

Sample Mentee/Mentor Termination Ritual

Termination may be the result of a variety of situations.

- Sometimes it may become necessary to terminate a match due to conflicts between the mentee and mentor.
- Sometimes termination may occur because either the mentee or the mentor drops out of the program. The dropouts may occur as a result of relationship conflicts or other factors (e.g., mentor's time limitations, irresolvable problems with the mentee).
- Sometimes it may become apparent that the mentee and/or mentor may work more effectively with another mentor/mentee. In these cases, reassignment may be best.

Termination should provide closure and opportunities for learning. In order for termination to accomplish this, the program director(s) may follow these guidelines:

- Identify and verbally clarify the reasons for termination with both the mentee and mentor. If the reasons involve the behavior of either party, this should be presented in a constructive manner. The person who engaged in the behavior (tardiness, rudeness, indifference, absenteeism, etc.) should be asked how that might make others feel, and the person who received the behavior could be asked how s/he might respond or address such behavior in the future. This will serve as practice for the actual meeting between the mentor and mentee.
- Give the mentee and mentor the opportunity to discuss together what worked and didn't work in their relationship and to identify ways to handle future situations more effectively. The program director(s) should facilitate a conversation between the mentee and mentor in order to make sure that both parties express themselves positively and constructively. This information may be critical to successfully rematching the mentee or mentor.
- Both parties should be encouraged to share their feelings about ending their relationship. Mentors who are terminating because of time limitations or other reasons not related to the mentee need to make particularly clear to the mentee that s/he did not do anything to make the mentor leave. The mentor should share with the mentee the things about the mentee that s/he liked. Without this—and often even with it to a lesser degree—the mentee will feel they are unlovable or flawed in some way. The mentor should do all that he or she can to convince the child this is not so.



- Plan the next step. If the mentee is to be reassigned, discuss the new relationship with the mentee alone first. Help him or her to identify mistakes that occurred with the previous mentor and discuss ways to avoid those mistakes in the future. (New behaviors may have been mentioned by the mentor in the mentor-mentee termination meeting.) If the match ended due to factors other than relationship conflict (e.g., mentor's part-time job schedule changed), reassure the mentee that s/he was not to blame and help him or her process any feelings about the termination of that relationship.
- Arrange a meeting between the mentee and the new mentor. Set appropriate time boundaries (e.g., "We will meet weekly for one year and then see if we are able to spend more time together after that.") and guidelines for the relationship (especially if there were problems with the previous match). If a mentee has had significant problems with previous mentors, a trial period may be appropriate.

Often, termination will become public information to other mentees and mentors in the program. The program director(s) should address this in order to minimize assumptions and rumors.

- If a mentee leaves the program — Explain to the others that you and the mentee have decided that this is not the best place for him or her to be at this time.
- If a mentor leaves the program — Tell the others that he or she needed to leave the program. If the mentor's reasons for leaving were unrelated to the mentee, remind the other group members of this. If the reasons for leaving were related to the mentee, tell the group that you and the mentor decided that it would be best to find a mentor who had more in common with the mentee and would be better able to connect with the mentee.
- If mentees and mentors are reassigned (*which should happen only infrequently*)—Tell the group that everyone involved decided that it would be best to rearrange matches. Remind the others that sometimes after getting to know someone a little better, it becomes apparent that you may work better with another person. If this happens, encourage mentees and mentors to approach the program director(s) to discuss reassignment.