

Mentor Training Manual

IGNITE

2014-2015

Worksheet #1: Freshman Year

Make a list of any challenge that you can think of (at home, at school, with friends) that teenagers may face. Once you complete your list, go back and star the ones that you personally experienced or had a close friend/relative experience.

Reflect on what you starred. What advice would have been helpful to you, during your first year of high school, in dealing with some of these challenges? Next, reflect on what you didn't star. What about your experiences made it so that you didn't face those challenges?

The role of a mentor

Before discussing the role of a mentor, it is important to define the term. Webster Dictionary defines a mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide.”¹ The peer mentor’s goal is to help “guide the younger mentee’s development in interpersonal skills and self-esteem.”² Words associated with the term mentor are usually *friend, coach, ally, or role model*.

Here are some of the main roles of a mentor:³

- *Provide academic support:* A mentor should encourage smart academic choices and set an example for effort and hard work in the classroom. A mentor should be aware of the tutoring and afterschool resources if his/her mentee is struggling.
- *Be a role model:* A role should set an example through his/her actions. Qualities of a mentor include his/her responsible strong values, hard work and determination in the classroom, and ability to make the right choices.
- *Be attentive to mentee’s needs:* Mentors can “fill the empty spaces in these mentees’ lives with dependable, sincere, and consistent attention and concern”.
- *Be accountable:* Most important, a mentor must fulfill all obligations and be present at all gatherings. Accountability is necessary to build a trusting relationship.
- *Listen:* Many mentees have few people who will listen to them, so it is important to be that person for your mentee. Mentors must be active listeners and always show interest without judging. Although mentors should share their own values and have a conversation with their mentees, it is important to first and foremost listen to what they have to say.

A mentor is not a:

- Surrogate parent
- Therapist or counselor
- Social worker

You have not been trained in dealing with your mentees’ serious and personal issues. You are meant to listen to their stories, be supportive, and provide them a positive example and a reliable relationship. You should never treat this as a job. That will be apparent to the mentee and will negatively affect your relationship with him/her. Treat your relationship as you would treat any other friendship. “Mentors should seek to develop equality in the relationship through mutual respect, encouragement, and openness.”⁴

Inappropriate behaviors for a mentor:

- Revealing any private information about your mentee to other people (unless the information is life-threatening, then talk to a counselor)
- Not showing up to meetings
- Not showing interest—talking to other mentors, texting, etc. during meetings

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mentor>.

² Dubois, David. *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Sage. 2005. Print.

³ Adapted from *Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* for “Be A Mentor Program”.

⁴ Allen, Tammy D. & Eby, Lillian T., *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring*.

Worksheet #2: What would you do?

1. What would you do if your mentee did not show up to the initial meeting?
2. How would you deal with your mentee if he/she exhibited rude behavior?
3. How would you deal with your mentee if he/she were not interested in the discussion questions?
4. What would you do if your mentee were not very talkative during the initial meetings?

The mentor-mentee relationship

Connecting mentors with mentees is a crucial element of any program. In general, however, the key to a successful match is NOT the degree of similarity between the mentor and the partner. The key is the mentor's ability to tune in to, understand and accept what the partner is experiencing.⁵

The mentor-mentee relationship goes through three stages:⁶

- Developing Rapport and Building Trust
 - Mentees 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 calls, missed meetings, or angry behavior.
 - *How to deal with this:* Be accountable. Be on time for meetings and follow through with promises made to your mentees. Successful mentors are those that regularly contact their mentees, rather than waiting for mentees to contact them.⁷
 - Mentors must also ensure confidentiality. Nothing the mentee tells you will be discussed *unless there is threat of physical harm to the mentee or to others.*
- Setting and Reaching Goals
 - Once you gain the mentee's trust, the relationship becomes less rocky. The next phase is to focus on setting 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 mentee wants to learn/accomplish and what the mentor can teach/share.
- Bringing Closure to the Relationship
 - IGNITE mentor-mentee relationships last for at least a year. After the school year is up, they can continue in a more informal and sociable manner, as that of a friendship, or they can end; this often will depend on the feasibility given the mentor and mentee's future plans. If the relationship will end, there are several steps to ensure a positive close to the relationship:
 - Use the closure process as a means to recall mentee's progress and strengths.
 - Help your mentee grow from the process; reassure them about what they have learned and are capable of.
 - Discuss some positive actions and directions for the future and reassure youth about your confidence in them.
 - Mutually agree about how, when, or if you will stay in touch.
 - Follow through on that commitment.

⁵ Taken from "Mentor Program Tips" from Mentors: Peer Resources, <http://www.mentors.ca/mentortips.html>.

⁶ Adapted from *Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* for "Be A Mentor Program."

⁷ Allen, Tammy D. & Eby, Lillian T., *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring*.

Worksheet #3: Your Role as a Mentor

1. Can you think of any other roles of a mentor besides what has already been discussed?
2. Which of these roles can you see yourself excelling in? Which of these roles will be most difficult for you?
3. What can you do to improve so that you fulfill your roles as mentor?

A mentor's responsibilities and duties

As an IGNITE mentor, you will be responsible for attending all regular gatherings (once every two weeks, with some exceptions depending on program location). In these gatherings, you will be expected to pair up with your mentee. These gatherings will either be free form or structured. If the meeting is free form, you will be expected to have regular conversations with your mentee. The goal is to listen and let the mentee take the lead.

During these meetings, don't push your mentee to talk about a certain topic or issue. Don't pry. Even if the conversation doesn't seem to be especially meaningful, regular conversations allow for building a real and positive relationship between you and your mentee.

If the gathering is structured, this means that the meeting will focus on a specific issue or skill-set important to the first-year transition. Most likely, discussion questions will be provided related to the issue of that meeting. You are responsible for keeping the conversation on track and sticking to the questions. Although the questions serve as a starting point for a deeper conversation, you want to make sure your conversation centers on the main theme.

You will also be expected to meet at least once a month outside of the gatherings. These meetings can occur during lunch, before school, or after school. These meetings are informal and meant to define the mentor and mentee's relationship as a friendship. During these meetings, treat it as you would be hanging out with a friend. Ensure that the meetings feel natural and fun for them, and work on developing that trust as a friend.

Possible activities for you and your mentee during outside meetings:⁸

- *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.
- *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.

⁸ Adapted from *Training Guide for Volunteer Mentors* for “Be A Mentor Program.”

Worksheet #4: Listening Habits

Complete the following activity.⁹

Directions: Read this list, and place a check in front of each habit that you now have, even if you use that habit only a third to a half of the time. Then, re-read the habits you have checked, and place **two checks** in front of those habits that you think you perform almost all of the time that you spend listening, perhaps 75-100% of your listening time.

1. I prepare myself for listening by focusing my thoughts on the speaker and the expected topic and committing my time and energy to listen.
2. I ask questions about what I have just heard before letting the speaker know what I heard and understood.
3. I follow the speaker by reviewing what he or she has said, concentrating on what the speaker is saying and anticipating what he or she is going to say.
4. I analyze what I am hearing and try to interpret it to get the real meaning before I let the speaker know what I heard and understood.
5. I look at the speaker's face, eyes, body posture, and movement, and I listen to his/her other vocal cues.
6. I think about other topics and concerns while listening.
7. I listen for what is *not* being said, as well as for what is being said.
8. I fake attention to the speaker, especially if I'm busy or if I think I know what the speaker is going to say.
9. I show in a physical way that I am listening, and I try to help set the speaker at ease.
10. I listen largely for the facts and details, more than I listen for ideas and reasons.
11. I am aware of my own facial, body, and vocal cues that I am using while listening.
12. I evaluate and judge the wisdom or accuracy of what I have heard before checking out my interpretation with the speaker.
13. I avoid sympathizing with the speaker and making comments like, "I know just what you mean — the same thing has happened to me," and then telling my story before letting the speaker know what I heard and understood.
14. I find myself assuming that I know what the speaker is going to say before he or she has finished speaking.

⁹ Adapted from Dubois, David. *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Sage. 2005. Print.

15. I accept the emotional sentiment of the speaker.
16. I think up arguments to refute the speaker so that I can answer as soon as he or she finishes.
17. I use “echo” or “mirror” responses to feedback to the speaker specific words and phrases the speaker has used that I need clarified.
18. I am uncomfortable with and usually reject emotional sentiments of the speaker.
19. I paraphrase or summarize what I have heard before giving my point of view.
20. I am easily distracted by noise or by the speaker’s manner of delivery.

Place an X in the blank by each number you have double-checked.

1___ 3___ 5___ 7___ 9___ 11___ 13___ 15___ 17___ 19___
 2___ 4___ 6___ 8___ 10___ 12___ 14___ 16___ 18___ 20___

Now you have an inventory of your *effective listening habits* (all of the *odd-numbered* habits that you checked), your *ineffective listening habits* (all of the *even-numbered* habits that you checked), your *most effective listening habits* (all of the *odd-numbered* habits that you checked twice), and your *most ineffective listening habits* (all of the *even-numbered* habits that you checked twice)

Strategies in listening and communication

Barriers to effective listening¹⁰:

- Viewing a topic as uninteresting.
- Criticizing a speaker's appearance or her/his communication style (verbal cues, nonverbal cues, or both) rather than responding to her/his message.
- Listening only for facts.
- Tolerating, creating, or failing to adjust to distractions.
- Faking attention.
- Listening only to what is easy to understand
- Permitting personal prejudice or deep-seated convictions to impair comprehension.

Ways to improve your listening skills:¹¹

- Develop a desire (motivation) to listen, regardless of your level of interest in the subject matter.
- Infer the speaker's intent or purpose: what is the speaker implying or suggesting about her/his goals or needs?
- Determine *your own* purpose in every listening situation.
- Become aware of your own biases and attitudes. What words or ideas or beliefs function as "shock" words to you?
- Analyze your listening habits (both productive and unproductive).
- Be mentally and physically prepared to listen.
- Delay judgments; hear the speaker out before you make judgments.
- Listen not only for facts, but for main ideas, principles, concepts, and patterns.

Rules of communication:

- Make your communication positive.
- Be clear and specific.
- Recognize that each individual sees things from a different point of view.
- Be open and honest about your feelings.
- Be supportive and accepting.
- Do not preach or lecture.
- Learn to listen.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Allow time for your mentee to talk without interruption.
- Show you are interested in what he/she has to say.
- Listen for a feeling tone as well as for words.
- Ask questions when you do not understand.
- Set examples rather than giving advice.

¹⁰ Taken from Dubois, David. *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Sage. 2005. Print.

¹¹ Taken from Dubois, David. *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Sage. 2005. Print.