



# Pathway Partners Mentoring Program

Mentor Handbook



Partner Program

# Thank you

...for your interest in mentoring! Millions of children in this country are eager to connect with adults who are willing to listen to them, stand by them, and help them develop to their fullest potential. One way to help is by becoming a mentor. Mentoring is very effective in helping children of all circumstances stay in school, avoid dangerous behaviors, and navigate the bumpy road to adulthood.

For more information about the benefits of mentoring: National Mentoring Partnership - [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)

“More students would benefit from having a mentor” - [www.educationdive.com/news/more-students-would-benefit-from-having-a-mentor/518472/](http://www.educationdive.com/news/more-students-would-benefit-from-having-a-mentor/518472/)

We hope the information that follows helps you in the next steps toward connecting with a young person. This handbook will provide helpful tips and will serve as a guideline for your relationship. The Pathway Partners Mentoring Program staff will also be available for you at any time if you need help or have questions. Please be sure to check in, monthly, with the program coordinator throughout the year.

We wish you success on your journey with your mentee!

Ginger Sternweis, Program Coordinator

(715) 387-8464, ext. 4559

## Mission

Pathway Partners' mission is

“to expose high school students to nurturing relationships with caring adults and to the diversity of opportunities and experiences in our community. These experiences, having guided academic and personal development, will enhance students' life skills and enable them to make successful transitions to post high school education and employment.”

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## Benefits to Students – The Signs of Success

**“You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results.” Mahatma Gandhi**

Mentors frequently ask: “Am I making a difference? What are the signs of progress that can be considered successful in a mentor/student relationship?” For some it may be ten years before a ‘former’ mentored student looks back in retrospect, and says, “You know who made a difference in my life? My mentor... when I was in tenth grade.”

Below are some signs of success, which you and others may notice in your student as a result of your relationship. Remember the key...PATIENCE! Every relationship is different.

- Improved attendance
- Improved eye contact
- Raising a hand more often in class
- Increased communication
- Smiling
- Improved interactions with peers
- Happier at school
- Improved appearance
- Increased consideration of others
- Decreased hostility
- More enthusiastic
- Fewer trips to the principal’s office
- Reduced detentions
- Improved attitude
- Improved academic performance
- Pay better attention
- Opening up to the mentor

## Benefits to Mentors

Mentors make a difference in the life of youth. There are also personal benefits that our mentors report experiencing from the one-to-one relationship. These are:

- Appear happier when they return to the workplace
- Are fulfilled with their commitment as a volunteer in the community
- Have a greater understanding of the educational system in which they are working and education-related issues
- Have more appreciation for students of similar or different cultural backgrounds
- Feel better about themselves for having impacted another’s life
- Get along better with their own families (spouse and children)
- Often become better prepared in the workforce

# Mentor Job Description

## Position Summary:

The most crucial role of a mentor is to be an adult who has time for a child, who cares about that child; who believes in that child. By definition, a mentor is a guide, a wise and trusted friend. Mentoring is wonderful way for caring adults to make a positive difference in a young person's life.

## The Mentor's Role is to:

- Listen well
- Engage in a positive relationship with the student
- Give attention to the student and reinforce the student's successes and failures
- Model positive self-esteem
- React well to stressful situations
- Tolerate frustrating situations
- Model healthy, appropriate behavior
- Communicate on a level that student can understand
- Possess leadership traits and be a positive role model
- Be non-judgmental and respectful of alternative lifestyles
- Know their boundaries
- Nurture a relationship that respects the student's dignity
- Be committed to the partnership

## The Mentor's Role is not to...

- Replace the role of parent or guardian
- Interfere with school policies and procedures
- Expect dramatic changes in attitude, self-esteem or attendance
- Provide solutions to all the issues facing students today
- Break the trust established unless a harmful or life threatening situation arises

## Time Commitment

- Make a one-school year commitment to the program
- Meet with the student one time/month
- Communicate with the student once a month
- Attend a one hour pre-match training session
- Attend a two hour yearly training session
- Complete the Online Activity Log after each meeting with your student

## Participation Requirements

- Be at least 21 years old
- Be interested in working with a young person
- Be willing to complete the application and screening process
- Be willing to adhere to all program policies and procedures
- Be punctual, dependable and consistent in meeting the time commitments/appointments
- Attend mentor training sessions as prescribed
- Be willing to communicate regularly with program staff, log activities in database, and receive constructive feedback regarding mentoring activities
- If transporting the young person, comply with the program transportation rules and guidelines
- Maintain confidentiality at all times, but understand potentially harmful situations need to be reported to the Pathway Partners Coordinator
- Have an outstanding record of employment
- Not engage in alcohol or drug abuse

## Other Responsibilities:

- Please do not set an agenda for your student; rather let the student discover his/her own agenda that will guide your partnership with them. Building trust and becoming a friend will be more effective than trying to change or reform your mentee.
- Voice and negotiate time with your student
- Allow time to get to know one another
- Expect the student to be reliable and allow for flexibility
- Take the lead and persist when the student appears disinterested
- Actively listen and provide specific positive and negative feedback to the student
- Watch out for signs of depression should student's behavior change or they withdraw, and notify Pathway Partners Coordinator as to your observations
- Be aware of your student's learning style
- Encourage engagement in other opportunities:
  - **Youth Service Learning-** Pathway Partners students are encouraged to join the Youth Service Learning program to earn recognition for their volunteer hours. Volunteer hours are eligible for the President's Volunteer Service Award and placed on transcripts. Marshfield High School business teacher Rhonda Goettl is the advisor for the program.
  - **Scholarships-** Encourage your student to apply for scholarships, particularly the Pathway Partners scholarship, which will be offered in the spring to students in the program. Senior students should be encouraged to apply for the many scholarships from the Guidance Department from February through May. A mentor's guidance can be very helpful in the scholarship application process.

# Program Rules and Guidelines

## Attendance

You are expected to meet with the student at least once per month during the school year and demonstrate punctuality and dependability. If you are unable to attend a meeting scheduled at school, notify the program coordinator or MHS main office directly. The message will then be passed along to the student. Regular, consistent meetings are essential for the development of the partnership.

## Match Support/Supervision

You are required to complete the Online Activity Log after each meeting. You may communicate via the Online Activity Log/e-mail/phone/text with the program director monthly to keep him/her informed of the partnership's progress. Failure to comply with these policies may result in suspension or termination of the partnership.

## Field Trips

Prior to finalizing any field trip that will occur during school hours, students must complete and turn in the Field Trip Permission Form. **A field trip form, signed by the student's parent/guardian, must be signed by the Pathway Partners Coordinator.** The student will then be issued a copy and must furnish this form to you prior to leaving school. The original will be placed in the student's file. The student will also need a building pass from the main office. Please follow up with your mentee prior to the field trip to insure that the form is completed and turned in to the coordinator.

You will need to cancel the off-campus engagement if the student fails to complete the necessary permission form with parent's permission prior to the outing. Failure to submit necessary paperwork to the Pathway Partner Office for on-campus and off-campus engagements will result in cancellation of the meeting, or suspension or termination of the partnership.

Field trips scheduled out of school hours require parental/guardian approval. Communication with parents/guardians is essential to a successful mentoring relationship. Communicate directly with parents/guardians prior to scheduling an out of school activity with your mentee. Prior approval assures compliance with the family's home rules, guidelines and expectations.

## Transportation

Pathway Partners Mentoring Program volunteers may provide transportation to youth participants in their own private vehicles. Program volunteers must complete and provide the following documentation on an annual basis in order to provide transportation to students.

- Proof of a valid driver's license, most recent vehicle maintenance report and automobile insurance verification form (copies to be kept on file in the School District Office)
- Signed School District of <sup>Marshfield</sup> Volunteer Application to Transport Students

## **Overnights**

Over Night Field Trips **ARE NOT PERMITTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.** Over-night field trips or knowledge of an overnight field trip will result in automatic termination of the student/mentor partnership.

## **Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs**

Use of or possession of tobacco, alcohol or mood altering substances are strictly prohibited. (Source: School District of Marshfield Activities Handbook. Board Approved: July 8, 2015). If visible will be confiscated by the mentor. Violation of this policy may result in immediate suspension or termination from the program. Likewise, mentors are prohibited from using alcohol, tobacco or mood altering substances while meeting with their mentee or prior to a meeting. If you believe your mentee has violated this policy, please inform Pathway Partners or school staff immediately. Violation of these policies may result in immediate suspension or termination from the program.

## **Summer Meetings**

Summer meetings are not required, however, summer meetings are permitted providing all established Pathway Partners policies and procedures outlined in this handbook are followed.

## **Email/Texting**

Mentors may coordinate meetings with their student via e-mail or texting. Complete the Online Activity Log form which provides documentation of your activity with your mentee.

## **Social Networking**

Pathway Partners Mentoring Program does not permit or condone the use of social networking between mentees and mentors within the context of the Pathway Partners Mentoring Program relationship.

## **Gifts**

The best gift that mentors and mentees can give each other is their time. However, there are occasions when a small gift is acceptable, such as a birthday, special accomplishment or holiday. We ask that mentors and mentees do not spend over \$25 on a gift.

# Confidentiality Policy for Mentors and Students

Pathway Partners mentors and students will ideally build a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. As trust builds, mentors and students may find themselves sharing information that should be kept confidential.

For example, information shared by mentors and students about family relationships, grade point averages, job performance, pain, frustration and disappointments of living, etc. should be kept confidential. Mentors should not share this information with anyone else, including family, friends, acquaintances and co-workers.

But sometimes, confidential information does need to be shared. Mentors have a primary responsibility to maintain the safety of the student. Mentors and students need to be clear from the beginning of their relationship, that while most of the time what is discussed is just between the two of them, if there was ever a situation where the mentor thought that the safety of a student or someone else was at risk, they would contact outside sources.

Examples of confidential information that must be shared include:

- suspicions of child abuse or neglect (see the “Mandatory Reporting of Abuse and Neglect Policy”)
- threats of suicide
- reports of dangerous and/or illegal behavior going on in the home, including, but not limited to such things as drug and alcohol abuse, and illegal use of firearms.

Mentors or students who have concerns about information that has been shared in a mentoring relationship should share their concerns with the Pathway Partners Mentoring Program Coordinator. If s/he cannot be reached, they may speak with one of the Guidance Counselors at Marshfield High School. If danger is imminent, contact the Marshfield Police Department or the County Sheriff’s Department (911).

(Board approved 9/22/2015)

## Mandatory Reporting of Abuse or Neglect Policy

The mentor's first responsibility is for the safety of the student. The mentor should be clear with the student from the beginning of the relationship that most of the time what is discussed is just between the mentor and student. If there ever is a situation where the mentor believes the safety of the student or someone else was at risk, they would be required to contact outside sources. The mentor can promise support and assistance, but not absolute secrecy.

Abuse or neglect encompasses physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Under law, mentors are required to report if they suspect child abuse or neglect has already occurred, or if they reasonably believe that abuse or neglect will occur.

A mentor must make a report in a timely manner whenever he or she has a reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. "Reasonable cause to suspect abuse" means a belief, which is based on evidence, but short of proof, that an ordinary person would reach about the existence of abuse or neglect if presented with a given set of facts. It is not the mentor's responsibility to determine *if* abuse or neglect has occurred, just ensure the report is made.

To make a report, the mentor will contact the Pathway Partner Director, at (715-387-8464, extension 4335) and tell her of their observations. He/she will include as much information as possible, including names of the people involved, place(s), and date(s), etc. If the coordinator is not available, the mentor will speak with one of the MHS Guidance Counselors (715-387-4332). That person will then contact Social Services or the Police Department, as appropriate.

If something occurs that makes the mentor suspicious of abuse or neglect (and this happens before or after school or on the weekend) and immediate attention is needed, the mentor will contact the Marshfield Police Department (715-387-4394) or the local Sheriff's Office (715-384-5345). They in turn contact the social worker on-call from Social Services. This social worker will assess the situation and determine a course of action.

The names of those who report child abuse or neglect are kept confidential. In addition, the law grants immunity from liability to those who make a report in good faith.

(Board approved 3/29/2016)

# School Information and Program Logistics

## Meeting Location

The Knapp Conference Room, located in the main office, is available for mentors to meet students. If this area is already in use, mentors and students may meet in other locations throughout the building. Please schedule meeting locations in advance with the program coordinator. **Mentors must have a visitor badge when they are in any area of the school outside of the main office.** Badges may be picked up at the desk in the main office.

## Important School Contacts

Program Coordinator: 715-387-8464, ext. 4559

Marshfield High School Main Office: 715-387-8464



# Tools for Mentoring Adolescents:

Especially for  
New Mentors!

## #2 - Making the Most of Mentoring an Adolescent

So you're mentoring a teen? Well, congratulations! You've embarked on an important and potentially very fulfilling journey. You can be a good friend to a person at a critical stage of their development. And you can get a lot of it too.

But there will also be times when you'll think you were pretty crazy to take this on. Adolescents are by nature unpredictable. They can't help it—their brains are still developing, especially the parts that will eventually help them control their impulses and make consistently rational choices. Right now they are hard-wired to be reactive and emotional.

On the other hand, most teens have matured to the point where they have the capacity to at times be incredibly thoughtful, creative, compassionate, and sensible. And fun. They are beginning to understand themselves as individuals in relationships, their communities, and the world. So, as with many of the potentially great experiences in life, you're probably in for a roller coaster ride. If you are ready and willing, you can hang on and enjoy the thrills and spills and steady times in between! Here are some tips to make it worth the price of admission:

### **A Place to Start:**

Begin by building mutual trust and respect with your mentee. That includes setting reasonable boundaries and working on having good communication (See handouts #5 & 6). In addition, a study of adults who work with adolescents (that includes you, a mentor!) found that adults who are most trusted and respected do the following:<sup>1</sup>

- Make it clear they see potential rather than problems in the young people they encounter.
- View the young person, not the "activities" they do with the young person, as the priority.
- Convey a sense of power and purpose for themselves and for the young people around them.
- Are described as authentic—real, not phony, with a genuine interest in and concern for young people.
- Are motivated to give back to their communities, neighborhoods, families, and organizations in return for the good things they received from caring adults when they were young.

### ***Makes You Think -***

Today's teens live in a very different world than those before them. But some things, like some adults having negative perceptions of adolescents, haven't changed much. Check out this quote from Socrates, a philosopher, mentor, and teacher from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E:

"Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers."

The truth is that adults and youth *are* different, but that doesn't mean adults are right and youth are wrong.

### ***Try It -***

Tell your adolescent mentee what makes life meaningful to you, and find out what's meaningful to your mentee. You may learn something interesting, and may each be pleasantly surprised by what you hear.

<sup>1</sup> McLaughlin, M., Irby, M.A., & Langman, J. (1994). Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth (Jossey-Bass).



### **From Good to Great:**

In order to be a great, and not just good, mentor to your adolescent mentee, you're going to have to take basic activities to the next level. You're going to have to give something of yourself, and expect certain things of your mentee. Here are some suggestions from *Mentoring for Meaningful Results* by Kristie Probst:<sup>3</sup>

- 1. Have a heart-to-heart about the ups and downs in every relationship, and stress that they are normal.** The key is to understand it and intentionally find ways to avoid a downward spiral from which it could be difficult to rebound.
- 2. Make plans together.** Brainstorm things that you'd like to do together. One match decided that at every visit they would take turns picking something totally spontaneous to do, and there could be no griping or whining about it.
- 3. Set goals for your relationship.** Make a timeline for all the activities you'll do over the next year. Throw in some really outrageous activities as well as some of your standard, tried-and-true activities. If you live in a rural area, consider an activity that gets you to a bigger city, or vice versa.
- 4. Empower your mentee to share her or his thoughts and feelings—it's crucial.** A natural pitfall for mentors is that they feel obligated to impart wisdom or advice to their mentee. Often, what adolescents need most is to have their mentors listen and empower them to work through problems on their own.
- 5. Be sensitive to your mentee's developmental stage and personal story.** Don't presume to know what is going on in your mentee's life. Today's young people are often dealing with a different set of issues than you may have faced in your youth. Things may be happening that are impacting how your mentee responds to your relationship. Let her or him know that you are there to support, and not judge, no matter what.

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### **What Can You Do Right Now?**

Here are four "categories" of things you can do today, tomorrow, later this week, and beyond to strengthen your mentoring relationship:<sup>4</sup>

- 1. Academic Support**
  - o Help with homework (but don't just do it yourself!).
  - o Work with your mentee's school or your mentoring program to find a tutor, if your mentee would like one.
  - o Help your mentee think about education beyond high school. Talk about and even visit places like trade schools, colleges, business schools, and other organizations.
- 2. Career Exploration**
  - o Find out what your mentee is curious about in terms of careers.
  - o Help arrange job shadowing for both of you or just your mentee.
  - o Encourage and help with Internet research about various careers.
  - o Together with your mentee conduct informational interviews with people in careers of interest.
- 3. Social Experiences**
  - o Take your mentee out of their neighborhood and yours, be a tourist in your own town.
  - o Expose your mentee to as many cultural and recreational experiences as you can (explore each other's cultural background).
- 4. Emotional Support**
  - o Show attention and concern—supports that many mentees may lack in other parts of their personal environment.
  - o Be someone who will actively listen and give your mentee your full attention.
  - o Be someone your mentee can confide in (monitor your natural tendency to make assumptions- try to see things from your mentee's point of view).

<sup>3</sup> Search Institute, 2005

<sup>4</sup> *Spirit of Mentoring*, Robin Cox (2005)

## Ways to Maximize the Relationship

- Give mentees your full attention
- Help mentees to find life direction, never push them
- Give insights about keeping on task and setting goals and priorities
- Educate about life and your own career
- Use your personal experiences to help mentees avoid misstates and learn from good decisions
- Be available as a resource and a sounding board
- When necessary, point out areas that need improvement, always focusing on the mentee's behaviors, never his/her character
- No matter how painful the mentee's experience, continue to encourage them to learn and improve
- Give specific advice on what was done well or could be corrected, what was achieved and the benefits or various actions
- Show that you care about mentee's progress in school and career planning, as well as his/her personal development
- Continue to be successful yourself, but also foster success in others
- Be respectful to mentees, and model respectful behavior in your organization and in the community

# Questions your mentee has been asked to consider for your first meeting:

## Preparing for the First Meeting

- **Have some conversation starters ready to go...**
  1. What made you become a mentor?
  2. What do you do for fun?
  3. What do you do for your job? How did you end up in that line of work?
  4. Tell me three unlikely things you did today (or recently).
  5. Where did you grow up? What is the strangest and best thing about that place?
  6. What is your cultural background?
  7. What are three words you would use to describe yourself?
  8. Who are some of the most important people in your life?
  9. Tell me an embarrassing or funny thing that happened to you lately.
  10. What were you like when you were my age? What did you like to do?
  11. What is your favorite book and why?
  12. Let's talk music. I listen to. . . . What kind of music do you like?
  13. If you could have a conversation with someone from history, who would it be and why?  
What would you talk about?
  14. What are three things in your bucket list?
  15. If you could be anyone in the world for an hour, who would it be and why?
  16. If you could teleport by blinking your eyes, where would you go right now?
  17. What is the latest movie you have seen?
  18. Who was your mentor growing up and why did you see them as a mentor?
  19. Other:
    - 20.
    - 21.
    - 22.
    - 23.
    - 24.
    - 25.

- Think about some activities you would like to do with your mentor (at school and outside of school)**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

- Think about some goals that YOU have for this mentoring relationship.** It will be important to share these with your mentor! Your mentor wants to help you achieve your goals!

Here are some examples to get you started:

- ✓ Form a relationship with an adult outside of my family
- ✓ Learn about a new profession and educational path
- ✓ Take advantage of new opportunities in my community
- ✓ Discover new strengths about myself
- ✓ Be open to having an adult role model and friend.

- List three of your own **short-term** (1-12 months) goals here:

1.

2.

3.

- List three of your own **long-term** (12 months +) goals here:

4.

5.

6.



# Tools for Mentoring Adolescents:

Especially for  
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## #4 – Building Trust & Attachment with Your Mentee

Every mentoring relationship cycles through phases as it matures. These phases tend to come in order, but there are many times when you'll feel you've looped back or jumped ahead.

### Phase 1: *Beginning the Relationship*

Early on, you and your mentee will be testing the water with each other. Your mentee may feel nervous or wary, and may be on their best behavior for you. They may also get frustrated if things don't go as expected. You, on the other hand, may want to "fix" everything. You may find yourself adjusting your initial expectations about being a mentor once you've experienced it for real. And both of you may be trying to bridge each others' age, cultural, and lifestyle differences as well as finding things in common.

#### *Strategies*

- ◆ Be consistent and reliable.
- ◆ Show you are willing to listen.
- ◆ Focus on doing things *with* rather than *for* your mentee.
- ◆ Be aware of your own feelings about age, cultural, and lifestyle differences.
- ◆ Be nonjudgmental.
- ◆ Reach out, be available.
- ◆ Be open and honest about what you can, cannot, or have to do.

### Stage 2: *Building Trust*

Now that the two of you know each other better and have some shared experiences, you and your mentee may experience greater trust. Your mentee may be opening up, having more self-esteem or simply feeling more confident because you have demonstrated that you care. As a result, your mentee may begin sharing more information, and perhaps relying on you more for support and validation. In this stage there is the possibility of your mentee becoming over-dependent upon you. You may be feeling overwhelmed by the issues and needs of your mentee, or you may be feeling more satisfaction with the relationship.

#### *Strategies*

- ◆ Be patient.
- ◆ Expect setbacks.
- ◆ If you think your mentee is becoming too dependent, set limits around the frequency and duration of visits and encourage him to broaden his support network.
- ◆ Be involved, yet keep perspective.
- ◆ Continue to be consistent and reliable.
- ◆ Continue to treat your mentee as capable.

### ***Makes You Think –***

Research by Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)) shows that only 20% of young people think that adults in the community value youth.<sup>1</sup> You can strengthen your mentoring relationship by demonstrating how much you value your mentee's ideas, perspectives, and companionship!



### **Phase 3: Testing the Relationship**

Now that rapport and trust are built, it is typical for the mentee to start testing boundaries, perhaps to see just how much staying power the relationship really has. This testing may include inappropriate requests of you, or even resentment or hostility toward you. You may start resenting what seems like negative behavior, and you might also feel caught in the middle between your mentee, your mentee's family, and other service providers.

#### *Strategies*

- ◆ Don't take testing personally.
- ◆ Reinforce limits, if necessary.
- ◆ Continue to treat your mentee as capable.
- ◆ Reaffirm your intention to remain in the relationship.

### **Phase 4: Increasing Independence**

Once you have come through the trust building and relationship testing, you may find your mentee becoming less dependent on you and finding other sources of support. On the upside, you might see an increased self-worth in your mentee. However, setbacks are still possible during this stage as your mentee may take bigger risks in life and in the relationship. As a result of all this, you may feel discouraged or less needed during this stage.

#### *Strategies*

- ◆ Point out the shifts you are observing in behavior and reinforce your
- ◆ mentee's efforts to seek support from others.
- ◆ Continue to support your mentee while encouraging independence.
- ◆ Expect some setbacks as a natural part of this stage.

#### ***When a Mentoring Relationship Ends-***

Mentoring relationships evolve over time, and some eventually come to an end. Whatever the reason, it's important to talk with your mentee about the time you spend together, the experiences you had, things you learned, what you liked and didn't like, and so on. If appropriate, leave your mentee with some sort of memento, even just a note or greeting card, of your time together.

#### ***Try It -***

Research shows that empowering your mentee to select activities you'll do together is one factor that contributes to a strong, successful match. At your next visit create two "idea" jars, one filled with low-cost things that you'd like to do, the other filled with low-cost things that your mentee would like to do.

Then draw and do one activity from each jar at each visit.



## *Tools for Mentoring Adolescents:*

*Especially for Mentors!*

### **#5 – *Let's Get Real: Promoting Positive, Honest Communication with Your Mentee***

Good communication is key to a successful mentoring relationship, and it starts with listening. It is sometimes said that most of us only listen with part of our attention because we are so pre-occupied by waiting for our own turn to talk! The ideas in this handout will help you give 100 percent to communication with your mentee...whether you're speaking, listening, watching, or just being quiet together.

#### **Engaging in Good Conversation-**

Conversations are the foundation of strong relationships, and strong relationships are the goal of meaningful mentoring. Engaging in the art of conversation does not always come naturally to people, and for many adolescents it can be a territory in which they have yet to build skills. Below are some tips for making conversations work.<sup>1</sup>

***Keep it Going.*** Asking follow-up questions or providing open-ended responses to questions are great ways to keep a conversation going. The idea is not to debate a topic, but to learn more. Try, for example, simply saying, "...tell me more about that."

***Conversation Doesn't Have to be "Heavy."*** It's perfectly okay to talk with your mentee about neutral topics like favorite foods, the weather, movies, and so on. In fact, it can be a good way to build the rapport that's needed to address more personal or sensitive issues. Having many light friendly conversations can pave the way for being able to comfortably discuss more difficult issues.

***Be Prepared for the Unexpected Answer.*** You may ask a question and get an answer you did not want or expect. Try to suspend your own judgment and let young people express their ideas and opinions.

***Listening is Most Important.*** Conversations with young people are better when mentors practice the art of listening—it shows that we care about them.

***Timing can be Everything.*** If you ask a question that is met with silence or "the look," maybe this isn't the best time for a conversation. Or it could be that the specific question triggers a bigger issue and the timing isn't right yet to "go there."

***If You Ask a Question, Answer the Question.*** By sharing your own answers to the questions that you ask your mentee, you equalize the boundaries in your communication. If, in contrast, you are always the one eliciting information from your mentee, he or she might feel "in the hot seat" and become less comfortable opening up to you.

***Trying Walking or Driving and Talking.*** Sometimes the physical movement, repetition, and quiet companionship of walking together make it easier to talk together too. Similarly, riding in the car provides a quiet, protective environment where eye contact isn't necessary, but where you are in close proximity in a fairly comfortable setting. All of these factors can help the conversation flow.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Conversations on the Go: Clever Questions to Keep Teens and Grown-Ups Talking* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 2004).



## **What Can You Do Right Now?**

There are simple techniques you can start using right away to promote positive communication with your mentee without necessarily showing that you agree or disagree with what you are told.

### ***For example:<sup>2</sup>***

- Encourage—Show interest (*Can you tell me more?*)
- Clarify—Get all the information and clear up any confusion. (*How did you react when that happened?*)
- Restate—Check meaning and interpretation by repeating back what you think you've heard. (*So what you are telling me is...*)
- Reflect—Help sort through feelings. (*It sounds like you feel pretty angry about what happened.*)
- Summarize—Put together key ideas and facts. (*These seem to be the key ideas you've expressed...*)
- Validate—Acknowledge the worthiness of your mentee. (*I'm glad you are willing to talk about this.*)
- Encourage fantasy—Encourage your mentee to develop a vision. (*Forget the rules for a moment. If you had a magic wand, what would you do?*)

### ***Try It!***

The next time you are with your mentee, see if you can listen twice as much as you speak!

### ***Makes You Think***

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."  
—Epictetus, Greek philosopher

### ***Talking about Tough Stuff:***

Most mentors find that at times they need or want to talk with their mentees about sensitive topics like sexuality, alcohol and other drug use, school concerns, hygiene, and others. It's important to be aware that both you and your mentee might feel anxiety in these situations. You'll want to take things slow, realize that you don't have to address all issues or questions at once, call on your mentoring support person if you need to, and do your best...no one expects you to be perfect. Here are some other tips that might help:

- ◆ Use "I" statements to express your feelings without blame or judgment. For example, *I feel sad that we are arguing about this because I'd really like to work with you to help you figure this out.*
- ◆ Listen; really listen by asking open ended questions, clarifying things that are confusing, paraphrasing to make sure you understand, and letting your mentee tell "the whole story".
- ◆ Show your engagement and openness through your body language. Face your mentee, make eye contact, and relax your body.
- ◆ Stay focused on what's happening now and what you hope will happen in the future. The past is done.
- ◆ Keep the conversation about the problem at hand and the needs and issues of the situations. Avoid making the conflict about certain people or their "positions" in the disagreement.

<sup>2</sup> Cox, Robin (2005).

# Boundaries

The definition of a boundary is a border or limit. It is very important for mentors to think in advance about setting appropriate boundaries with their mentees. When working with young people, there are *do's* and *don'ts* which are prescribed by the nature of the relationship, the

## 1. Physical

Be clear with your mentee about what type of physical contact is appropriate. Decide what type of physical contact, if any, you and your mentee will have. For example, is it okay for your mentee to give you a hug at the end of you meetings? If you have a young mentee, will you hold hands when you cross the street?

## 2. Emotional

Deciding what and how much personal information to share with your mentee can be challenging. Your mentee may bring up sensitive issues such as sexual activity or drug use. Listen without judging, and remember to keep such conversations confidential unless the mentee or someone else may be harmed. How much information you share about yourself will depend upon the age of your mentee and the policies of your mentoring program. *However, do not share if a certain topic makes you uncomfortable or you are not sure whether you should.*

## 3. Social

Your program most likely has specified guidelines about the meeting schedule you and your mentee will follow. You might meet once a week for an hour. But what if your mentee would like to see you more often? What if s/he would like to talk on the phone every day? Let your mentee know how often and what type of contact is appropriate.

Here are five things you can consider as you make decisions about what is or is not acceptable in you your mentoring relationship:

1. Is it safe? Is it legal? Is there potential for harm (physical, social or emotional)?
2. Is it within the rules and guidelines established by your mentoring program?
3. Have your mentee's parents/guardians told you what they expect and will accept, and it is within those guidelines?
4. Will it contribute to the positive and healthy development of your mentee?
5. Does it fit your comfort level and expectations for your mentoring relationships?

*If the answers to any of the five is no, this may be a sign of a potential boundary conflict. If you have any concerns about an activity or decision, follow up with your program coordinator, your mentee's parents/guardians, or (depending on the age of the mentee) your mentee to clarify any uncertain areas.*

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## *Tools for Mentoring Adolescents:*

*Especially for Mentors!*

### **#9 – Developmental Characteristics of 15-18 Year Olds**

Just as every adult has her or his unique attributes, so does every adolescent. There are, however, some things we know about teenagers in general. Here's a snapshot of what you might see if your mentee is 15-18 years old:

#### **Social**

Older adolescents are beginning to see that they have a lot to contribute to society. They also understand that adults don't always have the right answers. They are, therefore, coming to a point where they want to be treated with more respect...they want to feel more like adults.

- Tend to romanticize sexuality, but moving toward a more realistic understanding.
- Search for intimacy, pursue romantic relationships.
- Renegotiate relationships, test sexual attractiveness
- Make commitments. Can commit to follow through with community service, personal goals, and work responsibilities.
- Desire respect; want adult leadership roles.
- Are apt to reject goals set by others.

#### **Intellectual**

This can be a time of life when teens are mastering abstract thinking. They no longer want to be told "how things are," they want to make their own interpretations based on what they see, feel, and experience.

- Can imagine impact of present behavior on future consequences.
- Enjoy demonstrating acquired knowledge.
- Develop theories to explain how things happen.
- Create new possibilities from information.
- Will lose patience with meaningless activity.

#### **Emotional**

Older adolescents are more complex emotionally than their younger peers. They are relating to others more as confident individuals, and are gaining more autonomy. Furthermore, attaching themselves to things and people, that they value and respect, is becoming a high priority.

- Begin to accept and enjoy their own uniqueness, but still seeking status and approval of peer group.
- Develop their own set of values and beliefs, but look for confidence from others in their decisions.
- Take on multiple roles.
- Gain autonomy.
- Can see self from viewpoint of others.
- Take fewer risks in relationships and friendships.
- Search for career possibilities and place in the world.

#### **Physical**

Young people at this age are going through a lot of growth and change, including brain development. While their brains have at this point reached full size, the pathways that will help them do things like make positive choices, have healthy relationships, regulate their emotions and reactions, and plan ahead are actually in the process of being hardwired. Many teens have reached sexual maturity by age 15, and certainly most have by 18.

- Concerned about body image.
- Smaller range and fewer differences in size and maturity among peers (than previous years).
- Tend to develop a more realistic view of limits to which body can be tested.



### **What Does This Mean for Me as a Mentor?**

Partly it's just good to have a sense of where your teen mentee might be coming from. It can also help you understand more about how your relationship is developing. When Neal Starkman was writing the book *Walking Your Talk: Building Assets in Organizations that Serve Youth* he talked with adolescents about what they really want from the adults in their lives. Combined with information about adolescent developmental characteristics, it helps paint a powerful picture of how you as a mentor can make a difference:

1. Young people want to be listened to...and they don't typically feel they are.
2. Young people want to be supported when they make mistakes as well as recognized when they succeed.
3. Young people want to learn about themselves and about each other.
4. Young people want to be challenged, to be taught useful information and skills.
5. Young people want to be valued.
6. Young people want to give something to their communities.

#### ***Makes You Think***

"What seem to be small gestures of thoughtfulness and kindness can mean a lot – a whole lot."

- Mary Allyn, age 17<sup>1</sup>

### **Start by *Changing the Rules*-**

Starkman has also interviewed youth and adults from New Moon Publishing in Duluth, Minnesota. They have developed a list of usual rules and new rules for youth-adult relationships. Here are some examples:

#### **Usual Rules**

- Don't be honest with young people—they can't handle it.
- Young people can't understand adult feelings and experiences.
- Young people don't know what real life (and real disappointment) is.
- Young people aren't interested in talking with adults.
- Young people don't listen.

#### **New Rules: *Share the Power***

- Not talking is okay, but not listening is not okay.
- Welcome disagreement but end in compromise.
- Express your deep feelings passionately, and if something isn't too important to you personally, defer to someone who does have very strong feelings.
- No one knows all the answers.
- Be open to learning from each other.
- Make decisions with young people, not for them. This takes more time!

<sup>1</sup>From <http://www.generationterrorists.com/quotes/kids.html>, downloaded on November 8, 2006.



## *Tools for Mentoring Adolescents:*

*Especially for Mentors!*

### **#7 – The Influence of Culture on Mentoring Relationships**

Culture, in its broadest meaning, is the underlying fabric that holds together a person's world. It includes language, values, beliefs, customs, rituals, oral and written history, art, music, dance, food, and much more. It is so much a part of who we are and how we live, that most of the time we are not even aware of how it shapes what we see, think, and feel. You can spend a lot of time learning about culture: your own, others', and its influence in general on how we function in our communities and in the world. But you can also take some pretty basic measures to help you be a culturally curious and culturally sensitive mentor. Here's some ideas to help you get started.

#### **Why Does Culture Matter?**

As a mentor, you will likely find many ways that your background differs from your mentee's background. At a minimum you will discover generational differences. Perhaps you will also be from different ethnic and religious heritages, or from different socio-economic groups. It might be tempting to want to just look past the differences and focus on what you have in common, but that's not the road to a strong relationship. Rather, the more you can learn about and appreciate your differences *and* similarities, the better.

#### **What You Can Expect:**

***Generational Differences***- One of the best things you can do to help bring the age gap between you and your mentee is to question your assumptions. For example, to help you relate to your mentee you have probably spent some time thinking about what your life was like as a teen. That's great, but keep in mind that life for young people today is very different in ways both positive and negative. One obvious example is technology in the form of things like cell phones, electronic games, and Instant Messaging. These resources are widely available, though in some families it's not affordable, further widening the gap between "haves" and "have nots."

Furthermore, in some cases technology may be helpful and useful, and in other cases, such as violent video games, it can be harmful. To better understand your mentee's "world" check out pop culture. Ask your mentee to introduce you to the latest music, movies, activities, and places. The handout, *What's Hot, What's Not?* (#10) can help you get this conversation started with your mentee.

***Family System Differences***- between mentors and mentees are another influence. Perhaps, for example:

- You own your home while your mentee's family rents one and shares it with many extended family members. Or your mentee lives in a foster home or with a friends' family.
- You own or lease a car while your mentee uses public transportation or gets rides from friends or family.
- You have a home computer and use email a lot while your mentee doesn't have a computer and also has to share a room with siblings so doesn't have privacy for phone calls, much less homework.
- You have lived in the same home for several years while in the same period your mentee has moved four times.



### ***Socioeconomic Differences-***

Poverty, in particular, is a cultural factor that can stress a mentoring relationship in unique ways.

For example, a mentee whose family has lived for generations in poverty might spend \$100 on designer clothing in order to enjoy the moment. A mentor might think it would be better to save for “the future.” That future, however, may seem very uncertain and unpredictable to the young person. And perhaps holding on to the money might mean risking having it stolen, and putting it in a bank isn’t an option because a) there’s no reliable way to get there, and b) institutions like banks aren’t trustworthy. But all of this will vary, of course, from person to person. If you take the time to understand your mentee’s personal views, you might be able to sensitively start to create together a new, positive perspective. Also ask your match support staff for information or training, regarding socioeconomic gaps or differences.

### ***Try It***

Many mentor matches find that they appreciate talking about cultural differences and similarities. Start with simple discussions about things like communication styles, slang, and body language. Then share something else like a favorite “traditional” food, type of music, or event. Next, learn together about an aspect of a culture that’s different from either of yours.

Slowly but surely you’ll build a strong relationship based on mutual understanding and respect!

### ***Makes You Think***

Nearly 20% of families in the United States speak a language other than English in their own homes.<sup>1</sup>

### ***What Can You Do?***

You can start with a few simple, but not necessarily easy, steps:

- ◆ Honestly examine your own mind for prejudices and stereotypes. Recognize that almost all of us have learned some and that acknowledging them is the first step to broadening our perspectives.
- ◆ Think about where biases come from and try to see them as learned misinformation.
- ◆ Make a personal commitment to be a culturally sensitive mentor.
- ◆ See your mentee first and foremost as a unique and valuable person.
- ◆ Approach cultural differences as opportunities for learning.
- ◆ Expose yourself to pop culture.
- ◆ Do a little Internet research on generational differences, not so you can stereotype or make assumptions, but so you can see how the times we live in help shape the people we become.

<sup>1</sup> <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/27000.html>



# Tools for Mentoring Adolescents:

*Especially for Mentors and Mentees!*

## #10 – What’s Hot? What’s Not?

Understanding each other’s worlds, each other’s cultures, is important for the development of a meaningful mentoring relationship. This work sheet can help you brainstorm with your mentee about “What’s Hot? What’s Not?” with today’s youth and adults. You can share your own preferences and tastes now or when you were your mentee’s age. You might find that you have some surprising similarities and/or some major differences.

	<i>What’s Hot?</i>		<i>What’s Not?</i>	
	Mentee’s peers	Mentor’s peers	Mentee’s peers	Mentor’s peers
<b>Fashion</b>				
<b>Music</b>				
<b>Entertainment (Movies, books, games, etc.)</b>				
<b>Hairstyles</b>				
<b>Food</b>				
<b>Language (especially slang)</b>				
<b>Other</b>				

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## When the Partnership Comes to an End...

All partnerships eventually come to an end. Some end after several years, and others end in an unexpected or premature way. Regardless of the situation, Pathway Partners makes every attempt to make the closure as positive as possible.

### **Closure**

Pathway Partners Mentoring Program will follow the closure procedures as closely as possible. The procedures may vary based on the reasons for the match ending. At the point it is decided that a match is closing, the mentoring program staff will fill out a Match Closure Summary form and supervise and instruct all participants through the closure process. A copy of the Match Closure Summary will be placed in both the mentor and mentee files. Closures will be classified as to the reason for the match ending.

### **Planned**

A planned closure is one that has been known about for a period of time such as three months or more. Common reasons for planning a match closure may include the match is reaching the end of the commitment, the youth graduates from high school.

### **Extenuating**

Extenuating circumstances for match closure are usually more sudden in nature, and beyond the control of the program and/or its participants, i.e., relocation or moving away, or an unexpected personal crisis.

### **Difficult**

A difficult match closure is due to relationship or behavioral difficulties, i.e., lack of cooperation or contact, parental disapproval, irreconcilable issues, lack of compatibility, and/or violations of program policies.

In all cases, attempts will be made to have a closure meeting to include program staff, mentor, and mentee. The parent/guardian may attend if desired. The meeting should cover, depending on the circumstances of closure, an open discussion about the relationship ending and completion of the closure Exit Surveys. Discussion of Pathway Partners Mentoring Program policy, that any future contact is beyond the scope and responsibility of the program & closure letters will be distributed. In the absence of a meeting, program staff will attempt to contact all parties to inform them the match is closing and how best to proceed in closing the match. Closure Letters and Exit Surveys will be mailed out to the mentor, mentee, and parent/guardian and will include self-addressed, stamped envelopes. In all circumstances, the mentor, mentee, and parent/guardian should all receive a Closure Letter stipulating the match has formally ended and any future contact is beyond the scope and responsibility of Pathway Partners Mentoring Program. Program staff must coordinate closure proceedings with evaluation requirements and assist in any way necessary to gather evaluation data during this process. Copies of the Closure Letters and all completed Exit Surveys should be placed in the respective mentor or mentee files.



# MENTOR COMMITMENT FORM



Partner Program

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a volunteer in the Pathway Partners program, agree to do the following:

- Meet** my student at least once per month during the school year. With my student, we will plan the date and time of each monthly meeting.
- Notify** the program coordinator or the MHS main office directly if I am unable to attend an in-school meeting. The message will then be passed along to the student.
- Exchange** contact information with my mentee to promote frequent communication.
- Communicate** (e-mail/phone/text) with the program coordinator to keep him/her informed of the partnership's progress.
- Complete** the Online Activity Log after each meeting.
- Report** to the coordinator any information shared by my mentee that involves illegal behavior, or which could be potentially harmful to the student or someone else.
- Insure** that the student has completed and turned in the necessary paperwork for an off-campus field trip *one week prior* to the trip.
- Submit** required verification materials as necessary for compliance with the program rules.
- Encourage** my mentee to join the Youth Service Learning Program to earn credit for volunteered time.
- Attend** yearly mentor training session.
- Have read, understand and agree to adhere to** the information in the Mentor Handbook, including the Mentor Job Description, Rules and Guidelines, and Program Policies. Agree to address any questions or concerns with the material provided in the Handbook with the program coordinator.

In signing this form, I agree to the above stated and I understand that I am agreeing to be a positive, significant adult to a high school student.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



# STUDENT COMMITMENT FORM



Partner Program

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a student in the Pathway Partners Program, agree to do the following:

### Responsibilities to the Program Coordinator:

- I will accept school calendar invites by the coordinator to allow permission to leave study hall to meet my mentor.
- I will return the signed Field Trip forms to the coordinator when planning an off campus visit for a job shadow or lunch. **If I do not return the field trip form before the trip, it will be cancelled.**
- I will listen to and answer school announcements and emails.
- I will check in with the coordinator regarding any concerns and/or updates on a regular basis, but at a minimum of every month during the school year.
- Complete the Online Activity Log after each meeting.

### Responsibilities to my mentor:

- I am entering into a relationship based on mutual trust. In order to build and maintain this trust I will be respectful of my mentor’s time. I will uphold my responsibility to maintain communication with my mentor. **I will notify my mentor if I am unable to make our scheduled meeting.**
- I understand that my mentor is required to report any information that I may share that involves illegal behavior or which could be potentially harmful to me or someone else.
- I will exchange phone numbers and email addresses with my mentor.
- I will use a planner/calendar to remember meeting times with my mentor.
- I have read and understand the information in the Student Handbook, including the Student Rules and Guidelines, and Program Policies. I agree to address any questions or concerns I have with the material provided in the Handbook with the program coordinator.

I agree to all the above stated. I will be responsible and reliable to my mentor and to the Pathway Partners program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

As guardian of the above student, I agree to assist my student to meet these responsibilities of the Pathway Partners program in order for him/her to receive the most benefit from the mentoring relationship. I have read and agree to the Program Policies and the Student Rules and Guidelines stated in the Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature