

YOUR ROLE AS A MENTOR

So, now that you know a little about what mentoring is and why its 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.³

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:^{2,3}

- 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.²

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.²

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...²

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.



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