



**NORTH EAST INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

# **MENTOR HANDBOOK**

# INTRODUCTION

The Mentoring Program is the North East Independent School District's mentoring initiative coordinated through Partners in Education. The Mentor Program serves as the framework in which to develop, support, and recognize community-based mentoring programs in NEISD elementary, middle, and high schools.

## Goals

Mentoring is a program in which at-risk students, or students "on the brink of success," are paired with caring adults. The main goal of the Partners in Education Mentor Program is to provide students with an opportunity to interact with positive adult role models who will encourage and motivate students to succeed in school. This also follows the Volunteer Program mission to provide support for students, classroom teachers and other staff to better meet the needs of our students.

## Mission

The NEISD Mentor Program is a partnership of dedicated community members

- ◆ Providing positive adult role models for students
- ◆ Fostering relationships that help students become successful learners
- ◆ Reinforcing positive attitudes towards learning and problem-solving
- ◆ Building self-esteem by motivating students to strive for academic success

So that students may excel academically and accomplish their dreams and aspirations.

## Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring works because:

- ◆ Adults greatly influence how students behave.
- ◆ Students grow and develop through identification with adults.
- ◆ Positive models influence the social development of the students.

## **Mentor Attributes**

A mentor has...

- ◆ A strong desire to help students succeed in school.
- ◆ The ability to perceive and respond to the needs of students.
- ◆ A willingness to invest time and energy in mentoring a student.
- ◆ The belief that every student can learn, although each learns differently and at a different rate.
- ◆ A commitment to spend time with their student and be involved in the schools.

## **Mentor Duties**

- ◆ To listen, clarify and inspire.
- ◆ To help find solutions to social and academic problems.
- ◆ To set good examples by modeling appropriate behavior.
- ◆ To support and encourage good behavior and good attendance.
- ◆ To help set academic and personal goals.

## **Student Benefits**

- ◆ Seeing positive adult role models in the school.
- ◆ Receiving individualized attention and support.
- ◆ Having greater career exploration opportunities.
- ◆ Developing stronger academic and social skills.
- ◆ Learning to set educational goals.
- ◆ Increasing their self-esteem.

# **Mentoring History**

Mentoring is a fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy, and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person. In fact, mentoring is one of the oldest forms of influence. Popular mentoring literature attributes the origin of the term mentoring to Homer, one of the ancient Greek story tellers. In his classic tale, Homer tells of Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, who asked his friend Mentor to look after his son while he fought to win the Trojan War.

History offers many examples of successful mentoring relationships, such as Socrates and Plato, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung. History and legend record the deeds of princes and kings, but each of us has a birthright to be all that we can be. Mentors are those special people in our lives who, through their deeds and work, help us move toward fulfilling that potential.

*Mentor Behaviors,* by Gordon F. Shea.

*Excerpts taken from "How to Develop Successful*

# CAMPUS INFORMATION AND PROGRAM LOGISTICS

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose  
yourself in the service of others.”*

~ Mahatma Gandhi

# Partners in Education

## North East Independent School District

### Mentor Program Logistics

#### Before Your Weekly Meeting

The day of your visit, please call or e-mail your mentee's school to confirm that your mentee is at school. The school will confirm your student's attendance and will notify the mentee's teacher of the time you intend to arrive.

#### When You Arrive at School

- ◆ Come to the main office at the front of the school.
- ◆ Sign in at the front desk on the Raptor© computer system.
- ◆ Obtain a volunteer badge from the office staff.
- ◆ Go directly to the appropriate campus location to meet your student (either classroom, cafeteria, or location of child's class at the time).

#### While You Are at School

- ◆ Meet with your mentee at one of the designated mentor-approved locations on campus.
- ◆ Only meet with your mentee in a room with open doors or on the school grounds in site of school staff representatives. All mentoring activities are to take place on school grounds unless a special event is planned and approved by school administrators.

#### While You Are with Your Student

- ◆ Greet your student. Have welcoming dialogue.
- ◆ Enjoy time spent together.
- ◆ Provide mentee ample notice of how much more time you have together for the visit. For example, "We're having such a great visit today. In about five minutes, our time will be up for this week and I'll take you back to class."
- ◆ Understand the attention span of a typical elementary student and plan accordingly.
- ◆ Have several options of activities pre-planned, just in case!
- ◆ If your student is ill or misbehaving, please take the mentee to the main office. Never administer medication or punishment.
- ◆ Respect cultural, social, and religious differences. (Acceptance leads to communication.)
- ◆ Listen to the mentee, but do not join him/her in criticizing family, friends, or a school situation. You may offer ideas for improvement or help the student discover solutions for him/herself. Use "how about if..." instead of "you should..."

### **At the End of Your Visit**

- ◆ Have closing conversation. Review the day's visit and discuss when you'll see your mentee the following week (if you know) and what you may do together.
- ◆ Return the mentee to his/her class.
- ◆ Sign out at office and return the volunteer badge.

### **If You Must Miss a Weekly Mentor Session**

Call or e-mail the campus using the information provided at the end of this section.

# Volunteer/Mentor Guidelines

## Background Checks

To ensure the strength and integrity of our program, we require all volunteers to complete a Criminal History Record Check.

## Confidentiality

Always be sensitive to protect personal or academic information about students or classes. If a student shares information that causes you concern, contact the school volunteer liaison. Please do not share any identifying information about students to anyone other than NEISD staff.

State law may require that the school principal or other appropriate authorities be notified if a student shares information about physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

## Discipline

Discipline is the responsibility of the school staff. If you encounter any discipline problems with a student, please refer the problem to the school staff.

## Dress Code

Please follow the dress codes and practices established for staff and students. If you are attending a special event at the school, dress appropriately depending on the school activity or program.

## Funds

Volunteers are not authorized to use or commit the use of NEISD funds.

## Gift Giving

As a general rule, gift giving is strongly discouraged. Teachers have indicated that giving even small gifts can result in jealousy by other students or siblings and escalates their feelings of being left out. It also sets a standard that may make other volunteers uncomfortable. Also please do not lend or give money to students.

## Guests

Please do not bring guests or children to your volunteer assignment.

## Neglect or Abuse

Verbal or physical neglect or abuse of a student will not be tolerated. North East volunteers and mentors conduct themselves in a manner reflecting the utmost respect for all individuals with whom they come in contact within the district. Should you suspect or observe any negligent or abusive behavior, report it immediately to the school volunteer liaison, principal or District Volunteer Coordinator.

## **Personal Beliefs**

North East students come from a variety of backgrounds and volunteers demonstrate respect for their differences and individual rights. In that regard, volunteers and mentors do not propose religious beliefs or doctrines, nor promote political parties or candidates.

## **Photographs and Recordings**

Please do not take photographs, or make sound or video recordings of the students. The need to do so must be discussed with the principal. If agreement is reached regarding photographing, or sound or video recording, a parental permission release is required.

## **Problem Resolution**

Volunteering should be a positive and meaningful experience, but if you encounter problems related to a student, class or school personnel, immediately contact the school volunteer liaison or District Volunteer Coordinator.

Please do not engage in criticism of any school faculty or staff member and always treat students and school personnel with respect.

## **Recording Volunteer Hours**

The district maintains a record of volunteer hours for the schools. Volunteers and mentors should sign in and out at the school's main office from our computer system, Raptor<sup>®</sup>.

## **Removal**

Removal of a volunteer or mentor from the program is rare. However, failure to uphold any guideline or standard may result in dismissal from the NEISD Partners in Education program.

## **School Rules**

Any rules associated with your assigned school will be presented at an orientation session or in your volunteer packet. Please remember that you are a guest on the school campus and need to comply with its rules.

## **Security**

Because school staff must be able to quickly identify visitors or others authorized to be with students, all volunteers must sign in at the main office when they arrive on campus. You are also expected to wear a volunteer name badge or identification provided by the school each time you visit.

## **Smoke-Free Environment**

NEISD provides a smoke-free environment. Please do not smoke in the buildings or on the grounds of any NEISD property.

## **Special Needs, Safety and Medication**

Occasionally, a student will have special medical or physical restrictions. Please abide by these restrictions. Volunteers are not authorized to give medical treatment or prescriptions or non-prescription medication to any student. Allow school personnel to address any medical needs of the students.

## **Student Contact**

Programs involve spending time with students only in a supervised setting on the school campus during school hours. Any violation of these student contact guidelines could result in your assuming personal liability if a student is, or alleges to be, injured.

## **Success**

Success with your volunteer efforts requires consistently meeting the time commitment as defined by your program. As a volunteer, we ask you to take your commitment to your student, class, or school seriously. If you cannot meet your program commitment, contact the school.

## **Training**

Schools provide volunteers and mentors with training to prepare them for their duties. Should you have any questions related to your responsibilities, please meet with the PTA volunteer coordinator or the staff volunteer liaison.

## **Transportation**

Because transporting requires special permission, volunteers are not authorized to transport students, staff, or other volunteers.

# ORIENTATION

*“Slow down and enjoy life. It’s not only the scenery you miss  
by going too fast. You also miss the sense of where you are going.”*

~ Eddie Cantor

# Mentoring: A Special Relationship

**A mentor is an adult role model who spends 30 to 60 minutes with a student weekly, during the school day, as a role model, advocate, advisor and friend.** The mentor is an individual committed to helping a mentee - academically, socially, mentally, and physically - get his/her life heading in the right direction and focused on the future. He/she is committed to expending the time and energy necessary to help the young person as a role model and most of all, as a friend. More specifically, a mentor should:

- ◆ Be an effective listener. In many cases, the mentor is the only person that the student has identified as one who will listen to their concerns and problems.
- ◆ Help the mentee set short- and long-term goals. Remind the mentee that if s/he fails to plan, s/he is really planning to fail.
- ◆ Help the mentee identify the positive things in his/her life.
- ◆ Convey to the mentee that there is always “hope” that their situation can be turned around, but that hope depends largely on them.
- ◆ Employ role playing as a technique for solving mentee problems.
- ◆ Help the mentee to develop personal interests outside of school.
- ◆ Help the mentee become more involved in all aspects of school.
- ◆ Be sincere, committed, and punctual for scheduled meetings.
- ◆ Develop a level of trust with the mentee. The trust relationship established between the mentor and the mentee is the foundation for a successful relationship. Be a positive role model - your mentee may not have others.

## The Appeal of Mentoring

Mentoring can mean many things; asking 100 people would elicit 100 slightly different responses. However, two common elements seem to thread through each personal description. The first is a reference to individual people - one person interacting in some way with another person; and the second involves some sort of supportive action (i.e., guidance, support, advice and counseling).

The appeal of mentoring is that it brings individuals together on a one-to-one basis, bypassing bureaucracy and institutions. Mentoring assumes that real people engaging in a lasting and meaningful relationship will produce far-ranging benefits, and that an older and/or more experienced person will have skills or knowledge from which a younger person might benefit. **Hence, mentoring implies someone older with a broader scope of knowledge and experience working with someone younger who could benefit from loving guidance and sincere interest.**

Beyond these general parameters, what happens during mentoring is potentially unlimited. This part of the mentoring process is oriented toward the needs of individual people.

Although mentoring responds to the needs of the individual, these needs are in fact determined by what would help this individual live satisfactorily in society. For a younger person, the skills and knowledge of a more experienced person can be very important in enabling that young person to progress along a number of paths. These paths might range from finishing high school, to improving math skills, to learning decision-making strategies, to finding a job, to coping with a drug problem, to finding childcare. Good mentoring helps the individual personally and also helps to open doors to the larger society.

### **Characteristics of a Mentoring Relationship**

Relationships between young people and older/experienced people happen all of the time. Teachers work with students; employers supervise and train younger workers. Yet, mentoring is more than simple encounters, and more than one person telling another individual about his life or opinions.

Leading mentoring researcher Dr. Jean Rhodes, University of Massachusetts in Boston, suggests that mentors contribute to the development of youth by:

- ◆ Enhancing the social-emotional development of the youth
- ◆ Being a role model and advocate for the youth
- ◆ Improving the youth's cognitive development through dialogue and listening

In the relationship of a mentor to a mentee, there may be elements of tutoring, counseling, role modeling, etc., but these functions alone would be too narrow to encompass the meaning of mentoring. A role model is defined as one whose life and experiences provide a concrete image of who a younger person can become.

**A mentor is someone who lends guidance and support to enable the young person to become whoever he or she chooses to be.**

A mentor, therefore, might, among many possibilities:

- ◆ help to guide or direct a young person toward thoughtful decision-making;
- ◆ help the youth practice new skills;
- ◆ provide positive reinforcement; or
- ◆ listen to concerns of the young person, depending on the interests and needs of the youth.

When these factors of influence converge, the research (Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002; Sipe, 2002; Grossman & Tierney, 1998) suggests that mentoring demonstrates positive outcomes across three primary behavioral areas as noted below.

- ◆ **Academics** - positive academic returns such as better school attendance, increased interest in higher education, better attitudes toward school, and in some cases, improved grades.
- ◆ **Risk Behaviors** – reduced cases of substance use and delinquent behavior.
- ◆ **Psychosocial Development** - positive social attitudes, satisfying relationships, and young people's perceptions of their worth.

## The Do's of the Mentoring Relationship

- ◆ **Do** work for gradual progress. A student cannot improve from an “F” to an “A” immediately.
- ◆ **Do** take time to establish a rapport. Get to know more about your mentee than his/her name.
- ◆ **Do** focus on one subject area or problem at a time. Working on too many activities will cause confusion.
- ◆ **Do** try to make contact with the mentee’s teachers, counselor, and parents. They know the student well.
- ◆ **Do** be prepared for the mentee’s limitations and multiple intelligences. (See the section on Learning Styles, Multiple Intelligences and Study Skills.)
- ◆ **Do** remember that everyone has strengths; some may be obvious and others may not. Give positive reinforcement whenever possible.
- ◆ **Do** realize that everyone needs to feel valued in order to act responsibly.
- ◆ **Do** listen to your mentee. This shows that you care.
- ◆ **Do** be yourself. If you are uncomfortable in a situation, seek help from a school authority.
- ◆ **Do** be aware that the mentee’s value system may be different from yours.
- ◆ **Do** realize that you may not be able to reach every child. Responsibility for change lies within the student, not you.
- ◆ **Do** help mentees see the practical advantages of school. Your experience in high school and college will provide a unique springboard to encourage and support your mentee.

*(VIPS Youth Motivators Handbook, 1993.)*

## The Don'ts of the Mentoring Relationship

- ◆ **Don't** become so involved with your mentee that you neglect your own life.
- ◆ **Don't** get discouraged if you offer love and concern but your mentee does not respond immediately. The student's self-esteem maybe low, and he or she may feel unworthy of your concern.
- ◆ **Don't** feel awkward about silence. Many students are afraid to interact after meeting someone for the first time. It takes time to establish a rapport.
- ◆ **Don't** take ownership of your mentee's problems. The problems belong to the student.
- ◆ **Don't** expect the student to make sudden changes in attitude or academic achievement. It takes time.
- ◆ **Don't** feel that you need to have all the answers. Admitting you don't know an answer does not mean you have failed your mentee.
- ◆ **Don't** get discouraged if your mentee's progress does not meet your expectations.
- ◆ **Don't** wait too long before contacting appropriate individuals about any problems or questions concerning your mentee.
- ◆ **Don't** feel as though you have personally failed your mentee if the mentee drops out of school.
- ◆ **Don't** give your mentee all of the answers when helping with homework.
- ◆ **Don't** allow your mentee to manipulate you in any way. Some of the students can be manipulative and may intentionally put you in troublesome positions.

*(VIPS Youth Motivators Handbook, 1993.)*

# Tips for Working with Students

Children are unique individuals. That fact should always be remembered. However, children often have characteristics common to different stages of development. The following characteristics may help mentors work more effectively with students.

## Kindergarteners

Five and six year olds want to be heard by you. Be sure to listen to what the student has to say. Have students share their experiences and recent events in their lives. Some students will share very fascinating and astounding things. Be sure not to laugh at the wrong time because what seems humorous to an adult may be a very serious issue to the student.

Children in this age group generally love to play, and play is one way they learn. When this age child draws you a picture, thank them and ask them to tell you about the picture. This activity allows the child to exercise their language development, and the mentor does not have to guess about the content of the art.

## First Graders

First graders are talkative. They are friendly and usually enjoy school. They are eager to learn, but their attention span is short. Try to have a couple of stories to tell rather than to read. Be prepared to repeat stories over and over because children enjoy it. First graders also like to dramatize and act out stories or poems.

## Second Graders

By the time a child reaches second grade, they have more or less settled down to school activities. Second graders have been taught the basics of reading and arithmetic. They begin to learn other things by using these skills. Second graders feel grown-up, but they still respect authority.

## Third Graders

The attention span of the third grader is considerably longer than that of the first and second grader. They are being introduced to more subjects that cover a larger area than in the first two grades. This child is developing a sense of humor and greatly enjoys jokes, riddles, and funny stories.

They are becoming more aware of the world around them and are eager to learn about it. They are frank and open, and enjoy gossiping with and about each other. The third grade child is just acquiring a feeling of competition in and out of the classroom. They are beginning to care about the grades they make and how they compare to those of their classmates. This is also true in the games they play.

## **Fourth Graders**

Fourth graders are sometimes self-conscious and unsure of themselves around adults they do not know. They may not be as open and friendly or accept a mentor as readily as a child in a lower grade. Adults will have to work harder to gain the child's confidence.

Fourth grade students usually like to hear anecdotes and interesting stories. Comic strips and newspapers may be resources for these stories. Fourth graders appreciate adults taking an interest in them. They may also begin to take notice of the opposite sex, and this may lead to some antagonism between boys and girls. Avoid taking sides in their disagreements.

## **Fifth Graders**

Fifth graders develop respect for those who establish rules, follow the rules and are not permissive. A way to gain a fifth graders acceptance and friendship is to be firm, but friendly. Adhere to the established policies.

At this age, creativity begins emerging. This age child enjoys writing and putting on their own plays. Fifth grade is the time when local and abstract reasoning begin, hypotheses can be formulated and tested, and thought no longer depends on concrete reality. During this time, reflective thinking and understanding of analogies and metaphors occur.

## **Middle School Students**

Middle school students often have feelings of insecurity and awkwardness in becoming socially acceptable. They may often model after some idol in an unrealistic manner or are dependent upon friends for establishing their identities among peer groups.

Middle school students are usually interested in and sometimes follow fads and crash diets. They desire an attractive appearance as defined by their peer group. They often have varying degrees of concern about personal appearance and some experiment with current fashion trends. Young women generally have completed the greatest spurt of physical growth or are in the midst of it in contrast to young men who are in the beginning stages of rapid physical growth.

Middle school students are interested in earning and spending money for leisure activities and often have limited concern for value received for money spent. You might use magazines or catalogs to help talk about value for money.

They are becoming aware of personal abilities and potentials; yet lack confidence to fully express themselves.

These young people are often interested in group dating and spontaneous unorganized peer group activities. Young women are generally interested in most young men merely because they are young men. They are beginning to have selective interest in one individual of the opposite sex,

but they need the security of the group. Young men are beginning to be aware of members of the opposite sex, but they continue to maintain close associations with members of their own gender.

Middle school students begin to develop some understanding of good health practices, but they do not totally connect the relationship between practices and good health.

Most middle school students conform to peer group attitudes and values, and they communicate more readily with peer groups. However, many experience difficulty in coping with social pressures from their peer groups. Ask the campus mentor coordinator for articles that can help the student learn how to better handle social pressures. Discuss the role of a leader and explore ways the student might lead a peer group rather becoming a follower of peers that are encouraging unacceptable behavior.

Most middle school students want fair and honest treatment as individuals and are developing a willingness to evaluate adult ideas. Many are concerned with economic independence, but most often they have limited concern for the responsibilities involved in maintaining and establishing a home.

## **High School Students**

High school students are entering the young adult stage of their lives. They are facing issues and making decisions very similar to those many adults face. They are making decisions about education, careers and relationships which will impact them for many years in the future. Though high school students may exhibit many mature and independent behaviors, they at times may revert to more impulsive and immature behaviors. High school students may vary greatly in their maturity, goal setting skills and problem solving abilities. Mentors should discuss with the campus mentor coordinator how they can best mentor their particular student. Also ask the coordinator for articles or books that can lend guidance and offer suggestions.

## **Strategies to Extend Student Thinking**

- ◆ Use thought provoking questions. Avoid questions with “yes” or “no” answers.
- ◆ Ask follow-up questions: Why? Do you agree? Can you elaborate? Will you tell me more? Can you give me an example?
- ◆ Withhold judgment. Respond to the student’s answer in a non-evaluative fashion. For example, “That’s one idea. Can you think of others?” Remember in many cases a strong negative reaction from an adult to a student’s remarks or behavior may cause the student to feel rejected. The student may then hesitate to share anything else with the adult.
- ◆ Ask for a summary. “Could you please summarize what the author wrote?”
- ◆ Share controversial, but appropriate reading materials. Encourage the student to express their opinion. Talk with the campus mentor coordinator about issues and materials that might relate to the student’s classes.
- ◆ If appropriate, play the devil’s advocate. Get the student to defend their reasoning as opposed to a different point of view.
- ◆ Ask the student to describe how they arrived at a particular question or conclusion.

# Mentoring Ideas

## Ideas for All Grade Levels

- ◆ Set your mentoring goals together
- ◆ Go to the library together
- ◆ Just hang out
- ◆ Learn about pop music
- ◆ Talk about life
- ◆ Plan a week's worth of meals
- ◆ Write "thank you" notes
- ◆ Talk about the future

## Elementary Ideas

- ◆ Tell stories
- ◆ Listen to your mentee read
- ◆ Conduct flash card drills (math facts or vocabulary words)
- ◆ Work with students using basic sight words
- ◆ Help children with arts and crafts
- ◆ Make a greeting card for someone
- ◆ Make a kite
- ◆ Attend a school activity when the student performs
- ◆ Reinforce research skills
- ◆ Discuss careers or hobbies
- ◆ Reinforce learning alphabet
- ◆ Reinforce recognition of numerals
- ◆ Drill recognition of color words
- ◆ Talk to children and have time to listen to them
- ◆ Help children with motor skills
- ◆ Play a musical instrument for children and teach them about it
- ◆ Help children make puppets, then write and produce a play
- ◆ Dramatize a story
- ◆ Assist with handwriting practice
- ◆ Do science experiments
- ◆ Set up "grocery store" to practice math skills
- ◆ Drill spelling words
- ◆ Discuss care and training of pets
- ◆ Share information about local history
- ◆ Share ethnic backgrounds and experiences
- ◆ Play an educational game
- ◆ Have a picnic
- ◆ Start a scrapbook or journal
- ◆ Build a model
- ◆ Go on a scavenger hunt using a magazine

## Middle School and High School Ideas

- ◆ Talk about your school experiences when you were the same age
- ◆ Talk about your first job
- ◆ Talk about planning a career
- ◆ Plan a career
- ◆ Talk about college
- ◆ Work on applications together
- ◆ Explore financial aid options
- ◆ Talk about living within one's means
- ◆ Talk about credit cards
- ◆ Work on a resume
- ◆ Talk about dressing for success
- ◆ Do a pretend job interview
- ◆ Talk about how to find a job
- ◆ Find a summer job
- ◆ Talk about networking
- ◆ Talk about what it takes to get ahead
- ◆ Talk about health insurance
- ◆ Talk about taxes
- ◆ Talk about balancing work and life
- ◆ Talk about balancing a checkbook
- ◆ Talk about balancing a budget
- ◆ Talk about relationships
- ◆ Talk about personal values
- ◆ Discuss individuals you admire and, if they are well-known, share articles or books about them
- ◆ Create questions of the week after the relationship is established – during the week, the mentor and student can research the question
- ◆ Figure out how to program an electronic item
- ◆ Provide foreign language experiences for students of foreign languages classes
- ◆ Discuss hobbies, movies and extracurricular activities
- ◆ Read the newspaper together – the sports page, auto section or fashion section may be of special interest to your student
- ◆ Share photos of your family and pets, and tell the student about them
- ◆ Share slides or artifacts from other cultures

Some of the above ideas are provided by MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, at (703) 224-2200 or [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org).

# THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

## Introduction

The concept of mentoring has been around for thousands of years, coming to us from Homer's Odyssey. Mentor was the teacher of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. But Mentor was more than a teacher. He was all things to all people, half-god and half-human, half-male and half-female. Mentor represented the union of both goal and path. (Peterson, 1993.)

As Mentor represented the yin and the yang of life, so also mentors must pull and push their mentees. Mentoring requires strength in two different but complementary behaviors. First, mentors must lead by guiding interaction with their mentees. Mentors invest themselves in their mentees and uplift them. Secondly, mentors must support mentees. Mentors push their mentees to become their best by encouraging development in areas of expressed need in their inventory.

Beyond these general parameters, what happens in a mentoring relationship has unlimited potential. The appeal of mentoring is that it is oriented toward the needs of individuals. Drawing a "one-size-fits-all" blueprint for effective mentoring would not be feasible. However, mentoring is not a completely spontaneous endeavor. Based on years of experience, mentors have collaborated and prepared guidelines for the many aspects of the mentoring relationship. The following chapter will provide material to be used to further understand the mentoring relationship, to initiate a relationship, and to enhance opportunities for success.

## Who Is a Mentor?

A mentor plays many roles. A mentor:

- ◆ is a loyal friend, confidant, and advisor
- ◆ is a teacher, guide, coach, and role model
- ◆ is entrusted with the care and education of another
- ◆ has knowledge or expertise to nurture another person of ability
- ◆ is willing to give what he or she knows with no expectation of reciprocation or remuneration
- ◆ represents accomplishment, knowledge, skill, and virtue

The most effective mentors offer support, challenge, patience, and enthusiasm while they guide others to new levels of achievement. They expose their mentees to new ideas, perspectives, and standards, and to the values and norms of society. Although mentors are more knowledgeable and experienced, they do not view themselves as superior to those whom they mentor.

Knowing the expected stages of a mentoring relationship, as well as the mentee's personal characteristics, family, and socio-economic status (race, gender, age, economic status, family status) will alleviate many of these anxieties for the mentor.

# The Four Stages of a Mentoring Relationship

Any successful mentoring relationship will move through four definite stages. The time spent in each one of these areas will differ from relationship to relationship, but the progression is uniform. For a mentoring relationship to be healthy, it must be evolutionary rather than static in nature. The relationship changes because the purpose of the relationship is to enable the mentee to acquire new knowledge, skills, and standards of social competence. The perceptions of both members of the relationship evolve as the mentee's performance reaches new levels under the mentor's guidance and support.

**Stage 1** - The mentor and the mentee become acquainted and informally clarify their common interests, shared values, and future goals and dreams.

If taking time to become acquainted with one another's interests, values, and goals is given a high priority, the relationship seems to get off to a better start. In this stage, there may be a lack of communication, or difficulty in communicating. Mentees may be reluctant to trust mentors, and may attempt to manipulate them. The relationship typically may remain in this stage from one to six meetings.

**Stage 2** - The mentor and mentee communicate initial expectations and agree upon some common procedures and expectations as a starting point.

In stage 2, there will be more listening, sharing, and confiding in one another. Values will be compared, and personal concerns will be expressed. The relationship typically may remain in this stage from one to three months.

**Stage 3** - The mentor and the mentee begin to accomplish the actual purposes of mentoring.

Gradually, needs become fulfilled, objectives are met, and intrinsic growth takes place. New challenges are presented and achieved. Stage 3 is the stage of acceptance, but it is also a stage of change, where a mentee is more likely to exercise self-discipline.

**Stage 4** - The mentor and the mentee close their mentoring association and redefine their relationship.

In the four stages the mentor and mentee will acquaint themselves with one another, determine values and goals, achieve those goals, and close their relationship.

(Points adapted from *Resource Manual for Campus-Based Youth Mentoring Programs*, p. 83.)

## Getting Acquainted - Stage 1

There is no specific formula to integrate the proper personal and professional qualities to create a successful mentoring relationship. Some individuals are attracted to opposites; others are attracted to those with similar interests, styles, and backgrounds. Regardless, implementing the following suggestions will facilitate relationship development.

- ◆ **Introductions** - Introduce yourself to your mentee and let him/her know how to address you. Be confident and smile!
- ◆ **Learning Names** - Learn how to pronounce your mentee's name. Write it down correctly and phonetically.
- ◆ **Establish Logistics** - Give your mentee the confidence that you will be dependable and will be coming to see them on a regular basis. Tell them the method of notification to use if either of you is unable to attend a scheduled appointment. Let your mentee specifically know when the next meeting will be and how long each meeting will typically be.
- ◆ **Environment** - Encourage your mentee to give you a tour of the school. Notify the campus mentor coordinator that you'll be touring the campus.
- ◆ **Icebreakers** - Use an icebreaker activity and tell about yourself and allow your mentee to tell about him/herself.
- ◆ **Acceptance/Non-Judgementalism/Trust** - Accept your mentee as he/she is. Be non-judgmental and maintain composure if he/she initially acts in a shocking manner. The mentee may try to test your limits. Establish trust and explain confidentiality.
- ◆ **Positive Reinforcement**
  - “You are a great tour guide. You made me feel welcome.”
  - “It has been fun getting to know you through this exercise.”
  - “I will be looking forward to next week.”
- ◆ **Keep It Positive** - Avoid allowing the mentee to lead you into talking negatively about other students, teachers, or the administration.
- ◆ **Open-Ended Questions** - Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered simply with a “yes” or a “no.”
  - “Tell me about...”
  - “How did that make you feel?”
- ◆ **Review Prior Conversation** - Begin the second week by reviewing the past week's activities. Try to learn more about your mentee.
- ◆ **Talk About Goal Setting** - Help your mentee to understand the rationale for and value of goal planning. Get them to think about a long- or short-term goal that they would like to plan for the next meeting.
- ◆ **End Every Session on a Positive Note.**

(Points have been adapted from *VIPS Youth Motivator Program*, p. 13.)

## **Trust and Confidentiality Is Key!**

The Partners in Education Mentoring Policy toward confidentiality is as follows:

Both mentor and mentee should respect the confidentiality of their conversations unless the mentee gives indication that any of the following scenarios is possible:

- ◆ The mentee is hurting him/herself or is at risk for hurting him/herself.
- ◆ The mentee is being hurt by someone else or is at risk for being hurt by someone else.
- ◆ The mentee is hurting or plans to hurt someone else.

The mentor and mentee should agree to these terms from the very beginning of their relationship.

Should you have concerns about the safety or well-being of your mentee, please see the campus mentor coordinator or a campus administrator immediately.

## Goal Setting - Stages 2 and 3

Once the relationship has been established and trust and confidentiality created, mentor pairs will begin to outline goals for the relationship and the year ahead.

- ◆ Create a “contract” for your mentor/mentee relationship that will outline personal, social, and educational goals for the year.
- ◆ Assess your successes and failures monthly, chart your results, and reaffirm the value of your goals.

A mentee’s goals must be his/her own defined goals, not the goals that the mentor would set for them. It does not matter how outrageous these goals may seem. It is not the responsibility of the mentor to evaluate the goals of the mentee, but to help him/her decide for him/herself how to attain those goals, or whether these goals are even feasible.

Outlandish goals give great opportunities for present-day planning. If the mentee wishes to live in a condo in a ski resort in the Swiss Alps, then the mentor can show the mentee how valuable an education will be so that the mentee can make enough money to afford the condo. This encouragement can be linked to lessons in studying foreign languages, learning how to ski, and observing foreign cultures.

## Goals and Problem Solving

The following problem-solving model is designed to assist the mentor with a step-by-step approach in formulating effective individual goals. Once individuals have decided upon their values, self-identity, and future ideals, then they will need to establish the goals to carry them on the way to success. But, because most at-risk students have not assessed themselves in such depth, defining values will be a continuous exercise throughout the relationship. Through goal setting, mentees will discover their values. To set effective goals, it is important to observe the following guidelines.

Mentees should be encouraged to set goals using the mnemonic “SMART.”

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ction-Oriented  
**R**ealistic  
**T**imely

These five areas cover all of the necessary parameters in goal planning while helping mentees to memorize those parameters. Goal planning will be discussed in more detail in the section on goal-setting and decision-making.

A goal must be:

- ◆ **Conceivable.** One must be able to conceptualize the goal and clarify what the first step or two will be.
- ◆ **Believable.** In addition to being consistent with one's own personal value system, one must believe that he/she can reach the goal. If the mentee has a low self-concept or is from an economically disadvantaged area, this may affect their goal setting.
- ◆ **Achievable.** The goals that one sets must be accomplished within his/her given strengths and abilities. To determine the mentee's strengths and abilities, set a goal and then look at the individual components of that goal. Does the mentee have what it takes (physically, mentally, materially) to achieve this goal? Even if a goal is believable, it is not always achievable.
- ◆ **Controllable.** Sometimes goals involve others. If the others do not care to participate, then the goal is not controllable.
- ◆ **Measurable.** There must be some standard of measuring the progress achieved on a goal. Goals are measurable when they are broken down into intermediate steps with deadlines. Have mentees taken steps to completing their goals, and have they completed them in the expected time?
- ◆ **Desirable.** It may sound obvious, but a goal must be something that the mentee absolutely wants to accomplish. Often, mentees set goals merely to meet the expectations of others.
- ◆ **Stated with No Alternative.** The mentee should work toward only one goal at a time. Research shows that a person who says he/she wants to do one thing or another seldom gets beyond the "or." Even though the mentee may set out for one goal, he/she can stop at any time and drop it for a new one. Always discuss why the original goal did not work. But when the mentee changes goals, the new goal must be stated with no alternative.
- ◆ **Conducive to Growth.** The goal should never be destructive to the mentee, others, or society. If a student were seeking a potentially destructive goal, he/she should be encouraged to consider a different goal.

(Points adapted from *Resource Manual for Campus-Based Youth Mentoring Programs*, pp. 81-82.)

## **Communication in the Mentoring Relationship**

**Effective verbal and nonverbal communication is paramount to the success of the mentoring relationship.**

Mentors have the responsibility for effective communication because they are the primary source of support and challenge to the mentees. Because the mentees will most likely be different from the mentors in age, and sometimes culture, race, and gender, the mentors must know the different nuances of communication and interpretation particular to the mentee. Part of this understanding will be gained through trial and error in the relationship, but there are also factors to consider beforehand.

Some points about communication...

- ◆ It is impossible not to communicate!
- ◆ Everything one says or does transmits information.
- ◆ Communication takes two forms - verbal and nonverbal.
- ◆ Positive messages can and need to be spoken and unspoken. Negative messages need to be spoken to avoid misunderstanding.
- ◆ All communication occurs at two levels - first is the simple content of the message, second is the underlying statement about the relationship.
- ◆ In caring relationships, positive messages outnumber negative messages at least 5 to 1. Negative feelings cannot be ignored to assure that relationship stays strong.
- ◆ Relationships are improved when negative messages are rephrased as positive, constructive requests for change. Always ask yourself, "Is this the right time?" and "Is this based on fact?" If the answer to either is no, then the communication is likely to do more harm than good.
- ◆ Use the two question rule to show interest in your mentee - first ask a question, then listen to the answer. Follow up with another question based on the answer to the first.
- ◆ Use how, what, where, and when questions to clarify awareness and understanding.

### **Guiding Questions to Monitor Your Communication with your Mentee:**

- ◆ How do I perceive myself in the many roles a mentor plays?
- ◆ How well do I understand my mentee's overall expectations for our mentoring relationship?
- ◆ In general, is my communication with him/her effective, including my nonverbal and verbal communication?
- ◆ What is my objective in this conversation?
- ◆ Am I too formal or informal?
- ◆ What assumptions have I made in this conversation?
- ◆ What kind of response do I expect from my mentee?
- ◆ Am I prepared for a very different kind of response?
- ◆ Do I give him/her enough time to respond or ask questions?
- ◆ If I think I have been misunderstood, can I clarify and paraphrase?
- ◆ Am I willing to set aside my agenda to listen to his/her agenda at any time?

## Tips for the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

- ◆ **Focus on the Mentee.** Devote your time with your mentee to his/her needs and concerns. Be flexible in your planning and focus on the mentee. Questions like, “How do you feel about that?” elicit emotional responses that can help a mentee crystallize feelings and problem solving capabilities.
- ◆ **Mutual Respect.** Both you and your mentee have experiences unique to yourselves. Celebrate your uniqueness, respect your differences and do not judge your mentee for things not known or skills not yet required.
- ◆ **Don’t be Authoritative.** Be caring, concerned and offer non-judgmental help and guidance when asked. Offer suggestions when asked, but do not judge. However, you should be honest about what you are thinking and feeling. Speak for yourself, using “I” statements, not “You” statements. Don’t give unwanted advice.
- ◆ **Sit Side by Side.** Relationship building is more comfortable and communication can happen more easily if you sit next to rather than across from your mentee. Do make eye contact.
- ◆ **Let the Mentee Do the Talking.** Let the mentee do most of the talking when discussing a problem. Be an interested friend and help the mentee explore his/her feelings, but don’t interrogate. Be an active listener, pay attention, don’t think ahead to what you’re going to say, don’t interrupt, clarify what’s been said, and encourage the speaker to continue.
- ◆ **Silence is Golden.** Don’t be uncomfortable with silence. Give a mentee time to think. It’s okay to pause from time to time before or after a comment or question.
- ◆ **Be Attuned to Mentee’s Communication Cues.** Often, a mentee’s tone of voice, choice of words, pitch or tone, as well as body language can indicate that a topic being discussed has emotional significance to the mentee and/or that the mentee might need more time to discuss or think about a particular issue or concern.
- ◆ **Mentee as Decision-Maker.** Let the mentee be his/her own decision-maker. Guide, suggest and work together to examine consequences, but let the mentee articulate final decisions for him/herself.
- ◆ **Some Problems Require the Experts.** Do not hesitate to call on the campus experts, such as the principal or counselor. There are many social service agencies and special programs that can be recommended to help address specific health, emotional, or academic needs of the student.
- ◆ **Communicate with the Teachers.** Never hesitate to be in touch with your mentee’s teacher(s) if you have information to share that can support the mentee’s academic or social success. Think of yourself as teammates in helping to maximize your mentee’s social, emotional, and academic well-being.

## Weekly Closure

The following steps should be taken during or after each meeting with the mentee:

- ◆ **Mentors should remind their mentees each week about the duration of the meeting.** If the mentor lets the mentee know that he/she has another appointment five minutes before the normal ending of the session, then the mentee will feel unappreciated. Giving the notification prior to the meeting will meet expectations and avoid disappointment.
- ◆ **Before leaving each week, mentors should discuss achievements and give some positive feedback to their mentees.** Mentees need positive closure to make them feel upbeat, to look forward to the next week, and to motivate them to work harder during the week to please the mentor.
- ◆ **Both the mentor and the mentee should keep a mutual calendar that shows the mentee when the meetings will take place.** Their calendar should include vacations, business trips, holidays, and other events that would disturb the normal routine. The mentor should remind the mentee once again a week in advance of departing, and should then send a postcard while away.
- ◆ **Mentors should not overstay their welcome by trying to fill extra time if they do not have activities to last throughout the duration of the meeting.** If mentors do this frequently, mentees may find them boring. The best solution is to be over-prepared.
- ◆ **The mentor should take this mentorship and the weekly commitment seriously.** These students do not need one more insincere or unreliable relationship in their lives.

## **Closure - Stage 4**

Closure in the relationship occurs in two major places. Naturally, closure occurs when the relationship is redefined (Stage 4) at the end of the mentoring term.

### **Redefining the Relationship**

To have a satisfactory redefinition of the relationship at the end of the agreed term, the mentee must experience a sense of closure. The mentee should feel a sense of accomplishment, knowing that he/she is headed in the right direction toward achieving his/her goals. Because many of the youth in the program come from difficult situations, they naturally feel a sense of abandonment at the conclusion of the mentoring term. For this reason, they must know that the relationship is changing not because it was unsuccessful, but because they have succeeded and it is time for them to pursue goals in a different way. This will be achieved through verbal communication and through a little extra effort and planning on the part of the mentor. The mentor should not be limited by the following suggestions, but should rely on his/her own creativity to determine what would be the most fun and beneficial for the mentee.

- ◆ The mentor and mentee should swap some sort of an item or souvenir that would remind them of the positive experience they shared.
- ◆ The pair should have their picture taken together, and the mentor can have it framed and given to the mentee. The mentor might also prepare a scrapbook or photo album for the mentee.
- ◆ The entire group of mentors and mentees should have a final banquet, picnic, or awards ceremony for the last meeting. The mentor must redefine the relationship. While the mentee is still in school, he/she can only be considered as a “friend” to the mentor, but that does not keep the pair from using a more creative definition, such as being “buddies,” “associates” or “partners.”
- ◆ The mentor must assure the mentee of future communication and accountability. They must decide on their method and frequency of future communication.

Such end-of-the-year activities can be effective ways to redefine the relationship, leaving it on a happy note.

## **Advice**

As a mentor, you bring a wide range of life experiences to the relationship. As a result, you can be a great source of advice and information. From time to time your mentee may need a second opinion, or a different perspective that you can provide. Help your mentee gain a new perspective by sharing your experiences. What did you do in a similar situation? How did it work out? Be willing to share, but check to make sure your mentee is interested first!

Remember that you and your mentee are different people. Your mentee will have his/her own values, which may be very different from yours and may lead them to very different ideas about what to do. Your role is to offer insight, advice and suggestions. It is your mentee's role to evaluate the options, consider what you have said, and then make the best decision.

## **Access**

One of the most valuable things you can do for your mentee is to help open doors. That's what access is all about - helping your mentee find and get involved in new situations.

You can help your mentee find people, opportunities, and information that he/she might not have found on his/her own. You can teach your mentee about new places and new people, and help him/her learn about resources that will help reach his/her goals.

Improved access to resources is one of the most valuable benefits you can give to your mentee!

## **Advocacy**

Have you ever had someone stand up for you when you needed it? Or speak on your behalf? That's what advocacy is all about.

If your mentee needs a job reference or a college recommendation, you can be a big help!

But remember, in order to be an effective advocate, you have to really get to know your mentee. You will have to create opportunities to get to know your mentee as a person. The more you learn about your mentee, the stronger an advocate you can be!

# GOAL-SETTING & DECISION-MAKING

*“If you have made mistakes, there is always another chance for you.  
You may have a fresh start on any moment you choose, for this thing  
we call ‘failure’ is not the falling down, but the staying down.”*

~ Mary Pickford

# GOAL-SETTING

## Introduction

Goal-setting is a powerful technique for helping a mentee develop a solid foundation for future planning and organization. By knowing what he/she wants to achieve in life, a mentee may know where he/she wants to concentrate and what to improve. If mentees can set well-defined goals, they can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals.

**One of the most important tasks of the mentor is to assist the mentee in setting short-term goals (less than a year) and long-term goals (more than five years).** Aspiring to achieve long-term goals gives the mentee short-term motivation.

For instance, a mentee may want to attend a major university (long-term goal). First, he/she needs to do well on the SAT (short-term goal). According to Joan K. Carter (1993), a mentee should establish a long-term goal before a short-term goal can be explored. A mentee may not see the need to work toward a goal without understanding the relationship between the short-term goal and the long-term goal. For example, graduating from high school may be a motivating factor to help a mentee work toward the short-term goal of passing the eighth grade.

**There are several important factors to consider before goal-setting with a mentee (Carter, 1993.):**

- ◆ Establish a relationship of trust over time.
- ◆ Establishing confidentiality is prerequisite to goal-setting.
- ◆ The mentee should be directly involved in setting goals. With the mentor's guidance, the mentee must articulate each goal, and it must be genuinely his/her goal.
- ◆ A short-term goal that can be easily achieved is a good starting point; for example, simply to complete all math homework assignments for the next week.
- ◆ Goals must be specific and measurable. For instance, "Mary will complete and turn in all math assignments next week."
- ◆ To assure that an attempt will be made by mentees to meet their goals, a written commitment contract should be established between the mentor and the mentee.

**If a mentee fails to achieve his/her goal, examine these possible factors:**

- ◆ The goal may have been too difficult to achieve.
- ◆ The goal may have been developed without the active involvement and commitment of the mentee.
- ◆ The mentee may be fearful of achieving a self-enhancing goal. Many at-risk adolescents have low self-esteem and believe they are "losers." They often become accustomed to making poor choices, reinforcing their negative self-image.
- ◆ The mentor may need to speak to the mentee about his/her fears of being successful and making self-enhancing decisions.

## **Purpose of Goal-Setting**

Goal-setting helps the mentee to strive to achieve. Although goal-setting may be challenging, it is generally worthwhile. People who use goal-setting effectively suffer less from stress, are better able to concentrate, show more self-confidence, and seem to feel happier. Its intention is to increase efficiency and effectiveness by specifying the mentee's desired outcomes. Hellriegel, Slocum, and Woodman & Martens (1992, 1987) find the following to be the most important purposes of goal-setting:

- ◆ Goals guide and direct behavior.
- ◆ Goals increase the motivation to achieve.
- ◆ Goals provide clarity.
- ◆ Goals improve mentee's self-confidence.
- ◆ Goals provide challenges and standards.
- ◆ Goals help decrease negative attitude.
- ◆ Goals reflect what the goal setters consider important.
- ◆ Goals help increase mentee's pride and satisfaction in his/her achievements.
- ◆ Goals help improve performance.

## Deciding Your Goals

Mentors should help guide mentees when deciding goals, making sure that the mentee considers broadly all aspects of his/her life. For instance, a mentee's goal should take into account the following issues:

- ◆ **Artistic** Does your mentee want to achieve any artistic goals? Does he have/need any training to achieve them?
- ◆ **Attitude** Is any aspect of your mentee's mindset holding him/her back? Are any personal behaviors upsetting to him/her? If so, set goals to improve or cure the problem, even if the goal is only to get help.
- ◆ **Education** Is there any specific knowledge that the mentee wants to acquire? What information and skill will the mentee need to achieve other goals?
- ◆ **Pleasure** What does your mentee want to enjoy? The mentee should ensure that some time is reserved for personal pleasure or satisfaction.
- ◆ **Social** Does your mentee have any social ambitions?
- ◆ **Physical** Are there any athletic goals that your mentee wants to achieve, or does he/she want good health deep into old age? What steps will your mentee choose to achieve this?
- ◆ **Career** What career is your mentee seeking?
- ◆ **Family** How does your mentee want to be seen by members of his/her immediate family?
- ◆ **Financial** How much does your mentee want to earn and by what career stage?

(Taken from *Mind Tools - Planning & Goal-Setting*, Mind Tools LTD, 1996.)

As soon as the mentee has decided on goals in these categories, he/she should prioritize them. The mentor should ensure that the goals that have been selected by the mentee, and not by the parent, teacher, peers, or mentor.

## Goal-Setting Model

A mentee must formulate goals to travel the road to success. The SMART guidelines can help to set effective goals.

### SMART

<b>Specific</b>	A goal of graduating from high school is too general. Specify how this will be accomplished. (“Study more in order to receive better grades.”)
<b>Measurable</b>	Establish criteria for how a goal is to be achieved. Measurable does not refer to a timeline; it means determining a way to measure the mentee’s success in completing the long-range goal.
<b>Action-Oriented</b>	Be proactive in taking action that will result in reaching the desired goal.
<b>Realistic</b>	Strive for attainable goals, considering the resources and constraints relative to the situation.
<b>Timely</b>	Allow reasonable time to complete each goal, but not so much time the mentee loses focus or motivation.

(Adapted from *Discovery Focus on Your Values and Accomplish Your Goals*, Franklin Quest, 1996.)

# Assignment Sheet

<b>Subjects</b>						
<b>Monday</b>						
<b>Tuesday</b>						
<b>Wednesday</b>						
<b>Thursday</b>						
<b>Friday</b>						
<b>Test Date</b>						
<b>Next Report Due</b>						

# Goal Activity

**Directions:** Place a check in the column to indicate which are of value to you. (Check five.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Going to college is a good decision.

\_\_\_\_\_ Finding a job right out of high school is more important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Finishing high school is important to me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Having a car is important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Liking my job is important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Living in a clean, safe area is important to me.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is important to have spending money.

\_\_\_\_\_ Having friends is important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Spending time with my family is important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Something other than what is listed above is of value. (Specify.)

# Goals

✓	Goals	Value #
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
	8.	
	9.	
	10.	
	11.	
	12.	
	13.	
	14.	
	15.	



# What Will the Future Bring?

**Directions:** Answer each of the following questions about your future.

## What Do You Want to Achieve *Five* Years from Now?

- High school diploma? \_\_\_\_\_
- Part-time job? \_\_\_\_\_ Doing what? \_\_\_\_\_
- Full-time job? \_\_\_\_\_ Doing what? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have your own apartment? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- Own a used car? \_\_\_\_\_ Paying for a new car? \_\_\_\_\_
- Accepted into college? \_\_\_\_\_ College choice? \_\_\_\_\_
- A one-week vacation in \_\_\_\_\_
- A longer trip to \_\_\_\_\_

## What Do You Want to Achieve *Fifteen* Years from Now?

- College degree? \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_
- Master's degree? \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_
- Full-time job? \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_
- Own your home? \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_
- Salary range:
- |                   |       |           |       |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| \$10,000-\$25,000 | _____ | Married?  | _____ |
| \$25,000-\$50,000 | _____ | Children? | _____ |
| \$50,000-\$75,000 | _____ | How many? | _____ |
| \$ _____?         | _____ |           |       |
- Two-week vacation each year \_\_\_\_\_ One-month trip to (location) \_\_\_\_\_
- Own new car (no payments) \_\_\_\_\_
- Help in the community? \_\_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_\_

# Decision-Making

## Steps to Good Decision-Making

Decision-making may not always be an easy task for adolescents (e.g., staying out late with friends the night before exams). **The mentor's role is to advise mentees that they need to be the key decision-maker under any circumstances. Mentees will also need to learn to acknowledge the responsibilities that go along with those decisions.**

The "*Eight Steps in Making a Decision*" (Robbins, 1991) will help guide the mentees to make rational decisions.

1. **State the problem objectively** - Define what is happening.
2. **Gather information about the problem** - Do not try to solve the problem.
3. **List pros and cons of the problem.**
4. **Develop alternatives** - Do not force yourself into only one choice, and be sure that each solution solves the problem.
5. **Analyze alternatives** - Look at pros and cons.
6. **Select an alternative** - Mentee makes a decision based on what is best for him/her in this situation, keeping the goal in mind.
7. **Implement the alternative** - Test.
8. **Evaluate end results of the decision made** - Make changes as necessary.

If the mentee follows through these steps with assistance from the mentor often enough, the mentee will become familiar with the process and will be capable of applying it to any future complicated decision.

## Three Types of Decision-Making Styles

1. An **inactive decision-maker** is someone who fails to make choices. A mentee who has this style of decision-making usually procrastinates until a future time because of indecision. Eventually, one option merely plays itself out. Mentees who have this style have difficulty developing self-confidence, and feel that they have no control of their destiny.
2. A **reactive decision-maker** is someone who allows peers, siblings, parents, etc. to make the decision for them. Mentees with this style are easily influenced by what others think, do, or suggest. They are easily persuaded by peer-pressure, develop a negative self-esteem, and have a need to be liked by others. Mentors should not make decisions without the participation of the mentee; otherwise, the mentee's needs and wants go unfulfilled.
3. A **proactive decision-maker** is someone who follows the eight steps of decision-making and assumes responsibility for the consequences. In this case, the mentee takes on responsibility rather than being driven by circumstances and conditions or being influenced by others. Mentees with this style of decision-making often experience a feeling of empowerment or inspiration because they know that they are in control of their own destinies.

# COMMUNICATION AND LISTENING SKILLS

*“The heart of a fool is in his mouth, but the  
mouth of a wise man is in his heart.”*

~ Ben Franklin

# Communication and Listening Skills

## Introduction

When establishing a mentoring relationship, it is important to create a comfortable communication environment. This can be done by using the theory of reciprocity. Following this theory enables mentors to control the flow and direction of a conversation by the rate at which information is revealed. For example, if the mentor reveals something about him/herself, the mentee would likely respond by revealing the same sort of information. This pattern tends to repeat. If at some point the mentee does not respond in kind, the pattern of the conversation should be redirected to make the mentee feel more comfortable. This type of interaction pattern fosters the development of trust in the mentoring relationship.

## Guidelines for Communication

To encourage the development of trust in the mentoring relationship:

- ◆ Make communication positive, clear, and specific.
- ◆ Recognize that each individual sees things from a different point of view.
- ◆ Be open and honest about your feelings and accept others' feelings.
- ◆ Ask questions for clarification on an issue.
- ◆ Learn to listen. Allow time for the student to talk without interruptions.

These suggestions should be used as guidelines. There may be situations that require mentors to act differently.

## Active Listening Skills

Active listening is an essential mentoring skill. One of the most common mistakes mentors can make is confusing “hearing” and “listening.” Hearing is merely noting that someone is speaking. Listening, however, is making sense of what is heard and requires the individual to constantly pay attention, interpret, and remember what is heard. Hearing is passive; listening is active. The passive listener is much like a tape recorder. If the speaker is providing a clear message, the listener will probably get most of what is said. For mentors, this is not enough. They must be active listeners. *Active listening requires the listener to hear the words and identify the feelings associated with the words.* Mentors should be able to understand the speaker from his or her point of view. There are four essential requirements for active listening:

- ◆ Intensity
- ◆ Empathy
- ◆ Acceptance
- ◆ Willingness to take responsibility for completeness

An active listener concentrates on what the speaker is saying. The human brain is capable of handling a speaking rate six times that of the average speaker. Thus, the listener must focus on the speaker. Tuning out distractions will increase listening ability. (Robbins, 1991.)

### **Suggestions for Improving Active Listening Skills**

1. **Make Eye Contact** - Lack of eye contact may be interpreted as disinterest or disapproval. Making eye contact with the speaker focuses attention, reduces the chance of distraction, and is encouraging to the speaker.
2. **Exhibit Affirmative Nods and Appropriate Facial Expressions** - The effective listener shows signs of being interested in what is said through nonverbal signs. Together with good eye contact, nonverbal expressions convey active listening.
3. **Avoid Distracting Actions or Gestures** - Do not look at other people, play with pens or pencils, shuffle papers, or the like. These activities make the speaker feel like the listener is not interested in what is being said.
4. **Ask Questions** - Questioning helps ensure clarification of what the speaker is saying, facilitates understanding, and lets the speaker know that the listener is engaged.
5. **Paraphrase** - Paraphrasing means restating what the individual has said in different words. This technique allows the listener to verify that the message was received correctly.
6. **Avoid Interrupting the Speaker** - Allow the speaker to complete his or her thought before responding, and do not anticipate what he/she will say.
7. **Do Not Talk Too Much** - Talking is easier than listening intently to someone else. An active listener recognizes that it is impossible to talk and listen acutely at the same time.

### **Positive Feedback**

Mentors should focus on providing positive feedback. Negative feedback inhibits the mentee from talking freely and usually meets more resistance. Positive feedback, however, is typically met with acceptance. Suggestions for providing positive feedback:

- ◆ **Focus on Specific Behaviors** - Avoid vague, general statements like “You did a good job” or “That was a really bad decision.” Instead, provide information that tells *why* you feel what you expressed. For instance, “You had a great game today. I liked the way you played defense.”
- ◆ **Keep Feedback Goal-Oriented** - Make sure statements are relevant to what the speaker is saying.
- ◆ **Keep Feedback Well-Timed** - Providing immediate feedback is much more effective than comments given at a later time.

- ◆ **Ensure Understanding** - Just as it is important for listeners to understand the speaker, it is also important for listeners to be understood by the speaker. Asking the mentee to rephrase what has been said helps to ensure confirmation. (Robbins, 1991).

Effective communication requires practice. Over time, mentors should feel more comfortable with effective communication styles.

# LEARNING STYLES

*“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams!  
Live the life you’ve imagined. As you simplify your life,  
the laws of the universe will be simpler.”*

~ Henry David Thoreau

# LEARNING STYLES, MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE AND STUDY SKILLS

## Studying Together

Mentors can help their mentees develop good study habits by modeling through something they study together. Though the mentor's relationship is not a tutoring, or academic support-based relationship, sometimes a mentee will ask for assistance. If you're comfortable assisting, feel free to help your mentee with academic support. If not, speak with the campus mentor coordinator to ascertain what campus-based supports are available.

## Multiple Intelligences for Studying

Multiple Intelligences Theory provides a foundation for building sound study habits for both mentee and mentor. Multiple Intelligences also contributes to confidence and an understanding of personal learning. As a mentor, you can help your student identify his/her strengths. Multiple Intelligences is a theory proposed by Harvard Professor Howard Gardner. He defines intelligence as the ability to find and solve problems and to create products that are useful in one's own society and culture. Each culture views and values intelligence differently. *The driving premise behind Multiple Intelligences is that all students are individual learners with reservoirs of talent.* (Hatch, 1994.) *People have strengths that can be used as a way to compensate for weaknesses.*

Gardner divides intelligence into the following seven domains:

- ◆ **Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence.** A person who likes to read, write, and tell stories. The student has a sharp grasp of vocabulary, grammar, and speaking techniques.
- ◆ **Logical/Mathematical Intelligence.** A person who likes experiments, numbers, logical games, and questions. The student also enjoys figuring things out and asks "why" questions.
- ◆ **Visual/Spatial Intelligence.** A person who likes to draw, build, design, daydream, and is good at finding his or her way around. The student is sensitive to colors, shapes, and dreams that he/she remembers vividly well into the day.
- ◆ **Rhythmic/Musical Intelligence.** A person who likes to sing, hum, listen to music, keep time, and remember melodies.
- ◆ **Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence.** A student who likes to move and touch is sensitive to body language, good at sports, dancing, and acting and is often labeled as fidgety. This person learns best by touching and doing.
- ◆ **Interpersonal Intelligence.** A person who likes to talk, interact, join groups, and communicate; he/she is a leader, and has a gift for understanding people.
- ◆ **Intrapersonal Intelligence.** A person who likes to work alone, pursues his/her own interests, understands his or her inner being, focuses inward on goals and feelings, and is a self-paced learner. (Armstrong, 1995.)

- ◆ Gardner asserts, “We are not all the same, we do not all have the same kinds of minds, and education works most effectively for most individuals if...human differences are taken seriously.” (1995.) Acceptance of this concept is fundamental for both mentor and mentee. Learning to embrace the mentee’s strengths will help to improve weaknesses.
- ◆ In addition, the mentor can give the mentee the gift of understanding metacognition. **Metacognition can be defined as understanding how one thinks and learns and can be a powerful lifelong tool.** Educator Janet McClaskey offers the following: “One way to teach Intelligences comes from offering students opportunities to understand the learning processes.” (1995.)
- ◆ You can introduce the concept of Multiple Intelligences by administering a short test to assess your mentee’s strengths and weaknesses. Becoming more aware of their strongest forms of intelligence will help mentees compensate for their own weaknesses. For example, if a student is weak in logical/mathematical intelligence and strong in visual/spatial intelligence, the student can draw, chart, and list math problems to help him/her fully comprehend the question. Alternatively, a student who is strong in rhythmic/musical intelligence and weak in verbal/linguistic intelligence may want to make up a song to aid in learning vocabulary or spelling words. Because the possibilities are limitless, you and your mentee can experiment with different options to learn the most effective methods for this student.
- ◆ Another pertinent aspect of Multiple Intelligences is the idea that all students are “smart” in their own way. In particular, Multiple Intelligences builds confidence in students who are strong in “nontraditional intelligence,” that is, the intelligences that are not related to verbal and math skills. By stressing that all individuals are smart, you can increase your mentee’s confidence. For example, who is smarter: Madonna or Einstein? Michael Jordan or Martin Luther King? We know that each of these individuals each has his or her special gifts - as do all mentees. Using principles of Multiple Intelligences to tap into mentees’ reservoirs of talent will enable them to become better students and better citizens in our society.

## Active Learning

One important mentor task is helping a mentee become an active learner. “Active learning” implies seeking information beyond the material in the textbook. An active learner takes initiative to assume control of his/her own learning and finds meaning outside of the classroom in everyday life. The following table emphasizes the differences between active and passive learners.

Activity	Passive Learners	Active Learners
<i>Class Lectures</i>	Write down what the teacher says.	Decide what is important to write down.
<i>Textbook Assignments</i>	Read.	Read, think, ask questions, try to connect ideas.
<i>Studying</i>	Reread.	Make outlines, study sheets, predict questions, look for trends and patterns.
<i>Writing Class Assignments</i>	Only follow the teacher’s instructions.	Try to discover the significance of the assignment, look for principles and concepts to illustrate.
<i>Writing Term Papers</i>	Do only what is expected to get a good grade.	Try to expand their knowledge and experience with a topic and connect it to the course objective or content.

(McWhorter, 1998.)

Mentors can encourage active learning by asking the following questions:

- ◆ What are you reading?
- ◆ What is the purpose behind the assignment?
- ◆ How does the assignment relate to the rest of the course?
- ◆ How can you relate what you are learning to what you already know from the course and your own life and experiences? (McWhorter, 1998.)

### English/Writing

- ◆ Create a newsletter that mentees can write, illustrate, and distribute to their close friends.
- ◆ Write creative stories, poems, or songs, and play or sing.

### Mathematics

- ◆ Balance a checkbook or savings account book.

- ◆ Look in grocery store circulars; pretend to have a certain amount of money, and then go grocery shopping.

## History

- ◆ Search for pictures of events studied in class (i.e., the Great Depression, World Wars I and II, etc.).
- ◆ Visit libraries to research a family tree and then find historical events that occurred during a family member's life.
- ◆ Have grandparents share stories about the “good ole’ days.”

## Two General Study Techniques

Building study skills can be a time-consuming task. Later in this portion of the manual, the study skills are broken down into three main sections: lecture note-taking skills, textbook reading skills, and test-taking skills. To begin, the following are two excellent general study techniques that will aid mentees in many different areas of their intellectual development.

- ◆ **Building Associations.** Associations make learning new information easier by connecting it to previously learned information. The association can be made to a place, something already studied, or even interests such as movies, sports, or music. For example, if a student is a baseball fan and is studying U.S. geography, a mentor might use his or her favorite players to learn the cities of the U.S. The following example exhibits this technique. (McWhorter, 1998.)

Ken Griffey, Jr. – Cincinnati, Ohio

Craig Biggio – Houston, Texas

Barry Bonds - San Francisco, California

- ◆ **Mnemonic devices.** Mnemonics are memory tricks that the mentor can devise to help the mentee remember newly learned information. These devices might include anagrams, rhymes, words, raps, nonsense words, sentences, or even mental pictures. For example, “ROY G. BIV” can be used for remembering the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet). Also, the following techniques can be used for remembering the classification categories of animals.

**K**ing (Kingdom)

**P**hilip (Phylum)

**C**ame (Class)

**O**ut (Order)

**F**launting (Family)

**G**reen (Genus)

**S**unglasses (Species)

The above mnemonic device can be remembered either by the letters or by the silly saying, whichever the mentee finds most comfortable to his/her style of learning. (McWhorter, 1998.)

## Lecture Note-Taking Skills

Students go through a major change in instructional techniques from elementary school to middle school. Middle school instruction is dominated by the lecture format. In order to succeed, students must work toward building a longer attention spans, better listening skills, and lecture note-taking skills. Learning how to correctly and efficiently take notes is a major key to success in school at any level.

The following are suggestions to improve the note-taking ability of your mentee:

- ◆ **Record Main Ideas.** Write down the points that the teacher emphasizes. These are the main ideas, explanations, and examples upon which the discussion is built.
- ◆ **Listen for a Change in Voice.** A change in vocal tone can often alert students to important information. Vocal changes are a teacher's tool for highlighting important details.
- ◆ **Listen for a Change in Rate of Speech.** When a teacher slows her speech rate, this is often a cue to students to take notes because the teacher is facilitating student writing.
- ◆ **Watch for Lists and Number Points.** If a teacher begins to list points either verbally or on a chalkboard, this is a clue that the list is important.
- ◆ **Observe Chalkboard, Overhead, and Visual Aids.** Use of any audiovisual or handwritten aids is another clue to the importance of the material.
- ◆ **Take Note of Direct Announcement.** By using phrases such as "One important fact to keep in mind," "You will see this information again," or "Keep this fact in mind as you study for the test," the teacher is alerting students to the importance of the information. (McWhorter, 1998.)

### Additional Points to Remember When Taking Notes (Twining, 1991.):

- ◆ Use ink because pencil tends to smear over a period of time.
- ◆ Keep a separate notebook for each class.
- ◆ Date notes to provide easy reference.
- ◆ Mark ideas that are unclear by adding a question mark, signifying a need to complete the information at a later date.

## Reading Textbooks: Comprehension Skills

Another key adjustment that occurs during the middle school years is the reliance on textbooks as the key to the curriculum. Students must master ways to read and retain the information. Textbooks are organized in a manner that should aid the students in understanding. Most textbooks have an abundance of headings, subheadings, questions, and review exercises that assist the students in active, successful reading. A systematic approach to textbook reading follows.

### Preview

- ◆ Read the title and introduction.
- ◆ Read subheadings and the summary and scan illustrations.
- ◆ Skim questions and other problem-solving activities. (Twining, 1991.)

## **Read**

- ◆ Ask questions and read for answers.
- ◆ Identify important points by underlining (if allowed) or note taking.
- ◆ Ask connection questions and annotate in the margins.
- ◆ Set checkpoints to assess comprehension.
- ◆ Try to visually capture the meaning of terms, examples, and ideas. (Twining, 1991.)

## **Self-Test**

- ◆ Use subheading questions to monitor understanding and retention.
- ◆ Use periodic summaries to organize information and paragraph meaning.
- ◆ Use the practice questions found in the textbook. (Twining, 1991.)

## **Review**

- ◆ Look over information that was misunderstood or forgotten.
- ◆ Continue self-tests until mastery occurs.
- ◆ Review periodically after mastery to keep information fresh for test preparation. (Twining, 1991.)

McWhorter (1998.) offers the following tips for strengthening comprehension:

- ◆ Paraphrase each paragraph to aid in understanding.
- ◆ Read aloud any section that might seem confusing or difficult to understand.
- ◆ Slow down reading rate.
- ◆ Write an outline of major points in the text.
- ◆ Reread difficult or confusing sections.

## **Test-Taking Techniques**

Helping the mentee understand simple techniques will enable him/her to become a better test taker. This section discusses several types of tests and how to adjust study techniques appropriately.

- ◆ Get plenty of rest the night before the test.
- ◆ Be on time and prepared for the test.
- ◆ Scan over the entire test before starting. This gives you a general overview of the content and types of questions asked.
- ◆ Know how many points each question is worth.
- ◆ Read and follow the directions carefully. Notice key words in the directions (i.e., less, sometimes, best, all, every, most, seldom, rarely).
- ◆ Do the easier problems first. This builds confidence.
- ◆ Mark difficult questions and return to them at a later time.
- ◆ Never leave anything blank. Most teachers give partial credit.
- ◆ Look for clues in the test. Is a question referred to later on in the test? Sometimes questions act as prompts to cue an answer to a previous question.
- ◆ Review all questions and answers.
- ◆ Do not change an answer without a good reason. Trust your gut instinct.

- ◆ Save your returned tests as study tools for semester tests. Some of the same types of questions may appear on the final exam.

## **Specific Test-Taking Techniques**

The following are guidelines for taking specific types of tests:

### **Matching Tests**

- ◆ Glance through both lists to get an overview of the subject matter.
- ◆ Answer easy and obvious items first.
- ◆ Do not choose the first answer that seems right; instead, see if another choice is better. (McWhorter, 1998.)

### **Short-Answer Tests**

- ◆ Use credit distribution as a clue for answering questions accurately. For example, if the question is worth five points, you might need at least five items in the answer.
- ◆ Plan what you will say before you start composing the answer.
- ◆ Use the amount of space provided. The amount of space is a clue for how long the answer should be. (McWhorter, 1998.)

### **Fill-in-the-Blank Tests**

- ◆ Look for key words in the sentence and then use them as context clues.
- ◆ Determine what type of information is required. Is it a date, name, place, vocabulary term?
- ◆ Use the grammatical structure of the sentence as a cue as to whether the word is a noun, verb, or a qualifier. (McWhorter, 1998.)

### **Multiple Choice Tests**

- ◆ Read and consider all of the choices.
- ◆ Use logic and common sense. If a choice is unfamiliar, chances are that it is the wrong answer. Study the choices that are familiar. Try to express each of the choices in your own words. Then analyze how and why they are different.
- ◆ Make educated guesses. (McWhorter, 1998.)

### **Essay Tests**

- ◆ Read the directions first. Teachers often give hints in the directions. Also, directions assist in essay organization and content.
- ◆ Watch for multiple part questions such as the one that follows:
  - ❖ Regarding U.S. sanctions against Iraq, discuss the causes, immediate effects, and the long-range political implications.
- ◆ Make notes as you read the directions and the questions; these will help you organize your response effectively.
- ◆ Organize your answer in simple outline form to help you cover all aspects thoroughly.
- ◆ Build your response around a strong thesis statement. (McWhorter, 1998.)

## **Conclusion**

Finally, in addition to teaching mentees the importance of current subject matter, you need to assure that they understand that building sound study habits is vital to academic success. The tools in this section provide a foundation for beginning goal setting activities. However, because learning is always best when the mentoring pair is having fun, remember to loosen up, relax, have fun, and let the lifelong learning begin.

# CONCEPTS OF SELF-AWARENESS

*“Once you see a child’s self-image begin to improve, you will see significant gains in achievement areas, but even more importantly, you will see a child who is beginning to enjoy life more.”*

~ Wayne Dyer

# SELF-AWARENESS

## EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING, SELF-ESTEEM, AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION

### Background

Adolescence is typically a time of great stress and strain on the body, mind, and emotions. Adolescents experience more life-changing external and internal factors and situations than pre-adolescents. (Mullis, et al., 1993.) The flood of hormones through the body and the internal changes that are experienced during this period are a major contribution to stress. Some of the other changes that occur during this period can be labeled as school-based, such as trouble with grades, breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend, or being cut from a sports team. Overall, there is more of a daily connection to negative events during the period of adolescence than during the periods of pre-adolescence. (LeFrancois, 1996.) Adolescents begin to “break free” from their parents to find their own identities and, in some cases, that break creates a loss of childhood reality, or the protective nature of childhood.

For adolescents, self-esteem is fragile and is easily wounded outside the academic realm as well. Physical attractiveness has a powerful impact on self-esteem during the adolescent years. During this period, rapid changes occur in the body’s appearance, form, and size. With the development of sexual hormones, adolescents become fixated on the appearance of their bodies and the bodies of others. Concurrently with these massive changes, adolescents are moving away from their families and toward their own peers. Peer pressures and conformities are intense and adolescents are not very tolerant of differences, shortcomings, or aberrations. Another strain is the pressures imposed by media and society. Today, children and adults are bombarded with what the “perfect guy” or “perfect girl” is supposed to look like. It is difficult for many students to grasp the idea that not everyone in the world can look as though they stepped off the set of “Baywatch.” It is especially difficult for adolescents to realize that everyone has their own size and shape and that is all right.

The effects of early and late maturation in adolescence can have self-esteem implications. For instance, if a male matures early, he probably will be better adjusted, more confident, more popular, and have an advantage in heterosexual relationships. As a group, males that mature slower exhibit behavior that is more restless, more driven to gain attention, and less confident. (Crockett & Petersen, 1987.) However, early maturing females tend to develop lower self-confidence and self-esteem. The early developing female often dates earlier and engages in more unacceptable behavior such as drinking, skipping school, and sexual activity. (Dubas & Petersen, 1993.) Early maturing females are heavier than those who develop later and thus worry about their weight more and often develop lasting eating problems. (Brooks-Gunn, 1988.)

## Definitions

LeFrancois (1996.) offers definitions for significant self-awareness terms:

- ◆ **Self-esteem** is the positive or negative way an individual views himself or herself. It also entails the desire to be held in high esteem by others.
- ◆ **Self-concept** is the concept that an individual has of himself or herself. Notions of self are often linked to an individual's beliefs about how others perceive them.
- ◆ **Self-actualization** is the process or act of becoming oneself, developing one's potential, achieving an awareness of one's identity, and fulfilling oneself.

## Striving for a Sound Foundation: Emotional Well-Being

To deal with the forms of stress and overall life changes created by the onset of adolescence, individuals must have a strong grasp of their own emotional well-being. *Emotional well-being can be defined as "one's ability to relate to other people, feel comfortable with self, cope with disappointments and stress, solve problems, celebrate successes, and make decisions."* (Page & Page, 1992.) Emotional well-being is built upon the foundation of a positive and healthy self-esteem. Self-esteem can be viewed as an evaluative component of self-image. Self-esteem is the positive or negative manner in which people judge themselves. It is also the degree to which an individual sees himself or herself as competent, belonging, and worthwhile to society.

**Of all of the judgments we pass, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves. Positive self-esteem is a cardinal requirement of a fulfilling life.** (Page & Page, 1992.)

Mentors should:

- ◆ observe their mentees' self-esteem,
- ◆ talk to them about how they feel about themselves, and
- ◆ help them find a way to see their own self-worth.

## Characteristics of Emotional Well-Being

- ◆ I feel comfortable with myself.
- ◆ I can take life's disappointments.
- ◆ I have self-respect.
- ◆ I can laugh at myself.
- ◆ I respect the differences I find in other people.
- ◆ I am able to meet the demands in my life.
- ◆ I am able to give love and to consider the feeling of others.
- ◆ I set realistic goals for myself.
- ◆ I am not overwhelmed by my emotions.
- ◆ I can accept my shortcomings.
- ◆ I feel a sense of responsibility to others.
- ◆ I am able to think for myself and make my own decisions.
- ◆ I welcome new experiences and new ideas.
- ◆ I feel good about the relationships I hold with other people.
- ◆ I put my best effort into everything I do.

## Self-Esteem: The Parts to the Whole

The components of self-esteem vary depending on the source. The following explanation is easily understood.

- ◆ **The Self-Image** - How we see ourselves.
- ◆ **The Ideal-Self** - How we want to be.
- ◆ **The Pygmalion-Self** - How we perceive that others see us. (Page & Page, 1992.)

A sense of competency, worthiness, and belonging is formed by a combination of these three elements.

## Academic Demonstratives of High and Low Self-Esteem

<b>Behaviors Commonly Seen in Students with High Self-Esteem</b>	<b>Behaviors Commonly Seen in Students with Low Self-Esteem</b>
Active, curious about surroundings; makes wide variety of contacts.	Mildly passive, tends to avoid new experiences, has limited contacts.
Makes friends easily, talks and laughs; gets in trouble now and then.	Shy, bashful, quiet, and withdrawn.
Has a sense of humor, is a good sport, can laugh at themselves.	Tends to be overly serious, hypersensitive; afraid to be laughed at.
Asks questions, defines problems, willingly does his part in planning for solutions and carrying out plans.	Avoids getting to the problem, grumbles that what is wanted is not clear, plans in terms of wishful thinking.
Willing to take risks in a classroom. Contributes to discussions and is able to stand up for what they think.	Unsure, backs down easily, frequently asks others: "Do you think this is right?" "What do you think?"
Takes modest pride in own contributions; is not overbearing, and does not cheat.	Aggressively asserts own ability and contributions, finds it difficult to share; undermines others when possible.
Works and plays well with others. Cooperates easily and naturally.	Overly competitive, finds it difficult to share. Undermines others when possible.
Usually happy, confident; does not whine for what cannot be had.	Usually gloomy and fearful, worries as a matter of course, complains a lot.

## Self-Esteem-Related Problems

The issues and problems below can be closely related to self-esteem issues. Adolescents seek a feeling of belonging, of fitting in, and of peer acceptance. Many of the problems below result from adolescents (and sometimes adults) trying to fit into a certain group by behaving in a manner that is not true to their character or upbringing.

### Eating Disorders

- ◆ Anorexia Nervosa
- ◆ Bulimia

### Sexual Activity

- ◆ Teenage Pregnancy
- ◆ Sexually Transmitted Diseases

### Substance Abuse

- ◆ Cigarettes/Nicotine
- ◆ Alcohol and Illegal Drugs

### Gangs

- ◆ Violence/Death
- ◆ Arrests/Criminal Record/Prison

## Keys to Increasing Self-Esteem

- ◆ **Listen to Self-Talk:** Do you ever listen to those negative thoughts in your head? Replace the negative thoughts with positive thoughts. An example would be, “I can do this because I’ve studied hard for this test.” or “I’m proud of myself for the way I handled that situation.”
- ◆ **Recognize Accomplishments:** Make a list of your accomplishments, no matter how small or minor they may seem to you. This will help to build a sense of self-worth.
- ◆ **Be Assertive:** Say what you mean and respect what others say. Practice clear communication.
- ◆ **Be Tolerant:** Be tolerant of others and especially of yourself. Nobody is perfect. Try not to criticize others or yourself. Do not be afraid to admit a mistake; just learn from it.
- ◆ **Build a Support System:** Spend time with people that appreciate you for who you are. Value your friends and let them value you.

## Increasing Self-Esteem

Feelings of self-worth come from both external and internal influences. External feelings of self-worth arise from such things as appearance, group acceptance, school awards, and social recognition. The external aspects of self-esteem are largely based on personal achievement, which creates conditional self-esteem. In other words, this kind of self-esteem is solely based on a person’s achievement rather than on his or her inner character qualities. Individuals who base their feelings of self-worth on external factors are more likely to have an unhealthy self-esteem. (Page & Page, 1992.)

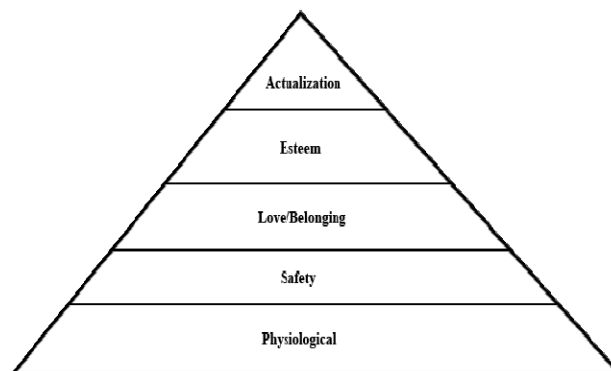
Internal feelings of self-esteem come from being a unique individual, with inner character or personality qualities such as resourcefulness, sense of humor, or sense of integrity. These are considered forms of unconditional self-esteem because they are based on the individual, not on his or her achievements. Persons who base their self-esteem on internal factors (i.e., resourcefulness, responsibility, loyalty, sense of humor, or integrity) are more likely to have a healthier self-esteem. (Page & Page, 1992.)

## Building a Strong Self-Concept

Self-concept can be defined as “the concept that an individual has of him- or herself.” (LeFrancois, 1996.) Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist, was primarily concerned with the development of a healthy personality and creation of self-concepts. Maslow took the position that a person’s competence is directly affected by the view he takes of himself/herself. Maslow felt that humans are moved along a hierarchy of needs. He breaks the needs up into two different groups, the basic needs and the metaneeds. (LeFrancois, 1996.) The basic needs include physiological (food and drink), safety (both physical and mental security), belongingness and love (affiliation, acceptance, and affection), and esteem (competence, approval, and recognition). (LeFrancois, 1996.)

The metaneeds or growth needs are the higher-level needs on Maslow’s hierarchy. The metaneeds include such human desires as knowledge, understanding, justice, truth, beauty, and order. (LeFrancois, 1996.) It is important to note that Maslow’s needs are arranged hierarchically because they provide a foundation for one another. If, for instance, the physical needs are not met, the other needs are irrelevant. In other words, if a person is hungry, he/she does not crave acceptance or knowledge.

Self-actualization, the highest level in Maslow’s hierarchy, can be defined as “the process or act of becoming oneself, developing one’s potential, achieving an awareness of one’s identity, and fulfilling oneself.” (LeFrancois, 1996.) It is important to note that true self-actualization derives from within an individual rather than from external factors such as personal achievements. Self-actualized behavior can be illustrated by an individual who reaches out toward his/her environment with confidence and assurance. The self-actualized person interacts with the world, grasps opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment, and contributes to the lives of others. It is important to assert that only a handful of adults ever achieve self-actualization (e.g., Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.). It is interesting to note that in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs the step before self-actualization is esteem.



## Activities to Help Bolster Self-Esteem and Self-Worth

Below are listed a sampling of activities to help you and your mentee get to know yourselves and each other better. One of the fundamental steps to building a strong sense of self, self-esteem, and self-concept is to know oneself. The exercise will help in that process of getting in touch with personal desires, feeling, likes, and dislikes. Have fun!

**Describe How I Look:** Have your mentee describe in writing each of his/her physical features in detail, beginning at the head and progressing to the feet, and then evaluate how they feel about each feature. After the first two steps are completed, have the mentee talk about how they feel about their entire body, and thus, their body image.

**Getting to Know Me:** Have your mentee complete the following prompts. Encourage honesty and depth.

I hate...  
I wish...  
I fear...  
I love...  
I hope...  
I'm embarrassed when...  
The thing that bothers me most...  
The thing I am most afraid of...  
I want most to be...  
Regarding myself, I feel...  
I am most cheerful when...  
My greatest interest in life is...  
I have great respect for...  
My hero is...  
When I am the center of attention, I feel...  
I feel awkward when...  
When I am angry, I...

### Strengths and Weaknesses

Discuss the wise man's wish: *"Grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."*

**Then discuss the following prompts.**

My most important strengths are...  
My most serious handicaps are...  
Things I can change for the better are...  
Things I am going to have to accept are...

### **Pygmalion-Self**

Have your mentee complete each phrase with at least two answers with honesty and depth.

My closest friend truly thinks I am...

My classmates think I am...

My parents honestly think I am...

A stranger's first impression of me might include...

### **Roles I Play**

Discuss how different people can view the same person differently. Then discuss the following prompts.

To me, I am...

To my family, I am. ...

To my peers, I am...

To a special friend, I am...

### **Self-Talk**

Discuss how words can affect our emotions and thus our self-esteem. Discuss how the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" does not exactly apply in real life. Ask the mentee to help you compile a list of self-put-downs and self-praise. And discuss their impact on self-esteem and self-worth.

## **Acknowledgement**

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We'd like to thank everyone who makes the NEISD Partners in Education Mentor Program a great success, especially our mentors.

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