Mentors: Measuring Success

- **Your success is measured by many milestones.**

  Your Mentee may realize for the first time that he/she……

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<th>Good indications:</th>
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<td>✓ Setting goals</td>
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<td>✓ Developing new skills</td>
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<td>✓ Aware of time management</td>
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<td>✓ Increased cooperation with parents, teachers, and peers</td>
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<td>✓ Behavioral changes</td>
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<td>✓ Increase in school attendance</td>
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<td>✓ Improved grades</td>
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<td>✓ Respect for teachers</td>
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<td>✓ A willingness to help others</td>
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<td>✓ Ability to see the future</td>
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<td>✓ Ability to plan for college</td>
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- **Your Mentee will reward you through notes, e-mails or simply conversation.** He/she may tell you how “great” you are, how you might have helped him/her with a specific problem, and so much more. It may be big or small. Whatever the compliment, know that what you are doing has had a significant impact on the future of this child. Do not however feel as if you have failed if these rewards are not apparent for some time.

- **You will work with your Mentee to establish mutual respect, friendship, motivation, and measurable goals.**

*Your commitment and dedication to your Mentee may be the most profound opportunity that you experience.* The quality of the relationship you build directly influences the life and future of the child. Please exert every effort to maintain professional standards, improve your mentor skills, and exercise good judgment when engaged in any activity involving your Mentee.
Mentoring is not a solution or remedy for all the problems/decisions facing your Mentee and his/her family. The essence of mentoring is the sustained human relationship: a one-on-one relationship that shows a child that he/she is valued as a person and is important to society.

YOU ARE A:
POSITIVE ROLE MODEL
FRIEND
COACH
TEACHER
ADVISOR
SELF-ESTEEM BUILDER
CAREER COUNSELOR
ADVOCATE
SPIRITUAL LEADER

QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL MENTORING

• Personal commitment to be involved with another person for an extended time—one year at minimum. Mentors have a genuine desire to be part of other people’s lives, to help them with tough decisions, and to see them become the best they can be. Mentors have to be invested in the mentoring relationship over the long haul to be there long enough to make a difference. It takes years to get a Mentee from Point A to Point B.

• Respect for individuals and for their abilities and their right to make their own choices in life. Mentors should not approach the Mentee with the attitude that their own ways are better or that participants need to be rescued. Mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship win the trust of their Mentees and the privilege of being advisors to them.

• Ability to listen and to accept different points of view. Most people can find someone who will give advice or express opinions. It’s much harder to find someone who will suspend his or her own judgment and really listen. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions, and giving mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with a minimum of interference. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.

• Ability to empathize with another person’s struggles. Effective Mentors can feel with people without feeling pity for them. Even without having had the same life experiences, you can empathize with your Mentee’s feelings and personal problems.

• Ability to see solutions and opportunities as well as barriers. Effective Mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by their Mentees with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of a seeming jumble of issues and point out sensible alternatives.
• **Flexibility and openness.** Effective mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. You must be willing to take time to get to know your Mentee, to learn new things that are important to your Mentee (music, style, philosophies, etc.), and even to be changed by your relationship.

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?**

Many people feel that being a mentor requires special skills, but Mentors are simply people who have the qualities of good role models.

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<tr>
<th>Mentors listen.</th>
<th>They maintain eye contact and give Mentees their full attention.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mentors guide.</td>
<td>Mentors are there to help their Mentees find life direction, never to punish them.</td>
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<td>Mentors are practical.</td>
<td>They give insights about keeping on task and setting goals and priorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentors educate.</td>
<td>Mentors educate about life and their own careers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentors provide insight.</td>
<td>Mentors use their personal experience to help their Mentees avoid mistakes and learn from good decisions.</td>
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<td>Mentors are accessible.</td>
<td>Mentors are available as a resource and a sounding board.</td>
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<td>Mentors criticize constructively.</td>
<td>When necessary, Mentors point out areas that need improvement, always focusing on the Mentee’s behavior, never his/her character.</td>
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<td>Mentors are supportive.</td>
<td>No matter how painful the Mentee’s experience, Mentors continue to encourage them to learn and improve.</td>
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<td>Mentors are specific.</td>
<td>Mentors give specific advice on what was done well or could be corrected, what was achieved and the benefits of various actions.</td>
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<td>Mentors care.</td>
<td>Mentors care about their Mentees’ progress in school and career planning, as well as their personal development.</td>
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<td>Mentors succeed.</td>
<td>Mentors not only are successful themselves, but they also foster success in others.</td>
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<td>Mentors are admirable.</td>
<td>Mentors are usually well respected in their organizations and in the community.</td>
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TIPS FOR BUILDING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

1. **Be there.**
   When you show up for every meeting with your Mentee and strive to make things work out, you send your Mentee a strong message that you care and that he/she is worth caring about.

2. **Be a friend, not an all-knowing authority.**
   Be the adult in your Mentee’s life who is just there without having to fix him or her. Hanging out and talking is surprisingly helpful to a young person’s healthy development. Young people learn more conversing with adults than they do just listening to them. In the words of a Mentee:
   
   “My parents lecture me all the time. Why would I want my Mentor to be the same way? I have the best Mentor in the program, but sometimes he tries too hard to be a Mentor instead of just being himself. What I mean is that he thinks he always has to share some wisdom or advice, when sometimes I would rather just kick it and joke around.”

   Of course, when your Mentee comes to you for help or advice, it is appropriate to help them develop solutions. It’s also okay to check in with them if you suspect that they are struggling with something. **They just don’t want non-stop advice.** So, take the pressure off of yourself and just enjoy your Mentee’s company.

3. **Be a role model.**
   The best that you can do is to lead by example. By becoming a Mentor, you’ve already modeled the most important thing a human being can do: caring about another. Here are some other ways you can be a positive role model for your Mentee:
   - Keep your word: Call when you say you will. Do what you say you will. Be there when you say you will;
   - Return phone calls and e-mails promptly;
   - Have a positive outlook;
   - If MATCH ever has a group session, participate fully;
   - If you enter a competitive activity with your Mentee, keep it in perspective and by all means do not cheat (or even fudge a little) to help your Mentee win, get a better place in line at an event, etc.; and
   - Let your Mentee see you going out of your way to help others.

4. **Help your Mentee have a say in your activities.**
   Some Mentees will have a lot of suggestions about what you can do together, but most will need a little guidance on your part. If your Mentee doesn’t have any preferences, start by giving them a range of choices. “Here are some things we can do. Which sound good to you?” You may also refer to the given list of activity ideas.
5. **Be ready to help out.**
When your Mentee lets you know that he or she is struggling with a problem, you can help out by following these tips:

- Be there for your Mentee and make it clear that you want to help;
- Be a friend, not an all-knowing authority: Don’t fix a problem. Ask questions and help your Mentee figure out how to come up with answers;
- Model ways to solve problems. You can also be a role model by describing how you overcame a similar problem in your life. Metaphor is a great teacher;
- Give your Mentee a say: Once he/she comes up with a solution, don’t try to come up with a better one, but help explore all the possibilities and offer support;
- Use the opportunity to point out how similar situations were handled in the Bible, or what Jesus might have said about it. Present the idea in a relaxed manner, rather than in a preaching style. Your Mentee may not respond well to a “sermon”;
- Be ready to help out by checking back and seeing how things worked out.

6. **Be ready to guide them spiritually.**
Both the Mentee and their parents know that you are mentoring through a faith-based program. This does not mean that your relationship should only revolve around spiritual ideas. Let any topics pertaining to the Bible or Bible study come up naturally, and when your Mentee is ready. If you suggest it and they shoot you down, don’t be discouraged. Building a great relationship with trust as a foundation will lead to later opportunities for spiritual depth.

**STAGES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP**

As with any relationship in life, the mentoring relationship will go through many different stages and phases. No relationship is the same, but most pass through similar steps. This section is to help you have an idea of what you and your Mentor might face along the way.

**STAGE 1: DEVELOPING RAPPORT AND BUILDING TRUST**

The “getting to know you” phase is the most critical stage of the relationship. Things to expect and work on during Stage 1 include:

- **Predictability and consistency**
  During the first stage of the relationship, it is critical to be both predictable and consistent. If you schedule an appointment to meet your Mentee at a certain time, it’s important to keep it. It is understandable that at times things come up and appointments cannot be kept. However, in order to speed up the trust-building process, consistency is necessary, even if the young person is not as consistent as you are.
• **Testing**
  Young people generally do not trust adults. As a result, they use testing as a coping or defense mechanism to determine whether they can trust you. They will test to see if you really care about them. A Mentee might test the Mentor by not showing up for a scheduled meeting to see how the Mentor will react.

• **Establish confidentiality**
  During the first stage of the relationship, it’s important to establish confidentiality with your Mentee. This helps develop trust. The Mentor should let the Mentee know that whatever he or she wants to share with the Mentor will remain confidential, as long as (and it’s important to stress this point) what the young person tells the Mentor is not going to harm the young person or someone else. It’s helpful to stress this up front, as we have discussed repeatedly, within the first few meetings with the Mentee. That way, later down the road, if a Mentor needs to break the confidence because the information the Mentee shared was going to harm him/her or someone else, the young person will not feel betrayed.

• **Goal setting (transitions into Stage 2)**
  It’s helpful during Stage 1 to take the time to set at least one achievable goal together for the relationship. What do the two of you want to get out of this relationship? It’s also good to help your Mentee set personal goals. Young people often do not learn how to set goals, and this will provide them with the opportunity to set goals and work toward achieving them.

**STAGE 2: THE MIDDLE—REACHING GOALS**

Once trust has been established, the relationship moves into Stage 2. During this stage, the Mentor and Mentee can begin to start working toward the goals they set during the first stage of the relationship. Things to expect during Stage 2 include:

• **Closeness**
  Generally, during the second stage the Mentor and Mentee can sense a genuine closeness in the relationship.

• **Affirming the uniqueness of the relationship**
  Once the relationship has reached this stage, it’s helpful to do something special or different from what the Mentor and Mentee did during the first stage, which helps affirm the uniqueness of the relationship. For example, go to a movie, sporting event, special restaurant, etc.

• **The relationship may be rocky or smooth**
  All relationships have their ups and downs. Once the relationship has reached the second stage, there will still be some rough periods. Mentors should be prepared and not assume that something is wrong with the relationship if this happens. The lives of teens and young people can be rather tumultuous.
- **Rely on support from the Mentor Director**
  Never be afraid to ask questions or voice concerns. We may be able to guide you in a helpful direction based on past experience with young people in our ministry. We will also be offering continued training throughout your mentoring relationship.

**STAGE 3: CLOSURE**

If the rough period continues or if a Mentor feels that the pair has not reached the second stage, he/she shouldn’t hesitate to seek support from the Mentor Director. Sometimes two people, no matter how they look on paper, just don’t “click”. Some Mentor/Mentee pairs don’t need to worry about this stage until farther down the road. However, at some point all relationships will come to an end—whether it's because the program is over, the Mentor is moving, or for some other reason. When this happens, it’s critical that the closure stage not be overlooked. Many young people today have already had adults come and go in their lives and are rarely provided the opportunity to say a proper goodbye.

- **Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial and resentment**
  In order to help Mentees express emotions about the relationship ending, mentors should model appropriate behavior. The Mentor should first express his/her feelings and emotions about the end of the relationship and then let the Mentee do the same.

- **Provide opportunities for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful and affirming way**
  Mentors shouldn’t wait for the very last meeting with their mentees to say goodbye. The mentor should slowly bring it up as soon as he or she becomes aware that the relationship will be coming to a close.

- **Address appropriate situations for staying in touch**
  Mentors should check with the Mentoring Director to find out the policy for staying in touch with their Mentees once their mentoring relationship has come to an end. The steps to follow pertaining to further communication will depend greatly on the specific situation.