

## **Stages in Mentor-Student Relationship**

The mentor/student 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 students accomplish something that is important to them. Mentors must take the time to help students 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.**

Students 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 students are from unstable backgrounds where they have been repeatedly disappointed by adults.

Once the mentor passes the test, the real work of the relationship can begin. Mentors should remember that the issue is not whether students like them. Students 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.
- 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 student. Through this difficult process, mentors need to be prepared, to understand, and to refrain from personalizing the experience.

## **Confidentiality:**

The students 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 student tells the mentor will be discussed with anyone else except the Mentor Project Coordinator.
- If the mentor feels it is important to involve another adult, it will be discussed first with the student.
- **If there is threat of physical harm** to the student 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 student becomes more committed. At times, however, old behaviors may appear, usually if the student is under stress. Now the mentor and student should identify and work toward some short-term goals. It is important that the mentor have the resources necessary or have access to them in order to achieve a fit between what the student wants to learn/accomplish and what the mentor can teach/share.

This is a time of closeness in the relationship. In general, students 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 student may not be right.
- Some students have been so disappointed and damaged by earlier experiences they are unable to risk taking advantage of a helping relationship.
- Some students will get stuck in the "testing" stage.
- Some students 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 students' progress and strengths.
- Help students 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 students about your confidence in them.
- Mutually agree about how, when, or if you will stay in touch.
- Follow through on that commitment.

## Example Mentoring Plan

<b>Academic Goal</b>	<b>Student 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  1. Share homework w/mentor weekly. 2. Discuss resources with mentor.	1. With mentor develop a study plan.  Include: a. When b. Where c. How long  1. Share homework w/mentor weekly. 2. Discuss resources with student (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.			

## **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.

Self-esteem 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 student's thoughts and feelings.
- Let your student experience success no matter how small.
- Show your student he/she is capable.
- Model your own healthy self-esteem.
- Treat your student as an individual.
- Help your student 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 student fails in an endeavor, help him/her to understand that there are many ways in which he/she has been successful.
- Teach your student that he/she can turn failure into success by trying again.

- Encourage your student each time you are together. Identify and acknowledge your student's strengths.

*"Whether the problem is drug abuse, low school performance, gang involvement, or teen pregnancy, the solution begins with helping children to see themselves as capable, worthwhile, and potentially successful individuals."*

***William Raspberry***

## **Benefits to Mentor, Student and Organization**

### **Benefits to the Mentor:**

- Mentors gain personal and professional satisfaction in helping a student.
- 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 Student:**

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

### **Benefits to the Organization who is providing volunteers:**

- 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 students 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 student's life.
- Recognize that the relationship may be fairly one-sided for some time --- mentors, not students, are responsible for keeping the relationship alive.
- **Call school before you come** to confirm your student's attendance
- Pay attention to the student's need for fun.
- Respect the student's viewpoint.
- Allow the student to make mistakes.
- Separate their own goals from those of the students --- leave their personal agenda behind.
- Do not focus on the negative aspects of the student, school, teachers, neighborhood, or parents --- leave it alone.
- Seek and utilize the help and advice of program staff.

## Practices of Ineffective Mentors

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

## 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 student'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?

### Specific Role of the Mentor

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

### Specific Role of the Student

As a willing participant in the Mentor Project, I commit to working with my mentor throughout the program and attending all scheduled meetings with my mentor. 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 student tells the mentor will be discussed with *anyone* except the Mentor Coordinator/School Counselor. If the mentor feels it is important to involve another adult, it will be discussed first with the student. If there is threat of physical harm to the student 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.

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **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 student 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.
- Availability of firearms.

## Sharing and Modeling Values

Everyone comes to the mentor/student 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 which are most important to them.

Students' values may be different from those of mentors. Awareness, tolerance, and respect for the values of others is basic to establishing a successful mentoring relationship. Mentors can encourage students 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 student 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 student to know and understand the mentor.
- By sharing, the mentor provides the student 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 student? Sometimes socio-economic or racial differences can raise particularly difficult problems for a developing relationship. Sometimes when mentor and student are of the same race, it is assumed that the mentor knows what the student's values are; yet, because of other differences (e.g., economic class, religion, family background, education), the mentor and student will actually have very differing values. The aforementioned differences between mentor and student provide them with a wide landscape to investigate and use to learn about one another.

## 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?