

# Mentor Handbook



A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE



**BESTFRIENDS**  
MENTORING PROGRAM

SINCE 1995

**135 W. Villard St., Dickinson, ND 58601**  
**701-483-8615**

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## **Mentor Checklist**

Tip: Save this number into your cellphone or keep them handy in case of an absence or emergency.

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

### **Personal Responsibilities (Community-based Mentors)**

- Call parent/guardian in the event of an absence
- Confidentiality between volunteer and child (Except in case of danger)
- Contact staff if problems arise at 701-483-8615

### **Personal Responsibilities (School-based Mentors)**

- Checking in and out in school office
- Name Tag/Visitor Badge
- Call school secretary in the event of an absence
- Lunches free- Identify that you are with Best Friends Program
- Confidentiality between volunteer and student (Except in case of danger)
- Contact person if problems arise: 701-483-8615

### **Tour of School (Given by Junior Friend)**

- Introduction to the school support system (secretary, teacher, principal, etc.)
- Lunch Room
- Classroom
- Computer Lab
- Playground
- Library

### **Mentor Activity Information**

- List of activities
- Scheduled meeting times: \_\_\_\_\_
- Where I meet my Mentee: \_\_\_\_\_
- Length of commitment (at least 9 months)

**\*School information:** [www.dickinson.k12.nd.us](http://www.dickinson.k12.nd.us) & [www.dickinsoncatholicschools.com](http://www.dickinsoncatholicschools.com)

**\* Community events and activities:** [www.bestfriendsnd.org](http://www.bestfriendsnd.org)

[www.dickinsonparks.org](http://www.dickinsonparks.org) [www.dickinsonchamber.org](http://www.dickinsonchamber.org) [www.dickinsonstate.edu](http://www.dickinsonstate.edu)





## Welcome

Dear Mentor,

Welcome to the Best Friends Mentoring Program! We believe that outstanding people are the key to helping youth achieve their full potential. Your supportive relationship with our youth is based on mutual interest and compatible personalities, assessed through personal interviews with our staff, and the child and his or her parent(s). To ensure your success, we have prepared this handbook; we urge you to familiarize yourself with it. If you have any questions or comments at any time, we encourage you to contact either the Program Coordinator or the Executive Director.

Thank you for taking this first step toward making a difference in children's lives!

Sincerely,

Angie Rabbitt  
Executive Director

## **Who is Involved in the Relationship?**

- 1. Child:** The children in the Best Friends Mentoring Program have been identified as children who would benefit from the influence of a positive adult role model in their lives. Through shared experiences such as playing sports, taking a walk, doing volunteer work, or going to a movie, the child's self-concept and feelings of worth improve from the simple assurance that someone cares.
- 2. Parents:** The child's parent(s) has given permission for the child to participate in the Best Friends Mentoring Program. The parent's job is to support the match and to facilitate your meetings with the child. Parents are always the persons who have the final say regarding their children? Remember that you are the child's friend and not a substitute parent.
- 3. Mentor:** Volunteering as a mentor can be a very rewarding experience. You have the satisfaction of helping a child become more self-confident while having fun yourself. You are a friend and a support to the child that you are mentoring.
- 4. School:** The school is very supportive of our program. They feel that this program is essential to many of the children they work with. Children are often referred by school personnel because they need a role model, stabilizing influence, and a friend in their life.
- 5. Program Staff:** Program staff is here to be a support to you and the child you are mentoring. Please call us at **(701) 483-8615** with any questions or comments.

## **About Mentors**

Mentoring gives children matched with adult volunteers the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of positive, developmental experiences. While the focus is on one-to-one mentoring, there are also opportunities for small and large group activities that include reading, academic tutoring, social activities, service projects, job skills, and resume building. Internships may also be available to mentors. A growing body of science-based research shows that mentoring can create positive changes in youth concerning decreased negative behaviors and drug and alcohol use. This program provides a safe, structured framework for mentoring activities.

**Having a mentor gives kids the resiliency they need to be successful today and gives them the confidence to:**

- Pursue healthy behaviors and habits.
- Reach out to others.
- Become positive role models for each other.
- Succeed with the help of caring adults in their lives.

**Values children would most like to see in adult volunteers:**

- Ability to listen.
- Honesty.
- Trustworthiness.

## **Who are our Mentors?**

- Mentors are positive persons who are nonjudgmental listeners and friends.
- A mentor's role is simply to be a friendly and encouraging presence to a youth.
- Mentors are **not** teacher's helpers, counselors, therapists, guardians or substitute parents.



**What you can accomplish.**

As a mentor you can:

- Encourage and reinforce positive behavior, attitudes, and ambitions.
- Enhance children's self-confidence and feelings of self-worth.
- Broaden children's knowledge of future education, lifestyle, and career options.
- Help children set and achieve educational and personal goals.
- Help children develop problem-solving skills.
- Share a lifetime of experience.
- Be what a young person needs most: someone to listen to.

**Caring is the main requirement.**

The most important requirement for being a mentor is a sincere desire to be a caring adult role model for a young person. The people who make a difference in our lives are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most rewards. They are the ones who care. Think back to a caring adult who shaped your life. Who was that role model?

**A successful mentor:**

- Gives time and support unselfishly.
- Share a skill or experience.
- Is willing to share knowledge.
- Fulfills time commitments.
- Does not set out to change a child, but to be a friend.

**Three things to consider before meeting with your Mentee.**

1. Talk to friends and acquaintances with children the same age as your Mentee. Parents are rich sources of information on what to expect.
2. Feeling anxious is normal. Remember that your Mentee is probably just as nervous as you are.
3. Don't expect immediate results. Building a friendship takes time.
4. Read "Stages of Development" (p. 24) to learn about the typical characteristics of your Mentee.

**Help others without any reason and give without the expectation of receiving anything in return. -Roy T. Bennett, *The Light in the Heart***

**Guidelines for Mentors****Gifts**

Gift giving is not expected or encouraged. Remember your most valuable gifts are your time and interest.

**Showing affection**

The best way to show a child you care is a warm smile. Physical contact should be limited to a pat on the back or shoulder. If your Mentee hugs you, be sure to respond with a side-by-side hug and not a front hug. Following these guidelines allows you to let your Mentee know you care and protects both of you.

**Mandatory confidentiality**

Your Mentee may share private information. This should not be discussed with anyone else. If your Mentee reaches out to you with problems that require outside help, contact the program staff for assistance and guidance. If your Mentee tells something that causes you to suspect that the child is being mistreated or is endangering self or others, you are required to report this information to the program staff as soon as possible.

**Fraternization**

This agency prohibits volunteers from fraternizing with any of the people served by our programs. Fraternizing is defined as pursuing a close friendship or intimate relationship with a current client. We also prohibit the transfer of money or goods between volunteers and persons currently or formerly served. Volunteers are further required to exercise good judgment in establishing nonprofessional, non-work-related relationships with persons formerly served by our programs. In general, we discourage such relationships at any time. If you have a concern about a potential personal relationship with a former client, please discuss it in confidence with our executive director or any member of the board of directors.

**Reliability**

Your Mentee is depending upon you. If you must be absent, call the parent/guardian or school and tell them why you cannot come that day as well as ask that your student and teacher be told why you cannot come that day. Arrange a make-up day, if possible.

**Social Media**

Under absolutely no circumstances should you post the name, location, or photo of a mentee to any social media. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you "remove/delete" it later or attempt to make it anonymous. BFMP receives permission and works hard to keep mentee anonymity.

**Relax and Have Fun.**

Have fun. If you aren't enjoying your match, please call the program staff.

**Support is available.**

Program staff is here to support you. Please call us at 701-483-8615 if you need assistance or have questions. We are here to help you have a successful match.





**Community-Based Program activities take place on evenings, weekends, and holidays, during non-school hours.**

You will arrange to meet with your Mentee during mutually-agreed-upon days and times. Remember to plan with the parent(s)/guardians for all meetings and activities.

**Planning ahead**

It is always a good idea to confirm your meeting with the family a day in advance to make sure the family remembers and the child will be ready at the agreed-upon time.

**School-Based Program activities take place on school grounds, during school hours.**

You will meet with your student before, during, or after school.

Sign-in sheets are located in the school office. Be sure to wear your Visitor Badge at every visit. Special parental permission must be given for activities outside of school. Contact the Program Coordinator if you want to meet with your mentee outside of school hours.

**Student absences.**

If the student that you meet with is frequently absent, it's a good idea to phone ahead to make sure your student is in attendance on the day of your visit. Don't forget to check the school calendar online for early dismissal days or special school holidays.

**School Rules/Policies.**

All school rules must be followed during your visit to the school. If you are unsure, ask the school staff.

***What to Expect from your Mentoring Experience***

Serving as a Mentor is sometimes as tough as it is rewarding. The children in our program come from a variety of backgrounds and social situations. Despite the absence of one parent, the family unit may be quite strong. On the other hand, a degree of dissension, conflict, or tension may be present in the child's home. All of these factors, coupled with the experience or imagined experience of rejection by one parent, will have an impact on your Mentee.

Your Mentee may be moody and unpredictable at times. You may experience frustration in attempting to communicate with him/her. They may not seem to care whether you are around or not. But they need you and need you badly. The results of your good work cannot be measured here and now. The Mentee will reflect in years to come as he or she begins to make decisions and explore life; you helped shape these decisions and yet you may never know it.

When these frustrations occur, please call the program staff. We are here to help with those tough times in your assignment. We won't tell you it's going to be easy, but with staff support and your own dedication, what a difference you will make in the life of a child!



### **Expectations for Community-based mentors**

**The Program Staff will expect from you:**

1. That you cooperate with the child, program staff, and parent/guardian.
2. That **you** inform staff of any changes in address or phone number ASAP.
3. That **you** keep the staff informed of any problems in the relationship with which you feel you need advice or assistance.
4. That **you** notify the program office when you intend to end the relationship.

**As a mentor, you have the right to expect the following from the Program Staff:**

1. Information about the program and activities.
2. Assistance with any problems you encounter with your match or the family.
3. Encouragement and ongoing support.
4. An opportunity to express your ideas for program improvement or group activities.
5. Regular and relevant training opportunities.

### **Expectations for School-based mentors**

**As a mentor, you have the right to expect the following from the school:**

1. That the school will provide free weekly lunches to the mentor.
2. That the teacher will assist the child in understanding and accepting that the volunteer may be absent for short periods (vacations, etc.).
3. That the mentor will not be used as a reward or punishment for the child.
4. The program's success depends on cooperation with you, the school personnel, and the BFMP staff.
5. That the school will not use the mentor as a playground supervisor for other children.

**The following will be expected of you by the school:**

1. That you sign in and out at the school office and wear your visitor's badge at each visit.
2. That you visit the child once a week on a consistent day and time.
3. That the school is notified in advance when you are going to be absent or need to change days.
4. That if you plan to be gone for any period of time, you will let the child and teacher know.
5. That you are committed to the program for at least nine months.
6. That you let the child and teacher know and provide a reason if you must end your relationship (change of jobs or schools, etc.).

**The Program Staff will expect from you:**

1. That you cooperate with the child, program staff, and school staff (counselor, teacher, principal).
2. That you inform staff of any changes in address or phone number.
3. That you keep the staff informed of any problems in the relationship with which you feel you need advice or assistance.
4. That you notify the program office when you intend to end the relationship.

**As a Volunteer, you have the right to expect the following from the Program Staff:**

1. Information about the program and activities.
2. Assistance with any problems you encounter with your match or the school.
3. Encouragement and ongoing support.
4. An opportunity to express your ideas for program improvement or group activities.
5. Regular and relevant training opportunities.



**PLEASE REMEMBER:**

1. To ask questions. If you need help, ASK!
2. Contact us immediately if you are unable to keep your commitment. We depend on you.
3. To not provide any direct financial help to a child. Don't let him/her take unfair advantage of you.
4. To use your imagination and initiative freely with the approval of the parent/guardian in choosing appropriate activities.
5. To discuss frankly any concerns or special problems with the staff.
6. Do not become discouraged. Remember, even the small gains are important.
7. To help the child to exercise and learn independence. He/she has a right and a need to make decisions.
8. To not let the child manipulate you into a position that you are uncomfortable with.
9. To keep track of all hours that you spend volunteering for our program, and to submit the list quarterly.
10. To promptly return telephone calls from the staff.

**A Mentor is not:**

- A Parental figure.
- A disciplinarian.
- A substitute probation officer, psychiatrist, counselor, or social worker.
- A moralizer or lecturer.

**A Mentor is:**

- Someone who can dedicate a part of his/her life to accepting, understanding, and loving a needy child.
- A role model, companion, teacher, listener, and FRIEND.

### **Starting the Friendship**

**As you start your relationship, keep these tips in mind:**

- **Names are important.** Ask your Mentee how to say and spell his/her name correctly. Make sure your Mentee knows what you would like to be called.
- **Show you are interested.** Listen carefully to what the Mentee has to say and remember the details. Ask open-ended questions about favorite activities, family members, good friends, and personal hopes and dreams. Try to summarize what the child tells you to make sure that you understand it and to demonstrate that you are listening. By your words and actions, let your Mentee know that you care.
- **Define your relationship together.** Set the boundaries for the friendship. Discuss acceptable behaviors.
- **Be consistent.** Young people like structure. It gives them security. Set up a regular schedule for your weekly visits and show up on time.
- **Be tolerant of mistakes.** Mentees will make mistakes. You will, too. That means you are both trying; that you are acquiring new information. Let your Mentee know that making mistakes is a part of learning. A healthy attitude toward failure is a great tool for success.
- **Build the child's self-confidence.** Praise your Mentee honestly and frequently. Remember that attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance. Accentuate the positive.
- **Minimize the negative.** Make sure that your praise is sincere. Find something real to compliment, especially when Mentees are having difficulties.
- **Let the Mentee make choices.** It is a great way to build decision-making skills. Providing options will help them build these skills. For example: Ask them "Do you

want to go for a walk or shoot some baskets?”

- **Plan ahead.** Young children, especially, have very short attention spans. Be sure to plan a change of activity every few minutes—a short break, stretch, or a change in conversation or activity.
- **Listen.** Being a good listener is a key ingredient to your success as a mentor.
- **Be patient.** The change will come slowly. Your patience may be tested. Some volunteers report that it has taken several months before their Mentees began to trust them. Mentees often don’t express their appreciation. If you’re feeling uncertain about whether you are making a difference, talk to the program staff.

#### **At your first meeting:**

- **Be friendly and let the Mentee warm up to you gradually.** They might be shy or nervous at the first meeting.
- **Share information.** Discuss with your mentee what kinds of things you will be doing together and the schedule (day and time) that you plan to visit each week.
- **Build trust.** Your first step is to build trust between you and the child. With trust comes the foundation of friendship.
- **Get Acquainted.** Ask questions to help you get acquainted and find some common ground (even though you may come from very different backgrounds).

#### **Sample questions to spark conversation:**

- Do you have a nickname?
- When is your birthday?
- What is your favorite song?
- What is your favorite color?
- Do you have siblings? How many? What are their names?
- What is your favorite TV show or favorite movie?
- Who is your favorite celebrity?
- What is your favorite book or magazine?
- If a genie granted you one wish, what would it be?
- What is your favorite food?
- What was your favorite trip or vacation?
- What places would you like to visit and why?
- Do you have any pets? Describe them.
- Are you right- or left-handed?
- What is your favorite subject in school? Why?
- What subject do you dislike the most? Why?
- What is your favorite sport?





- Who is your favorite athlete?
- If you could be any kind of animal, what would you be and why?
- What type of music do you like? Who is your favorite artist?
- What are some of your hobbies?

## **As the Friendship Grows**

### **Be honest**

If you don't know the answer to your Mentee's question, admit it. This is the opportunity for you and your mentee to work together to find the answer. Honesty sets a good example. Always feel free to ask for help if you need it.

### **Encourage Mentees to do their own thinking**

Give them plenty of time to answer. Don't be afraid of silence.

### **Solicit suggestions and ideas from your Mentee**

Encourage and accept feedback. Ask your Mentee what he likes about the time you spend together or what other activities he might prefer.

### **Try not to preach or lecture**

Your Mentee is used to being directed by adults and will be sensitive to words like *must*, *should*, and *ought*. Mentors are there to listen. When giving feedback, use phrases like "have you thought about...?" or "one option might be..."

### **The swarming effect**

Other young people may want to spend time with you and your Mentee. Make sure you are comfortable together before including others in your activities. If you feel including additional children hampers your friendship, don't take additional children along or only do it occasionally.

### **Expect to be tested**

It's natural for young people to test boundaries. They may be suspicious that adults will not keep their promises. They may also act in offensive ways just to see how committed you are to them. Don't take it personally. Focus on being a positive role model.

### **Show appreciation**

If your Mentee shows appreciation for your interest and friendship in any way, tell her how much this means to you. Explain that adults, as well as children, need encouragement, and a word of appreciation means a lot. Thank the child for his or her time, interest, and friendship.

## **Similarities and Differences**

### **Culture is more than race or ethnicity**

Culture encompasses values, lifestyle, and social norms, including traditions, communication styles, mannerisms, dress, family structure, orientation to time, and response to authority. These differences may be associated with age, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. Good mentoring relationships find similarities and appreciate differences.

### **Find common ground**

You may come from a different culture or background than your Mentee. But perhaps you both enjoy sports or computers or like spicy foods or the color orange. Discovering common interests and shared preferences can help bridge differences.



### **To bridge differences:**

- Talk about background and ancestry.
- Draw pictures of things in your lives that are important to you.
- Talk about something you may have brought with you that represents an aspect of your lifestyle.
- Discuss how what you value can influence the way people live and the decisions they make.
- Share traditions.
- Find out what your Mentee values and share your values as an adult.

### **Diversity can be reflected in:**

- Accent.
- Behavior and attitude.
- Physical appearances.
- Abilities.
- Customs observed.

### **Suggestions for dealing with diversity.**

- Remember that you are the adult— the experienced one. It is your responsibility to take the initiative and look for ways to find common ground.
- Remember to be yourself. Don't try to relate to your Mentee by using his/her slang.
- Learn about your Mentee's culture, lifestyle, or age group.
- By taking the lead in caring about your Mentee, in a non-judgmental way, you can make big strides in bridging your differences.
- Remember that building a friendship will take some time. Your relationship with your Mentee may go through many different stages as you learn and grow together.
- Help a Mentee understand that what people value can influence important decisions about education, work, friends, sexual relationships, and parenting.

## **Tips for Helping with Schoolwork**

As a mentor, you may be asked to help a child you are mentoring with schoolwork. The classroom teacher is the best source of information on how you can help your mentee. Here are some tips that may help:

- **Sit side by side.**
  - Sit next to your Mentee facing the same direction.
- **Know the material.**
  - Familiarize yourself with the lesson as quickly as possible.
- **Be articulate.**
  - Speak slowly and clearly.
- **Encourage responsibility.**
  - Once the child understands what to do, encourage the child to work independently with your support.
- **Be patient.**
  - Let your Mentee have time to think and organize thoughts. Children take great pride in being able to figure out the answer or a problem on their own.
- **Use positive praise.**
  - After every right answer, congratulate your Mentee.
  - Try to vary the phrases you use to praise.
- **Allow children to master a task.**
  - Mentees require a great deal of drill and practice with any new task, and they have considerable tolerance for practice exercises if they are having success. A child should be allowed to master one concept completely and then be allowed to practice it numerous times before another is introduced.
- **Review important facts.**
  - Mentees may know something one day and then forget it another.
- **Be flexible with time.**
  - Children have their particular attention spans beyond which learning is not effective. Be flexible with your time frame.
- **Have fun.**
  - Children learn best when they are enjoying what they are learning.



## **Difficult Situations/Challenges**

### **Specific situations you may encounter.**

- Children in the family or classmates who don't have a mentor want to spend time with you and your mentee.
- Your mentee tests boundaries to see if you are committed to him/her.
- You don't agree with the parent's approach to disciplining the child.
- Your Mentee doesn't seem to care if you show up or not.
- Your Mentee does not have necessities such as school supplies or even a winter coat.
- Your Mentee is disruptive or behaves in a way that is unacceptable to you.
- Your Mentee shares information with you that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- You suspect that your mentee is being bullied or is bullying other children.

### **What to say when your Mentee asks about drugs, alcohol, or sex.**

- Be honest. If you don't know, say so.
- Avoid providing more information than is sought by the Mentee.
- Ask clarifying questions to understand why and what the child is asking.
- Discuss aspects such as the dangers of peer pressure, why it is dangerous, and why you want the child to avoid making a mistake.
- Ask the program staff for guidance or suggestions for specific situations.

### **Techniques for handling difficult situations.**

- Face the problem. Ignoring it won't make it go away.
- Think before you speak. Change places – how would you want someone to deal with a sensitive issue or situation?
- Separate the behavior from the person.
- Stay serious but supportive.
- Respect privacy. Discuss sensitive issues in a private place.
- Relate something personal and relevant from your past. Share a similar incident that occurred in your youth and describe how you handled it.
- Be positive.
- Reinforce positive behavior.
- Emphasize that the issue was about behavior, not personality.
- Review stages of development (p. 23) to see if the behavior is age-appropriate.
- Your Mentee's behavior may be age-appropriate.
- Seek advice from the program coordinator.
- Try to let your Mentee solve the problem.
- As a friend, listen, listen, listen.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect to the program staff. If your Mentee tells you something that causes you to suspect that he/or she is being mistreated or maybe endangering himself/ herself or others, you are required to report this information to the program staff.

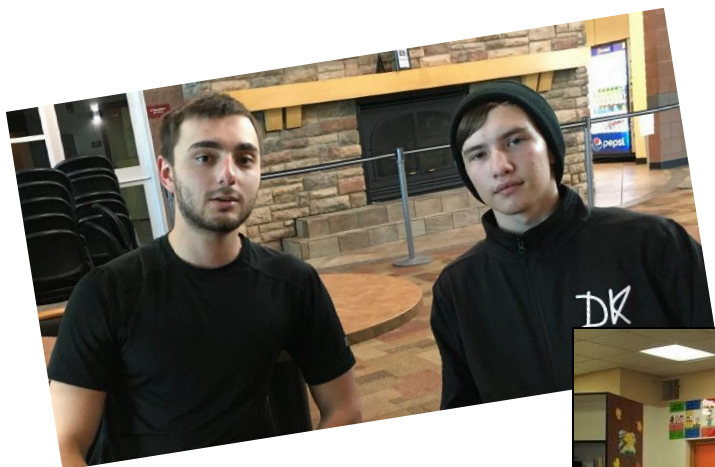
**Potential Challenges for the Senior Friend**

1. Stagnation: repetition of activities and lack of enthusiasm.
2. Need for immediate self-gratification.
3. Lack of decisiveness in activity planning.
4. Lack of responsibility for getting together with the child consistently.
5. Lack of honest self-expression (not letting the child know how you feel, often resulting in bitterness and distrust of the child).
6. Inappropriate need to please the child, thus giving the child the chance to be manipulative.

**Potential Challenges for the Mentee**

1. Uncertainty of when and/or whether they will get together with their mentor.
2. Short-range goals as opposed to long-range goals.
3. Poor sportsmanship.
4. Lack of ability to show appreciation.
5. Manipulation of volunteers: taking the upper hand.
6. Seeing the volunteer as a source of money/gifts.
7. Anxious to spend more than the allotted once a week get-together with the volunteer.

Should you encounter any of the above problems or any others and need advice, please contact the Program Staff at 701-483-8615.





## **Encouragement**

It is important that when we are encouraging a child, we make sure that our words are genuine and as specific as possible. Avoid using general praise such as “good job” and substitute words such as these:

### **Phrases that demonstrate acceptance:**

- “I like the way you handled that.”
- “I like the way you tackle a problem.”
- “I’m glad you enjoy learning.”
- “It looks as if you enjoyed that.”

### **Phrases that show confidence:**

- “Knowing you, I’m sure you’ll do fine.”
- “You’ll make it!”
- “I have confidence in your judgment.”
- “That’s a rough one, but I’m sure you’ll work it out.”



### **Phrases that focus on contributions, assets, and appreciation:**

- “Thanks; that helped a lot.”
- “It was thoughtful of you to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “Thanks, I really appreciate \_\_\_\_\_, because it makes my job much easier.”
- “You have skill in \_\_\_\_\_.”

### **Phrases that recognize effort and improvement:**

- “It looks as if you really worked hard on that.”
- “It looks as if you spent a lot of time thinking that through.”
- “Look at the progress you’ve made.” Be specific; tell how.
- “You may not feel that you’ve reached your goal, but look how far you’ve come!”

### **A Word of Caution:**

Encouraging words can become discouraging. Avoid giving with one hand and taking away with the other; that is, avoid qualifying or moralizing comments.

Example: “It looks as if you really worked hard on that,  
 ... so why not do that all the time?  
 ... it’s about time.  
 ... see what you can do when you try!”

### **In summary, encouragement is:**

- Valuing and accepting children as they are (not putting conditions on acceptance).
- Pointing out the positive aspects of behavior.
- Showing faith in children so that they can come to believe in themselves.
- Recognizing effort and improvement (rather than acquiring achievement).
- Showing appreciation for contributions.

## **Listening**

Being a good listener is a key ingredient to your success as a mentor. Here is some information on how to be a good listener:

1. Communication begins by listening and indicating you hear the feelings and meanings.
2. Effective listening involves establishing eye contact and posture which clearly indicates that you are listening.
3. Avoid nagging, criticizing, threatening, lecturing, probing, and ridiculing.
4. Treat the child the way you treat your best friend.
5. Mutual respect involves accepting the child's feelings.
6. Let the child learn. Resist the impulse to impose your solutions.
7. Reflective listening involves hearing the child's feelings and meanings and stating this so the child feels understood. It provides a mirror for the child to see him/herself more clearly.

*Example: Child: "That teacher is unfair! I'll never do well in class."*

*Mentor: "It sounds like you're feeling angry and disappointed, and you've given up."*

8. Communication between persons can be described in terms of closed and open responses. A closed response tends to cut off communication. An open response reflects the speaker's message in a way that indicates the listener has heard the feelings behind the words. The open response recognizes what the child is feeling. The child may decide to tell you more.

*Example: Child: "I'm really disappointed with Billy and the other kids for not coming over to play with me. There's nothing to do."*

*Closed Response: "Well, things don't always go the way you want them to. That's part of life."*

*Open Response: "It sounds like you feel as if no one cares and you're feeling left out."*

9. The communication process is non-verbal as well as verbal. Our actions, facial expressions, and tone of voice communicate whether or not we are listening. Be aware of your body language when you are communicating with your mentee.

## **Signs of Success**

**Appreciate small signs of success.**

For some, it may be ten years before a former mentee looks back and says, "You know who made a difference in my life? YOU."

**Success can come gradually, but know you are doing a good job when you spot the following:**

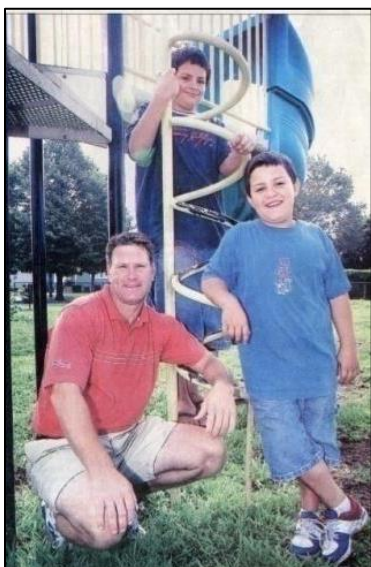
- More smiles.
- Improved eye contact.
- Improved appearance.
- Increased consideration of others.
- More enthusiasm about school.
- Improved interaction with peers.
- Decreased hostility.
- Your Mentee introduces you to friends or classmates.
- Improved grades.
- More attentive.
- More confidence showed.
- More willingness to express thoughts and feelings.



### **Suggestions for Mentors**

#### **On Friendship:**

1. Make no promises that can't be kept.
2. Give advice sparingly. Be a good listener and a good example.
3. Don't push your ideas onto him/her; he/she might resent it.
4. Listen to what he/she is "really" trying to tell you when he opens up.
5. Several short visits together may be more effective than one big fancy activity.
6. Explain beforehand any expected absence.
7. Never break an appointment with a Mentee without a clear explanation.
8. Let him/her know you recognize his/her good qualities and positive achievements.
9. Mentees need an opportunity to learn to trust you. Don't expect him/her to "open up" to you in the early stages of your relationship.



10. Lavishing money or gifts on the child will come across as an attempt to buy friendship. Exchange of small gifts or a simple card at birthdays or Christmas is preferred.

11. If you feel that you and your Mentee are not suited to each other, discuss

it with the staff so other arrangements can be made for both you and the child.

12. If problems exist but you wish to continue the friendship:

- Don't lose your temper; keep your poise.
- Apologize when you are wrong even on a minor matter.
- Don't imply superior knowledge or power.
- Acknowledge with grace the significance of the other's comments or statements of fact.
- Separate facts from opinions.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.

**On Self-Awareness:**

1. Prepare for rejection and hostility, especially if the child has had a difficult relationship with an absent parent and other adults.
2. Recognize your own feelings and don't let them get in the way.
3. Go slow. Don't expect big changes in behavior or attitudes overnight.
4. Avoid competition with other volunteers.
5. Prepare yourself for possible complete rejection.
6. Be aware of your own prejudices.
7. Avoid imposing your own set of standards on the child.

**On the Child's Family:**

1. Respect all information regarding the child's family as confidential.
2. Don't openly support criticism of either of the child's parents.
3. Avoid becoming involved in family difficulties. You are not to assume a parental role.

**On Delinquency – Acting Out Behavior:**

If the child gets into trouble, don't give up on him/her. Your Mentee will need friendship and support.

**On Peer Groups:**

1. Be aware that on occasion the child may choose the companionship of the peer group rather than your planned activity.
2. The child may ask to bring a friend along. You may wish to permit this on occasion; however, it should not be expected and should be planned in advance.

**On Social and Cultural Values:**

1. Prepare to accept, without criticism, a child from a different family setting and with different life goals and values.
2. Accept the child as he is, with his own values and cultural beliefs or practices.

**On Sexual Adjustment:**

1. Be prepared to deal with the sexual adjustment of the child.
2. Discuss problems with the program staff.

**On Religious Beliefs:**

1. Avoid imposing your own religious values on the child.
2. Acceptance as a person will do more toward directing a child toward the church than sermons.

**More Suggestions for Working with Children**

1. State suggestions or directions in a positive rather than a negative way. Example: "Give me the ball to hold while you are climbing." rather than - "Don't climb with that ball in your hands."

2. Give the child a choice only when you intend to leave the decision up to him. Do not ask a child if he wants to do something that is necessary.  
Example: "It is time to come in." - - rather than - - "Do you want to come in?"
3. If a child seems to be annoying a group, you might make a suggestion that will help the child become accepted by the group:  
Example: "Alex would make a good helper."
4. When there's competition, someone always loses and is likely to feel hurt and resentful. Children should not feel that their chances for getting attention and approval depend on being first, winning, or being best. Avoid making comparisons between one child and another or encouraging competition.
5. Speech conveys feelings as well as ideas. Children are sensitive to tone quality. A tight voice can reveal annoyance, uncertainty, or fear. Avoid calling or shouting to a child across a play area. Instead, go to the child to talk or give directions. Use only words and tone of voice that will help the child feel confident and reassured; not afraid, guilty, or ashamed. Do not label the child **good** or **bad**. Facial expressions and body movements also convey meaning to the child. Be aware of the signals that you are sending out.
6. The redirection will be most effective when it is consistent with the child's own motives or interests. Therefore, you should try to understand why the child is acting as he is.
7. Let the child express himself creatively. The adult's "model" inhibits creativity and tells the child that there is a "right" way to draw pictures, paint, etc.
8. Do not rush in to solve his problems. Ask questions that will stimulate him to think and find his own solutions.  
Example: Do not complete the model airplane he is working on. Give him full opportunity and time to complete the project himself, offering encouragement, before offering to help
9. Reinforce verbal suggestions or directions with other techniques, such as:
  - a. a glance.
  - b. moving nearer the child or starting an activity with him.
  - c. offering to help the child finish what he is doing.Example: "It is time to go now. I will help you put away the craft supplies."
10. The timing of suggestions or redirection is important.  
Example: Suggesting a new activity before the child gets bored, tired, or frustrated.
11. Give the child advance notice that an activity will be ending.  
Example: "We will be going home in about 10 minutes. What would you like to do until then?"



12. Never threaten a child nor use shame, ridicule, or sarcasm.
13. Keep your promises. Be sure that promises can be carried out before making them. If it is necessary to break a promise, be sure to give the child a simple, logical explanation.
14. When limits (rules) are necessary, they should be clearly defined and consistently maintained.
15. If a child does something he should not do, tell him in a firm but friendly way, "I like you, but I do not like what you are doing."
16. Be aware: A Mentee whose parents are divorced may have some of the following feelings:
  - a) not understanding what divorce is.
  - b) feeling responsibility and guilt: "I was bad, so he/she left."
  - c) wishing Mom and Dad would be together.
  - d) memories of something else: a house.
  - e) fear of abandonment: who is going to keep me safe.
  - f) sadness.
  - g) anger: blaming one or the other parent.
  - h) feeling different because parents do not live together.
  - i) denial: pretending it is not so.
  - j) feeling the need to be grown-up: man, of the house.
  - k) torn between Mom and Dad.
  - l) regression: things were better when I was a baby.
  - m) preoccupation with reconciliation wishes.

**There is no better exercise for your heart than reaching down and helping to lift someone up. -Bernard Meltzer**



## **Stages of Development**

Here are some general characteristics of young people of different ages to give you an idea of what to expect. As a general rule, in determining the attention span of a child, use one minute per year of life. For example, a six-year-old would have an attention span of about six minutes.

### **Grades K-1 (Ages 5 1/2 to 8):**

- Physically active—more likely to run than walk.
- Learn best through action.
- Take things literally.
- Have short attention spans and enjoy a variety of activities. Need frequent breaks and changes in location and position.
- Use simple reasoning.
- Do little or no planning.
- Work for praise and attention rather than the right answer.
- Are starting to learn how to get along with others, learning to resolve conflicts without fighting.
- Can usually tell right from left.
- May reverse letters such as p, q, b, and d.
- Have difficulty making decisions and do best with limited choices. (More than two choices can confuse and frustrate.)
- Are still somewhat self-centered and want immediate attention from adults.
- Are very eager to learn and have a high energy level.
- Mimic people they admire.

### **Grades 2-3 (Ages 7 1/2 to 10):**

- Are aware of body movements and posture and can be very dramatic in activities.
- Work and play hard. May do one thing until exhausted.
- Are very enthusiastic, which sometimes results in action before thought.
- Enjoy sports and boisterous games.
- Are alert, friendly, and interested in people and their ideas, beliefs, and attitudes.
- Like to help the teacher.
- Understand the value of money.
- Favor reality over fairy tales.
- Still need to be active while learning.

- Have capacity for self-evaluation.
- Can reason and accept the idea of rules.
- Understand logical principles as long as they can be applied to specific or concrete examples.
- Have passed through the confusions of the previous stage, but have not yet reached the complications of adolescence.



#### **Grades 4-5 (Ages 9 1/2 to 12):**

- Act in a more adult manner.
- Like games involving mental competition.
- Still enthusiastic about learning, but are more easily discouraged.
- Understand right from wrong and will accept blame when necessary, but offer excuses.
- Beginning to show increased interest in friends and decreased interest in the family.
- Like definite responsibilities.
- Able to consider more than one conclusion to situations.
- Understand more about truth and honesty.
- Worry about everything.
- Have definite likes and dislikes.
- Enjoy team play and activities.

#### **Grades 6-7 (Ages 11 1/2 to 14):**

- Able to think and reason through their own problems.
- Have a need for warm affection and patience from adults.
- Like to plan and execute plans for the group.
- Have improved social skills and show more tact, patience, and friendliness to other young people.
- Often self-conscious and sensitive. Feel the desire to conform to peers in dress and behavior.
- Are able to grasp math concepts and apply them to daily activities.
- Like active learning—such as reading aloud and science projects.
- May allow peer relationships to affect school work.
- Like group projects and classes based on cooperative effort.
- Begin to enjoy adult conversation.
- Identify themselves as adolescents and do not want to be called little kids.
- Are experiencing changes in physical and hormonal development.
- Begin to experience romantic feelings and attractions.

#### **Grades 8-10 (Ages 13 to 15):**

- Extremely self-conscious.
- Do not like to be talked down to.
- Need adults to show confidence in their judgment.
- Have a strong need to belong and be accepted by peers, who greatly influence their behavior.

- Appearance is very important to their self-image.

### **Grades 11-12 (Ages 16 to 18):**

- Begin to develop a sense of independence.
- Behavior is still greatly influenced by peers.
- Spend much time thinking about romantic relationships.
- Begin to think and worry about their future.

## **Developmental Assets for Children and Youth**

"Developmental assets" are factors - both internal and external - which decrease the likelihood that young people will engage in risky behavior and increase the chances they will grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible adults.

The following framework, developed by Search Institute (a research and training organization in Minneapolis), identifies 40 assets or factors that are critical for young people's growth and development. The first 20 of these assets are external, positive experiences that children and youth should be receiving. The next 20 are internal qualities that young people should (with the help of adults, communities, and institutions) be developing within themselves.

### ***External Assets***

The first 20 developmental assets focus on positive experiences that young people should receive from the people and institutions in their lives. Four categories of external assets are included in the framework:

1. **Support**: Young people need to experience support, care, and love from their families, neighbors, and many others. They need organizations and institutions that provide positive, supportive environments. The developmental assets in this category include:
  - **Family Support**. Family life provides high levels of love and support.
  - **Positive family communication**. The young person and his or her parent(s) communicate positively, and a young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents(s).
  - **Other adult relationships**. The young person receives support from non-parent adults.
  - **Caring neighborhood**. The young person experiences caring neighbors.
  - **Caring school climate**. School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
  - **Parent involvement in schooling**. Parent (s) are actively involved in helping young people succeed in school.
2. **Empowerment**: Young people need to be valued by their community and have opportunities to contribute to others. For this to occur, they must be safe and feel secure. The developmental assets in this category include:
  - **The community values youth**. The young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.

- **Youth as resources.** Young people are given useful roles in the community.
  - **Service to others.** The young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
  - **Safety.** The young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
3. **Boundaries and Expectations:** Young people need to know what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are "in bounds" or "out of bounds." The developmental assets in this category include:
- **Family boundaries.** The family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
  - **School boundaries.** School provides clear rules and consequences.
  - **Neighborhood boundaries.** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
  - **Adult role models.** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
  - **Positive peer influence.** Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
  - **High expectations.** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
4. **Constructive Use of Time:** Young people need constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through creative activities, youth programs, congregational involvement, and quality time at home. The developmental assets in this category include:
- **Creative activities.** A young person spends three or more hours a week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
  - **Youth programs.** A young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
  - **Religious community.** A young person spends one hour or more a week in activities in a religious institution.
  - **Time at home.** A young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

### ***Internal Assets***

A community's responsibility for its young does not end with the provision of external assets. There needs to be a similar commitment to nurturing the internalized qualities that guide choices and create a sense of purpose and focus. Four categories of internal assets are included in the framework:

1. **Commitment to Learning:** Young people need to develop a lifelong commitment to education and learning. The developmental assets in this category include:
- **Motivation for achievement.** A young person is motivated to do well in school.
  - **School engagement.** A young person is actively engaged in learning.
  - **Homework.** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
  - **Bonding to school.** A young person cares about her or his school.



- **Reading for pleasure.** A young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
2. **Positive Values:** Youth need to develop strong values that guide their choices. The developmental assets in this category include:
    - **Caring.** Young person places high value on helping other people.
    - **Equality and social justice.** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
    - **Integrity.** A young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
    - **Honesty.** A young person "tells the truth, even when it is not easy."
    - **Responsibility.** A young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
    - **Restraint.** A young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.
  3. **Social Competencies:** Young people need skills and competencies that equip them to make positive choices, build relationships, and succeed in life. The developmental assets in this category include:
    - **Planning and decision-making.** A young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
    - **Interpersonal competence.** A young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
    - **Cultural competence.** A young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
    - **Resistance skills.** A young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
    - **Peaceful conflict resolution.** A young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
  4. **Positive Identity:** Young people need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise. The developmental assets in this category include:
    - **Personal power.** A young person feels her or she has control over "things that happen to me."
    - **Self-esteem.** Young person reports having high self-esteem.
    - **Sense of purpose.** Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."

### **Activities a Mentor and Mentee can do Together**

#### **Activity Guidelines**

1. Try to plan as many weekly activities in advance as possible, setting a consistent day and time and sticking to it. This gives the child something to look forward to. The child's knowledge that he/she will be seeing you again will give him/her a sense of security.
2. Let the child help plan your activities.

3. Take part in activities that interest both of you.
4. No overnight visits with the child at any time.
5. For suggestions of things to do and places to go, consult the program staff.  
Remember the activities are only a vehicle for forming a relationship. Be creative and have fun.

### **Things to do together for Community-based matches:**

- Research and talk about famous people who used their abilities to get ahead.
- Make greetings, get well, or holiday cards to give to other people.
- Interest the mentee in games, math, and different books each week.
- Look at magazines for children with low reading levels; they offer many things to talk about and help the child with self-expression.
- Share your own life experiences.
- Tell the mentee about your work and how you reached this position.



- Remember the mentee with a card on his or her birthday.
- Just talk together for an hour.
- Attend the holiday concert or other school activities.
- Share your school experiences when you were the same age.
- If a child has trouble sitting still, run a short race together then do another activity.
- Bring in a proverb a week to discuss.
- Bring construction paper, scissors, glue, and magazines with lots of pictures, and create a collage about the child.
- Read the newspaper together.
- Play a musical instrument together.
- Work on the computer.
- Play sports or discuss your favorites.
- Play chess and/or games; stress following rules and good sportsmanship.
- Write stories together.
- Work on puzzles.
- Eat lunch or a snack.
- Go to the library.
- Fly a kite.
- Walk outside to the neighborhood playground or sit under a tree.
- Have a picnic outside.
- Build a model.
- Do a service project together, serving lunch in a soup kitchen or collecting cans for the Best Friends Program.
- Go ice-skating (or in milder climates) roller-skating.
- Take in school athletic activities.
- Create a time capsule. What would each of you want future generations to know? Pick a place to bury it with instructions for when it should be opened.
- Build a birdhouse or bird feeder for the winter birds.
- Visit your local bakery for fresh donuts and juice.

- Check your local parks and recreation department for fall foliage walks, nature hikes, bird watching, or other activities.
- Explore your community on bikes. Take a picnic lunch and enjoy the fall weather.
- Learn how to make bread from scratch.
- When school starts, talk about what is different and what is the same. Share your own experiences with new schools and settings.
- Check local college and high school sports schedules and choose an event to attend.
- Check out lesser-known sports such as field hockey, rugby, or rowing.
- Visit the local nursing home and play bingo or “adopt” a grandparent.
- Volunteer at the local animal shelter or animal rescue.
- Make greeting cards for soldiers, shut-ins, children in hospitals, etc.
- Plan an activity with another mentor and mentee.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Just be a friend.
- Bring in a photo album from home and share pictures of family, house, and pets.
- Discuss favorite hobbies.
- Buy a small journal or notebook; write down thoughts and feelings during the week and share them when you see each other.
- Swap photos of each other.
- Read, read, read.



*(List adapted from the list developed by Dr. Susan Weinberger of the Mentor Consultant Group for a school-based program in Norwalk, Connecticut, LEARNS at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and the Bank Street College of Education.)*

### **Things to do together at school for School-based matches:**

- Research and talk about famous people who used their abilities to get ahead
- Make greeting, get well, or holiday cards to give to other people
- Interest the mentee in games, math, and different book each week
- Look at magazines for students with low reading levels; they offer many things to talk about and help the student with self-expression
- Share your own life experiences
- Tell the mentee about your work and how you reached this position
- Remember the mentee with a card or little cake on his or her birthday
- Just talk together for an hour
- Attend the holiday concert or other school activities
- Share your school experiences when you were the same age
- If a student has trouble sitting still, let him or her work off energy by running in the gym for the first half-hour of the meeting, then play computer games together for the second half-hour
- Bring in a proverb a week to discuss

- Bring in construction paper, scissors, glue, and magazines with lots of pictures, and have the student create a collage about himself or herself
- Read the newspaper together
- Play a musical instrument together
- Work on the computer at school
- Play sports or discuss your favorites
- Play chess and/or games; stress following rules and good sportsmanship
- Write stories together
- Work on puzzles
- Eat lunch
- Go to the library
- Fly a kite
- Walk outside to the playground or sit under a tree
- Have a picnic outside
- Build a model
- Plan an activity with another mentor and mentee
- Listen, listen, listen
- Just be a friend
- Bring in a photo album from home and share pictures of family, house, and pets
- Discuss favorite hobbies
- Buy your mentee a small journal or notebook; write down thoughts and feelings during the week and share them when you see each other
- Swap photos of each other
- Read, read, read

*(List adapted from the list developed by Dr. Susan Weinberger of the Mentor Consultant Group for a school-based program in Norwalk, Connecticut.)*

**"If you want to feel proud of yourself, you've got to do things you can be proud of."**  
**–Oseola McCarty**



## Resources

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Parts of this manual were adapted from: Volunteer Manual by Mentor Map, © 2008 Youth Friends.