

# Module 4 Handouts

The following handouts are included in this module:

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 Children and Youth (optional)
6. Helpful Strategies for Intergenerational Communication (optional)
7. Recommended Resources for Mentors (optional)
8. Training Feedback Survey



## The Mentoring Relationship Cycle\*

Stage or Phase	Characteristics	Mentor’s Challenges	Effective Communication Strategies
<b>STAGE 1</b> <b>The Beginning and Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know each other, finding common interests</li> <li>• First impressions</li> <li>• Trying to see the positive in the relationship</li> <li>• Bonding, building trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor makes all the decisions rather than sharing the responsibility</li> <li>• Missed meetings</li> <li>• Expectation that the child/youth will “open up”</li> <li>• Expectation that mentor will see change in child/youth right away</li> <li>• Mentor emphasizes behavior change rather than building mutual trust</li> <li>• Child/youth may start to become too dependent on mentor’s support</li> <li>• Mentor may feel s/he has to “fix” child/youth’s life</li> <li>• Boundary issues with families may occur</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ask open-ended questions (e.g. “What is your favorite thing to do when you have free time?”)</li> <li>✓ Use body language that is open and not guarded</li> <li>✓ Use active listening (e.g. eye contact, summarizing)</li> <li>✓ Demonstrate empathy</li> <li>✓ Avoid “prescriptive” communication, which can force disclosure before the child/youth is ready</li> <li>✓ Use prompts (e.g. “yes, I see”, “tell me more about...”)</li> <li>✓ Speak with language that you are comfortable with</li> <li>✓ Don’t be afraid of silence</li> <li>✓ 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, and offer choices if appropriate (e.g. “I won’t be able to do __, but I can help you with __ or __. What would you prefer?”)</li> </ul>

\*Adapted from *Ongoing Training for Mentors: Twelve Interactive Sessions for U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Programs* (2006); *Overcoming Relationship Pitfalls* (2006), U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Center; and *Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors* (2007), The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & The National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Education Laboratory.

## The Mentoring Relationship Cycle (continued)

Stage or Phase	Characteristics	Mentor's Challenges	Effective Communication Strategies
<b>STAGE 2</b> <b>Testing and Challenging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentored child/youth challenges you</li> <li>• Rethinking first impressions</li> <li>• Child/youth tests the relationship and your commitment</li> <li>• Difficult feelings or emotions may surface</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some challenges may continue from Stage 1 (e.g. missed meetings)</li> <li>• Mentor may doubt mentoring abilities</li> <li>• Mentor may feel less interested in continuing the relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be consistent in your communication, even if it is difficult</li> <li>✓ Demonstrate respect</li> <li>✓ Build in problem-solving techniques in your open ended questions</li> <li>✓ Raise sensitive issues at the beginning of your meeting (be aware that testing behavior may be a sign of other issues in the child/youth's life)</li> <li>✓ Make sure to separate behaviors from who the child/youth is, and don't take the challenging behavior personally</li> <li>✓ Disclose personal feelings and experiences when appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>STAGE 3</b> <b>"Real" Mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relationship begins feeling right again</li> <li>• Trust is established</li> <li>• Growth in the child/youth can be observed</li> <li>• A "deeper" bond and connection has been formed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some challenges may continue from earlier stages (e.g. mentor may feel s/he has to "fix" child/youth's life)</li> <li>• Mentor may disclose personal information that is inappropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Continue with disclosures that are age-appropriate and support the mentoring relationship</li> <li>✓ Reinforce boundaries set at the beginning; clarify how you will be a part of the child/youth's life</li> <li>✓ Avoid advising, and allow child/youth to actively problem solve</li> <li>✓ Build off your knowledge of the child/youth's strengths to foster deeper discussions</li> <li>✓ Give positive feedback and don't be afraid to let the child/youth know when something has hurt you</li> </ul>
<b>STAGE 4</b> <b>Ending</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing for closure</li> <li>• Relationship may become deeper or child/youth may start pulling away</li> <li>• Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some challenges may continue from earlier stages</li> <li>• Mentor doesn't address the closure issues (e.g. child/youth withdraws)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Find common language to express your feelings</li> <li>✓ Provide feedback that describes growth that you observed</li> <li>✓ Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that your child/youth may have</li> <li>✓ Understand that the child/youth may need to grieve the end of the relationship</li> </ul>

**Tough Topic Conversation Role Play Cards (for Children Ages 6-12)**

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.

2. The 11 year old 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.

3. The 9 year old has Asperger's Syndrome and often misunderstands social cues. She is upset and tells the mentor that she does not have any friends at school.

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

5. The 8 year old 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.

6. The 11 year old seems troubled. He tells the mentor that his brother is being approached to be part of a gang and he is worried for his brother's safety.

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.

**Tough Topic Conversation Role Play Cards (for Youth Ages 13-18)**

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.

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.

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.

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".

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

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.

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.

# Tough Topic Conversation Worksheet

## Instructions

1. Decide who will be the **Observer**, who will be the **Child/Youth**, and who will be the **Mentor**.
2. Observer: Select one of the role play cards and read it aloud. Take a minute to sink into the role.
3. Youth: Begin the conversation with your mentor. Mentor and Youth should talk for about 5 minutes while the Observer watches.
4. All: Take just a few minutes to discuss the questions below and write down your impressions. It is okay if you don't finish.
5. Switch roles and repeat with the next role play card. Everyone will have an opportunity to play each.

## Role Play Questions

Youth: What worked well for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mentor: What worked well for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Observer: What did you notice? Did you have another idea of how to approach the situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ALL: If you were the mentor in this situation...

What do you need to consider BEFORE responding? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What might be an initial possible response? What exactly would you say? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What might you need to consider AFTER the conversation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Reflection: Setting Boundaries with Children and Youth

Take a few minutes to think about situations where you needed to set clear boundaries with a child or youth, and write down a few notes. If you like, share your responses with a partner.

**1. What do you do** when you feel like your personal boundaries have been crossed? How do you tend to react initially (e.g. irritation, withdraw from the person or situation)?

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**2. Here are a couple of examples.** Suppose you were working with these children. Write down what you would say, or skip to #3 and use your own example.

2a. A 12-year old girl uses offensive language in front of you. She may use this language at home, but it really makes you uncomfortable. What do you say?

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2b. A 6-year old boy asks you to buy him a toy he wants. You can't afford it and he doesn't need it. What do you say?

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**3. Your own example:** Think of something that happened to you recently and how you responded (or would respond if it happened again).

The situation: \_\_\_\_\_

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How you responded/will respond: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Tips for Setting Boundaries

1. Take a deep breath and think positive thoughts: "Another teachable moment!"
2. Remind the child/youth of the program rules (if they apply here) or rules that the two of you have already agreed upon.
3. Be respectful and polite, but (age-appropriately) honest. Use "I" statements to say how you feel.
4. If responding to an inappropriate request, refuse firmly but nicely. If possible, say what you can do instead; give choices and ask for their preference.

## Positive Strategies for Connecting with Children and Youth

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The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence and The National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory published the following strategies in *Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities*. (For more information, go to [http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/173](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/173).)

### 1. Be a friend

- Don't act like a parent.
- Don't try to be an authority figure.
- Don't preach about values.
- Do focus on establishing a bond, a feeling of attachment, a sense of equality, and the mutual enjoyment of shared time.

### 2. Have realistic goals and expectations

- Focus on the whole person and his or her overall development.
- Especially early on, center your goals on the relationship itself.
- Throughout the relationship, emphasize friendship over performance.

### 3. Have fun together

- Many children/youth involved in mentoring programs have few opportunities for fun.
- Having fun together shows the child/youth that you are reliable and committed.
- Focusing on "fun" activities early in the relationship can lead to more "serious" activities later.

### 4. Give the child/youth voice and choice in deciding on activities

- Give a range of choices concerning possible activities.
- Create an "idea file" together.
- Listen carefully to what he/she says.
- Emphasize that his or her enjoyment is important to you.
- Negotiate
- Feel comfortable about setting clear limits on the amount of money you will spend (if applicable).

### 5. Be positive

- Offer frequent expressions of direct confidence.
- Be encouraging even when talking about potentially troublesome topics, such as grades.
- Offer concrete assistance.

## **6. Let your child/youth have much of the control over what the two of you talk about and how you talk about it**

- Don't push.
- Be sensitive and responsive to his/her cues.
- Understand that children and youth vary in their styles of communicating and their comfort with disclosure.
- Be direct in letting the child/youth know that s/he can confide in you without fear of judgment or exposure.
- Remember that the activities you do together can become a source of conversation.

## **7. Listen**

- "Just listening" gives children and youth a chance to open up, and let's them know that they can disclose personal matters to you without worrying about being criticized.
- When you listen, s/he can see that you are a friend, not an authority figure.

## **8. Respect the trust the child/youth places in you**

- Respond in ways that show you see his/her side of things.
- Reassure the child/youth that you will be there for him or her.
- If you give advice, give it sparingly.
- If you give advice, be sure it's focused on identifying solutions.
- If, on occasions, you feel you have to convey concern or displeasure, do so in a way that also conveys reassurance and acceptance.
- Sound like a friend, not a parent.

## **9. Remember that your relationship is with the child/youth, not the family**

- Maintain cordial but distance contact with family members.
- Keep your primary focus on the child/youth.
- Resist any efforts by the family to extract help beyond providing friendship for the youth.
- Be nonjudgmental about the family.
- Know the program's policy about how to respond to the child/youth's family, if applicable.

## **10. Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship**

- Take responsibility for making and maintaining contact.
- Understand that the feedback and reassurance characteristics of adult-to-adult relationships are often beyond the capacity of children and youth.

## Helpful Strategies for Intergenerational Communication

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Communication is complex and you may need to begin slowly and build to develop a relationship with a child or youth. Research on intergenerational communication provides a variety of helpful strategies to promote positive communication.

1. Use active listening skills.
2. Create an environment favorable to conversation— one that works for both of you. For example, you may need a quiet environment to talk, but the youth prefers music in the background because the conversation seems too intense otherwise. Look for an acceptable solution for both; for example, a simple activity like doodling may help the youth feel more comfortable while the two of you talk.
3. Develop an understanding of the child/youth's perspective. Don't be afraid to let them be your guide to youth culture and their own cultural norms and contexts.
4. Be aware of and try to lessen the power differential between you and the child/youth. Use body language to create a more relaxed atmosphere.
5. Be respectful of differences and opinions. Ask questions; being curious is a helpful approach.
6. Be honest (but not brutal).
7. Use appropriate self disclosure. For example, you need not talk about your recent medical tests; however, sharing a time when a teacher annoyed you, too, goes a long way.
8. Avoid over accommodation (e.g. using a voice or words for a younger child when talking to a 13-year old) or patronizing behavior (e.g. excessive praise for a simple task).
9. Be careful of stereotypes. Try not to judge the child/youth according to media images or even how your own grandchildren think and act.
10. Be yourself. You don't need to "sound" like a youth to connect to the youth.

## Recommended Resources for Mentors

Below are some resources to help you build your communication skills with children and youth. Your supervisor may have additional recommendations.

The **National Mentoring Center** (<http://educationnorthwest.org/nmc>) at Education Northwest has resources for mentors and mentoring programs on almost any topic; for example:

- “Real Life” video examples of taking through tough topics for mentors working with adolescents: <http://talkingitthrough.educationnorthwest.org/>:
- Information for specialized mentoring models, including mentoring youth in the foster care system, mentoring children of incarcerated parents, rural or tribal settings: <http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/652>
- Information for school-based mentoring programs: <http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/647>

The **Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota**, in collaboration with the Search Institute, has put together a variety of resources to support mentors working with adolescents, including information on improving communication and building a bond.

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

The Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota has also put together resources for people working with military children and families, including helping children deal with stress and grief:

<http://www.mpmn.org/Resources/ForParentsandGuardians/MilitaryChildrenandFamilies.aspx>

You can view sample pages or order “The Academic Activity Guide” from **Friends for Youth**, a collection of learning activities and projects designed by educational professionals specifically for mentoring programs. <http://www.friendsforyouth.org/SampleAAGPages.html>

**Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults** is a book by Kristie Probst, published by the Search Institute (2006). The book is a "start-up kit" with information and activities for mentors, mentees, and parents or caregivers, and uses the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets framework.