



Diversity

Cultural Sensitivity

You may or may not come from a background similar to your mentee's. If not, how you handle economic and cultural differences will greatly affect how your relationship develops.

Ethnic Diversity

Learn about the values and traditions of your mentee's culture. Such things as the role of authority, communication styles, perspectives on time, and ways of handling conflict vary greatly among different ethnic groups. You might ask your mentee to teach you things about his/her traditions and culture. Discussions with your program coordinator and other mentors can further your understanding of your mentee's behavior.

Socioeconomic Diversity

Your mentee may live very differently from you. She/he may share small living quarters with many people, may not have a phone, or may not be able to go outside because safety in the neighborhood is such a serious problem.

Your mentee may move frequently or may move in with different relatives, perhaps every few months. This could make it difficult for you to stay in contact. It's important to be supportive of your mentee and not judgmental about the way she/he lives. Modeling values and behavior will be far more productive than lecturing your mentee about what she/he "should" do. Remember also that you cannot rescue your mentee. Family connections can be very strong, even if they don't fit into your idea of how they are "supposed" to be. It's more important to provide a relationship that will nurture self-development and a sense of dignity and self-worth.



Youth Culture

From generation to generation, adults have viewed the young as being more rebellious and outrageous than they were at the same age. Although you may not approve of your mentee's appearance or speech, it's important that you respect the mentee's individuality while insisting on certain standards. Try to determine why your mentee's behavior troubles you. Is it because it's not how you would do something, or because there is something more serious going on and s/he is really in trouble?