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural / racial / ethnic backgrounds. 42% |
|            | 35. Resistance Skills - Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 42% |
|            | 36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution - Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently. 45% |
| Positive Identity | 37. Personal Power - Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me.” 44% |
|            | 38. Self-Esteem - Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 52% |
|            | 39. Sense of Purpose - Young person reports that "my life has purpose.” 59% |
|            | 40. Positive view of personal future - Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future. 74% |
Below are some general principles that are important to remember about successfully building Developmental Assets with your mentee (or any young person in your life). Using these principles as a guideline for how you interact with and communicate with your mentee can help boost your chances of successfully providing your mentee with ample opportunity to build assets.

- **Everyone can build assets.** Not just parents, teachers, and other people with college degrees in child and youth development. Whether you are an electrician or a singer, you have the power to be a positive influence in the life of a young person.

- **All young people need assets.** Search Institute’s research shows that almost all young people need more assets than they have. Young people may have lots of friends or achieve high marks in school, but they may be lacking in other areas. Mentors can help them identify strengths and build the assets that are missing in their lives.

- **Relationships are key.** Strong relationships between adults and young people, young people and their peers, and teenagers and children are central to building assets. As a mentor, you have a significant opportunity to make a difference in your mentee’s life, just by being there for them.

- **Asset building is an ongoing process.** It starts when a child is born and continues through high school and beyond. It’s never too late to start building assets in your mentee, no matter at what age you began your mentoring relationship or what their life has been like up until now.

- **Consistent messages are important.** It is important for families, schools, communities, and others to give young people consistent and similar messages about what is important and what is expected of them. Mentors can be critical to exposing young people to positive messages, values, and examples; these messages can be modeled in action by the way you live your life and the way you and your mentee interact with each other and the world around you.

- **Intentional repetition is important.** Assets must be continually reinforced across the years and in all areas of a young person’s life. As a significant adult in your mentee’s life, you have a great opportunity to continually emphasize the positive messages and experiences they need throughout their young life—and beyond.
YOUR ROLE AS A MENTOR

So, now that you know a little about what mentoring is and why it's important, we can get into the important part – how to be a good mentor. Don’t be discouraged by the size of this packet, a major part of being a good mentor is simply working to form a close relationship with a young person. As a mentor, you should consider yourself...

A friend
Be the adult in your mentee's life who is just there without having to fix him or her. Hanging out and talking is surprisingly helpful to a young person’s healthy development. Of course, when your mentee comes to you for help or advice, it is appropriate to help them develop solutions. It's also okay to check in with them if you suspect that they are struggling with something. Don’t feel the need to provide non-stop advice. So, take the pressure off of yourself and just enjoy your mentee's company.

A role model
The best that you can do is to lead by example. This is not the same as being perfect. Rather, it is about acknowledging your imperfections and sharing your strengths. It is also about advocating for your mentee when dangers to his physical or emotional well-being are present in his life. By becoming a mentor, you've already modeled the most important thing a human being can do: caring about another. Here are some other ways you can be a positive role model for your mentee:

- Keep your word: Call when you say you will. Do what you say you will. Be there when you say you will;
- Have a positive outlook;
- If you enter a competitive activity with your mentee, keep it in perspective and by all means do not cheat (or even fudge a little) to help your mentee win, get a better place in line at an event, etc.; and
- Let your mentee see you going out of your way to help others.

A confidant
Building a close relationship with your mentee will help them build better relationships with others in their life as well, like parents and peers. In the process, your mentee may tell you things they do not feel comfortable telling anyone else. Sometimes they may tell you about hopes, dreams, insecurities, or mistakes they have made. Your role is to be supportive of your mentee as a person with possibilities, regardless of what kinds of actions or attitudes they confide in you.

A nurturer of possibilities
Your role is to see the gifts and possibilities of your mentee and help him flourish personally. You should help your mentee channel his gifts toward actions that make him a resource to others in his family, neighborhood, school, or community.
There are many things that you can be as a mentor. However, there are a few roles that you should never have to take on in your relationship with your mentee…

A mentor to the family
Your role is to provide special attention to your mentee; therefore, your energy and attention should be focused on providing support to your mentee and not the family.

A parent, counselor, financier, social worker, or doctor
If your mentee tells you about experiences or health conditions that concern you, always turn to the mentoring program staff for help. It is not your responsibility to try to address conditions or situations that require professional help. The staff at the mentoring program may be able to find additional help for him, including local information and referral services.

A savior
You shouldn’t see your role in this relationship as coming in to make a young person’s life better or to fix his or her problems. Certainly your support can help your mentee overcome hurdles they face, but don’t forget that every young person has gifts and talents that make them more than just a “recipient” of your support.

TOP MENTORING TIPS

Got all that? Great! Here are some tips to help make you and your mentee get the most out of the time you spend together.

Be Caring
Don’t let things get too complicated. The essence of mentoring is you caring, and that along goes a long way. Mentors care about their mentees’ progress in school and career planning, as well as their personal development and the children often need just this – old fashioned warm, loving care and understanding.

Be There
Mentoring only works when you are there. You must find the time to see your mentee regularly. Good intentions are not enough, children can tell how much you care by how often you show up, so being their steadily is very important. When you show up for every meeting with your mentee and strive to make things work out you send your mentee a strong message that you care and that he or she is worth caring about.
Listen
Talking and communicating are not the same things. This packet offers some good advice on communication. Where you go and what you do with your mentee is less important than how well you listen.

Be Resilient
Mentoring takes time to produce results. Children will not offer their trust and affection quickly, so it is important to be patient and realistic. Remember, mentees, regardless of their “risk factors” are still children and your relationship with them will be prone to natural ups and downs. Just remember that you ARE making a difference, though it may not be evident in the short term.

Be Respectful
Be sensitive to the role and feelings of the mentee’s parents and issues of cultural diversity. Preserve the confidentiality of all information learned about the student and family.

Be yourself
You don’t have to pretend to know everything or pretend to be someone you are not. Similarly, try not to carry empathy and sympathy to the point where you sound false or patronizing.

Be a Guide
Mentors are there to help their mentees find life direction, never to push them. As a mentor, you can give insights about keeping on task and setting goals and priorities and offer your own insight towards helping the mentee make good decisions. Try to avoid telling your mentee what to do, instead work together to help him or her reach their own decisions. Some mentees will have a lot of suggestions about what you can do together, but most will need a little guidance on your part. If your mentee doesn't have any preferences, start by giving them a range of choices. "Here are some things we can do. Which ones sound good to you?"

Be Proud and Rewarded
As a mentor you are providing a great service and are truly making a huge difference in the life of a child. Many mentors find the relationship is as rewarding for them as it is for their mentee.
THE RELATIONSHIP

The speed with which your particular relationship develops will depend on many things, some that you can control such as how you spend your time and how often you see your mentee, and some that you can’t such as your mentee’s individual personality. It’s helpful to know the typical stages of development for mentoring relationships so that you do not get discouraged if things do not go as you expect.

Stage 1: Developing Rapport and Building Trust
The “getting to know you” phase is the most critical stage of the relationship. Things to expect and work on during Stage 1 include:

- **Predictability and consistency**
  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, it’s 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, consistency is necessary, even if the young person is not as consistent as you are.

- **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. A mentee might test the mentor by not showing up for a scheduled meeting to see how the mentor will react.

- **Establish confidentiality**
  During the first stage of the relationship, it’s important to establish confidentiality with your young person. This helps develop trust. The mentor should let the mentee know that whatever he or she wants to share with the mentor will remain confidential, as long as (and it’s important to stress this point) what the young person tells the mentor is not going to harm the young person or someone else. It’s 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 him or her or someone else, the young person will not feel betrayed.

- **Goal setting (transitions into Stage 2)**
  It’s helpful during Stage 1 to take the time to set at least one achievable goal together for the relationship. What do the two of you want to get out of this relationship? It’s also good to help your mentee set personal goals. Young people often do not learn how to set goals, and this will provide them with the opportunity to set goals and work toward achieving them. Your site coordinator might be able to help you suggest goals that you can propose to work on with your mentee.
Stage 2: The Middle—Reaching Goals
Once trust has been established, the relationship moves into Stage 2. During this stage, the
mentor and mentee can begin to start working toward the goals they set during the first stage of
the relationship. Things to expect during Stage 2 include:

- **Closeness**
  Generally, during the second stage the mentor and mentee can sense a genuine closeness
  in the relationship.

- **Affirming the uniqueness of the relationship**
  Once the relationship has reached this stage, it’s helpful to do something special or
different from what the mentor and mentee did during the first stage, which helps affirm
the uniqueness of the relationship. For example, go to a museum, sporting event, special
restaurant, etc.

- **The relationship may be rocky or smooth**
  All relationships have their ups and downs. Once the relationship has reached the second
  stage, there will still be some rough periods. Mentors should be prepared and not assume
  that something is wrong with the relationship if this happens.

- **Rely on staff support**

Stage 3: Closure
If the rough period continues or if a mentor feels that the pair has not reached the second stage,
he or she shouldn’t hesitate to seek support from the mentoring program coordinator. Sometimes
two people, no matter how they look on paper, just don’t “click.” Some mentor/mentee pairs
don’t need to worry about this stage until farther down the road. However, at some point all
relationships will come to an end—whether it’s because the program is over, the mentor is
moving or for some other reason. When this happens, it’s critical that the closure stage not be
overlooked. Many young people today have already had adults come and go in their lives and are
very rarely provided the opportunity to say a proper goodbye.

- **Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial and resentment**
  In order to help mentees express emotions about the relationship ending, mentors should
  model appropriate behavior. The mentor should first express his or her feelings and
  emotions about the end of the relationship and then let the mentee do the same.

- **Provide opportunities for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful and affirming way**
  Mentors shouldn’t wait for the very last meeting with their mentees to say goodbye. The
  mentor should slowly bring it up as soon as he or she becomes aware that the relationship
  will be coming to a close.

- **Address appropriate situations for staying in touch**
  Mentors should check with the mentoring program coordinator to find out the policy for
  staying in touch with their mentees once the program has come to an end.
HELPFUL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The following four communication skills are very helpful for mentors to develop and practice. These skills are particularly useful when your goal is to open up communication with a young person:

Active Listening

Active listening is an attempt to truly understand the content and emotion of what the other person is saying by paying attention to verbal and non-verbal messages. The task is to focus, hear, respect and communicate your desire to understand. This is not the time to be planning a response or conveying how you feel.

Active listening is not nagging, cajoling, reminding, threatening, criticizing, questioning, advising, evaluating, probing, judging or ridiculing.

Skills to Use:
- Eye contact;
- Body language: open and relaxed posture, forward lean, appropriate facial expressions, positive use of gestures; and
- Verbal cues such as “um-hmmm,” “sure,” “ah” and “yes.”

Results of Active Listening:
- Encourages honesty — helps people free themselves of troublesome feelings by expressing them openly;
- Reduces fear — helps people become less afraid of negative feelings;
- Builds respect and affection;
- Increases acceptance — promotes a feeling of understanding; and

When you actively listen, you cooperate in solving the problem — and in preventing future problems.

“I” Messages

These messages give the opportunity to keep the focus on you and explain your feelings in response to someone else’s behavior. Because “I” messages don’t accuse, point fingers at the other person or place blame, they avoid judgments and help keep communication open. At the same time, “I” messages continue to advance the situation to a problem-solving stage.

For example: “I was really sad when you didn’t show up for our meeting last week. I look forward to our meetings and was disappointed not to see you. In the future, I would appreciate it if you could call me and let me know if you will not be able to make it.”

Avoid: “You didn’t show up, and I waited for an hour. You could have at least called me and let me know that you wouldn’t be there. You are irresponsible.” Take care that the following actions and behaviors are congruent with an honest, open heart:
• Body language: slouching, turning away, pointing a finger;
• Timing: speaking too fast or too slow;
• Facial expression: smiling, squirming, raising eyebrows, gritting teeth;
• Tone of voice: shouting, whispering, sneering, whining; and
• Choice of words: biting, accusative, pretentious, emotionally laden.

Results:
“I” messages present only one perspective. Allowing the other person to actually have a point of view and hearing it doesn’t mean that he or she is right. “I” messages communicate both information and respect for each position. Again, this skill moves both parties along to the problem-solving stage.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing focuses on listening first and then reflecting the two parts of the speaker’s message — fact and feeling — back to the speaker. Often, the fact is clearly stated, but a good listener is “listening between the lines” for the “feeling” part of the communication. Using this skill is a way to check out what you heard for accuracy — did you interpret what your mentee said correctly? This is particularly helpful with youth, as youth culture/language change constantly. Often words that meant one thing when mentors were young could have an entirely different meaning for youth today.

Examples for fact:
• “So you’re saying that . . .”
• “You believe that . . .”
• “The problem is . . .”

Examples for feeling:
• “You feel that . . .”
• “Your reaction is . . .”
• “And that made you feel . . .”

Paraphrases are not an opportunity to respond by evaluating, sympathizing, giving an opinion, offering advice, analyzing or questioning.

Results:
Using active listening skills will enable you to gather the information and then be able to simply report back what you heard in the message — the facts and the attitudes/feelings that were expressed. Doing so lets the other person know that you hear, understand and care about his or her thoughts and feelings.
Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are intended to collect information by exploring feelings, attitudes and how the other person views a situation. Open-ended questions are extremely helpful when dealing with young people. Youth, teenagers especially, tend to answer questions with as few words as possible. To maintain an active dialogue without interrogating, try to ask a few questions that cannot be answered with a “yes,” “no,” “I don’t know,” or a grunt.

Examples:
- “How do you see this situation?”
- “What are your reasons for . . . ?”
- “Can you give me an example?”
- “How does this affect you?”
- “How did you decide that?”
- “What would you like to do about it?”
- “What part did you play?”

Note: Using the question “Why did you do that?” may sometimes yield a defensive response rather than a clarifying response.

Results:
Because open-ended questions require a bit more time to answer than close-ended questions (questions that can be answered by “yes,” “no,” or a brief phrase), they give the person a chance to explain. Open-ended questions yield significant information that can in turn be used to problem solve.

Tips for Making Conversations Work:

- Keep it going. Asking follow-up questions or providing open-ended responses are great ways to keep the conversation going. The idea is not to debate an answer but to learn more.
- Conversation doesn’t have to be “heavy.” All conversations are meaningful when two people are truly engaged and interested in one another’s questions and answers.
- Be prepared for the unexpected answer. If an answer bothers you, simply listen and ask more questions about why the young person thinks and feels that way. Suspend your own judgment and let young people express their ideas and opinions.
- Listening is most important. Conversations with kids are better when we “elders” practice the art of listening. Through careful listening we tell them we care about their thoughts—and we care about them.
- Timing can be everything. If you ask a question that is met with silence or “the look,” maybe this isn’t the best time for a conversation. Or it could be that the question triggers a bigger issue for him, or he needs some time to process it.
- Be prepared to give your own answer. You are focusing on the young person, but she may also want to turn the question in your direction.
SETTING LIMITS

Limit setting is a very important consideration during early stages of your relationship. This will ensure that you do not overextend yourself both emotionally and fiscally and prevents the mentee from developing unachievable expectations for the relationship.

Expect that:
- Children will wait for, and want, limits placed on their behavior.
- Children will test limits frequently. It is important to be consistent.
- It will be important to set limits right at the beginning of the relationship.
- Setting limits will clarify your role as a Mentor – you are an adult friend.

Do:
- State clearly consequences for not respecting limits you set and that he / she is making a choice. Example:
  - Be as consistent as you can be.
  - Use taking the mentee home/back to class as the ultimate limit-setting consequence.

Do not:
- Use the loss of your relationship with your mentee as a consequence. Your friendship should be unconditional and separate from the child’s behavior.
- Promise a material reward for good behavior. It’s a recipe for manipulation.

GIFT GIVING… WHY NOT?

Research shows that what makes mentoring relationships successful is the simplicity of mentors and mentees spending time together. Gift giving (to or from mentees and mentors) can be problematic to the mentoring relationship for many reasons, including the following:

- Mentors giving gifts (including money) to mentees causes division of mentees into two groups: the “haves” and the “have nots”. Those who have not received gifts may have hurt feelings and even question whether their mentor likes them as much as the gift giver likes his/her mentee.

- Mentors’ gift-giving can cause feelings of inadequacy for the parents of mentees. Parents of mentees may also feel that the gift giving must be reciprocated. Gifts of any type may be beyond the means of some families. In addition, the gifts could cause division within a family between the mentored child and non-mentored siblings.

Remember:
- This is not a material relationship. It need not be costly to you.
- You are responsible for the child and have the right to set limits for him/her.
- Don’t be afraid to say “NO”.
- “Your presence is the present” (Dr. Susan Weinberger)
- Mentees are usually aware of mentoring programs guidelines, including the gift/money policy, and are not expecting gifts.
SAFETY ISSUES and CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an extremely important part of ensuring the integrity of programs. In order to respect the privacy of families it is important not to repeat any information that your mentee shares with you unless you are concerned about their safety. You may tell people the first name of your mentee and you can tell people that you played a new game together or that you baked cookies together or played basketball outside. This type of information is not necessarily confidential. However, anything else that your mentee shares with you about their feelings, changes in their family or other personal information must not be shared. If it sounds like gossip, then it probably is.

However, it is also crucial that you are an advocate for the health and safety of your mentee. Sensitive issues that come up between a mentor and mentee require different levels of response and intervention. These issues have been grouped below as delicate topics, issues of concern and crises requiring intervention. However, any of these issues may move up or down this continuum depending on the seriousness of the actions involved.

Delicate Topics

Generally speaking, delicate topics should be discussed only when initiated by the mentee. These topics can be touchy and strongly affect the relationship. Confidentiality takes on greater importance with these topics. Although mentors should be adequately trained to deal with these issues on their own, they should be encouraged to seek support and feedback from their supervisor and other mentors when their mentee has brought issues such as these to their attention.

Examples of delicate topics:

- Sex
- Peer pressure
- Hygiene
- Behavior
- School performance
- Self-image/personal insecurities
- Identity issues: class, cultural and sexual
- Others________________________

Issues of Concern

Issues of concern are those that may have lifelong implications for the mentee, and therefore the mentor needs to report them to the agency. However, these issues do not necessarily require direct intervention. Because these issues may be part of ongoing situations and conditions that mentees face, mentors need to be trained and supported to accept these aspects of the mentees’ lives without judgment. Mentors and mentoring programs should not focus too heavily on changing behavior when issues such as these arise. Nevertheless, by staying aware of the challenges their mentees must face, they may be able to help mentees ameliorate these problems over time.
Examples of Issues of Concern:

- Unsafe sex
- Fighting at school
- Depression
- Delinquent behavior
- Gang affiliation
- Substance abuse
- Verbal harassment: sexual, racial, bullying, others
- Others: __________________________

**Crisis Requiring Intervention**

Crises involve issues of grave concern that generally require direct and immediate intervention. Some of these issues, like child abuse and neglect, are mandated by law to be reported to the county; others may require a referral of a direct intervention by the mentor program. MENTORS SHOULD NEVER BE EXPECTED TO HANDLE ISSUES SUCH AS THESE ALONE. In addition, many of these issues require collaboration with families of mentees, and this should be handled by the mentor program manager.

*The only time you should make a report directly is if you feel your mentee is in immediate danger. Then call the state Children’s Emergency Services Hot Line at 1-800-452-1999*

Examples of Crises Requiring Intervention:

- Child abuse and neglect
- Abusive relationships: sexual abuse, incest, dating violence/rape
- Chemical dependency
- Serious delinquency/arrests
- Suicidal behavior
- Mental illness
- Physical harassment: sexual, racial, bullying, others
- Other trauma

**General Guidelines**

*Put the mentee at ease . . .*

- Stay calm.
- Use body language to communicate attentiveness (e.g., maintain eye contact, sit at same level).
- Avoid judgmental statements such as “Why would you do something like that?” or “I think you know better.”
- Be honest if you are getting emotional or upset.
- Let mentee know that you are glad he or she came to you.
- Reassure mentee that his or her confidentiality will be honored.
- Use tact, but be honest.
- Allow mentee to talk at his or her own pace—don’t force an issue.
- Do not pry—allow mentee to bring up topics he or she is comfortable with.
- Do not collaborate with mentee’s family to provide discipline.
Honor the mentee’s right to self-determination . . .

- Focus on the mentee’s 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?” “How would you like me to help?”
- If you are not comfortable with what the mentee wants to do, ask yourself why before you decide whether to say so.
- If what the mentee wants to do is not possible, explain so gently and apologize.
- Ask what alternative solutions would make the mentee comfortable.
- Encourage critical thinking through questions and reflections.
- Use the words, “I don’t know—what do you think?”

Problem solve and offer resources . . .

- Know your appropriate role as a mentor.
- Be honest with mentee if confidentiality does not hold.
- Suggest that your supervisor may have some thoughts if you don’t know what to do.
- Ask mentee if he or she would like to talk to the agency with you if necessary.
- Provide information if mentee is unaware of resources or options.
- Brainstorm with 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 mentee if he or she is uncomfortable with something he or she has decided to do.
- Be collaborative—you are a team.
- Follow through with any and all commitments.

Family Issues

- Let your mentee know you are there for her, no matter what.
- Point out the positive things that are happening in his family. When a family member shows love or caring, be sure your mentee notices.
- Assure your mentee that she is a good person with gifts and talents to contribute. Tell her about specific times when you have observed her being a good daughter, sibling, grandchild, or friend.
- Help your mentee separate the person he is in conflict with from that person’s behavior. Mom may be a fun, caring person who made a big mistake. Help him focus his frustration with family members on behaviors, not on the person herself.
- Talk about why parents and caregivers enforce boundaries on young people. A curfew that seems unfair may in place because parents and caregivers want to protect their child.
- Continue to have high expectations for your mentee’s behavior and achievement. Don’t allow family situations to come up as a barrier or an excuse.
- Help your mentee strategize the many ways she could confront a difficult family situation, weighing the pros and cons of each approach.
- Advocate for your mentee’s health and safety. It is possible that your mentee’s parent or guardian is not making good choices on your mentee’s behalf. If you suspect that his home situation is in serious turmoil that could escalate to abuse or neglect, talk to your mentor program staff about your concerns. Ask them to connect the family to professional services. Do not try to step in and mediate the situation yourself.
Blood Borne Pathogens

Bleeding:

“Protect yourself” – If it is wet, warm, sticky, or slimy, and not yours – WEAR GLOVES.

For small injuries, Direct pressure then bandage.

For larger injuries, direct pressure and elevate (raise the injury above the heart), keep child lying down and warm.

Never, never, never use a tourniquet on a child

Reassure the child
EXPECTATIONS

Specific guidelines exist for matches to ensure the safety of both mentor and mentee. Failure to comply with these guidelines will result in early termination of the match. Remember, these guidelines are not meant to hamper your ability to develop a relationship with your mentee. Rather, they serve to protect you, the program, and most importantly, the mentee.

- Mentors will abide by the specific program guidelines relating to times and locations mentoring occurs as well as reporting on progress of your match to the program representatives.

- Mentors should also follow all site protocols as well. For school based programs, this often means staying within school property and being sure to sign in at the office and carry a visitor pass with you at all times.

- You should always notify the appropriate people if you are unable to make a scheduled meeting with your mentee.

- You should also maintain regular communication with your mentor program leader to keep them updated on the progress of your match.

- Remember to keep discussions confidential unless you suspect the child’s safety is at risk.
EVALUATION

Evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship is an important aspect of the program.

Goal: Measure changes in developmental assets, academic performance, quality of mentee-mentor relationship, and satisfaction with program.

Target populations

- Mentees
- Mentors
- Parent/Guardian
- Teachers
Work Referenced in this Training Manual

1  Mentor, national mentoring partnership: How to Build A Successful Mentoring Program Using the Elements of Effective Practice  Copyright 2005. MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership.

2  Developmental Asset materials are provided by the Search Institute. Search Institute resources (from the forthcoming publication Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset Building Tips, Tools and Activities for Youth and Adults by Kristie Probst; Pass It On at School! Activity Handouts for Creating Caring Schools; Handouts and Overheads from Great Places to Learn) are used with permission from Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN; www.search-institute.org. All rights reserved. Search InstituteSM and Developmental Assets™ are trademarks of Search Institute.


4  Courtesy of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

5  National Network for Child Care – NNCC (www.nncc.org)

6  www.canadianparents.org

7  Adapted from California Governor’s Mentoring Partnership and the Los Angeles Youth Mentoring Connection.

8  Courtesy of Dr. Susan G. Weinberger, president, Mentor Consulting Group.

9  Adapted from Virginia Mentoring Partnership.

10  Adapted from materials provided by The Mentoring Partnership of New York, Mentoring in the Faith Community: an Operations Manual for Program Coordinators and from Virginia Mentoring Partnership: Responsible Mentoring – Talking About Drugs, Sex and Other Difficult Issues is a project of The Evaluation Management Training Group, Inc., Funded through The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. (www.emt.org/publications.html) By Dustianne North, M.S.W.

11  Courtesy of Mass Mentoring Partnership, Mentoring 101 Train the Trainer Curriculum.