

CHAPTER 6: Beginning the Match

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Early Mentoring Sessions

Getting off to a good start is important. Mentors and Mentees are usually somewhat nervous being together the first few times (and this is normal). As a Mentor you will want to give the beginning of the match some time, as you two may or may not hit it off right away.

Remember, it is important to keep your promises and especially your appointments. Nothing will turn a Mentee off as quickly as their Mentor not showing up.

Here are some things to consider doing during early meetings:

1. Tell them your role as the Mentor, and ask them what they understand about what a Mentor is. Also let them know that you are happy to be selected as their Mentor, and that you will be meeting with them at least once a week for the school year.
2. At some point early on (best done at the first meeting) explain confidentiality rules and your restrictions: "Anything you tell me will be between you and me, except if I hear that you or anyone else has been hurt, or is in danger (past, present, future). Then I need to tell someone in the program.
3. Ask them about themselves, what kinds of things they like, such as hobbies, books, movies, etc.



4. Tell them about things you like to do, such as hobbies, books, movies, etc.
5. Ask them about school, as in "What do you like best at school? Who do you hang out with at school?"
6. Ask them if they have any ideas about what they would like to do during the time you are going to spend together. Also, give them some of your ideas about what you can do together
7. Try to find something positive about them and tell them. This is a good habit to get into. Some examples: "I've noticed how you always try to get along with people." "You always seem to be in such a good mood." "I like the way you are wearing your hair."
8. Near the end of the meeting, recap what you have done together today, what you have learned, what you two might be doing during the next meeting. If possible, and within reason, ask the Mentee what he or she would like to do next time.
9. Set up a regular time schedule, (and try to stick to it).
10. Note: if you after you've met you are extremely uneasy, or if something happens that you feel you need assistance with, don't hesitate to get in touch with program staff (and the sooner, the better).

Developing the Relationship

Relationships take time. You and the Mentee may hit it off right away, or it might take a while to get comfortable with each other. Remember that you are trying to build mutual trust and respect, and that usually takes some time.

Be Mature. As the Mentor, you are the "container" for the relationship. A Mentor who keeps a mature stance does not blame the Mentee or put them in a defensive position when difficulties arise in the relationship. You may have a Mentee who does not easily talk much or say "thank you", or one who is not always punctual. As the Mentor, it is your responsibility to manage any differences that you and the Mentee may have.

About Youth Today

Mentors are not professional counselors and are not meant to be. Contact the staff of your mentoring program immediately if you suspect your mentee is experiencing any of these issues.

Remember, you cannot solve all the mentee's problems, but your presence can be an important vote of confidence. Children may be of similar chronological age but at different levels of maturity. Eventually, most children will end up at the same maturation level, but it may take some children longer than others. What defines each child's development is both that child's biological clock and what has happened to him or her emotionally and environmentally.

Most of the children you encounter as a mentor may have had some disturbance in development, such as a loss through divorce or death. Some children seem to weather these changes, while others are more vulnerable to their effects. It is important to be aware of this and have realistic expectations for your mentee. A child's development is an individual and continual process. The following pages outline typical developmental characteristics of four age groups. But remember that your mentee may be "behind" or "advanced" in any of these areas.



Diversity

What constitutes diversity?

Diversity within mentoring can be defined as any significant, personal or cultural difference which has the potential of affecting the development of the mentoring relationship. It is important to realize that diversity is broader than simply an ethnic distinction. Instead, there are many elements and components of diversity. These include:

- Country of origin
- Age
- Socio-economic background
- Color of skin
- Level of education
- Ethnicity
- Level of acculturation in the US
- Gender
- Religion
- Generation
- Sexual orientation

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 she is really in trouble?

Suggestions for Dealing with Diversity

- **Remember that you are the adult—the experienced one.** Imagine what your mentee must be thinking and feeling. In general, young people of all ages, but particularly teens, believe they are not respected by adults and worry about whether a mentor will like them or think they're stupid. They are coming to you for help and may already feel insecure and embarrassed about the problems in their lives. It is your responsibility to take the initiative and make the mentee feel more comfortable in the relationship.
- **Remember to be yourself.** Sometimes, with the best of intentions, we try to "relate" to young people and try to use their slang, etc. Mentees can see through this and may find it difficult to trust people who are not true to themselves.
- **You may learn a lot about another culture, lifestyle, or age group—but you will never be from that group.** Don't over-identify with your mentee. Your mentee realizes you will never know exactly what she or he is feeling or experiencing. Your mentee may actually feel invalidated by your insistence that you "truly know where she or he is coming from."

[Adapted with permission from material in *Mentor Training Curriculum*. 1991. National Mentoring Working Group, convened and staffed by the National Mentoring Partnership and United Way of America. Originally appeared in *Guidebook for Milestones in Mentoring*. 1990. The PLUS Project on Mentoring, National Media Outreach Center, QED Communications, Inc.]

Influences on Youth

To understand what is going on with mentees, mentors should have some idea of the environment (both neighborhood and family) in which their mentees live, typical behaviors of that age group, and pressures that they face. The following are key factors influencing the behavior of today's youth.

Poverty

Many mentoring programs target youth who are poor. Economic realities often make it difficult for poor youth to perform well in school. Your mentee may also be very cautious about establishing a relationship with you. She/he may have difficulty trusting others, especially adults. Your mentee may project a feeling of hopelessness and be cynical about the future. If you are aware that these characteristics may be a means of coping with the stress of poverty, you will be better prepared to help your mentee.

Tobacco, Drugs, and Alcohol

Substance abuse is a serious problem affecting all populations in a community. Cigarette smoking is declining among males, but not among females. Many youth have tried marijuana, cocaine, crack, etc. Some have even sniffed glue to get a "high." Alcohol abuse is probably the most prevalent intoxicant of choice for youth.

Injuries

Accidental injuries are the leading cause of death for persons 15 to 21 years of age. Automobile accidents account for most of these deaths, and the driver is often under the influence of alcohol.

Violence

Adolescent males are frequent victims and perpetrators of crimes. Homicide is the leading cause of death for African American males 15 to 21 years. There is also an alarming increase in youth carrying guns and knives for both attack and protection purposes. Escalating street crime raises a myriad of fears for a young person about his/her personal safety. Such fears often curtail extracurricular activities that occur in the evenings. This violence is present not only within the neighborhoods, but has also spread to the school environment. Metal detectors and security guards are now part of the landscape of many schools.



Suicide

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth. It is often difficult for youth to express their feelings of depression to adults, particularly their parents. Youth are also very reluctant to share their concerns about the potential suicide of a friend.

AIDS/STDs

Many teens have misconceptions about how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). STDs include herpes, syphilis, and, most seriously, AIDS. Most teens know that AIDS is usually transmitted by sexual intercourse, drug needles, and contact with HIV-contaminated blood.

Many youth know that condoms can provide some protection from AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. While many young people feel condoms should be used, those who are sexually active are not always responsible enough to use them consistently. Knowledge does not necessarily translate into action. Currently, the second highest rate of HIV infection is among adolescents.

Sexuality/Teen Sexuality/Teen Pregnancy

More young teen boys and girls are becoming parents. Young women who are poor are more likely to become unwed mothers than affluent teens. This topic is often a very difficult one for mentors and mentees to discuss. Parents of your mentee may have some specific feelings about the mentor's role in talking about this sensitive issue, particularly as it relates to birth control. While using contraceptives correctly certainly decreases teen pregnancies, their use is controversial with some.

Additionally, the role of the teen father is often not discussed. Males are sometimes not aware of their responsibility in protecting themselves from sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted fatherhood.

Peer Pressure

Adolescence is a time when approval from peers is very important. Young people look to each other for approval. Youth need to understand that peer-influenced decisions can have lifelong consequences. A mentor can help by working with mentees on problem-solving skills that will develop their own sense of competence and responsibility.



Technology

Youth growing up today have never known a world where they could not keep in constant communication with their friends. Computers, cell phones, pagers, BlackBerrys, iPhones, and MP3 players are but a small sample of the available communication devices. Sending text messages has become so common that people of all ages can “talk” to one another without making a sound. Anything can be broadcast on YouTube, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram allow us to connect to an ever-growing network of people.

While technology has tremendous advantages and can be lots of fun, it also presents significant challenges and even hazards. Sending e-mails or text messages should not become a substitute for face-to-face social interaction, and mentors can be very helpful in assisting mentees with basic social and communication skills. Mentors should be aware of whether mentees are spending too much time online and/or participating in inappropriate chat rooms. Mentees may need to be reminded that once they post photos of themselves or spread gossip about others in cyberspace, there is no way to “take it back,” and serious repercussions can follow them for many years.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying takes many forms but essentially involves taunting, teasing, and harassing online. It can be more brutal and destructive than schoolyard bullying because it can follow a child everywhere—a text message sent via cell phone is always present. By creating “bashing Web sites,” an entire group of youth can taunt and pressure one child—e.g., polls that circulate to vote for the “fattest, ugliest kid at school.”

Passwords can be stolen and computers hacked. If your mentee talks to you about being a victim of cyber-bullying, take it seriously and share the information with program staff and families. You will also want to talk to mentees about not participating in acts of cyber-bullying.

Developmental Stages of Youth

11- to 13-Year-Olds

General Characteristics

1. Testing limits; a “know-it-all” attitude.
2. Vulnerable; emotionally insecure; fear of rejection; mood swings.
3. Identification with admired adults.
4. Bodies going through physical changes that affect personal appearance.

Physical Characteristics

1. Good coordination of small muscles; interest in art, crafts, models, and music.
2. Early maturers may be upset about their size—as their adult supporter, you can help by listening and explaining.
3. Very concerned with their appearance; very self-conscious about their physical changes.
4. May have bad diet and sleep habits and, as a result, low energy levels.

Social Characteristics

1. Acceptance by friends becomes very important.
2. Cliques start to develop.
3. Team games become popular.
4. Often have “crushes” on other people.
5. Friends set the general rules of behavior.
6. Feel a strong need to conform; dress and behave like their peers in order to “belong.”
7. Very concerned with what others say and think about them.
8. Have a tendency to try to manipulate others to get what they want.
9. Interested in earning own money.

Emotional Characteristics

1. Very sensitive to praise and recognition; feelings are easily hurt.
2. Because friends are very important, can be conflicts between adults’ rules and friends’ rules.
3. Caught between being a child and being an adult.
4. Loud behavior may hide their lack of self-confidence.
5. Look at the world more objectively; look at adults more subjectively, and are critical of them.



Mental Characteristics

1. Tend to be perfectionists; if they try to attempt too much, may feel frustrated.
2. Want more independence but know they need guidance and support.
3. May have lengthy attention span.

Suggested Mentor Strategies

- ❖ Offer alternative opinions without being insistent.
- ❖ Be accepting of different physical states and emotional changes.
- ❖ Give candid answers to questions.
- ❖ Suggest positive money-making opportunities.
- ❖ Share aspects of your work life and rewards of achieving in work.
- ❖ Do not tease about appearance, clothes, boyfriends/girlfriends, sexuality. Instead, affirm them.

14- to 16-Year-Olds

General Characteristics

1. Testing limits; a “know-it-all” attitude.
2. Vulnerable; emotionally insecure; fear of rejection; mood swings.
3. Identification with admired adults.
4. Bodies going through physical changes that affect personal appearance.

Physical Characteristics

1. Very concerned with their appearance; very self-conscious about their physical changes.
2. May have bad diet and sleep habits and, as a result, low energy levels.
3. Often a rapid weight gain at beginning of adolescence; enormous appetite.

Social Characteristics

1. Friends set the general rules of behavior.
2. Feel a strong need to conform; dress and behave like their peers in order to “belong.”
3. Very concerned with what others say and think about them.
4. Have a tendency to try to manipulate others to get what they want.
5. Go to extremes; often appear to be unstable emotionally while having a “know-it-all” attitude.
6. Fear of ridicule and of being unpopular.
7. Strong identification with admired adults.

Emotional Characteristics

1. Very sensitive to praise and recognition; feelings are easily hurt.
2. Caught between being a child and being an adult.
3. Loud behavior may hide their lack of self-confidence.
4. Look at the world more objectively; look at adults more subjectively, and are critical of them.

Mental Characteristics

1. Can better understand moral principles.
2. May have lengthy attention span.

Suggested Mentor Strategies

- ❖ Give choices and don't be afraid to confront inappropriate behavior.
- ❖ Use humor to defuse testy situations.
- ❖ Give positive feedback—and let them know your affection is for them, not for their accomplishments.
- ❖ Be available and be yourself—with your true strengths, weaknesses, and emotions.
- ❖ Be honest and disclose appropriate personal information to build trust.

Stages of the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

The mentor-mentee relationship often goes through at least three major stages. It is important to understand these stages so you can be prepared to respond appropriately.

The first stage of a mentoring relationship is **Familiarization and Testing**; the second stage is **Commitment and Work**; and the last stage is **Termination and/or Closure**. Since each relationship is unique, the amount of time spent in each of these stages will vary.

Stage 1: Familiarization and Testing

In this stage you and your mentee are trying to get to know each other. Many mentees may be uncommunicative, answering questions with shrugs or one-word answers. There may be some jousting between you and your mentee to test the limits of the relationship. This is particularly true of those mentees who really want to see how far they can “push” you or trust you to be there for them.

This pushing or testing might be demonstrated by the mentee:

- Missing appointments
- Giving you the silent treatment
- Making unreasonable demands
- Having angry outbursts
- Cursing to get a reaction

In Stage 1, the tone for the relationship is set. You should:

- Be on time for meetings
- Request that your mentee be on time as a matter of respect for you
- Express realistic expectations of the mentee
- Try to make only promises that you can keep
- Provide unconditional friendship and support
- Engage in activities that the mentee suggests
- Understand that your mentee may not be comfortable just talking
- Let the mentee know how his or her behavior is affecting you. While you should respect the confidences shared by the mentee, you should counsel your mentee that information that may be detrimental to him/her should be shared with the project coordinator. Encourage the mentee to share such information with the coordinator or other proper authorities.

Stage 2: Commitment and Work

In Stage 2, there is a deepening of the relationship. You and your mentee may begin to spend more than the required time together and may call each other frequently on the phone. You may notice visible signs of caring for each other, such as remembering special occasions. However, it's possible that as your relationship proceeds, your mentee may exhibit behavior that is problematic.

Stage 2 is a time for the hard work that can really make a difference for your mentee in the long run. Goal setting is particularly important during this stage. The most successful mentoring relationships involve helping mentees develop specific skills and competencies. It's important to work with your mentee in developing goals, even if you think she/he should be working on certain things. Otherwise, you will be just another adult telling him/her what to do.

Stage 3: Termination and/or Closure

It is hoped that this formal mentoring relationship will grow into a more natural one that will sustain itself without agency supports. However, some relationships will not continue, and others will end prematurely due to geographic moves, illness, incompatible relationships, mentee confinement, etc. How a relationship ends is key to how you and especially the mentee will think about and value the experience you shared.

Planned terminations can be facilitated in the following ways:

If you initiated the termination:

- The mentee should be alerted well in advance of your departure from the relationship.
- The reasons for the departure should be discussed with the mentee by you and reinforced by the project's coordinator.
- Mentees may feel they are being abandoned and may demonstrate anger. Allow them to grieve and be appropriately angry. In relationships that were less intimate, this process will of course be less painful to the mentee.
- If possible, continue contact with your mentee by phone or letters.

If your mentee initiated the termination:

- Don't view this separation as a failure but as an opportunity to continue the relationship at a new Level.
- Engage in letter writing and phone calls.

In both instances, focus on the:

- Progress you made
- Fun you had
- New ways you plan to keep in contact

Ethical Issues in Mentor-Mentee Relationships

1. Promote the welfare and safety of your mentee.

Power/influence. It can be very tempting to think we know what is best for our mentee. Providing opportunities to mentees that they may not have access to is an important role of mentors. But what if those opportunities go against the family's belief system, family circumstances, or expectations?

It is incumbent upon the mentor to be sensitive to the family's concerns and build rapport with the family to insure that a mentee doesn't feel compelled to choose between loyalty to the family or to the mentor.



Inappropriate boundaries. Boundaries clarify the limits of the mentor-youth relationship and can protect both mentors and mentees from exploitation and harm. The obvious example is prohibitions against sexual relationships, which are indisputable. Mentors, however, may function in a role similar to extended family, so it is important to be aware of touching or physical contact that may seem appropriate but might make a mentee— especially a younger child—feel uncomfortable.

Multiple roles. You are available to your mentee to guide, coach, and support her, but you also may have professional expertise or financial stability that your mentee or her family does not have. However, you should avoid entering into professional, financial, or other relationships with your mentee or her family if it will challenge your ability to be an effective mentor or will harm your mentee.

2. Be trustworthy and responsible.

Consistency and reliability serve as the foundation for trust and positive outcomes for youth. Early termination of a relationship, especially without explanation, can lead to detrimental outcomes, particularly for youth who have experienced disappointment in familial relationships with adults.

3. Act with integrity.

Last-minute changes in plans, failure to communicate regularly with your mentee, and lack of respect for customs and protocol in a mentee's home, school, or community can erode or challenge a developing relationship. It's important not to take for granted the connection your mentee has with you.

4. Promote justice for young people.

Awareness and acknowledgement of our own prejudices, biases, and fears is an essential component of effective and enduring mentoring relationships. Showing a subtle lack of respect for a youth's family, promoting stereotypes based on race or ethnicity, or dismissing a youth's interests because they seem too rooted in his/her ethnic background can all harm a mentee's self-esteem and identification with his/her cultural heritage.



5. Respect the young person's rights and dignity.

This is probably one of the most challenging aspects of being a mentor. On the one hand, mentors want to build trusting relationships with their mentees. They need to be able to help mentees make sound decisions without telling them what to do, they need to be respectful of the mentee's goals and values, and they must keep confidential information confidential.

On the other hand, mentors may be privy to very serious disclosures, from both the family members and the mentees. First and foremost, mentoring programs must provide training and ongoing support to help mentors navigate the slippery slope of disclosure, trust building, and confidentiality.

Problem Solving

The goal of many mentoring programs is to impart life skills to the youth. One important component of life skills is the ability to set positive goals and deal effectively with conflict. There is a limit to how effectively life skills can be taught without giving young people an opportunity to actively engage in practicing skills.

The Across Ages program, an evidence-based model project (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), utilizes the Social Competence Promotion Program for Young Adolescents (Weissberg, Caplan, Bennett, & Stroud, 1990. New Haven CT. Yale University Press.), which empowers young people to take responsibility as problem solvers.

The problem-solving process consists of six steps:

- 1.** Stop, calm down, and think before you act.
- 2.** State the problem and how you feel.
- 3.** Set a positive goal.
- 4.** Think of lots of solutions.
- 5.** Think ahead to the consequences.
- 6.** Go ahead and try the best plan.

When to Ask for Help

In general, please ask for help at any time when you feel uncomfortable about what is going on in the match.

Contact Program Staff:

1. If you are unable to fulfill your commitment as a Mentor.
2. If the dynamics of the match are strained.
3. If your Mentee is not keeping appointments.
4. If your Mentee takes advantage of you by taking up too much of your time, frequently asking for favors, wanting to borrow money, etc.
5. If you have any question or concerns about rules, policies and procedures of the program.
6. If you suspect abuse, neglect, endangerment (past, present or future)
7. During any other time when you feel uneasy, or you think that you may be in over your head.

Georgia's Foster Care Youth

Current Status for Georgia's Foster Youth (J.W. Fanning 2014)

- 84% of 17-18 year old foster youth want to attend postsecondary
- 20% of foster youth who complete high school attend college
- 9% of former foster youth obtain a certificate/AA/bachelor's degree
- Foster youth are more likely to lag behind their peers in high school language arts and math
- 2066 high school age children in Georgia are in foster care (FY14)
- Estimated that only 100-150 foster youth are enrolled in postsecondary
- Other trend data:
 - More likely to be unemployed as young adults
 - Significantly lower annual income than peers
 - More likely to be convicted of a crime

Who are Foster Youth?

According to the National Foster Care Coalition, a foster youth is a youth who is removed from their biological parents care due to neglect or abuse and placed in the care of the state. This placement could include being placed with relatives, in a group home, or in a traditional non-relative foster home placement.

Why are children placed in Foster Care?

Children are removed from the care of their parents primarily because of abuse or neglect due to complex family, social, and environmental conditions out of their control. Some children in foster care move frequently among emergency shelter, foster parent, guardian homes (kinship/relative or non-relative) and group homes.

Who are the adults in foster youths' lives?

Multiple adults are involved in different aspects of foster youths' lives; social workers, relative caregivers, foster parents, group home staff, probation officers, therapists, court appointed lawyers, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), education surrogates, and birth parents.

General Tips for Working with Foster Youth

- ❖ Respect the youth's privacy! His/her foster care status is confidential and cannot be shared without permission.
- ❖ Create an environment that makes the youth feel included and safe. Having someone that they can check in with and connect to at school is important in helping them be successful in school.
- ❖ Structure activities to support the youth's success. Provide predictability, consistency, clear expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation. Scaffold activities when appropriate.

Activities

Activities form the basis for developing and maintaining a trusting and caring relationship between mentors and mentees. Successful mentoring programs:

- Foster a sense of ownership and belonging among volunteers and participants. Be sure to get participants involved in planning program activities.
- Sponsor a mix of group activities that support program goals and encourage interaction among all participants in addition to one-to-one activities.



Please note: The REACH Georgia Scholarship Program is intended to be a school-based program housed at individual school sites with adults and youth meeting in various campus locations and the program making use of school facilities and administrative space for mentoring session. If a school system elects to relax the boundaries of the school site and/or utilize an offsite existing mentoring program, please be sure to have the necessary waivers and agreements in place to ensure full responsibility.

One-On-One Activities

- Just listen to your mentee
- Help with homework
- Work on school projects
- Take out a library card and use the library regularly
- Learn to do research on the Internet
- Assist in researching a term paper
- Research college opportunities
- Complete applications for college
- Apply for financial aid
- Attend school events (plays, assemblies, graduations)

Job or Career

- Help create a résumé
- Help mentee look for part-time or summer employment
- Assist in completing job applications
- Coach with interviewing skills
- Attend career fair
- Help mentee participate in “job shadowing” at different organizations
- Others?

Community Service Ideas

Engaging young people in service to their community unleashes youthful energy in ways that can solve real problems and meet vital needs. Community service can also be an important means for young people to learn new skills, gain a sense of independence, and boost self-esteem. Community service helps young people break through their segregation from the mainstream of society by giving them a chance to see the positive impact their actions can have on the larger world.

REACH Coordinator Resources



Community service activities are a great way for mentors and mentees to work together to address community needs and illustrate the theme of reciprocity that is the essence of mentoring. In devoting unpaid time to benefit others, youth are following the example of their older mentors. A goal is to encourage the mentees to make a lifelong commitment to service and volunteerism. Some suggested activities include:

- Friendly visiting with residents in nursing homes
- Chore service for older adults with limited mobility
- Pet therapy in nursing homes or children's hospitals
- Reading for the blind
- Helping in daycare centers after school
- Packing and distributing food for a food pantry
- Collecting and distributing clothes
- Collecting books, toys, and clothes for victims of natural disasters
- Helping to develop an online newsletter
- Planting and maintaining a community garden with residents from a senior center or assisted living facility
- Helping to deliver Meals on Wheels
- Volunteering for Habitat for Humanity
- Participating in the Martin Luther King Day of Service in January
- Others?

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR MENTEE

1. What do you like most about school?
2. What do you like least about school?
3. What class is most challenging for you?
4. What is your favorite class?
5. What school subjects do you do well in?
6. What do you need extra help with in school?
7. If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?
8. When you don't do as well in school as you can, it is usually because_____.
9. When you have leisure time, what do you like to do?
10. What career are you most interested in?
11. Do you take outside lessons or classes of any kind?
12. Do you have any pets?
13. What is your favorite:
 - Food
 - Place
 - Sport
 - Indoor activity
14. Who is your favorite:
 - Friend
 - Relative
 - Movie Star
 - Hero/Heroine
15. Complete this sentence:
Happiness is...

Conversation Starters

1. What is something you're really proud of today?
2. What is a recent success in the past week?
3. What is the best compliment you've received lately?
4. How were you a leader this week?
5. Name a person in your life you admire. Why do you admire him/her?
6. What was your biggest challenge this week?
7. Name a time you knew you were needed.
8. Describe a favorite teacher. What talents does he or she see in you?
9. Describe your closest friend. What makes him/her close?



10. What is the greatest need in your community/school? How can you contribute?
11. If you could go back to any time in your life, where would you go?
12. What do you want to be when you grow up?
13. Who is your favorite celebrity/athlete? What helps him or her be successful?
14. What is your definition of success?
15. Tell me the latest news in your school.
16. What advice would you give someone going into your grade?
17. What do you wish you would have known about yourself a year ago?
18. What is your favorite class?
19. If you had three hours of free time tomorrow, what would you do?
20. Who is a superhero in your life right now?
21. What realization did you make about yourself this week?
22. What is your favorite time of day? When are you at your best?
23. If you could invite any three people to dinner, who would they be?
24. What's your favorite book?
25. What do you do better than anyone else you know?
26. What would your friends say you do well?
27. What are you doing when time seems to fly?
28. What is your favorite song? What do you like about it?
29. Tell me about a typical day for you. What do you enjoy most?
30. What contribution would you like to make to your school? How will you do it?

Topics for Discussions between Mentors and High School Age Youth

1. Time line for after high school – in five, 10, 15, 20, 25 years.
2. Realistic and attainable goals.
3. Examination of personalities and style of functioning.
4. Personal interests – yours and theirs.
5. Financial independence – personal credit cards, budgeting, ATMs and setting up a bank account.
6. Balance time – time management.
7. Get organized – does the youth have a calendar and organizer?
8. People you admire – your heroes.
9. Communication skills.
10. Workplace-readiness skills.

11. Employability indicators – attendance, punctuality, appearance, initiative, maturity, courtesy, attitude, quantity of work, quality of work, flexibility and cooperation.
12. Job opportunities – job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships.
13. Career interest inventory.
14. Job exploration.
15. Mock applications for work and post-secondary education.
16. Applications for financial aid, scholarships and awards.
17. Create a resume.
18. Practice interviewing skills.
19. Exercise and eating right.
20. Personal mission statement.
21. Driver’s license.
22. Well-rounded youth – involvement in school clubs, community activities.
23. Review report cards.
24. Appreciate cultural differences.
25. Manners – the code of etiquette (including cell phone and pager).
26. Visit a local college.
27. Design a business card.
28. Advice regarding risky business (alcohol, drugs, sex, cigarette smoking, gang activity, peer pressure).
29. Getting ready for the prom.
30. Summer plans.
31. What are some additional ideas that you have tried and found to be successful? List them below and share with other mentors:

WHAT WILL WE DO EACH WEEK?

Below is a partial list of some tips and strategies for your mentoring sessions. Check to see that they are age appropriate. Remember to ask youth what they would like to do.

Plan together. Don’t be too structured, though. Spontaneity is important! Add some good ideas of your own. Make a list of the ideas that you really liked and share them with other mentors. Good luck!

REACH Coordinator Resources



1. Start by telling your youth why you decided to become a mentor.
2. Engage in games such as chess, checkers, Monopoly and crossword puzzles.
3. Select books you like and read them together. Get to an exciting part and finish it next time you are together.
4. Start a book club.
5. Exchange favorite recipes. Put them in a book and use it as a neighborhood fundraiser for the program.
6. Research the history of music and learn to play a musical instrument together.
7. Teach the beginning alphabet, words and phrases of a foreign language.
8. Create a scrapbook of memories that last the entire year.
9. Use a disposable camera to capture special moments.
10. Work on the computer. Create calendars, write poems and search the Web.
11. Set up e-mail correspondence between mentors and youth if you are permitted and if your youth has e-mail access where the mentoring program is located. Write to each other and touch base between visits.
12. Construct a kite together and fly it.
13. Build and launch a rocket. Don't forget to take photos.
14. Create a design and carve a pumpkin on Halloween.
15. Help research and design an extra credit project.
16. Create a time capsule and bury it. Determine when it should be opened.
17. Create a holiday, get well, or greeting card for a special occasion.
18. Discuss safety precautions such as wearing helmets when riding bikes and fire safety in the home.
19. Write an original storybook together.
20. Discuss personal hygiene, health, exercise and healthy habits. Remember that we are what we eat! Manage a diet plan together.
21. Teach how to give a good handshake. Practice makes perfect!
22. Discuss proper etiquette and social graces. Plan a field trip to a fine restaurant after youth pass *all* the tests. Make sure to get permission and invite a chaperone. Get approvals from the program first!
23. Connect with the community. Research what after-school programs are offered in the community in which youth might engage.
24. Encourage your youth to try out for school activities such as the band, chorus, drama and sports.
25. Play sports. Shoot basketballs in a school or organization's gymnasium.
26. Explore what to do in an emergency. Create a contact list and discuss 911 procedures.

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27. Plan for a sound financial future. Discuss opening savings and checking accounts and the concept of good credit and the meaning of credit cards. Invite a banker to speak with youth.
28. Plan for future careers. Conduct mock interviews for a job, read the want ads, discuss dress codes and fill out a sample job application.
29. Discuss opportunities for post-secondary education. Research two- and four-year colleges and technical schools and the meaning of financial aid. What does it take to get to college? What high school courses should be taken? It is never too early to begin.
30. Take a career interest inventory. Discuss entry-level positions.
31. Decide on a community service project together with mentors and youth and carry it out. Plant a garden in front of the local school, remove graffiti from school walls or collect food and deliver it to the homeless. Take credit for the project as part of your mentoring program. Ask the program what their needs are.
32. Start a pen pal project with a group of young people in another country.
33. Talk about friends — those that your youth has and those he or she would like to have.
34. Decorate T-shirts and wear your creations proudly.
35. Discuss what your youth wants to be when he or she grows up. Invite guest speakers in who represent the careers of choice.
36. Arrange to shadow corporate executives on Groundhog Job Shadow Day, a national event in February.
37. Have a game of basketball, football or volleyball with mentors playing against youth.
38. Help your youth to craft a personal mission statement.
39. Design and paint a mural on the wall of the school.
40. Act out a scene from a favorite book and make a production out of it. Invite the school to attend.
41. Discover ways to make spelling fun. Use alphabet cereal or flashcards.
42. Play Hangman.
43. Discuss the positive activities youth can get involved in during the summer.
44. Walk outside on a nice day; sit under a tree and just talk.
45. Research and talk about famous people who use their abilities to get ahead.
46. Read the newspaper and discuss current events.
47. Share your life experiences.
48. Share your career experiences. How did you get to where you are today?
49. Remember your youth on his or her birthday with a card.
50. Share your school experiences when you were the same age as your mentee is now.
51. Share a proverb each time that you meet.



52. Build a model.
53. Swap photos of youth and mentors.
54. Bring a scrapbook or photo album from home and share photos of your family, travels and pets.
55. Share thoughts and feelings between meetings in a small journal.
56. Practice the answers to the questions for a driver's license.
57. Help your youth write a resume.
58. Discuss people you admire. Compare heroes and research your favorites.
59. Discuss leisure activities.
60. Plan a leadership project with your youth and carry it out.
61. Tell your youth – if you could go back to high school, what would *you* do differently?
62. Complete a personality inventory to find out who your youth is.
63. Help your youth to design a unique and original calling or business card.
64. Ask your youth where they hope to be in five years and in 10 years.
65. Help your youth to get organized. Write out what your youth does every day and what he or she would like to change.
66. Practice how to get a point across.
67. Research volunteer opportunities and adopt a project. Giving back through community service is so important.
68. Discuss travel and dream vacations.
69. Discuss the pillars of character including pride, punctuality, honesty and responsibility.
70. Help to arrange a mini career fair and invite other youth to attend.
71. Cook a meal together if it is allowed. Ask to use the school kitchen or home economics classroom if there is one at your local school.
72. Explore careers over the Internet.
73. Teach how to ask a boss for a raise.
74. Invite a guest from the local labor market office to discuss market requirements and the fastest growing jobs today.
75. Share your dreams.
76. Help with homework. Make sure that your youth takes the lead in making this decision.
77. Plan a random act of kindness.
78. Learn about how newspapers write the news and invite a reporter to a session.
79. Usher at the school play or musical concert.
80. Arrange a field trip to visit a senior citizen home. Read to the seniors.
81. Hold a spelling bee and crown the winner.
82. Try clay modeling.

Goal Setting

After you and your mentee have gotten to know each other, you should meet with your program coordinator to discuss developing short- and long-range goals.

A goal should be: **S.M.A.R.T**

- **S**pecific (You need to know what you want to do).
- **M**easurable (You need to know when you have accomplished it.)
- **A**ttainable (When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true.)
- **R**ealistic (If it is too difficult, it will lead to frustration.)
- **T**imely (It should have a deadline so you won't put it off.)

Steps in Goal Setting

Have the mentee identify some positive things she/he would like to accomplish. This might be something like getting a driver's license, finding an after-school job, passing an English course, or attending school every day.

- 1. Select one or two goals to work on.** Help your mentee select goals that are realistic and achievable. You want your mentee to set his/her sights high but also be assured of some success.
- 2. Discuss with your mentee how his/her parent or guardian may feel about these goal plans.** If a parent counts on your mentee for babysitting during the school day, regular school attendance may not be a goal supported by the family. If the mentee's efforts are not supported or understood by the family, achieving the goal will be more difficult.
- 3. Brainstorm ways to reach the goal.** Brainstorming is a process that involves thinking of as many ideas as you can for reaching a goal, even if some may seem silly or unrealistic. You and your mentee should write down all of your ideas. Later, you can help him or her select the best ones.



4. Identify small steps for reaching the goal. Most goals require more than one step to complete. Recognize the mentee's attainment of each small step to reach his or her goal.

5. Identify obstacles that might prevent completion of the goal. This will need to become part of the action plan for accomplishing the goal. For example, if a parent objects to the mentee's getting a driver's license, your mentee will have to think of ways to approach the parent to obtain permission. If no one can teach your mentee to drive and she/he does not have money for lessons, what else can be done to accomplish this step?

6. Decide on a deadline for accomplishment and reevaluation of the goal. This is an important step. If the process drags on too long, your mentee may get discouraged and quit. A deadline give him/her something to work toward. Opportunity for reevaluation gives you a chance to check his/her progress. Encouragement from you may be all that is needed to keep your mentee on course.

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Here are some of the kinds of goals a young person might be interested in setting:

- Art/Music/Creativity: What goals do I have for my creative side?

- Education: Where do I want to be in several years in terms of my education?

- Relationships: Three years from now, what do I want my relationships to be like? Do I want more friends? More time with family? A better relationship with my mom or dad? To be married? To be single?

- Spiritual: What kind of spiritual growth or involvement do I see for myself over the next few years?

- Sports/Fitness/Health: If I am successful, what will my health and fitness level be like several years down the road?

- Work: In what direction do I want to go in terms of my future career?
