Module 4

Effective and Respectful Communication with Children and Youth (Part II)
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INTRODUCTION
This workshop continues from Module 3 (Part I) with a discussion of effective communication and opportunities to practice.

Establishing and maintaining effective communication with children and youth is rewarding, and challenging. This workshop examines the mentoring relationship cycle in light of communication, examines and discusses the challenges the mentor may experience during each stage, and offers communication strategies for each stage.

This workshop includes a brief lecture, opportunities to practice good communication skills (including a small group exercise), and a short reflection activity. It is recommended that you do a full 2-hour workshop to allow more time for group discussion. Remember that you do not need to present this workshop “as is”. For example, you may wish to review confidentiality policy during the discussion on “tough topics”. Modify the session to fit your participants’ needs and to address the age groups they are serving.

Objectives
By the end of the session, participants will:

- Understand the mentoring relationship cycle and what to expect during each stage
- Be prepared to address common challenges for mentors at each stage
- Feel better prepared to talk about tough topics with children and youth

Visual Aids (Power Point) and Facilitator’s Notes
If you are using the PowerPoint slides included with this curriculum, Facilitator’s Notes are provided under each slide. These notes provide the same information as the Facilitator’s Notes included in this document, but they are not as detailed.

It is recommended that you use easel paper, a whiteboard, or a chalkboard to note responses to some of the “callout” questions and important points that participants make during the exercise “debrief.” This validates participants’ knowledge and reinforces learning. You may want to write the headings on sheets of easel paper in advance to save time.

This symbol will cue you as to when you might jot down responses:
Handouts
The handouts for this session follow the Facilitator’s Notes and Instructions. Handouts 1-4 should be distributed during the session; this symbol in the Facilitator’s Notes will cue you as to when: 🎤. The remaining handouts can be distributed at the end of the session.

1. The Mentoring Relationship Cycle
2. Tough Topic Conversation Role Play Cards
3. Tough Topic Conversation Worksheet
4. Reflection: Setting Boundaries with Children and Youth
5. Positive Strategies for Connecting with Youth (optional)
6. Helpful Strategies for Intergenerational Communication (optional)
7. Recommended Resources for Mentors (optional)
8. Training Feedback Survey

SESSION AGENDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Slide Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Welcome</td>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Learning Objectives</td>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Warm-up: Intergenerational Mentoring</td>
<td>15 min.</td>
<td>Large group discussion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>II. The Mentoring Relationship Cycle</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The Beginning and Building Stage</td>
<td>15 min.</td>
<td>Lecture/large group discussion</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The Challenging and Testing Stage</td>
<td>10 min.</td>
<td>Lecture/large group discussion</td>
<td>9-11</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| C. The “Real” Mentoring Stage
| The Mentoring Relationship Cycle              | 5 min.         | Lecture                    | 12-13         |
| III. Tough Communication Topics               | 45 min.        |                            |               |
| Exercise: Tough Topics Role Play              | 30 min.        | Small group discussion/    | 14            |
| Tough Topic Conversation Role Play Cards      | 15 min.        | Large group discussion “debrief” |               |
| Tough Topic Conversation Worksheet            |                |                            |               |
| IV. Reflection: Setting Boundaries            | 15 min.        | Individual/Pairs           | 15            |
| Setting Boundaries                            |                |                            |               |
| Reflection: Setting Boundaries with Children and Youth | 15 min. | Individual/Pairs | 15 |
| V. Closing                                    | 10 min.        | Lecture                    | 16            |
| Positive Strategies for Connecting with Youth (optional) | | | |
| Helpful Strategies for Intergenerational Communication (optional) | | | |
| Recommended Resources for Mentors (optional) | | | |
| Training Feedback Survey                      |                |                            |               |
If you are using the PowerPoint slides, have slide 1 up on the screen.

I. Welcome

Welcome participants and introduce the workshop: “Creating and maintaining good, quality communication with children and youth is rewarding, but also challenging. Today we will talk about the mentoring relationship cycle so you know what to expect. We’ll talk about effective communication strategies and give you an opportunity to practice.”

A. Learning Objectives

Show slide 2.

Describe the learning objectives. In this workshop, participants will:

- Understand the mentoring relationship cycle and what to expect during each stage
- Be prepared to address common challenges for mentors at each stage
- Feel better prepared to talk about tough topics with children and youth

B. Warm-Up: Intergenerational Mentoring Relationships

Show slide 3.

“Let’s start off with a little quiz to review what we know about mentoring.” (For all of the “true or false” questions you “call out”, give participants a few seconds before they shout out their response and you give them the answer.)

TIP: Have the group move around as part of the warm-up. One way to modify this warm-up activity is to put the statements on easel paper around room. Participants roam and check true or false, and then explain the rationale for their answer during the discussion.
CALLOUT: “True or False: Regardless of how old kids are, they are usually enthusiastic about having a mentor.”

**Answer: FALSE.** Younger children (early elementary school age) are usually quite excited to have a mentor – an adult that pays attention to them—and they will often point out the special relationship they have to other children. However, older children and youth, though still excited, are more likely to minimize or even hide the relationship with their peers, especially if they feel singled out.

CALLOUT: “True or False: The best mentors are usually hip, young adults.”

**Answer: FALSE.** The most important thing is an adult who commits the time and support to build a trusting relationship. An older adult might have some challenges (e.g. becoming aware of the language and issues youth are dealing with), but an older adult can also offer some unique benefits.

CALLOUT: “What do you think some of those benefits would be? What do older adults bring to a mentoring relationship?”

Participants may say things like:
- We have more time to pay attention to that child/youth
- We have a lifetime of experience.
- We have important qualities that link directly to being an effective mentor: attention, patience, understanding and consistency.

CALLOUT: “True or False: Intergenerational communication is improved when we understand attitudes and stereotypes of seniors and youth.”

**Answer: TRUE.** By understanding our own attitudes and beliefs toward children or youth, we can check ourselves before we develop unhelpful patterns of communication. By understanding youth’s attitudes toward seniors, we can show them otherwise, if needed, and disprove negative stereotypes.

CALLOUT: “True or False: People generally agree on what respect looks like in a mentoring relationship.”

**Answer: FALSE.** Given differences in culture, generation, age, gender, there may be different ideas of what respect looks like.
CALLOUT: “True or False: The most important thing about being a mentor is being a good listener.”

Answer: TRUE. Having an adult really listen to them helps children and youth feel supported and heard. It is an essential element of the relationship.

TIP: Try an alternative warm-up discussion. For example, you can start a lively conversation by asking participants about the slang terms they have heard kids use lately. Ask them about the slang they remember from their youth and what their parents thought (or if they even understood it!). Make the point that every generation of youth can seem a little loopy to the adults, but we can still learn from each other and appreciate our common experiences.
II. The Mentoring Relationship Cycle

Tell participants that building positive intergenerational communication is a process that takes time, practice, and patience.

- We know that communication is the key to developing strong relationships in general and certainly this is true with children and youth.
- Although it is most helpful to focus on the strengths of the child/youth, that does not mean challenges won’t arise.
- “Today, we want to remind you of the ebb and flow over the course of the mentoring relationship and what this means for communications with the child/youth you mentor.”

The mentoring relationship is intentionally created and purposeful, but you might not see an impact on the child/youth right away.

- Like any meaningful relationship, it takes time to gain momentum and requires patience, as well as the ability to work through rough patches.
- Those relationships that continue to grow have a good chance of helping the child/youth. On the other hand, those that stall out may do actual harm to the child/youth.

With any relationship, there are stages of development.

- For instance, a couple gets to know each other; they date, marry, and go through a “honeymoon stage” where everything seems perfect about the other person.
- Then they enter into some challenging stages where the real work begins.
- And even though we know this will happen, it is worth reminding ourselves that there is an ebb and flow to the mentoring relationship as well.
- Knowing that there are phases that can be expected, and what the challenges can be, will better prepare mentors to successfully handle the issues and seek assistance, if needed.

The mentoring relationship phases have sometimes been described as a series of stages, and can be described in a variety of ways.
“Let’s look at the stages of the mentoring relationship.”

Show slide 4.

The four stages of the mentoring relationship are:
1. The Beginning/Building
2. Testing and Challenging
3. “Real” Mentoring
4. Transition (toward closure)

“Today we will talk about the first three stages. We’ll first talk about the characteristics of that stage, some of the challenges that mentors often experience, and some communication strategies you can use at each stage.”

**TIP: If most of your participants are new to mentoring...** Ask an experienced volunteer or a representative from one of your stations to talk about their experience communicating with your youth population and what new mentors can expect. For example, a teacher or experienced classroom volunteer might talk about the typical youth conversations or activities popular among this particular population.

### A. The Beginning and Building Stage

**CALLOUT:** “What do you think happens in the very beginning of the relationship when a mentor and child or youth are matched? What are the mentor and the child/youth doing?”

Participants may say things like:
- Getting to know each other, forming first impressions
- Trying to figure out how to spend time together (when and where to meet, if applicable; schedules, activities to do together, setting boundaries and expectations)
- Learning a little about one another through small talk
- Trying to see the positive—the good things that will come from the relationship

Note that it takes time to go from strangers to acquaintances to friends. It is a time of excitement and anxiety and awkwardness.

We want to know, “Will s/he like me?” During the first phase, we start with small talk ("Hi, how are you?") and eventually build from there.
**CALLOUT:** “As the mentor and child/youth start to meet and get to know each other and build the relationship, what do you think happens? What does the relationship look like?”

Participants may say things like:
- They have some shared experiences, activities they have done together that they can talk about
- They are starting to bond, deepening the relationship, finding shared interests
- Mentor is starting to understand what makes that child/youth “tick”
- The relationship is developing trust and momentum

Show slide 5 and validate participants responses if they may have mentioned most of these characteristics of the beginning and building stage already.

**CALLOUT:** “What do you think are some common mistakes or challenges the mentor might have in the early stages of the mentoring relationship?” Give an example to get them started, if needed.

For each of the common mistakes the group lists, **CALLOUT:** “What do you do about those? What are some communication strategies to overcome the challenges?” Note their ideas on easel paper. Draw a line down the middle with two headings on either side: “Mistakes/Challenges” and “Strategies for Mentor”. (See the example below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mistakes/Challenges</th>
<th>Strategies for Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor makes all the decisions</td>
<td>Take turns choosing activities; follow child’s lead as much as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor expects too much “sharing” too soon</td>
<td>Be patient. Find common interests, experiences to talk about.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common Mistakes/Challenges and Strategies**
- **Common Mistake:** Mentor makes all the decisions rather than sharing the responsibility. If you (the mentor) make all the decisions, the child/youth will likely become reluctant to share his/her preferences and opinions right from the beginning.

  **Strategy for Mentor:** Let the child/youth have much of the control over what the two of you talk about and how you talk about it. Share, take turns choosing (activity, order of
homework, where to sit, etc.). Remember, it is a partnership.

- **Common Mistake: Missed meetings.** Children/youth may miss meetings because they are still building organizational skills. Mentors should not be missing meetings unless it is an emergency.
  
  **Strategy for Mentor:** Help kids who are missing meetings develop better organizational skills. Mentors should never miss a meeting without notifying the child/youth in advance. Everyone knows that there are emergencies but regular meetings are key to the success of a mentoring relationship.

- **Common Mistake: Mentor expects the child/youth will “open up” right away.** It is likely that the child/youth is not comfortable yet; don’t assume that they are bored or dislike you. Many children/youth have good reason not to disclose to every new adult in their life. Pushing them before they are ready does not work.
  
  **Strategy for Mentor:** Understand that kids vary in their styles of communicating and their habits of disclosure. Use the activities you do together and common experience you have as a source of conversations (reading, board games, art projects, etc.). Use open-ended questions: “I’m wondering what you like about that video game? Tell me about it.” Be patient.

- **Common Mistake: Mentor expects too much change too soon.** Positive behavior or change does not happen on a schedule nor when pushed. It happens when the child/youth feel supported and are ready.
  
  **Strategy for Mentor:** Don’t push. Keep interactions light for a while. Focus on who the child/youth is, not who you want them to be.

- **Common Mistake: Mentor tries to fit into the child or youth’s culture (generation, ethnicity).** The mentor believes s/he needs to be one of the youth’s peers to connect.
  
  **Strategy for Mentor:** Although it is important to be interested and learn about who the child/youth is, always be yourself. You don’t need to “sound” like a youth to connect to the youth. Speak with language that feels comfortable.

- **Common Mistake: Child/youth becomes more dependent on support.** As the child/youth feels more comfortable, s/he calls the mentor at home, invites the mentor to
activities outside of mentoring hours or mentoring relationship.  

**Strategy for Mentor:** Reinforce boundaries set out at the beginning and remind the child/youth how you can be a part of his/her life.

- **Common Mistake:** Mentor feels the need to “fix” the child/youth’s life. As the child/youth discloses more, the mentor may learn about difficult issues in that child/youth’s life.  
  **Strategy for Mentor:** Remember the mentor’s role is to be an advocate and friend, not a social worker! Alert your supervisor if additional assistance seems necessary.

- **Common Mistake:** Boundary issues with families. You receive invitations to family events, or the family wants to talk to you about their child.  
  **Strategy for Mentor:** Set boundaries with parents. Encourage families to contact the program for additional support.

- **Common Mistake:** Mentor may feel underappreciated. You may feel you are giving time, energy, and effort, but never receiving any thanks for it.  
  **Strategy for Mentor:** The mentor should not really expect to be thanked. Most kids do not have the maturity to realize people care about these things. You can continue to model courteous behavior and appreciation of others’ efforts and set an example.

After the participants have contributed their thoughts, show slides 6 (common mistakes, challenges and strategies for the beginning of the relationship) and 7 (common issues as the relationship builds). Note that they may have mentioned many of the challenges and strategies listed. Point out the common mistakes and strategies that were not already discussed.
Show Slide 8.

Tell participants that this is a summary of good communications strategies for mentors in the beginning and building stage of the mentoring relationship. Read through the list and elaborate as needed.

Communication Strategies

- **Use nonverbal communication that sends a positive message.** Use body language that is open and not guarded. *(Note: Module 3 of this series talks more about nonverbal communication, body language, and active listening skills.)*

- **Be sensitive and responsive to the child/youth’s cues through their own body language.** Do they seem shy or uncomfortable? Use your sense of humor to help them feel more comfortable.

- **Use active listening skills.** For example: use prompts (“hmm”, “really?”), ask open-ended questions for clarification (“What did you do then?”); demonstrate empathy, and don’t be afraid of silence.

- **Be careful of stereotypes; don’t assume.** Try not to prejudge the child/youth according to TV images or even how your own grandchildren think and act.

- **Avoid “prescriptive” communication or forced disclosure.** Let the child/youth open up to you in his/her own time.

- **Set boundaries, and restate if needed.** If you need to restate boundaries, remind the child/youth of the program rules, be honest and use “I” statements to say how you feel. Offer choices if appropriate (e.g. “I won’t be able to do __, but I can help you with __ or __. What would you prefer?”).

- **Speak with language that you feel comfortable.** You don’t have to sound like the child/youth to make a connection. Be your natural, charming self!

**TIP:** If you have time, you might want to try a quick group exercise to demonstrate how finding even small commonalities can foster a sense of connection. Invite participants to pair off with someone. Ask them to find at least three things they have in common (e.g. they both have two grandchildren). Once the pair finds three commonalities, invite the pair to find another pair and find a commonality among the four of them. Continue joining other groups until you have the whole group finding a commonality. For the debrief, as the group: 1) What happened that helped develop relationships? 2) How might you use “commonalities” with your child/youth?
B. The Testing and Challenging Stage

Tell participants that now we are on to the difficult part – the testing and challenging phase. This may happen even after the mentor and child/youth have built a rapport and seemed to be getting along great.

CALLOUT: “What happens during the testing and challenging phase, do you think? What does it look like?”

Participants may say things like:

- **Child/youth’s behavior is challenging.** S/he may start to act out or try to sabotage the relationship by missing meetings, acting resentful, hostile or sullen; challenging or avoiding the mentor.
- **Child/youth tests the boundaries of the relationship and the mentor’s commitment.** The child/youth is looking for a reaction: will the mentor stay around even if s/he is difficult?
- **Rethinking first impressions.** The mentor may be unsure of the child/youth now that this new behavior has started.
- **Difficult feelings or emotions may surface.** The mentor and child/youth may feel frustrated with each other. The situation can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication.

CALLOUT: “Why do you think a child/youth would act like this?”

Participants may note that many children and youth come from situations where the adults in their lives are not reliable and do not stick around when things get difficult. The child wants to know if the mentor is different.

Show slide 9 and note any characteristics of the testing and challenging stage that participants haven’t mentioned.
CALLOUT: “So what do you think are some common mistakes or challenges the mentor might have in this testing and challenging stage of the mentoring relationship?”

For each of the common mistakes the group lists, CALLOUT: “What do you do about those? What are some communication strategies to overcome the challenges?” (You may want to write down some of their ideas on an easel pad. See example.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mistakes/Challenges</th>
<th>Strategies for Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor feels that it isn’t working</td>
<td>Stick with it. Reaffirm commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor wants to give up</td>
<td>Be patient. Remind yourself why the child/youth is acting this way.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talk to your supervisor.</td>
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Common Mistakes and Strategies

- **Common Mistake: Mentor may doubt abilities and feel incompetent.** You may feel like you aren’t making a difference or can’t connect with the youth.  
  **Strategy:** Don’t take it personally; it is not about you. Remember that the child/youth is checking to see if s/he is going to be rejected by another adult. Stick with the child/youth during this tough time and affirm the commitment. Show up on time, every time. Find new way to show that you believe s/he is capable. You may also need to reinforce limits and boundaries.

- **Common Mistake: Mentor may feel less interested in continuing the relationship.** You may start to feel like your time and effort is not worth it. This is often when relationships fall apart.  
  **Strategy:** Try to be patient and remember why s/he is challenging you. Think about the good qualities you have seen in this child/youth and try to stick it out. Remember that s/he needs to see that there are adults that meet commitments and don’t quit when times get tough. Last, talk to your supervisor about how you feel and ask for advice. You are not the first mentor to feel discouraged.

After the participants have contributed their thoughts, show slide 10. Note that they may have mentioned many of the challenges and strategies listed. Point out the common mistakes and strategies that were not already discussed.
Show Slide 11.

Tell participants that this is a summary of good communications strategies for mentors in the testing and challenging stages of the mentoring relationship. Read through the list and elaborate with examples if you like.

Communication Strategies

- Be consistent in your communication, even if it is difficult.
- Demonstrate respect.
- Build in problem-solving techniques in your open ended questions (“I wonder how you would tackle this...?”)
- Raise sensitive issues at the beginning of your meeting.
- Separate the behavior from who the person is.
- Disclose personal feelings and experiences, as appropriate.
- If, on occasion, you feel you have to voice displeasure, do so in a way that also reassures the child/youth.

“The first two stages are critical as they lay the foundation for the relationship. If mentors are to be successful, they need to work through the testing and challenging behavior so that the relationship gets to a place of trust and mutuality where ‘real’ mentoring can take place.”

**TIP: Alter according to your program model. Use examples of local programs.** As you describe different types of mentor challenges, give examples from programs in your community. For example, “The XYZ Mentoring program requires mentors to sign a one-year commitment, complete 40 hours of training, and meet with the caseworker two times per month. This gives the mentor ongoing support to get through the rough patches and helps the program retain mentors for the full one-year term.”
C. The “Real” Mentoring Stage

CALLOUT: “Let’s talk about the third stage. What happens during the ‘real’ mentoring stage? Now that you have survived the testing stage, what do you think real mentoring looks like?”

Participants may say things like:

- The relationship begins feeling right again.
- Mentor and child/youth trust each other.
- Mentor can see growth in the child/youth.
- A deeper connection develops between mentor and child/youth.

Give participants a chance to respond and then show slide 12, and note any points they haven’t mentioned. Tell participants that during the “real” mentoring stage, the relationship intensifies. As you and the child/youth learn more personal information about each other, you will build a stronger bond.

CALLOUT: “What do you think is a common mistake that mentors make as they try to build a strong bond with the child or youth?”

For each of the common mistakes the group lists, CALLOUT: “What do you do about those? What are some communication strategies to overcome the challenges?” (You may want to write down some of their ideas on an easel pad. See example.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mistakes/Challenges</th>
<th>Strategies for Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate disclosure</td>
<td>Remember you are still talking to a child/youth</td>
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</table>

Common Mistake: Mentor may disclose inappropriate information. In an attempt to bond, you may unintentionally disclose information that is too personal in nature, not age-appropriate, or not an appropriate topic.

Strategy: Remember to be conscientious that you are still talking to a child or youth, even though you are building a bond. Disclose information that supports the relationship but is also appropriate. For instance, you may not want to talk about your recent medical test; however, sharing a time when a teacher annoyed you too, goes a long way.

“Let’s have a look at some good communication strategies when you get to the real mentoring stage.”
Show slide 13. Read through the list and elaborate with examples if you like.

**Communication Strategies**

- Let child/youth know s/he can confide without fear of judgment.
- Avoid advising, but help the child/youth to actively problem solve. If you give advice, give it sparingly and focus on identifying, not giving, solutions.
- Know the child/youth’s strengths and build deeper discussions from there.
- Give positive feedback but let the child/youth know when something has hurt you.

Distribute the handout, *Mentoring Relationship Cycle*, as a reference.

**TIP: Provide a list of activity ideas for different stages of the mentoring relationship.** If the mentoring program has not done so already, provide a handout with a list (or ask participants to give you ideas for the list) of activities mentors can do with children and youth of different ages. For example, toward the end of the mentoring term, a mentor and child could put together a collage using pictures only – no text—that describes what the relationship means to them.
III. Tough Communication Topics

**CALLOUT:** “Let’s say you are just getting to know the child/youth. Take a minute and think about topics or issues that would worry you, or make you nervous if it came up in conversation. What are some of these topics?”

Participants may say things like: violence, criticizing parents, drugs, sex, etc. Remind participants that mentors are not expected to be counselors and they are not on their own. Remind them who they should talk to should they feel “over their heads” with the child/youth (e.g. program supervisor, caseworker).

Tell participants, “It is not surprising that those kinds of topics would make you nervous. The best way to overcome that discomfort is to be prepared. Let’s get some practice in!”

**TIP:** Encourage participants to share their worries about tough topics to talk about with youth. If you create a safe place for people to share their worries, you will be better able to address their concerns and provide appropriate guidance and resources.

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**Exercise: Tough Topics Role Play**

Show slide 14.

The purpose of this activity is to help participants practice connecting with children and youth and feel better prepared for tough topics that might come up.

**YOU WILL NEED:** Individual *Tough Topic Conversation Role Play Cards* (one role play example on each card; one card per person), copies of the *Tough Topic Conversation Worksheet* (one per person), easel paper and a marker for taking notes during “debrief”.

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INSTRUCTIONS
1. Invite participants to get into groups of three.
2. Asks participants in each group to select one person to play the “Child/Youth”, one to be the “Mentor”, and one to be the “Observer”.
3. Give the groups three different role play cards based on the age level of the children/youth they are working with. Give each person a Tough Topic Conversation Worksheet. (If you have a large group, you may want to invite the “Observer” in the trios to come to the front of the room to get the role play cards and worksheets.)
4. The “Observer” randomly selects one of the cards and reads the scenario out loud to the group. After a minute to sink into the roles, the “Child/Youth” begins to have a conversation with the “Mentor”. The “Observer” watches and listens, offering assistance only if the mentor asks for help. The conversation should take about 5 minutes.
5. After 5 minutes, ask the groups to take a few minutes to “debrief” among themselves. They should take just a few minutes to respond to the questions on the worksheet. (It is okay if they don’t finish answering the questions; you want them to spend more time doing the actual role play.)
6. After a few minutes, ask the groups to repeat the activity, changing roles and cards.
7. Repeat steps 4-6 so that everyone has had a chance to play each of the three roles.

DEBRIEF
Bring the group back together and ask for a few comments on the experience. Encourage the groups to explain how they experienced the communication as the “child/youth”, what the “mentor” did well, and what the “mentor” might do differently.

Take a few of the more challenging role play conversations and ask the small groups to share their responses to the three discussion items on the worksheet (see Facilitator Debrief Notes on pp. 21-25 for ideas):
- What would you need to consider before responding?
- What might be an initial response?
- What would you need to consider after the conversation?
Take note of particularly difficult topics in case you need to follow up with a specific topic or specific person. Be sure to review program policy as needed, including guidelines about conversations with youth and who they can talk to if there is an issue they are unsure about handling.

**TIP: Customize the role play situations for your population.** Change the role play conversations and situations to fit the children and youth that you serve. Be prepared to review policies and procedures as well as provide additional resources to participants. For example, you may need to remind participants of the program’s confidentiality policy.
IV. Reflection: Setting Boundaries

Show slide 15.

Tell participants that sometimes a big communication challenge for mentors, or anyone, is in setting and reinforcing boundaries. For example, a child wants you to stay longer and gets upset when you try to leave, or a youth is disrespectful toward you and you need to draw the line. Note that setting boundaries for many people is uncomfortable, even with kids, because it can feel confrontational. It also requires some determination and composure.

Distribute the handout, Reflection: Setting Boundaries with Children and Youth.

Ask participants to take about 5-10 minutes to think about how they firmly but respectfully talk with kids when they need to set boundaries, and answer the questions on the handout. They may want to share their thoughts with a partner.

TIP: Ask seasoned volunteers or mentoring program directors to talk about closure in the mentoring relationship. Have a guest speaker come in and explain how this stage of the mentoring cycle works in practice. How do they leave the relationship on a positive note, with a sense of accomplishment for both mentor and child? How do they look back on the experience together and reflect? For example, programs may offer a group activity (e.g. picnic) for all mentors and kids to attend together on the last day of school.
V. Closing

Show slide 16.

Let participants know that even though you have talked about some of the challenges of being a mentor today, you know they are ready to provide the love and attention that so many kids need to thrive and grow.

★ Optional: Distribute the remaining handouts:
- Positive Strategies for Connecting with Children and Youth
- Helpful Strategies for Intergenerational Communication
- Recommended Resources for Mentors

**TIP: Customize the handouts or add your own.** You may want to add your own tips and recommendations to the handouts, or highlight the tips and resources that you feel are most appropriate for your volunteers’ assignments. You might also find information you would like to print out and distribute from the websites listed in the Recommended Resources handout if participants don’t usually have internet access (e.g. information for special populations such as immigrants and refugees, or age-focused materials for mentors working with adolescents).

★ Last, ask participants to complete a Training Feedback Survey to help you improve the next workshop.

Ask participants if there are any more questions or last words before you close. Make any final announcements and thank participants for coming.
FACILITATOR NOTES FOR EXERCISE DEBRIEF

Facilitator: Below are some notes for the small-group discussion questions, including examples of possible “mentor” responses for each of the role play situations. You may want to refer to these notes if participants get stuck during discussions. Alternatively, you can distribute these notes to participants after the exercise and ask for their thoughts. However, review these notes first and adapt them for your specific population and context. For example, if mentors would never have a conversation with parents, omit references to it.

Role Play #1: The 10 year old walks up to the mentor, stomping his feet and muttering under his breath about his teacher. The mentor can’t quite hear what is being said.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, previous conversations about this topic, the setting where the conversation takes place (e.g., in private, in front of peers or in school).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “Hi. Sounds like you might have had a rough day at school. Want to talk about it?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Whether follow up is needed given the information shared, possible conversation with the teacher, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #2: The 11 year old child plays on a baseball team. She tells the mentor that she just lost a game and she is upset. She made several bad plays and her teammates made fun of her.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the child, previous conversations about this topic, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers), ability of the child to share her thoughts and feelings, ability of the child to problem-solve, her level of social skills.

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “Wow. That sounds like a rough game. What did you do then?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Whether follow up is needed given the information shared (e.g., bullying), possible conversation with the coach, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #3: The 9 year old has Asperger’s Syndrome and often misunderstands social cues. She is upset and tells the mentor that she doesn’t have any friends at school.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the child, ability of the child to express feelings, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers or in school).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “Tell me more about that. Can you give me an example of what happened today?”
Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., bullying), resources and additional support that might help the child or the mentor, confidentiality of information that is shared.

**Role Play # 4:** The 6 year old tells the mentor that his 17 year old step-brother has been touching him inappropriately.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the child, limits of confidentiality, previous conversations about this topic, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “That must have been really hard to share with me. Thank you. I want to make sure that you are safe, so I have to tell someone else what you have told me. They may ask you questions as well. While we are waiting, what would you like to do?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared, resources and additional support that might help the child or the mentor, possible conversation with parents, shame and/or guilt of child for sharing information, reporting requirements and confidentiality of information that is shared.

**Role Play # 5:** The 8 year old child is frantic and crying. She is very hard to understand, but does tell the mentor that her family has been evicted and that the family has been living out of their car for the last week.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the child, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “Okay, take a deep breath. This sounds like a really difficult situation. I am having a hard time hearing you and I want to make sure that I can understand what you are saying. Can you calm down enough to talk about what is going on with you?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared, resources and additional support that might help the child or the mentor, possible conversation with parents, shame and/or guilt of youth for sharing information, reporting requirements and confidentiality of information that is shared.

**Role Play #6:** The 11 year old seems troubled. He tells the mentor that his brother is being approached to be a part of a gang, and he is worried for his brother’s safety.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the child, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers), if the child is in immediate danger.
Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “That sounds scary. How did you find this out? Have you told anyone else about your concerns yet?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., youth in danger), resources and additional support that might help the youth or the mentor, possible conversation with parents, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #7: The 10 year old child was caught shoplifting. The mentor happened to be at the grocery store and saw this. This is the first meeting after the incident.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the child, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers), your values about the issue, previous conversations about the topic, possible guilt/shame of child.

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “Hey, I know you had a difficult week and something happened at the grocery store and you might have even seen me there. I am really interested in hearing your side of the story. Are you willing to tell me what happened?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., additional confessions of shoplifting), resources and additional support that might help the youth or the mentor, possible conversation with parents, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #8: The 13 year old youth is uncharacteristically quiet. When the mentor asks, “How are you doing today?” The youth responds, “Fine.” The mentor knows that her parents are in the process of a nasty divorce.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, whether the youth at this age is willing or not to share information, previous conversations about this topic, the environment (e.g., in front of peers or in a very public place).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “I know this might be a difficult time for you. Let me know if you want to talk about what is going on at home.”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., plans to run away, suicidal thoughts), possible conversation with the parents, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #9: The 17 year old comes out as gay. He tells the mentor that he has been teased at school and is worried about his parents finding out.
Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, your values about this subject, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers or in school).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “Thank you for trusting me enough to share that information. I imagine that it might have been difficult for you to even share. What would be helpful for you right now?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., plans to run away, suicidal thoughts, bullying), local resources and additional support that might help the youth or mentor, possible conversation with parents, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #10: The youth, 14 years old, is a child of immigrants and English is his second language. He often pretends to understand what the mentor is saying, but really doesn’t.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, language ability of the youth, sensitivity to youth regarding this subject, previous conversations about this topic, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “I noticed that sometimes it seems like you are not sure what I am saying. Can we talk about that?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Resources and additional support that might help the youth or mentor, possibility of misunderstanding, possible shame of youth, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #11: The 15 year old youth just got suspended from school for fighting. She tells the mentor that if she sees that other person, she is going to “take her out”.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, mentor safety, previous conversations about this topic, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers).

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “You sound really mad. What happened?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., bullying, plans to retaliate), resources and additional support that might help the youth or the mentor, confidentiality of information that is shared.

Role Play #12: The youth, 16 years old, has been acting strangely for weeks. She finally tells the mentor about her unplanned pregnancy.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, your values about this topic, previous conversations about this topic, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers).
Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “That must have been really hard to share with me. Thank you for sharing that information. What would help you right now?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., plans to run away, suicidal thoughts, plans to ignore medical needs, pregnancy due to rape, legal ramifications), resources and additional support that might help the youth or the mentor, possible conversation with parents, confidentiality of information that is shared.

**Role Play # 13:** The youth, 16 years old, is visibly upset. She tells the mentor that she wasn’t hired for an afterschool job because of her disability.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers), the youth’s disability.

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “I can understand why that might have upset you. Tell me what happened.”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., possible discrimination), resources and additional support that might help the youth or the mentor, possible conversation with parents, confidentiality of information that is shared.

**Role Play # 14:** The 15 year old youth’s breath smells of alcohol. He initially tells the mentor that he wasn’t drinking. Eventually, he admits to trying alcohol, but swears it was the first time and begs the mentor not to tell anyone.

Q: What do you need to consider BEFORE responding?
A: The strength of your relationship with the youth, the environment you are in (e.g., in front of peers), your values about the issue, possible medical attention, previous conversations about the topic, previous agreements about this issue.

Q: What might be an initial possible response?
A: “I imagine that you are really worried about what your parents might say. This is really important and I care about you and your decisions. It is also part of the information we discussed at the beginning that I would need to share with your parents. How do you want to be involved in this discussion?”

Q: What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation?
A: Follow up response given the information shared (e.g., plans to run away, suicidal threats, how the alcohol was obtained), resources and additional support that might help the youth or the mentor, possible conversation with parents, reporting requirements and confidentiality of information that is shared.
MODULE 4 REFERENCES


