



“In order to be a mentor, and an effective one, one must care. You must care. You don’t have to know how many square miles are in Idaho, you don’t need to know what is the chemical makeup of chemistry, or of blood or water. Know what you know and care about the person, care about what you know and care about the person you’re sharing with.” — Maya Angelou

Welcome!

Dear Mentors:

I first saw the power of mentoring several years ago as a building administrator. I could see that when mentors entered the lives of children, the impact was felt immediately and had lasting impacts. Students would have a strong bond with their mentor, adding someone to their lives that cared about them and was willing to be their friend, regardless of their gender, race, or socio-economic backgrounds. It is not uncommon for these bonds to continue long after the student leaves school.

But it wasn't just the students that benefitted. The mentors themselves grew. They were learning that every generation has problems and could benefit from those that came before. I distinctly remember one mentor, a man at 91 that had been a mentor for over 20 years. He told me, very sincerely, that he would have died many years ago, but through mentoring it had given him purpose and drive and that is why he was still around.

I believe that time is one of the most valuable gifts we can give children. It is almost embarrassing to give so little time and have it mean so much to them. I would encourage anyone with just a little time and a heart for kids to get involved with the Mentor Program. You will get a lot more out of it than what you will give.

Thanks for all that you do for our kids.

Wade Pilloud

Superintendent



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| We Believe-Program Philosophy.....4 | Mentor Training & Support.....17 |
| Program Overview.....5 | Building the Relationship.....18 |
| What is Mentoring.....6 | Tips for Effective Communication.....18 |
| How the Program Works.....7 | Exploring & Valuing Diversity.....19 |
| The Role of a Mentor.....8 | Self Esteem.....20 |
| Clarifying Your Role.....9 | Mentor Scenarios.....21-22 |
| Mentor Program Rules.....10-11 | Ages & Stages of Youth.....23-26 |
| Mentor Guidelines & Reminders.....12-13 | 5-to-7 Year-Olds.....23 |
| Guidelines for Reporting Abuse or Neglect.....14 | 8-to-10 Year-Olds.....24 |
| What to Do with My Student.....14-15 | 11-to-13 Year-Olds.....25 |
| Saying Goodbye.....16 | 14-to-18 Year-Olds.....26 |
| | References and Resources.....27 |



We Believe...

- ★ Each student can be successful
- ★ “One at a Time” is the way to go!
- ★ Each student can discover hope and develop resiliency
- ★ Each student can discover personal abilities and understand how they can be used to help him/herself and others
- ★ Each student can show respect and accept responsibility
- ★ This community is a rich resource of caring people and learning opportunities



Mentoring is a **bridge**. Children in our communities are eager to connect with adults who are willing to listen and be available to them. There are many options and opportunities in mentoring. In fact, mentoring is one of the most **powerful** ways to combat the gaps (generational, racial, cultural, financial) between people in our society.

Mentoring Works for All of Us!



Program Overview

Mission Statement

The Kootenai School District Mentor Program, in partnership with the community, is committed to strengthening students' social and emotional growth through one-on-one matching with caring and responsible role models.



What is Mentoring?

A **mentor** is a wise and trusted friend and guide.

Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee.



The Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits to Mentors:

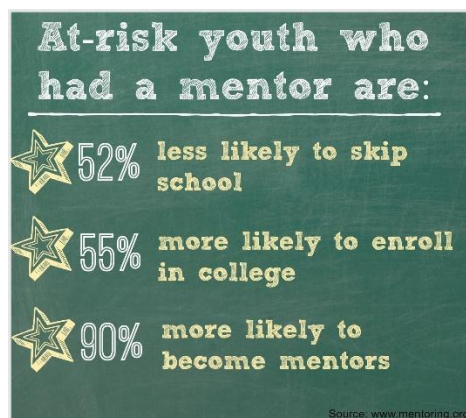
Most mentors feel that they gain as much, if not more, from the experience of being a mentor as the child they mentor.

A survey conducted by the Commonwealth Fund found:

- Three-quarters of the mentors surveyed reported their experience had had a “very positive” effect on their lives. They felt that mentoring provided a break from their busy professional lives and a chance to give something back.
- Eighty-three percent indicated that they learned or gained something personally from their mentoring experience, including feeling they were a better person, increased patience, friendship, a feeling of effectiveness and a chance to acquire skills.

Benefits to Mentees:

Support for education. Mentors help keep students in school. Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class (Public Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters).



Support for day-to-day living. Mentors help improve a young person’s self-esteem, providing support for students trying to think through new challenges. Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking (Public Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters). Mentors teach young people how to relate well to all kinds of people and help young people strengthen their communication skills.



How the Program Works

The Mentor Program is simple but requires many community volunteers and the collaborative effort between administrative staff, school counselors, teachers, parents, and students. To ensure our program is effective and provides a safe and healthy environment for both our students and mentors, we use our school resources and parents to select students for the program, recruit and screen all mentors, and assign a mentor to a student (on the waiting list).

Student Selection Process

Students are selected for the Mentor Program when teachers, school counselors, and/or parents recognize that a student is losing interest in school, experiencing a traumatic event (such as divorce, death in the family or new school environment), or inconsistently meeting school expectations. Below outlines the referral process:

1. Teachers and/or counselors recommend students for the Mentor Program.
2. The student is placed on a waiting list.
3. Mentor Program staff recruit, screen, and train potential volunteers on an ongoing basis.
4. School Counselors/Mentor Program staff identify a potential mentor/mentee match.
5. Parents give permission for the student to be matched with a mentor.
6. When a mentor becomes available, the student is matched and begins meeting weekly with his/her mentor.

The duration of a mentor/mentee match varies depending upon the willingness and availability of the mentors and the interest and needs of the student.

Mentor Application Process

Mentor applicants are eligible only if they meet requirements defined by the Kootenai School District Mentor Team. Mentor applicants are subject to criminal background checks, reference checks, and in-person interviews. The decision to accept an applicant into the Mentor Program will be based upon a final assessment done by the Kootenai School District Mentor Team.

Mentor Assignments

After screening is complete, information about the mentor is shared with the School Counselor at the school in which the mentor chooses to mentor. If the applicant did not indicate a school preference on his/her application, the application will be sent to the school with the greatest need for mentors. Based on the information on the application and needs of the students on the waiting list, counselors choose the best match. The goal of matching is to pair a student and mentor who share similar life experiences, personalities, or interests.

Mentoring Calendar

The Mentor Program operates during the school calendar. Mentor Program Staff are in the office September-June. Each year mentoring begins in mid-September. This time frame allows Mentor Program staff and school counselors to determine which students have transferred to a different school or moved out of the area. It also allows students and teachers to adjust to their new school routine. Mentoring ends two weeks prior to the end of the school year due to school field trips, exams, and graduation.



The Role of a Mentor

As a wise, entrusted friend, a mentor plays many roles that a mentee will value:

Listens

Listening is one of the most important functions of a mentor. Many young people do not have anyone who is willing and able to listen to what they have to say.

Role Models

Mentors can help their students develop values, standards and goals by allowing themselves to be seen as “real people,” and by sharing personal beliefs and values. Mentors may also introduce or expose their students to others whom they hold in high regard.



Advises

Through discussion, mentors can help young people gain a different perspective on their problems and their own abilities to deal with them.

Coaches

Giving advice and providing feedback are important as a young person takes on new challenges. Coaches give praise for a job well done, encouragement when the going gets tough, and constructive criticism when changes need to be made. It is always easier to deal with the negatives when you know there are some positives.

Empowers

While it may be easier to do things for a young person who is struggling with a problem, the benefit will be greater if the young person is taught how to handle the problem himself. One way to empower young people is to teach them the skills to take care of themselves.

Sponsors

Mentors can help open doors for young people by introducing them to new people, activities and organizations. Opportunities for a young person to meet new people and explore new situations may open new horizons.



Clarifying Your Role: Understanding the “C’s” of Mentoring

Although mentors should prepare themselves to handle various situations, there may be times that mentors are not sure what to do or say to their mentee. As you begin to understand more about your role as a mentor, you will see that there are five “C’s” which contribute to the successful development of the mentoring relationship.

Commitment: Any person who decides to become a mentor (or mentee) must be committed to the process. First and foremost, you must have a clear understanding of what the commitment is.

Consistency: Once you have committed to the process you must be consistent with that commitment. It is important that you regularly attend the mentoring sessions and participate fully.

Concern: You should have a sincere concern for your mentee and/or issues raised as part of your mentoring relationship. Mentors are there as a guide, to be supportive and show compassion.

Connection: Finding that connection to another individual is difficult! However, mentors and mentees alike have told us the phrase “you get out of it, what you put into it” could not be truer when we think of mentoring. Think of ways to share your expertise and build a respectful rapport. It can make a world of difference.

Confidentiality: Recognize that confidentiality between mentor/mentee should be respected at all times. Whatever is discussed should stay within that relationship as a courtesy to your mentee. **However, in the case of potential harm to the mentee or another person, confidentiality must be broken. (In some cases, it is a legal requirement.)**

Confidential information about the student should only be discussed with the school counselor or teacher.



Mentor Program Rules

1. BE DEPENDABLE: If you cannot meet, call the school and let the child and counselor know.
2. MEET ONLY AT THE SCHOOL during the school day.
3. ASK THE COUNSELOR OR TEACHER IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR STUDENT. For general concerns or suggestions, you can contact the Mentor Office.
4. CONFIDENTIALITY IS ESSENTIAL!

Be Dependable

Mentors are very special people. Many of the children in the Mentor Program have been let down numerous times by family, friends and/or life circumstances. The Mentor Program strives to create a dependable and trustworthy relationship between a student and a mentor. Earning a child's trust is hard and often difficult to rebuild.

It's not uncommon to have a schedule change without notice. If your schedule changes and you are unable to mentor, simply call the school and inform the office personnel or school counselor of your inability to meet. They will contact your student and inform him/her of your schedule change. Perhaps it would be easier to reschedule and meet on another day. The important thing is to make your mentor student aware of your absence.

Meet Only at the School

There are two main reasons for insisting that mentors meet only at school. First, some students do not like school, have little success with school, or are not well accepted. Our experience shows that meeting with a mentor is the highlight of the week for some students. In many cases, a student's attendance has improved because he/she knows the mentor will be there.

Second, there are liability issues with meeting off of school grounds. This guideline not only protects the student, but it also protects the Mentor and the Mentor Program. Meeting at other sites increases the possibility of a vulnerable situation for both the Mentor and the student.

The Mentor Program is a school-based program. If you want an opportunity to "make a difference" in the life of a child outside of the school hours and location, opportunities exist with other organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters, 4-H, city recreation programs, scouting, and church groups.

Use Counselor/Teacher Resources

The Kootenai School District has wonderful teachers, school counselors and administrators that support our program and know the children well. If you ever have a question regarding the well-being of your mentee, call the school counselor or teacher and utilize his/her expertise. The counselors/teachers collaborate and work closely to ensure the well-being of each mentor-



mentee relationship. Below are some examples in which to utilize counselor and teacher support:

- Talk to the counselor immediately if it appears someone could be in danger. Instances could be talks of suicide, indications of abuse or violence. The counselor and school officials will know how to respond.
- Ask the teacher or school counselor for information on your student's progress whenever needed--counselors will help arrange for this.
- Talk to the counselor for advice on interacting with the student's parents. Occasional notes to the student's family have been effective--especially when they are friendly and positive. Do not go to the student's home.

Respect Confidentiality

A mentor's role contains elements of teaching, counseling and parenting. The relationship that develops between a student and a mentor implies that your student will share personal, private and confidential information. Mentors have an obligation to protect the confidentiality of their mentee. You must not "gossip" or share things entrusted to you as a friend. Trust is fragile and, once broken, is not easily put back together. As a rule of thumb, share only with people who "need to know" such as counselors, administrators and teachers (if the topic relates to the classroom material). Remember that our only purpose in talking about a student should be to help them. **If what you share is not intended to help, don't share.** Use the following guidelines to ensure you maintain and respect confidentiality:

- Share information only with those who "Need to Know."
- Share information only to "help"—not to gossip.
- Seek advice from the school counselor or administrator when you feel uncertain about what to do in any situation including questions of confidentiality.



Mentor Guidelines

In addition to our four rules, we have a few guidelines to help make your mentor/mentee relationship a success:

1. Call the school in advance if your student's attendance is a problem--this may save you an unnecessary trip. Also ensure that school is not closed due to inclement weather and check the school calendar for vacation days, in-service, or other changes that could affect your meeting time.
2. Concentrate on the good qualities and actions of your student. Each child is unique and Mentors are wonderful at discovering the buried treasures. Help your student achieve small goals and learn to be responsible for following through. Celebrate success!
3. "What should we do today?" Take cues from your student. Is he/she upset and just needs to talk? Is he/she ready to work on a project? Would playing a game be best today?
4. **ENJOY EACH OTHER AS FRIENDS!**

Important Reminders for Mentors:

A Mentor...

- Enjoys being with children
- Has a positive attitude
- Acts in a dependable manner
- Maintains confidentiality
- Finds student's strengths
- Gives student hope and vision
- Communicates to student "I believe in you!"

A Mentor Does Not...

- Replace a parent or guardian
- Break the trust given by the student
- Give the student money
- Go into a student's home
- Provide transportation
- Get involved in the student's family life
- Disregard school policies
- "Fix" the student's problems
- Expect quick or dramatic changes



Gift-giving Guidelines

Gift giving is optional and should be done at the discretion of the mentor. Mentors are encouraged to use the following guidelines when gift giving:

- Avoid giving gifts early on in the relationship to avoid setting an expectation on the child's behalf
- Avoid extravagant gifts (i.e. iPod and mp3 players, video games, snowboard etc.) which may lead the mentee to misconstrue the mentor relationship
- Give gifts in the privacy of your mentor/mentee visit to avoid creating adversity between other mentor/mentee relationships
- Ensure the mentee places the gift in his/her locker or in the possession of school personnel for safety and to avoid disruption of class time

Guidelines for Mentor/Mentee Contact

- The Kootenai School District Mentor Program discourages mentors and mentees from connecting on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
- Our program does not require mentors and mentees to exchange personal contact information or to communicate via phone, text, or email. However, mentors and mentees may communicate through those methods for the purpose of arranging school visits and brief check-ins during times when school is not in session. An appropriate number of contacts by each party is a maximum of two phone calls, texts, or email (combined) per week. If either party is contacting the other more than 2 times per week, the school counselor should be notified.
- Parents/guardians must give permission for their child's contact information to be shared with the mentor.



Handling “Sticky” Situations

What do you do if your mentee asks you to do something “outside the rules of the program,” or something that makes you uncomfortable?

As friendships deepen between mentor and student, situations might arise that require making a tough choice. The best help for dealing with these sticky situations is to be prepared. Mentors need to be aware that sticky situations, although uncommon, might occur. Mentors need to understand the parameters of the program and the possible jeopardy to the program, and to the individual mentor, if the programs' guidelines are not followed. Mentors also need to know their own boundaries as to what is “right” or acceptable for them. Also, it is necessary to know whom to contact in case their student indeed needs help that is beyond the mentoring relationship. When in doubt, contact the school counselor or administrator.



While the vast majority of mentoring relationships develop and flourish without “sticky situations” or serious problems, things do happen. Mentors have an important role, but that role does not include medical or psychological treatment, or family counseling. There are support systems in place for real emergencies. The most a mentor is expected to do, and should do, is to help guide a young person to the appropriate source of professional help.

Guidelines for Reporting Abuse or Neglect

As volunteers for the Mentor Program, it is our responsibility to provide you with the necessary information for reporting abuse or neglect in the rare occasion that you suspect your student is experiencing such a situation. In the unlikely event you suspect that your student has been abused or neglected, please follow the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the student:

1. Remind your student that whatever they share with you will be kept in confidence unless their safety or the safety of others is in jeopardy.
2. Do not ask leading questions about that which the student reports to you. Leave interviewing to a trained staff member. Questioning done by untrained staff can damage future testimony.
3. Try not to react with shock or extreme reactions if you hear disturbing information and need to debrief. Praise the child for self- disclosure.
4. Inform your student you must share the information with the school counselor.
5. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to your school’s guidance counselor. If the school counselor is not available, report the suspected abuse or neglect to the teacher or building principal.
6. Be aware that you will need to speak with a Child Protective Services worker. The first individual who heard the information must be the one to share it with Child Protection Services. Second hand reports are not accepted. Understand that the school counselor or social worker may not be able to share any of the follow-up information with you.

Note: If you are unsure of whether the information shared with you constitutes abuse or neglect, talk with your school’s guidance counselor.

What to Do with My Student

“What do I do with my student?” is a question often asked by new mentors. The answer is really the same when answering, “What can I do with my new friend?” Below are a few guidelines that we share with our new mentors.

- Take cues from the student. Often what they need varies from one week to the next. Sometimes they are ready to work on a task; other times they need an understanding ear.



- Getting started is often awkward...some mentors bring in favorite photos or hobby items to “break the ice”. Some mentors bring in news articles or magazines...or other interesting items to expand the students’ horizons.
- The school counselor has many books, activities, games, etc. that are appropriate for students of different ages and abilities. Ask the counselor at your school to show you where these are kept.
- Avoid computer time. Kids don’t need to be “plugged in” any more than they already are.
- Often other mentors are your best help. Ask other mentors what works for them or how a particular situation was handled. Input from the school counselor is always helpful.

Resources Available

Each school has a selection of board games, cards, and some art supplies. Mentors can spend time playing games, drawing pictures, walking around the school, playing in the gyms or on the playground. **Mentors and students must stay on school grounds.** Mentors are also welcome to bring in a board game or activity from home.

Additional activity ideas:

- “Show and Tell!” You and your mentee can both bring in photos or items that are important to you.
- “Act it out!” Go to the library find a play, and read it out loud.
- Make your own board game.
- Start a scrapbook.
- “Mentees are teachers!” Let your mentee plan to teach you something they are knowledgeable about
- Write a story together. Take turns adding to the story!
- Paper airplanes! Have a contest to see whose goes the farthest.
- Discuss a current event
- Make a collage! Choose a theme like: “What do I want in my future?”, “What is fashion?” and find pictures and words in old magazines and glue them on paper.
- Play hangman
- Take turns reading a page, paragraph or sentence from a funny story aloud
- Make your family trees
- Play charades!



Saying Goodbye...

It's important for your mentee to understand why you are not able to continue your mentoring relationship. Whether your relationship was brief or was built over many years, your mentee needs to understand that sometimes - despite everyone's best efforts - a mentoring relationship comes to an early conclusion.

Common reasons for this to occur include:

- Mentor or mentee moves out of the area
- Other major life changes (health concerns, major career shifts) make continuing impossible
- One of the pair decides to end the relationship

If the relationship ends because of an unavoidable circumstance, consider taking the time for closure and celebrate what you have accomplished. It is helpful to acknowledge that there is probably some disappointment on both your parts; make sure your mentee knows that this is not a reflection on him/her or how much you care.

If one or both of you truly feels it would be best to end the relationship, then your goal should be to make the ending positive and affirming for you both. If possible, ask your mentee for a last meeting to talk about the ending and say good-bye. When ending your relationship, remember to:

- Emphasize what has gone well - ways you've seen your mentee grow, and ways you've benefited
- Acknowledge that sometimes relationships are challenging, and you hope you've both gained some skills in working on interpersonal issues
- Reaffirm your faith in the young person's abilities and potential
- Encourage him or her to keep reaching out to others who can make a positive difference in his or her life - and to give back of himself/herself to others.

Wrapping up the Relationship

With the closure of each match, we ask mentors to write a card or note to their mentee. This is a great way to wrap up any final thoughts on the relationship; it also gives the student something to hold on to. Ideas of what to write in the card include, what you liked about mentoring, positive changes you saw in your mentee, what you learned from the experience, and encouragement for their future. Cards/notes can be given to the student at your last meeting, or if that is not possible, you can send the card to the Mentor Office to be forwarded on to your mentee.

After the Relationship Ends

After your relationship ends, remember to emphasize the positive in your own thoughts as well. You've taken the time and the risk to make a difference in a young person's life, and that is a great thing, something to be proud of. Even if you can't see the impact you have made (and this is unlikely), remember - sometimes the effect we have doesn't manifest itself for years. Some of the adults who changed your life probably never knew they did.



Mentor Training and Support

Mentors experience many highs and lows throughout the course of their mentoring relationship. The Mentor Program offers a variety of training and supportive opportunities for you during your service as a mentor:

- New mentor training is offered at mentor orientation. These sessions are offered to provide an overview of the Mentor Program and the program guidelines. Mentors receive a mentor handbook at the time of orientation.
- Mentor Information Sessions are offered at varying times throughout the school year. These sessions are offered to all mentors and are especially helpful for those who have questions, concerns or a need for new ideas. Topics of information sessions are geared toward current issues or topics faced by students in our school district. Past information sessions included such topics as bullying, poverty and building self-esteem in youth.
- Mentor Chats are held throughout the school year to provide mentors time to talk with other mentors in the program and explore positive and negative issues of mentoring.
- Fall registration, holiday party, and spring party offer an opportunity for mentors to get to know their student's teacher & school counselor, connect with other mentors and celebrate the spirit of mentoring. Mentors are made aware of these events by invitation.
- Match Support Mentor Program staff contacts mentors annually to discuss comfort with the mentoring relationship, mentor/mentee activities, problems or concerns encountered, and access to program support.

Office Phone: 208-689-3311

Email: kames@sd274.com, wpilloud@sd274.com

- School counselors, principals and teachers serve as additional support to mentors. Issues related to your student can be addressed through school personnel. Information shared is based on rules of confidentiality that school personnel are required to follow.



Building the Relationship

This section of the handbook is meant to provide information that allows you to enhance the relationship with your mentee through positive communication, building mentee self-esteem, and valuing diversity. It also includes scenarios of real-life mentoring situations and advice on how to respond.

Tips for effective Communication

Talking and communication are not the same! There are three basic skills:

Listening, Looking and Leveling

LISTENING

To listen effectively:

- Pay attention
- Don't think ahead to what you are going to say (ignoring the speaker while rehearsing your own comments)
- Don't interrupt — let your mentee finish what he/she is saying
- Listen for feelings underneath the words — read “between the lines”
- Keep an open mind — don't judge immediately
- Encourage the speaker to continue and clarify what has been said

LOOKING

People communicate both verbally and with body language, pay attention to the whole person. Take note of facial gestures and body movements. There are clues that will help you more fully understand what the person is saying. Some helpful tips:

- Make eye contact
- Show that you are listening by leaning forward in your chair, saying “Uh huh” or “Go on”
- Make sure you understand what your mentee is saying — repeat back what you think you heard
- Don't be afraid to ask your mentee for clarification on what they said
- Keep an open posture — don't cross arms.

LEVELING

Leveling means being honest about what you are feeling and thinking. Tips include:

- Be honest in what you say.
- Speak for yourself. Use “I” statements instead of “you” statements.
- Deal with the other person's feelings. Don't give unwanted advice or try to change someone's feelings. Just listen and try to understand.



Exploring & Valuing Diversity

Culture, in this sense, is more than race or ethnicity. It encompasses values, lifestyle and social norms, and includes issues such as different communication styles, mannerisms, ways of dressing, family structure, traditions, time orientation and response to authority. These differences may be associated with age, religion, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. A lack of understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity can result in mentors becoming judgmental, which may prevent the development of a trusting relationship.



What Can You Do?

As in many other situations, knowledge is the key to understanding. Some diversity issues include Ethnic and Socioeconomic Diversity, and Youth Culture. Each has the potential to cause misunderstandings between a mentor and a mentee. However, cultural understanding is not something you can learn exclusively from a textbook. Talk to your mentee about his or her background and ancestry, about what life is like at school or home, or with his or her friends. Find out the reasons for what he or she does. Your program staff, school counselors, other mentors, friends and coworkers may also have insights into cultural differences.

Cultural Reciprocity

An important but often forgotten aspect of cultural diversity is the mutuality of the mentoring relationship, which is what we call cultural reciprocity. This phrase refers to the fact that mentors and mentees alike can benefit from their increased understanding of others who may at first seem unfamiliar. For the mentor, a greater breadth and depth of understanding of others can facilitate better relationships at work, at home and in other social situations. As your mentee begins to trust and know you, s/he will begin to learn about life outside a limited circle of peers and discover new opportunities and ways of doing things: you can be a model for your mentee. The more options we have, the better off we'll be.

Remember: Our lives are enriched by diversity!



Self-Esteem: What All Children Need

Young people need a mentor to create opportunities for them to enhance their self-esteem. Foster their self-esteem by valuing your mentee and by showing commitment and concern on a consistent basis. Expose the youth to positive experiences — choose activities that are guaranteed to provide a sense of success and accomplishment. Have you ever had a bad self-esteem day? Maybe your hair doesn't look good or your pants are too tight. Think about how you feel. Just like you, young people will have bad days. Perhaps a meeting that you thought would be wonderful is not well received by your mentee. Do not take it personally. Their reaction may have nothing to do with you or your role as a mentor. We all have bad days. Your challenge as a mentor is to help the young person work through those times and learn how to cope appropriately.

Self-Esteem is a sense of ...

... Belonging

... Competency

... Worthiness



At this time in their lives, adolescents are just beginning to challenge the information they receive as well as testing a person's commitment to their word. Again, it is critical that as mentors we follow-through and remain consistent. We stand to lose credibility with youth if we are not consistent with what we say and what we do. Mentees will be testing the character of their mentors. Young people are very perceptive and will know when you are being honest and sincere. Resist the temptation to say what you think they want to hear because you hope to make them happy. Be honest. If you are uncomfortable with a question or don't know the answer, just say so. In some cases, the experience could be used as a learning opportunity.

Factors that help build self-esteem include:

- Finding work you love or developing the capacity to love your work
- Developing an open mind, tolerance and respect of others
- Keeping an open mind to learn more; being receptive to learning from others
- Addressing basic needs, including staying physically healthy
- Being able to communicate with others without either one of you feeling "put down"



Mentor Scenarios — “What would you do if....”

The following are scenarios that have happened to volunteers during their experience as a mentor. Read the scenario and think about what your reaction might be to each situation.

Scenario 1

Your student asks you for money for a field trip, school supplies, a present for mom, diapers or food... or some other worthy cause.

You might be tempted to...

Feel sorry for your student and give him or her the items asked for.

But it would be better to...

Option 1: Say, “You know I care about you, and would like to help you any way I can, but mentors are not supposed to give students money. Let’s check with your teacher (counselor) to see if we can figure out a good way for you to get what you need.”

Option 2: (If you REALLY DO want to give the money) Say, “Let’s talk to your counselor and see if it would be OK for me to do this.” Then write a check to the place/program or give the money to someone who will see that the money is spent the way it was intended.

Scenario 2

You get a call in the middle of the night... “I can’t get in my home, (I’m on the street and my ride left me) can you come get me?”

You might be tempted to...

Drop everything and go get him/her – even if you have to drive your own car all alone to an uncomfortable place.

But it would be better to...

Option 1: Encourage them to call their parents or family for help. You might even offer to call the parents for them. If the parents are unwilling to help, tell the student, “I’ll call for someone to come, and get you to a safe place.” The best course of action for the safety of the child is to tell them to call the police. Many mentors are reluctant to call the police for fear of breaking the child’s trust, but the main consideration needs to be for the SAFETY of the child – and yourself! Plus, it is important that kids know the police are not the “bad guy”, but they exist to HELP keep people safe!

Option 2: Call a taxi to pick up your student. Never take the child to your home! This puts you at great risk. ALWAYS make certain whatever action you take is SAFE for yourself and the child. You might also want to have a reliable witness – Protect yourself!

Scenario 3

Your student tells you terrible things and you suspect physical or sexual abuse.

You might be tempted to...

Ignore the situation and assume that “this couldn’t be happening” or immediately call Social Services.

But it would be better to...

Option 1: Remember that this student trusts you. How can you help without breaking that trust?

Option 2: Remind your student you will keep his/her confidence unless their safety or the safety of others is in jeopardy.



Option 3: You might say “I believe you and think you need help so that won’t happen again. I know someone who could help you. Would you be willing to talk to that person?” Then offer to go with the student to report the incident to that professional (usually a school counselor). It may take a while for the student to agree to tell someone, but most will. The counselor will then talk to the student, make the judgment as to whether or not the authorities need to become involved, and follow through with the student until the situation is resolved.

Scenario 4

Your student has been depressed a lot and says things that make you suspect that they may be suicidal or apt to hurt someone else.

You might be tempted to...

Say “Oh, don’t think that way.” Ignore it.

But it would be better to...

Report it immediately to the school counselor or teacher.

Scenario 5

Your student talks a lot about conflict at home and that they don’t get along with their parents or guardians.

You might be tempted to...

Minimize or ignore it.

But it would be better to...

Option 1: If you perceive that this could escalate into a bigger problem, try to help the student think through some choices, such as...

“What could you do to make things better?”

“Who could help you if this happens again?”

Option 2: Encourage your student to talk about this further with their counselor.



Ages & Stages of Youth

5-to-7 Years Old

General Characteristics

- Eager to learn, easily fatigued, short periods of interest
- Self-assertive, boastful, less cooperative, more competitive
- Need rest periods. Good quiet activities would be reading books together or doing simple art projects
- Large muscles are well developed. Activities involving small muscles will be difficult (working on models with small pieces)
- May tend to be accident-prone
- Like organized games and are very concerned about following rules
- Can be very competitive
- Are very imaginative and involved in fantasy playing
- Are self-assertive, aggressive, want to be first, less cooperative at seven than at five, and boastful
- Learn best through active participation
- Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are easily hurt
- Inconsistent in level of maturity evidenced; regresses when tired, often less mature at home than with outsiders



Suggested Mentor Strategies

- Be patient, encouraging and flexible
- Give supervision with a minimum amount of interference
- Give praise, opportunities for successful completion, and suggestions on acceptable behavior



8-to-10 Year-Olds

General Characteristics

- Interested in people, aware of differences, willing to give more to others but expect more
- Busy, active, full of enthusiasm, may try too much, accident-prone, interest in money and its value
- Sensitive to criticism, recognize failure, capacity for self-evaluation
- Capable of prolonged interest, may make plans on own
- Decisive, dependable, reasonable, strong sense of right and wrong
- Spend a great deal of time in talk and discussion, often outspoken and critical of adults although still dependent on adult approval
- Are very active and need frequent breaks from tasks to do things that are fun for them and involve use of energy
- Can be very competitive
- Are choosy about their friends: BOYS LIKE BOYS, GIRLS LIKE GIRLS
- Being accepted by friends becomes quite important
- Team games become popular
- Worshipping heroes, TV stars and sports figures is common
- Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are hurt easily
- Their idea of fairness becomes a big issue
- Are eager to answer questions
- Want more independence, but know they need guidance and support
- Wide discrepancies in reading ability



Suggested Mentor Strategies

- Recognize allegiance to friends and “heroes”
- Remind child of responsibilities in a two-way relationship
- Offer enjoyable learning experiences. It’s a great time to teach about different cultures
- Provide frank answers to questions about upcoming physiological changes



11-to-13 Year-Olds

General Characteristics

- Testing limits, “know-it-all attitude”
- Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings
- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance
- Interest in art, crafts, models and music are popular
- Are very concerned with their appearance, and very self-conscious about growth
- Diet and sleep habits can be bad, which may result in low energy levels
- Girls may begin menstruation, and may begin sexual activity
- Being accepted by friends becomes quite important
- Cliques start to develop outside of school
- Team games become popular
- Crushes on members of the opposite sex are common
- Friends set the general rule of behavior
- Are very concerned about what others say and think of them
- Have a tendency to manipulate others
- Interested in earning own money
- Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are hurt easily
- Loud behavior and “showing off” hides their lack of self-confidence
- Tend to be perfectionists. If they try to attempt too much, they may feel frustrated and guilty
- Want more independence, but know they need guidance and support



Suggested Mentor Strategies

- Offer alternative opinions without being insistent
- Be accepting of different physical states and emotional changes
- Give frank answers to questions
- Share aspects of professional life and rewards of achieving in world of work
- Do not tease about appearance, clothes, boyfriends or sexuality. Affirm often



14-to-18 Year Olds

General Characteristics

- Testing limits, “know-it-all attitude”
- Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings
- Identification with admired adult
- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance; very self-conscious about growth
- Diet and sleep habits can be bad, which may result in low energy levels
- Rapid weight gain at beginning of adolescence. Enormous appetite
- Friends set the general rules of behavior. Fear of ridicule and being unpopular
- Feel a real need to conform. They dress and behave alike in order to “belong”
- Are very concerned about what others say and think of them
- Going to extremes, emotional instability with “know-it-all” attitude
- Are caught between being a child and being an adult
- Look at the world more objectively, adults subjectively, critical
- Can better understand moral principles
- Attention span can be lengthy
- Argumentative behavior may be part of “trying out” an opinion
- Romantic or Sexual relationships/experimentation

Suggested Mentor Strategies

- Give choices and don’t be afraid to confront inappropriate behavior
- Use humor to diffuse testy situations
- Give positive feedback
- Be available and be yourself, with strengths, weaknesses and emotions
- Be honest and disclose appropriate personal information to build trust



References

The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania

<http://www.mentoringpittsburgh.org/>

Minnesota Mentoring Partnership

<http://www.mpmn.org/Home.aspx>

Other Resources

National Mentoring Partnership www.mentoring.org

Search institute <http://www.search-institute.org/>

