

# ***Supporting Children and Youth: Mentor Training for Senior Corps Volunteers***



## **Effective and Respectful Communication with Children and Youth (Part II)**

Trainer:

Date:

# LEARNING 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

# Intergenerational Mentoring

What is it like  
to mentor a  
child or youth  
these days?



# Stages of the Mentoring Relationship

1. Beginning and Building
2. Testing and Challenging
3. “Real” Mentoring
4. Transition toward Closure



# The Beginning and Building Stage

## *What happens*

- ▶ First meeting; first impressions
- ▶ Mentor and child/youth are getting to know each other, finding common interests
- ▶ Looking for the positive in the relationship, developing trust
- ▶ Bonding, spending time together, sharing common experiences

Source: The Mentoring Resource Center (2006)

Examples of Common Mistakes and Challenges in the <u>Beginning Stage</u>	Strategies
Mentor makes all the decisions	Activities should be youth-driven; share ideas, take turns choosing
Missed meetings	Notify in advance. Mentor must be dependable and consistent.
Mentor expects the mentee to “open up”	Be patient. People vary in communication styles.
Mentor expects too much too soon	Focus on who the child is – not who you want him/her to be
Mentor tries to fit into child/youth’s culture (age, ethnicity)	Be yourself! You don’t need to sound like that person to make a connection.

Examples of Common Mistakes and Challenges in the <u>Building</u> Stage	Strategies
Child/youth may become more dependent on mentor's support	Reinforce boundaries set at the beginning
Mentor feels like s/he needs to "fix" mentee's life	Remember the mentor's role is to be advocate and friend.
Boundary issues with child/youth's family	Remind parents of boundaries. Encourage family to contact program for additional support.
Mentor may feel unappreciated	Don't expect to be thanked. Role model courteous behavior for them.

***When in doubt, ask your supervisor!***

# The Beginning and Building Stage

## *Communication Strategies*

- ▶ Use nonverbal communication that sends a positive message
- ▶ Be sensitive to body language/cues of mentee.
- ▶ Use active listening skills.
- ▶ Be careful of stereotypes; don't assume.
- ▶ Avoid "prescriptive" communication or forcing disclosure.
- ▶ Set boundaries, and restate if needed.

# The Testing and Challenging Stage

## *What happens*

- ▶ Child/youth's challenging behavior
- ▶ Child/youth tests the boundaries of the relationship and your commitment
- ▶ Rethinking first impressions
- ▶ Difficult feelings or emotions may surface



Source: The Mentoring Resource Center (2006)

# The Testing and Challenging Stage

Examples of Common Mistakes and Challenges	Strategies
Mentor may doubt abilities and feel incompetent	Don't take it personally; child/youth is testing you to see if s/he can count on you
Mentor may feel less interested in continuing the relationship	Stick with child/youth and affirm your commitment. Find new ways to show that you believe in him/her.

Source: The Mentoring Resource Center (2006)

# The Testing and Challenging Stage

## *Communication Strategies*

- ▶ Be consistent in what you say
- ▶ Demonstrate respect
- ▶ Build in problem-solving techniques in your open-ended questions
- ▶ Raise sensitive issues at the beginning of your meeting
- ▶ Separate the behavior from the person
- ▶ Share personal feelings, experiences as appropriate

Source: The Mentoring Resource Center (2006)

# The “Real” Mentoring

## *What happens*

- ▶ The relationship starts to feel right again
- ▶ Mentor and child/youth trust each other
- ▶ Mentor can see growth in the child/youth
- ▶ A deeper connection develops



Source: The Mentoring Resource Center (2006)

# The “Real” Mentoring

## *Communication Strategies*

- ▶ Let child/youth know s/he can confide without fear of judgment
- ▶ Avoid advising; help child/youth learn to problem-solve
- ▶ Know his/her strengths and build deeper discussions from there
- ▶ Give positive feedback but let child/youth know if you feel hurt

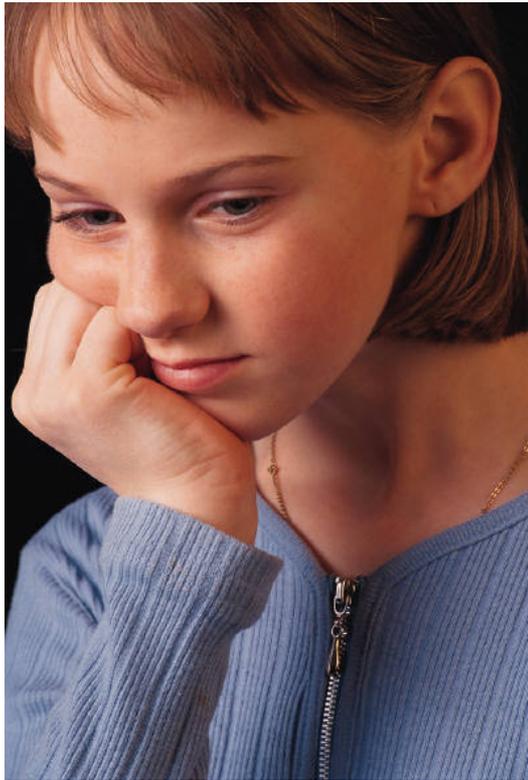
Source: The Mentoring Resource Center (2006)

# Exercise: Tough Communication Topics

## Instructions:

1. In your group, decide who will be Observer, Child/Youth, and Mentor first.
2. Observer: choose a card and read it to your group.
3. Child/Youth: start the conversation. You and mentor talk for 5 minutes. Observer watches.
4. All: Take a few minutes to consider worksheet questions and jot down notes.
5. Repeat 2 more times so everybody has a chance at each role.

# Reflection: Setting Boundaries with Children and Youth



How do you use this opportunity to role model good communication skills?

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

Robert Louis Stevenson

