

MENTOR GUIDELINES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

CONGRATULATIONS! As a mentor, you are now about to begin one of life's most rewarding and fulfilling experiences. Your commitment indicates that you believe in young people. You recognize the magnitude of the responsibility that you accepted in choosing to work with youth and agree to interact appropriately with your mentee according to the highest ethical standards at all times.

Be yourself! Please read the following guidelines carefully.

Your Role as a Mentor:

- At the initial stages of the match, your mentee may appear to be hesitant, unresponsive, and unappreciative of the mentor relationship. This guarded attitude is simply a manifestation of his/her insecurity about the relationship. The mentee's attitude will gradually take a positive turn as he/she realizes your sincerity about being a friend. *Be patient!* Don't try to speed up the process by going out of your way to accommodate your mentee, such as seeing your mentee more than the prescribed one hour per week.
- Remember that the mentor-mentee relationship has an initial phase. During this phase the mentee is more interested in getting to know how "real" you are and how much he/she can trust you. In addition to your monthly meetings in confirmation class, you may wish to establish how you can reach your mentee: by phone, email, or at a designated meeting location. Experience proves that calling or e-mailing your mentee is usually the best way to make contact. Establish a time and phone number where you can usually answer calls or make contact. Mentees need encouragement to leave messages on your voicemail to confirm meetings as well as to cancel them.
- Don't try to be teacher, parent, disciplinarian, therapist, Santa Claus or babysitter. Experience demonstrates it is counterproductive to assume roles other than a dependable, consistent friend. Present information carefully without distortion and give all points of view a fair hearing. Listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgment. Don't criticize or preach. Think of ways to problem solve together rather than lecturing or telling the mentee what to do. Never "should of" your mentee.
- Respect the uniqueness and honor the integrity of your mentee and influence him/her through constructive feedback. The mentor empowers the mentee to make right decisions without actually deciding for the mentee. Identify the mentee's interests and take them seriously. Be alert for opportunities and teaching moments. Explore positive and negative consequences.
- Set realistic expectations and goals for your mentee and make achievement for them fun. Remember there is a big difference between *encouraging* and *demanding*. Encourage your mentee to complete his/her secondary education and pursue higher learning or vocational goals; provide access to varying points of view. Assist in making the connection between his/her actions of today and the dreams and goals of tomorrow. Don't get discouraged if the mentee isn't turning his/her life around or making great improvements. Mentors have a great deal of impact; it's not always immediately evident. Look for signs such as increased school attendance, improved grades, showing up for meetings and expressing appreciation.

- As a friend you can share and advise, but know your limitations. Problems that your mentee may share with you regarding substance abuse, molestation and physical abuse are best handled by professionals. If you have any concerns, *contact Alina, Sarah Bocian or Jen Troutman immediately.*
- Be supportive of the parent, even when you may disagree. Don't take sides or make judgments concerning any family conflict or situation. Leave the parenting to the parent.

YOU ARE A:

POSITIVE ROLE MODEL
 FRIEND
 COACH
 ADVISOR
 SELF-ESTEEM BUILDER
 CAREER COUNSELOR
 ADVOCATE

- Be open and honest at all times. Do not try to hide things from the youth; they will know you're hiding something and trust you less.
- Learn to communicate effectively.
- Be an active listener.
- Have a sense of humor. Laugh.
- Be strong and courageous.
- Be open-minded.
- Have the ability to laugh at yourself.
- Be daring; and ask the youth you're mentoring to be daring in return.
- DO NOT care what other people think of you. As soon as you care what others' think of you; you've lost your edge.
- Be active. Sometimes the best way to get a youth involved and communicating is to simply distract them with some sort of activity.
- Always remember that youth are NOT children anymore. They have their own opinions, judgments and can often surprise you with their intelligence. Treat them as such.
- Always be willing to try new things. You never know what the youth you're mentoring could potentially teach you!
- Always maintain a positive attitude. Regardless of the mood of the youth you're mentoring; it will eventually rub off on him/her if you maintain a great attitude.

Although there will be many times where you won't be sure what to do; and you'll have to judge the situation for yourself, the above guidelines should be helpful.

Creating a positive, creative environment for youth is essential to mentoring them. By following the above guidelines and throwing in your own common sense and judgment you will be able to create that environment for them. Being a mentor for youth will be a learning process; but one that is well worth it!