

# **Be A Mentor Program**

## **Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors**

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## **Preface**

*A Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* has been designed to be a reference guide for mentors in training, and one they can refer to later for BE A MENTOR's experience gained in designing and conducting training workshops for the many volunteers it has served since 1995. This guide has evolved over time and has been shaped by the lives it has touched: Be A Mentor training facilitators, by the volunteers who have been trained, and by the youth we are honored to serve.

The primary objectives of the initial mentor training are to confirm the commitment of the mentor, establish the basic parameters of the program, and to begin to prepare the mentors for the realities of the mentoring experience. It has been designed to set the stage for the mentor's relationship with their youth and to give the mentors the information and tools necessary to be effective in their match.

After being matched, it is critical that mentors take advantage of ongoing training sessions, primarily to enhance their skills as a mentor. These sessions serve to keep the mentors engaged and on track. They also serve as a reminder to mentors about their need to continue to expand their own knowledge base and experiences.

BE A MENTOR is honored to work with and support the many caring volunteers who step forward to assist the young people within our communities. We wish you success in your work and a meaningful volunteer experience!

Eileen Pardini, Director of Training

## Overview of a Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors

*A Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* is designed to give mentors the necessary information to be effective in their match. Its objective is to get mentors started and to provide adequate guidelines for maneuvering within the mentoring relationship.

*Why Youth Need Mentors...* lists the personal and social pressures that youth are exposed to today.

*The Role of a Mentor...* clearly defines the mentors' purpose, responsibilities, and what mentors are not.

*So What Exactly Does a Mentor Do...* discusses expected and suggested activities for mentors.

*Benefits to Mentor, Youth, and Organization...* lists the benefits to all of being involved in a mentoring relationship.

*Practices of Effective and Ineffective Mentors...* contains advice to mentors for successfully relating with their youth.

*Stages in Mentor/Youth Relationship...* discusses the three stages of the mentoring relationship – Developing Rapport and Building Trust, Setting and Reaching Goals, and Relationship Closure for Planned Terminations.

*What is Culture...* offers a definition of culture and how to communicate effectively in cross-cultural relationships.

*Environmental Factors that Affect Adolescent Development...* discusses the common environmental circumstances that youth are exposed to today.

*Risk Factors that Affect Adolescents in or on the Periphery of Gangs...* lists the factors which contribute to our youth's fascination and affiliation with gangs.

*Listening with Both Ears and Communicating with Your Youth...* provides advice to mentors for effective communication.

*Rules of Communication...* is a list of fourteen rules for mentors to follow when communicating with their youth.

*What is Self-Esteem?...* discusses the importance of self-esteem and what mentors can do to help instill a sense of positive self-esteem within their youth.

*Sharing and Modeling Values...* discusses the importance of mentors sharing their values with their youth.

*Empowering Youth: Solving Problems Versus Giving Advice...* discusses the importance of youth solving their own problems.

*Asking High Quality Questions...* provides a list of questions for mentors to ask when assisting youth in solving their problems.

*Mentor Support...* includes a variety of ways for mentors to get the support they need with their mentoring effort.

*How to Let Go – When and How to Dissolve the Relationship...* discusses guidelines to follow for planned and premature match terminations.

## **Overview of a Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors (cont.)**

*Exhibits...* includes various forms mentors will use during their match.

Remember... *A Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* is designed to be a reference guide for mentors and one that they can refer back to later for deeper clarity and understanding. It is expected that mentors will attend ongoing advanced mentor trainings in order to receive critical feedback and to expand their own knowledge base.

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**MARGARET WHEATLEY**

## **WHY YOUTH NEED MENTORS**

The young people of today must cope with far more personal and social pressures than any other previous generation of youth. Early intervention through a structured mentor relationship may be able to give young people the tools and support they need to deal effectively with these pressures.

Understanding the many social, psychological, and physical demands that the youth face is extremely important for any individual about to undertake the task of being a mentor. Following is a list of these issues.

### ***Peer Pressure***

One of the greatest forces on adolescents is the power and influence of their peers.

### ***Substance Abuse***

The curiosity to experiment with alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is a constant threat to each adolescent in today's world.

### ***Sexuality***

Many young people turn to sexual relationships for a variety of reasons.

### ***Child Abuse and Family Violence***

Physical and psychological abuse, within the family or in any environment, will have both an immediate effect on the youth and create long-lasting, negative attitudes and behaviors.

### ***School Safety and Violence***

Many young people are exposed to bullies or other violent behaviors in the school setting which may result in attendance problems or lower academic achievement levels.

### ***Depression and Suicide***

Serious depression is common when young people are overwhelmed with issues and situations they cannot resolve.

### ***Nutrition and Health Care***

Many young people feel they are immortal and are either ignorant of or tend to ignore good health practices.



## ***WHY YOUTH NEED MENTORS (cont.)***

### ***Faith and Religion***

This issue is usually within the domain of the family. However, this may be an area of great concern for some young people.

### ***Social and Time Management***

How to manage leisure time, schoolwork, extracurricular activities, family chores, and other social demands is often very difficult for young people.

### ***Career Exploration and Part-Time Work***

Many young people struggle with the subjects of work and career. They often don't know what they want to do or be, how they can contribute to society, what their strengths are, or what steps to take in exploring workplace opportunities. Making money is important to most kids, but knowing how to go about securing satisfying employment is something they usually learn through trial and error.

## THE ROLE OF A MENTOR

Mentors' roles fall into four categories:

- Providing academic help and tutoring
- Providing career exploration assistance
- Providing emotional support
- Providing social experiences

It is common to hear the mentor described as:

- Coach
- Guide
- Role Model
- Advocate
- FRIEND

Any and all of the following are important activities that mentors provide in the lives of their youth:

### ***Academic Support***

Keeping youth in school; helping them graduate from school; evaluating educational choices; directing them to educational resources.

### ***Role Modeling***

Pointing out, bringing to attention, demonstrating, and explaining your own actions and values that offer the youth the best chances for success and happiness; helping youth see and strive for broader horizons and possibilities than they may see in their present environment.

### ***Attention and Concern***

Many youth do not receive enough from the adults in their lives; mentors can fill in these empty spaces with dependable, sincere, and consistent attention and concern.

### ***Accountability***

A commitment made to a youth for a meeting together, an activity, or an appointment should be a mentor's first priority, barring emergencies. This consistent accountability has several benefits:

- Sets a good example for youth to see and emulate
- Cements trust between mentor and youth
- Creates mutual expectations that can be met

## ***Listening***

The other adults in the young person's life may not have the time, interest, or ability to listen, or they may be judgmental. Mentors can encourage young people to talk about their fears, dreams, and concerns. Staying neutral and not judging, but rather, sharing your own values, is important in listening. Remember, a mentor may be the **ONLY** adult in a youth's life who listens.

## **WHAT MENTORS ARE NOT**

There is no expectation that volunteer participants in mentoring programs will take on the roles of **PARENT**, professional **COUNSELOR**, or **SOCIAL WORKER**. But some of their traits will be a part of the mentor's role:

- Listening
- Nurturing
- Supporting
- Advising

Through the mentors' sustained caring, interest, and acceptance, youth may begin to think of themselves as worthy of this attention. They may apply this new, stronger sense of self-confidence to other relationships and experiences.

Mentoring is not a **PANACEA** for all the problems and deficiencies facing youth and their families. **THE ESSENCE OF MENTORING IS THE SUSTAINED HUMAN RELATIONSHIP**. Mentor programs can enhance the efficacy of this relationship by providing support activities and opportunities for development of social skills of the youth through group activities.

## SO WHAT EXACTLY DOES A MENTOR DO?

Mentors commit to spending a minimum of four to six hours each month with their youth. Group activities are fun, but it is expected that the mentor and youth will spend time together, just the two of you. This time may be spent in a number of ways. The Mentor Site Coordinator will ask you to document your activities and hours regularly. The following are some recommended activities that youth and mentors have found valuable in the past:

### ***Expected Activities***

- Make a point of meeting your youth's parent(s), early in the relationship
- Attend periodic group youth/mentor meetings
- Attend periodic Advanced Mentor Trainings
- Attend special events such as Recognition and Awards Event

### ***Suggested Activities***

- **Arrange one or more job shadows.** Have your youth follow you around as you perform your work. Have your youth follow a worker that has agreed to host your youth for a prearranged period of time. Or be a youth for a day - shadow your youth.
- **Talk.** Tell your youth those things that you wish you had known when you were in high school. You can do this anywhere, any time – over lunch, walking in the park, on the phone – whatever works.
- **Ask Questions.** Teenagers need somebody to ask, “What do you want to do after high school?” and “What’s your plan for how to get there?” They will also need help answering those questions.
- **Attend recreational and/or cultural activities.** Youth need more exposure to enriching activities such as visits to museums, attending plays, concerts, or sporting events. These experiences can pique interest and encourage youth to pursue new areas of learning.
- **Tutor.** Mentors should feel free to help youth with homework. Getting involved with their curriculum is a good way to relate to youth and gain insight into the educational program. Mentors may also arrange for someone else to tutor the youth.
- **Attend youth activities.** If your youth is involved in extracurricular activities, is employed, or is involved in activities outside of the school environment, attend those functions, when appropriate, to show support.
- **Do things in groups.** Mentors should be encouraged to join in activities with other mentors and youth. Participants in mentor programs enjoy meeting, interacting, and sharing experiences with one another.

You need not limit your activities to this list of suggestions – be creative. The goal is to provide experiences that the youth's usual environment does not provide. The more “real world” exposure a mentor can provide a youth, the more that youth will learn. Youth will gain new perspectives on the working world and their own education and potential.

## **BENEFITS TO MENTOR, YOUTH, AND ORGANIZATION**

### ***Benefits to the Mentors***

- Mentors gain personal and professional satisfaction in helping a youth.
- Mentors gain recognition from their peers.
- Mentors gain improved interpersonal skills.
- Mentoring focuses the mentor outside of him/herself.
- Mentoring promotes deeper understanding of teen and societal problems.

### ***Benefits to the Youth***

- Exposes youth to a positive role model
- Helps to focus youth on their future and on setting academic and career goals
- Exposes youth to new experiences and people from diverse cultural, socio-economic, and professional backgrounds
- Provides youth with attention and a concerned friend
- Encourages emotional and social growth
- Fosters increased confidence and self-esteem

### ***Benefits to the Organization:***

- Mentoring builds employee, hence, company morale.
- Mentoring develops the same skills needed for successful and effective company managers.
- Mentoring enhances the image of the company.
- Mentoring allows for participation by the company in the total educational process.
- Mentoring recognizes the competence of employees.
- Mentoring prepares employees to take on greater responsibilities in the corporation.
- Mentoring helps the company revitalize the community.
- Mentoring assists in the development of a competent future workforce.

## **PRACTICES OF EFFECTIVE MENTORS**

- Involve youth in deciding how the pair will spend their time together.
- Make a commitment to be consistent and dependable – to maintain a steady presence in the youth's life.
- Recognize that the relationship may be fairly one-sided for some time – mentors, not youth, are responsible for keeping the relationship alive.
- Call youth before each support meeting or appointment to confirm their attendance and/or their transportation needs.
- Pay attention to the youth's need for fun.
- Respect the youth's viewpoint.
- Allow the youth to make mistakes.
- Separate their own goals from those of the youth – leave their personal agenda behind.
- Do not focus on the negative aspects of the youth, neighborhood, or parents – leave it alone.
- Seek and utilize the help and advice of program staff.

## **PRACTICES OF INEFFECTIVE MENTORS**

- Have difficulty meeting the youth on a regular basis; demand that the youth play an equal role in initiating contact.
- Attempt to transform or reform the youth by setting goals and tasks early on; adopt a parental or authoritative role in interaction with the youth.
- Emphasize behavior changes over development of mutual trust and respect.
- Attempt to instill a set of values inconsistent with those the youth is exposed to at home.
- Ignore the advice of program staff.

## STAGES IN MENTOR/YOUTH RELATIONSHIP

The mentor/youth relationship typically goes through three stages:

- Developing Rapport and Building Trust
- Setting and Reaching Goals
- Bringing Closure to the Relationship

Mentors need to understand these stages and their roles in each.

### ***Developing Rapport and Building Trust***

One of the best ways to build trust is to help youth accomplish something that is important to them. Mentors must take the time to help youth identify the goal(s) they want to accomplish, view it realistically, break it down into small steps, and explore ways of reaching the goal. Building trust takes weeks, sometimes months.

**Testing will occur.** Youth may be slow to give their trust, expecting inconsistency and lack of commitment, due to past experiences with adults. The mentor's trustworthiness and commitment may be tested, particularly when youth are from unstable backgrounds where adults have repeatedly disappointed them. During the testing period, mentors can expect:

- **Missed appointments**
- **Phone calls not returned**
- **Unreasonable requests**
- **Angry or sullen behavior**

Once the mentor passes the test, the real work of the relationship can begin. Mentors should remember that **the issue is not whether youth like them.** Youth are protecting themselves from disappointment. From their perspective, not having a relationship at all seems better than trusting and subsequently losing someone. These young people may come from families where nothing can be taken for granted.

- **People living in the household may come and go.**
- **Frequent moves occur during the course of a year.**
- **The phone may be turned on and off.**
- **Food may be unavailable at times.**

Remember, **predictability breeds trust. The mentor must be consistent and accountable:**

- **On time for meetings**
- **Bring promised information, materials**
- **Follow through on promises and contracts that were volunteered**

One misstep, though it may seem small to the mentor, can assume great importance to the youth. Through this difficult process, **mentors need to be prepared, to understand, and to refrain from personalizing the experience.**

## ***Developing Rapport and Building Trust (cont.)***

### **Confidentiality**

The youth may be unsure whether the feelings and information they disclose to their mentors will be passed on to teachers, parents, etc. Early in the relationship, mentors must provide reassurance:

- Nothing that the youth tells the mentor will be discussed with anyone else except the Mentor Site Coordinator.
- If the mentor feels it is important to involve another adult, it will be discussed first with the youth.
- If there is threat of physical harm to the youth or to others, the mentor must break confidentiality to seek protection for the endangered person (including the threat of suicide).

### ***Setting and Reaching Goals***

Once the “testing” is over, the rocky part of the relationship usually ends and the youth becomes more committed. At times, however, old behaviors may appear, usually if the youth is under stress. Now the mentor and youth should identify and work toward some short-term goals. It is important that the mentor has the resources necessary or has access to them in order to achieve a fit between what the youth wants to learn/accomplish and what the mentor can teach/share. This is a time of closeness in the relationship. In general, youth at this stage will view their mentors as important in their lives. Since each relationship is unique, the timing and intensity will vary.

### **When Things Aren’t Working**

- The match/fit between mentor and youth may not be right.
- Some youth have been so disappointed and damaged by earlier experiences they are unable to risk taking advantage of a helping relationship.
- Some youth will get stuck in the “testing” stage.
- Some youth may drop out of the program or school.
- The mentor may feel burdened by the relationship and feel angry or annoyed by the youth’s behavior or words.

### ***Relationship Closure for Planned Terminations***

- Use the closure process as a means to recall youth’s progress and strengths.
- Help youth grow from the process; reassure them about what they have learned and are capable of.
- Discuss some positive actions and directions for the future.
- Reassure youth about your confidence in them.
- Mutually agree about how, when, or if you will stay in touch.
- Follow through on that commitment.
- A letter will be sent to the parent/guardian formally announcing the closure of the relationship.



## WHAT IS CULTURE?

- Culture is a set of mental rules for survival and success that a particular group of people has developed.
- Culture is that part of the environment made by humans; it includes customs and values as well as material objects.
- Cultures are learned and communicated consciously and unconsciously to subsequent generations.
- Cultures are multifaceted, including factors like family structure, spirituality, language, technology, organizations, law, art, body image, parenting practices, concept of growth, aging and death.
- Cultures are dynamic; that is, they are characterized by continuous – though sometimes incremental – change.
- Culture is a way of life that makes a group of people unique.
- We have multiple, overlapping cultural identities. The culture and sub-cultures of my religion, my ethnic heritage, my gender, and the dominant culture of the geographic region where I grew up or live now, for example, may inform who I am, in different ways. Practically speaking, no person is the product of one culture alone.

### Why is Communicating Interculturally Difficult?

- Cultures provide us with roles, telling us who to be, how to act, what is okay to say – and to whom.
- Actual language differences often prohibit us from reaching shared meaning.
- Our perceptions about people and events are determined by culture, as are our goals and motivations, and our basic notions about human nature and self.
- Prejudice and stereotypes can pop up in communication, often without us recognizing them as such in advance.
- Frustration, hurt, guilt, or anger from previous encounters with the same person or other people with similar cultural backgrounds can stand in the way.
- Assuming similarity when none exists is also a barrier to communication.

### Our Internal Dialogue

Our internal dialogue of what any given person means, thinks, wants, or needs cannot be fully accurate since...

- No one culture defines any person, but rather a mix of the cultures a person has lived in or learned from informs what we think, feel, want and need.
- We are interpreting the other person's culture, personality, demeanor, words, and actions through a screen of our own cultural values.

Even if our culture and organization call on us to be non-judgmental or open-minded, our minds will naturally still pose the questions “true or false”, “good or bad”, “beautiful or ugly”. We answer those questions in a non-stop, mostly sub-conscious conversation within ourselves. So what does this knowledge help us do that can be useful in cross-cultural interactions?

When we are conscious of our dialogue, we can...

- **ACKNOWLEDGE** that others will see a situation, person, or event differently.

### **Our Internal Dialogue (cont.)**

- UNDERSTAND that reasonable people can and will reasonably disagree about meanings and significance.
- TAKE a conscious and healthy interest in how you perceive the world differently than I do.
- KNOW that my reactions and judgements have a legitimate source – they make sense in the context of my own unique mix of cultural contexts. They help me survive and succeed there.

### **Creating Inclusion**

Our goal in mentoring relationships – especially in “cross-difference” mentoring (cross-age, cross-cultural) – is to create “inclusion”. An inclusive environment is one in which you feel valued and respected by me, and I feel valued and respected by you. When we create that mutual, almost physical, feeling of being valued and respected, we’ll resonate with our similarities and differences. Where better to create this than in a mentoring relationship?

## **ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

A youth's environmental circumstances often include a single parent in the home, limited financial resources, and limited parental supervision. Thus, many young people must assume responsibilities making them appear more independent than they are emotionally. For example, youth are often responsible for youngsters in the family. This added responsibility can conflict with school attendance (babysitting during school hours) and grades (lack of privacy or study time). Without adult supervision, young people must take more responsibility for themselves before they are ready.

Growing up in poverty will often affect a young person's developing sense of identity and goals. Youth may have few role models for success. They see parents, grandparents, and sometimes great-grandparents struggling with the same problems, with little change or progress from generation to generation. This affects the young person's ability to picture his/her life or future in a positive way. Instead of planning for education or career, some youth may show little concern for the future. Some youth are motivated and determined to take charge of their lives and develop their potential, whereas some do not have a vision for themselves and may present a frustrating challenge for mentors. There will be youth from all along the continuum. Part of the mentor's challenge is to determine where the youth fits into the developmental picture. A combination of knowledge, intuition, and the continued desire to discover more about the youth will help mentors help their youth.

### ***Problems of the Urban Poor***

Since many mentor programs deal with youth in urban poverty, mentors need to understand the unique problems that arise for youth because of this environment. In general, youth growing up in poor urban areas face problems that would overwhelm many adults:

- Fear of personal safety due to crime in neighborhoods.
- Violence in neighborhoods leads to violence in schools.
- School dropout rate is high: peer culture fosters quitting school more often than graduating.
- Sexual activity is at an earlier age; youth are less likely to use birth control, hence three to four times more likely to become teen parents; parenthood during adolescence provides bleak prospects for schooling, employment, and future income; these youth are also at greater risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.

In learning to survive in often-hostile environments, many teens exhibit caution, mistrust, cynicism, and even hopelessness. Mentors may have difficulty breaking through the tough outer shell to the "real" person inside. Knowledge and understanding will help the mentor to persevere.

## **RISK FACTORS THAT AFFECT ADOLESCENTS IN OR ON THE PERIPHERY OF GANGS**

For many of today's teens/pre-teens, gangs represent the way in which adolescent frustration, searching, and rebellion is expressed. Factors which contribute to this inclination include their family situation, school failures, lack of self esteem, the need to feel protected, lack of economic prospects, peer pressure, family history of gang membership, lack of role models, and the glamour and excitement they perceive the gang affiliation to have. Following are some risk factors detailed:

### ***School Climate Risk Factors***

- Negative school experiences and success; academic failure, truancy, and suspension
- Availability of drugs
- Lack of youth involvement
- Frequent transitions between schools
- Lack of positive role models
- Inconsistently enforced discipline/drug policies

### ***Family Risk Factors***

- Alcohol/drug/gang involved parents
- Low level of quality time/involvement
- Poor communication/parenting style
- Low achievement expectations
- Lack of family rituals/ceremonies
- Frequent and high impact changes
- High levels of stress/conflict/violence

### ***Peer Risk Factors***

Early antisocial/withdrawn behaviors that result in:

- Lack of friends
- Favorable attitudes toward drugs/gangs
- Early interest in/use of drugs
- Greater influence of friends than parents
- Lack of sense of future

### ***Community Risk Factors***

- Economic and social deprivation
- Neighborhood disorganization
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Easy availability of drugs
- Norms and laws favoring drugs/alcohol
- Exposure acceptance of violence

## LISTENING WITH BOTH EARS

“Speaking and listening are two skills that are required in order for any two people to communicate with one another. When you speak, your words convey a message with both cognitive and affective components. In other words, what you say has both meaning and emotion attached to it.

Most of us forget that the listening half of communication has the same two skills inherent to it. We usually understand the meaning that the speaker has attached to his words, but often fail to let the speaker know that we are aware of the emotion that he is feeling at the time.

Empathy is the art of letting the speaker know you not only understand the words used, but also are sensitive to the feeling that he is expressing. “You sound ‘up’ today” or “what’s got you down lately?” would be a simple way to begin to explore some of the feelings being expressed.

When two speakers begin to listen with the same enthusiasm with which they speak and to convey to one another that they heard both what was said and how it was said, a powerful bond begins to develop. This bond is friendship and love”.

- James Deary, III, Ed.D., Institute for Urban Family Health, New York City

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR YOUTH

When young people are allowed to express their feelings, particularly their negative feelings, it offers them a safety valve, which like the safety valve on a boiler, prevents it from exploding. Allowing a youth to release feelings also prevents exploding. If your youth is systematically taught to keep negative feelings bottled up, he or she cannot get them out of his or her system. Young people cannot discriminate and hold back only negative feelings without putting down positive feelings as well. If they are not allowed to express negative feelings in words, they will come out in some form of antisocial action. Youth who are not allowed to express their negative feelings usually grow up to be adults who cannot express their negative feelings either. Give them the freedom to express all of their feelings as a child.

Youngsters very desperately want us to understand how they feel. Unfortunately, many do not get this understanding from their parents. Not that the parents are cruel or unfeeling. Rather they are not able to let their children know they understand how they feel because nobody taught them how to convey this kind of understanding. Many parents have not learned the importance of LISTENING to their children and empathizing with them.

Mentors can use communication skills to help their youth overcome these barriers. The essence of the technique is simple. You are doing three things whenever your youth expresses his/her feelings:

1. Listening carefully to what your youth is saying.
2. Formulating in your own mind what your youth is expressing.
3. Repeating back to him/her in your own words the feelings they have just expressed to you.

When a mentor uses this technique, the youth will really know the mentor understands, because he/she will hear his/her own feelings coming back to them from the mentor. Be careful you don’t repeat the exact words your youth has used so you won’t sound like an echo chamber. Paraphrase the child’s feelings in your own words.

A dramatic change may not take place in the child as a result of listening to and repeating his or her feelings. However, it is a powerful way for keeping lines of communication between you and your youth open. It lets your youth know that you understand how he/she feels and that their feelings are respected and valued. It also helps to promote a feeling of mutual respect between you and your youth.

## **RULES OF COMMUNICATION**

1. Make your communication positive.
2. Be clear and specific.
3. Recognize that each individual sees things from a different point of view.
4. Be open and honest about your feelings.
5. Accept your youth's feelings and try to understand them.
6. Be supportive and accepting.
7. Do not preach or lecture.
8. Learn to listen.
9. Maintain eye contact.
10. Allow time for your youth to talk without interruption; show you are interested in what he or she has to say.
11. Get feedback to be sure you are understood.
12. Listen for a feeling tone as well as for words.
13. Ask questions when you do not understand.
14. Set examples rather than giving advice.

## WHAT IS SELF- ESTEEM?

Close your eyes...envision a picture of yourself...what do you see? How do you feel? These feelings are called "self-esteem".

Self-esteem is the way we feel about ourselves. It begins to develop in infancy and is shaped by the feedback children receive from parents and other significant people in their lives.

Some people believe that self-esteem is the single most important element in children's lives. It affects everything they do.

### **Children with high self-esteem:**

- Are physically healthier
- Are more motivated to learn
- Get along better with others

### **Children with positive self-esteem are more willing to:**

- Tap into their creativity and risk expressing it
- Approach life with energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity
- Stretch themselves to reach their full potential

### **Positive self-esteem facilitates:**

- Self-confidence
- Self-direction
- Self-reliance
- Responsibility

### **How can a mentor help?**

Regardless of the other specific goals of the mentor program, our primary challenge is to find ways to build a strong sense of self-worth – positive self-esteem.

- Listen to and acknowledge your youth's thoughts and feelings.
- Let your youth experience success no matter how small.
- Show your youth he/she is loveable and capable.
- Model your own healthy self-esteem.
- Treat your youth as an individual.
- Help your youth understand that although you may dislike a specific behavior, you do not disapprove of him/her as an individual.
- Recognize and value cultural diversity.
- If your youth fails in an endeavor, help him/her to understand that there are many ways in which he/she has been successful.
- Teach your youth that he/she can turn failure into success by trying again.
- Encourage your youth each time you are together. Identify and acknowledge your youth's strengths.

## SHARING AND MODELING VALUES

Everyone comes to the mentor/youth relationship valuing certain behaviors and ideals. As individuals, we are aware of some but not all of our values. As a first step, mentors should, themselves, recognize the values that are most important to them.

Youth' values may be different from those of mentors. Awareness, tolerance, and respect for the values of others are basic to establishing a successful mentoring relationship. Mentors can encourage youth to clarify their own values and establish goals, which are consistent with them.

**What does a mentor do when values differ so much that the mentor cannot, in good conscience, let the youth think that he/she agrees with or condones these values?**

- The mentor must take risks and let the young person see and understand what the mentor values. **This sharing and modeling of values is the heart of the mentoring process.**
- Mentors must share **not only what their values** are, but explain **why they are important**, and describe how these values affect their lives. This allows the youth to know and understand the mentor.
- By sharing, the mentor provides the youth with the chance to see a situation from a fresh and different perspective, perhaps for the first time. If this sharing is accomplished **without imposing** values upon the youth, it can have a positive and lasting effect upon the youth and the relationship.

How does the mentor address differences in social status, economic background, race, and other real differences between mentor and youth? Sometimes socio-economic or racial differences can raise particularly difficult problems for a developing relationship. Sometimes when mentor and youth are of the same race, it is assumed that the mentor knows what the youth's values are; yet, because of other differences (e.g., economic class, religion, family background, education), the mentor and youth will actually have very differing values. The aforementioned differences between mentor and youth provide them with a wide landscape to investigate and use to learn about one another.



## **EMPOWERING YOUTH: SOLVING PROBLEMS VERSUS GIVING ADVICE**

The differences between these two approaches are significant; they will affect mentors' relationships with their youth and youth' ability to reach their fullest potential.

### ***Major Differences***

#### **Giving Advice**

- Youth is passive, possibly resistant
- Cuts off further exploration of problem
- Often premature
- Youth doesn't learn
- Can impose mentor's solution on youth's problem
- Does not encourage self-esteem

#### **Youth Solving Problems**

- Active youth
- Opens lines of communication
- Eliminates timing problem
- Youth learns
- Solution belongs to youth
- Fosters self-esteem

### ***When is Giving Advice Appropriate***

If the mentor is an expert in a particular field, the youth may benefit from the mentor's specific knowledge and advice.

If the youth is "stuck" after going through the problem-solving process, mentor can give advice about how to proceed.

## **ASKING HIGH QUALITY QUESTIONS**

### ***Useful Questions to Clarify Outcomes***

- What do you really want in this situation?
- What is important about this outcome to you?
- What are all the ways you can go about getting what you want?
- Who/what can you use as resources to get what you want?
- Who do you know that has already achieved this outcome, and how did they do it?
- Is this outcome possible to achieve?
- Can the outcome be initiated and sustained by you?
- Is this outcome consistent with who you are?
- Considering what it will take and the possible consequences, is the outcome worth doing?

### ***How to Elicit Values, Needs and Wants***

- What is important about achieving this particular outcome?
- How will you know that you have achieved your outcome? What will you see, hear, feel or experience to know that you have achieved your outcome?
- If you get what you want, what will this do for you?

## MENTOR SUPPORT

**Your Mentor Site Coordinator and Be A Mentor staff will support your mentoring efforts in a variety of ways throughout the tenure of your relationship with your youth.**

- Mentors will receive monthly “check-in” calls from the Mentor Site Coordinator, inquiring about the progress of the relationship, problems you may be encountering, successes, etc.
- Exchange telephone numbers with other mentors so that contact can be made for purposes of support, sharing, and organizing group activities.
- BE A MENTOR will sponsor periodic advanced mentor trainings; these trainings are for the purpose of discussion, interaction, and problem solving.
- Your Mentor Site Coordinator will provide four group support meetings with youth and mentors during the school year.
- Mentors can log on to SIB’s website at [www.beamentor.org](http://www.beamentor.org) for mentor support.
- BE A MENTOR provides a Mentor Newsletter three times a year informing our mentors of mentor tips, successful match stories, and upcoming events.
- Remember --- your Mentor Site Coordinator is just a phone call away, and will strive to assist you with any problem you may be having, after you call.

## HOW TO LET GO – WHEN AND HOW TO DISSOLVE THE RELATIONSHIP

### ***Guidelines for Planned Termination***

Mentors should:

- Alert youth well in advance about the ending of the relationship.
- Be prepared for anger or denial; help youth anticipate these feelings.
- Monitor your own feelings: sadness, guilt, relief, etc.
- Use the process as a means to recall youth's progress and strengths.
- Help youth grow from the process; reassure them about what they have learned and are capable of.
- Discuss positive actions and directions for the future.
- Reassure youth of your confidence in him/her.
- Plan a "fun" final activity together, and follow through on that activity.

### ***Guidelines for Premature Terminations***

**If the mentor or youth is ending the match prematurely**, due to moving to another community, joining another program, family pressure, job commitment, or "not liking" the program;

- They must notify the Mentor Site Coordinator as soon as possible of their intentions.
- They must communicate to the other their intentions and the reason why they are leaving. This should be done in person. If that is not possible, a phone call or letter is acceptable as a last resort. The youth or mentor may ask the Mentor Site Coordinator to be present for this meeting.
- The Mentor Site Coordinator must be notified when this discussion has taken place and a letter will then be sent to the parent/guardian informing them of the formal closure of the match.

**If the Mentor Site Coordinator must ask youth or mentors to leave the program prematurely:**

- In rare instances, the Mentor Site Coordinator may be required to end the relationship. It will be the responsibility of the Mentor Site Coordinator to fully explain to both parties the reason for the premature closure.
- A letter will be sent to all parties including parents, announcing the formal closure of the relationship.

## **EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1 – Our Mentoring Agreement

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Exhibit 2 – Our Mentoring Plan

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## ***Our Mentoring Agreement***

We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship which we expect to benefit both of us. We want this to be a mutually rewarding experience with most of our time together spent in development activities revolving around the youth's goals outlined in "Our Mentoring Plan". We note the following features of our relationship:

### ***Frequency of Meetings***

- How often will we meet? \_\_\_\_\_
- Day(s) of the week: \_\_\_\_\_
- Where will we meet? \_\_\_\_\_
- How long will our meetings last? \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Best Time to Call/Page***

- At work: \_\_\_\_\_
- At home: \_\_\_\_\_
- At school: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Specific Role of the Mentor***

(Model, guide, observe and give feedback, recommend developmental activities, facilitate learning, suggest/provide resources, etc.)

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### ***Specific Role of the Youth***

As a willing participant in the Mentor Project, I commit to working with my mentor throughout the program, attending all scheduled meetings with my mentor, and communicating with my mentor weekly. Emergencies happen, so if I am unable to keep a meeting date, an advance call will be made to my mentor to reschedule. I will develop personal goals and be open to coaching and feedback from my mentor. Other role? \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Confidentiality***

Nothing that the youth tells the mentor will be discussed with *anyone* except the Mentor Coordinator. If the mentor feels it is important to involve another adult, it will be discussed first with the youth. If there is threat of physical harm to the youth or to others, the mentor must break confidentiality to seek protection for the endangered individual.

### ***No-fault Conclusion***

We agree to a *no-fault* conclusion of this relationship if, for any reason, it seems appropriate. Either party has the option of discontinuing the relationship for any reason, and he or she will discuss this decision with the Mentor Project Coordinator before terminating the relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**OUR MENTORING PLAN**

<b>Academic Goal</b>	<b>Youth Action Steps</b>	<b>Mentor Action Steps</b>	<b>Dates Completed</b>
Improve study habits.	1. With mentor develop a study plan. Include: a. When will I study b. Where will I study c. How long will I study 2. Share homework w/mentor weekly. 3. Discuss resources with mentor.	1. With youth develop a study plan. Include: a. When b. Where c. How long 2. Discuss homework w/youth weekly. 3. Discuss resources with youth (such as library, tutoring possibilities, internet, etc.).	
<b>Personal Goal</b>			
Improve relationship with parents.			
<b>Career Exploration Goal</b>			
Learn what are the skills, qualifications and schooling needs to be a private detective.			

### OUR MENTORING PLAN

<b>Academic Goal</b>	<b>Youth Action Steps</b>	<b>Mentor Action Steps</b>	<b>Dates Completed</b>
<b>Personal Goal</b>			
<b>Career Exploration Goal</b>			