



Building the Relationship

Now that you and your mentee have been matched, the next challenge is to develop your relationship. The following are some suggestions to help you get started.

- Discuss with the REACH Coordinator how your activities will fit into the overall plan for your mentee.
- Find out how ongoing communication between you and other professionals will occur.
- Have the program coordinator introduce you to your mentee. The coordinator should introduce you to your mentee at the school.
- Talk about what you both like to do and the things you have in common.
- Take turns answering questions about your interests and hobbies. Discuss favorite music, movies, sports, books, school subjects, food, heroes, heroines, etc.
- Discuss basic expectations that you have about the relationship. Ask the mentee to do the same.
- If possible, arrange for a brief chat with the mentee's parents. If the mentee's family does not have a phone, drop them a short note.
- Focus activities around the mentee's interests.
- If the coordinator has a list of the things your mentee likes to do, ask for a copy of it.
- Think ahead about what you will say to your mentee.
- Do not force your mentee to talk about intimate details of his/her life, family, or problems.
- Call your mentee the day before to verify the date and time of your meeting.



- Focus on the positive accomplishments of the mentee, no matter how small they might be. Pay compliments regularly.
- Keep alert for clues about what motivates your mentee. This will help you plan for future activities.
- Share information about yourself to stimulate conversation.
- To “jump-start” a conversation with your mentee, you may want to share some personal details about yourself (e.g., your age, your neighborhood, information about your family).
- Try to discover similarities between your family and your mentee’s. Feel free to discuss those “strange people” in your family. This can help your mentee feel that he or she is not the only person who has family members who are “different.”
- Discuss your career and what kind of education and training you needed to do your job. If you feel comfortable, also talk about your growth in salary over the years, working hours, and your feelings about your job environment. This is a good time to throw in the “work ethic” notion without preaching about responsible behavior. Use this discussion to initiate conversation about your mentee’s career plans and how she/he can get there.
- Talk about your regrets in life as well as those things that make you proud.
- Talk about your faults and your strengths.
- Talk about successes that were not easily obtained and hardships you have faced and overcome.