



Healthy Boundaries

When you were first matched with your mentee hopefully you heard us talk a lot about the importance of healthy boundaries, and what they look like in a mentoring relationship. We feel boundaries can be an ongoing challenge for many of us which is why we feel the need to talk about them some more. If you will remember back to our Mentoring 101 training, we talk a lot about what Mentors are and what Mentors aren't in an effort to clarify your role.

A Mentor is:

A role model
A resource
A confidant
An encourager
An initiator

A Mentor isn't:

A parent substitute
A Santa Claus
A therapist or life coach
A lawyer, judge or jury
An authoritarian

We want our youth to learn self-sufficiency skills, and in order for that to happen, they need to be taught *how* to do things, not to have things done for them. The ultimate goal for the mentoring relationship is for our youth to have a caring adult role-model in their life, for our youth to feel valued and to gain a new perspective on life.

Personal Space-Keep in mind that some of our youth have a history of sexual or physical abuse so please respect their personal space and ask their permission before hugging them, putting your arm around them. Make sure you are also comfortable with their proximity and touch. Some youth who have been sexually abused do not understand appropriate personal space and touch. Gently remind them of what is appropriate without making them feel they are doing something wrong.

Attitudes and Beliefs-Youth are always watching you so model positive behavior. Also, respect their personal and family values. You may disagree with some values, but that doesn't stop you from respecting them as a person.

Emotional Involvement-Staying in your role is VERY important and allows you to keep perspective a bit easier. You don't need to solve all their problems, just be there to listen and advise them to reach out to the appropriate person, i.e. parent, school counselor, therapist, etc. Also, they will test you by saying or doing something rude. Don't take it personally; brush it off and model healthy communication by expressing how it made you feel.

Financial Expectations-Your gift truly is your time! PLEASE do not feel that you have to do something spectacular each time you get together. Simple errands and tasks are valuable and can still be a lot of fun.

Confidentiality-Keep information between the two of you, EXCEPT when youth's health or safety is threatened. (Youth hurting self, others, or someone is hurting the youth)

Interactions with the Family- It is important to have a good relationship with the family, but be careful. Too much buddy-buddy or behind the scenes time with family can undermine your relationship with the youth, especially if there is family tension. Be aware of youth vs. family stories and avoid picking sides.

What Matters Most...

1. Don't perpetuate bad cycles/patterns--no broken promises, abuse, rejecting, insulting. Call when you say you'll call. Show up when you say you'll show up. Be consistent!
2. Truly listen to your youth and be yourself. Teens can sniff out a fake like no other and that will lead to a lack of trust.
3. We are all human and we all make poor choices at times. Help youth to learn that tomorrow is a new day and their choices do not have to define them.
4. Building a new relationship can take time, especially with youth who have had multiple adults wrong them.

Be patient and commit to the long haul!!

Thank you for all that you do to better the lives of youth! We appreciate you!

Note from Match Coordinators: The above topics are simply suggestions. We would love to hear about any fun and/or meaningful experiences you have with your youth to pass along to other mentors. As always, we are here to support you as you build your mentoring relationship. Please do not hesitate to contact us at 303.756.9285 if you have specific questions or just need additional ideas along the way.