

# effective mentoring

making it work

Section 5 of 7



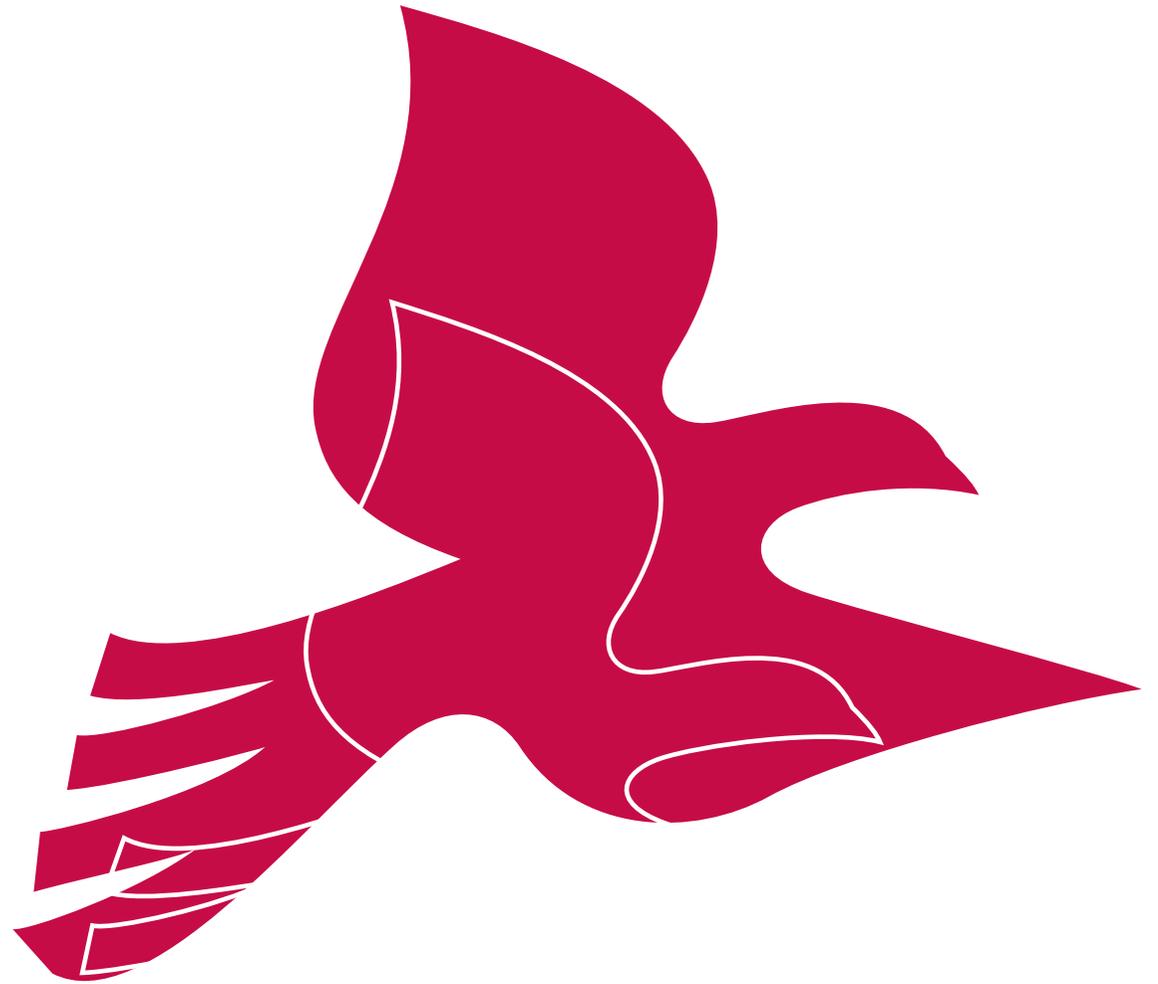
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# basics



## basics for a positive experience

The mentoring situations described in this guide represent the results of formal mentoring, in which mentors and mentees are selected, progress is monitored and results are evaluated. On the other hand, excellent mentoring can also occur during casual interaction between two people. Whichever the case, mentoring demands that you become personally involved in the development of someone else. The mentoring relationship can't be forced, and you shouldn't expect to see tremendous results overnight. As you build your relationship, the results will come, incrementally and over time. Mentoring produces a special spark, reveals new aspects of things in a flash, and is often missing in today's education and training.



**“Mentoring goes beyond what we normally learn in school. Fortunately, there are people in our lives other than educators and trainers who often provide that spark—people who care enough about us to make it happen.”**



Even formal mentoring is largely the art of making the most of a given situation. This flexible view tends to distress some individuals, who expect and perhaps need a cookbook approach to any task and want to know exactly what they are supposed to do, how to do it and when to do it. Mentoring is part intuition, part feelings and part hunch—made up as you go along and composed of whatever ingredients you have available at the moment. From this reality it derives its power.

# 20 TIPS

## for successful mentoring

### 1 **make a commitment.**

You can't expect to save the world, but you can and should make a real commitment to your student for the duration of your mentorship. Know that all participants need to be up-front about their expectations. There is nothing worse than building up trust and then feeling abandoned if either party misses a session.

**Most important  
to remember:  
this is not an internship!**

**You cannot instruct your mentee to run errands for you or help out around the office.**

**These sessions require your spending most if not all of your time together with your mentee, engaging him/her in dialogue, talking about ideas and working on a project together.**

## 2 remember that your mentee is an impressionable student!

High school and college-aged students have enormous pressures on their attention spans and time. Even though they are more than happy to have the kinds of opportunities that coming to your studio will provide, they may sometimes simply forget or be late. While you need to have a bit of flexibility, you also need to let them know that if they are late, they will be missing the time that you made for them. Make a point of calling them the day before your established meeting to remind them and encourage them to call you to confirm as well. This will also impart a sense of worth to the mentoring relationship, and demonstrate that you care about getting to know them.



## 3 put aside preconceived notions.

Many first-time volunteers worry that differences in age, race, education, sexuality and so on, may prevent their relating to their young mentees. Realize that mentoring is a process and that it takes effort from both sides to work together. Sensitivity and mutual respect are of utmost importance. Mentoring should broaden your own horizons and understanding of people and cultures as much as it will your mentees'.

## 4 mentoring is a two-way street.

While the students who come to you will learn invaluable information and skills from you, you will quickly realize that they are there to teach you as well. Accompanying the diversity of perception and everyday life that you and the students may encounter, there is the possibility for a dramatic range of visual expression. As two artists, you'll find that this stratification can be an integral factor to your effective collaboration. For the students, realizing that they have something to offer and teach is one of the most valuable parts of establishing a respectful relationship with an adult. Your acknowledgement and appreciation of their perceptions and skills will give them positive reinforcement, which will inevitably enhance your working relationship as two people coming to the table with different yet equally valued contributions.

## 5 be communicative.

Just as you make an effort to get to know your mentee, let the mentee get to know you, too. Be open about yourself and your own feelings, opinions and experiences; it will help young people to open up.





## 6 take caution or shyness with a grain of salt.

It takes a while to build up trust, and while all participants should approach the relationship openly, remember that both mentor and mentee embark as strangers. Don't interpret caution as indifference or rejection. Remember that the students who participate do so because they want the opportunity to learn what you have to offer.

## 7 show them around.

Unfamiliar environments are always a bit scary at first. Take the time to make the students aware of their new surroundings. Introduce them to other people in your office, and show them some of the more playful or fun aspects of the workplace, as well as those that may appear intimidating.

## 8 focus on doing hands-on work together.

Even looking through stock photo books, magazines or swatch books together for things to use in your project can help engender a sense of collaboration and trust. Remember that although you should ask the students to think about their projects outside of the actual mentoring time, what is fun about their relationship with you is that it is not school. Try to avoid approaching the relationship with ideas that sound too much like work or lessons.

## 9 focus on the needs of the young person.

This is a collaboration in which your skills and resources (whether technical, material, conceptual or emotional) are utilized to aid your mentees in defining their own vision. Allow them to explore their own opinions and expressions. Show them the ropes and share your thoughts, but try not to restrict their hand by imposing your style or ideas. Try to ask questions rather than making statements.

## 10 be realistic.

You have a limited amount of time to spend with your mentees. Set your sights practically and demand of yourself and your students the highest expectations within that reality.



## 11 communicate high expectations.

Although you must be realistic regarding what a student can accomplish given time constraints and his/her particular skill level, mentees need to know that you trust in their abilities and believe them capable of thinking great thoughts and doing great things.

## 12 offer positive feedback.

Positive feedback engenders a sense of security and creates an environment that is conducive to personal expression. Positive remarks, when well deserved, reinforce and encourage positive behavior, provide incentive to continue along a successful path and help a student to feel proud. We all like to have our hard work and innovations acknowledged, especially by those whom we respect.



## 13 be encouraging but honest.

When confronting questions like “Why can’t I do this?” or “Why does my picture look so bad?” you must be straightforward and clear. Should a student express frustration while experiencing difficulty or disappointment, you needn’t pretend s/he is doing fine. Talk about what the problem is and what the mentee can do to improve upon it. Try to acknowledge his or her struggle, for it is real, but reiterate the mentee’s ability. Mutual respect requires honesty.

## 14 enjoy your student.

Your time together does not need to be bound to a strictly working relationship. The personal connection that you form will inevitably lead to a stronger product and simply be a lot more fun. Genuinely appreciate that your mentees are individuals worth knowing; for some of these young people, it may not be a common experience.

## 15 **respect your student.**

Although many adults complain that today's adolescents lack respect for their elders, respect must be given in order to be received. Know that students are capable of respectful relationships even when their actions seem to indicate otherwise.

## 16 **keep your compassion, not your pity.**

Actively expressing compassion will promote understanding between the two of you. Pity, however, is disrespectful and condescending. Although students undoubtedly need and deserve your understanding, they also need to know that you expect them to be capable of a great deal, despite their difficulties.



## 17 **don't take things too personally.**

Remember that you are only a small part of the student's world and there is only so much you can do. In extreme cases, you may want to suggest professional help to your student, or refer him or her elsewhere (see *Section 6: Understanding the Relationship*). However, in general, be responsible for your time with the student and the environment you provide, but keep a healthy and realistic distance.



## 18 **if a serious issue comes up, know whom to call.**

As a mentor, you are not expected to serve all of a young person's needs. In serious cases involving things like substance abuse or neglect, you can only be expected to guide the young person to an appropriate professional resource. If you do not know the appropriate place, contact the student's parent organization. If you are uncomfortable about where a conversation is going, tell your student. Make sure your student understands that you may need to seek help for him or her on this problem. Remember that your student trusts you with this information.

## 19 **give yourself a little credit.**

It may be easier than you think to make a difference in a young person's life. Often it is things that you may take for granted that are mysterious, intimidating or exciting for a young person to learn about. You are a resource for many types of knowledge, whether it be knowing the technicalities of how light can create an image on paper or showing how colors can be manipulated on a computer screen or simply doing a search on the Internet.

## 20 follow-up.

You are encouraged to continue the relationship beyond the mentoring situation when possible. The student has just been exposed to a new and exciting environment, you have become a trusted friend, and many students would love to continue as interns or be otherwise involved in the work that you do. Invite your mentee back for a visit. Keep your eyes open for other possibilities that he or she might be interested in, and leave the door as wide open as you can.



## what makes an effective mentor?

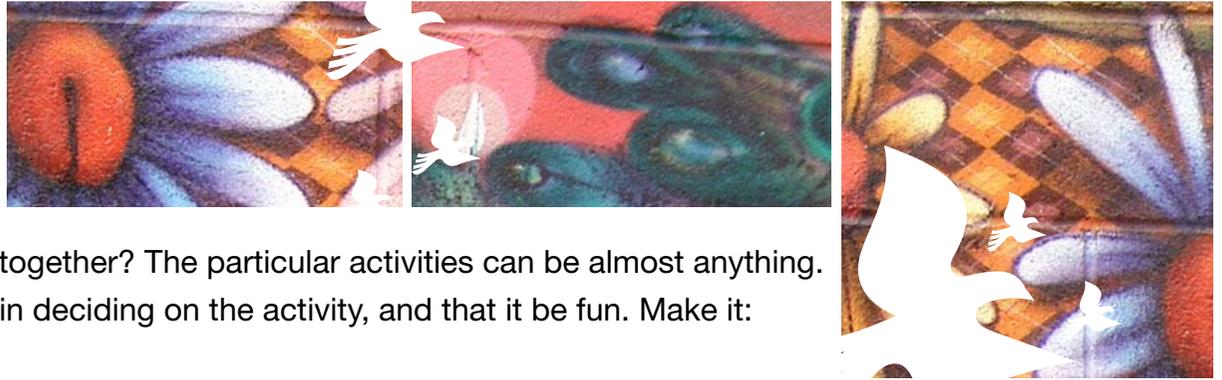
These are 10 important features and qualities of successful mentors' attitudes and styles:

1. Be a friend.
2. Have realistic goals and expectations.
3. Have fun together.
4. Give your mentee a voice in choosing activities.
5. Be positive.
6. Let your mentee's interests guide the conversation.
7. Listen.
8. Respect the trust your mentee places in you.
9. Remember that your relationship is with the student, not the youth's parent.
10. Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship.

**“ In a study by Big Brothers Big Sisters, mentors who took these approaches were the ones able to build a friendship and develop trust. They were the mentors who were ultimately able to make a difference in the lives of youth. ”**



## have fun together



How do students and mentors spend their time together? The particular activities can be almost anything. What is important is that the mentee play a role in deciding on the activity, and that it be fun. Make it:

### active

Play catch, shoot some hoops, see a game, go bowling, start a hobby together, have a picnic, fly a kite, play chess, take photographs together, play miniature golf, take a walk in the park, go bargain hunting

### personal

Hang out and talk, eat at a restaurant, write a story together, create artwork together, listen to music each of you enjoys, visit your student's neighborhood, get involved in a community service project, spend time together "doing nothing", do Basicswork (although only occasionally)

### career

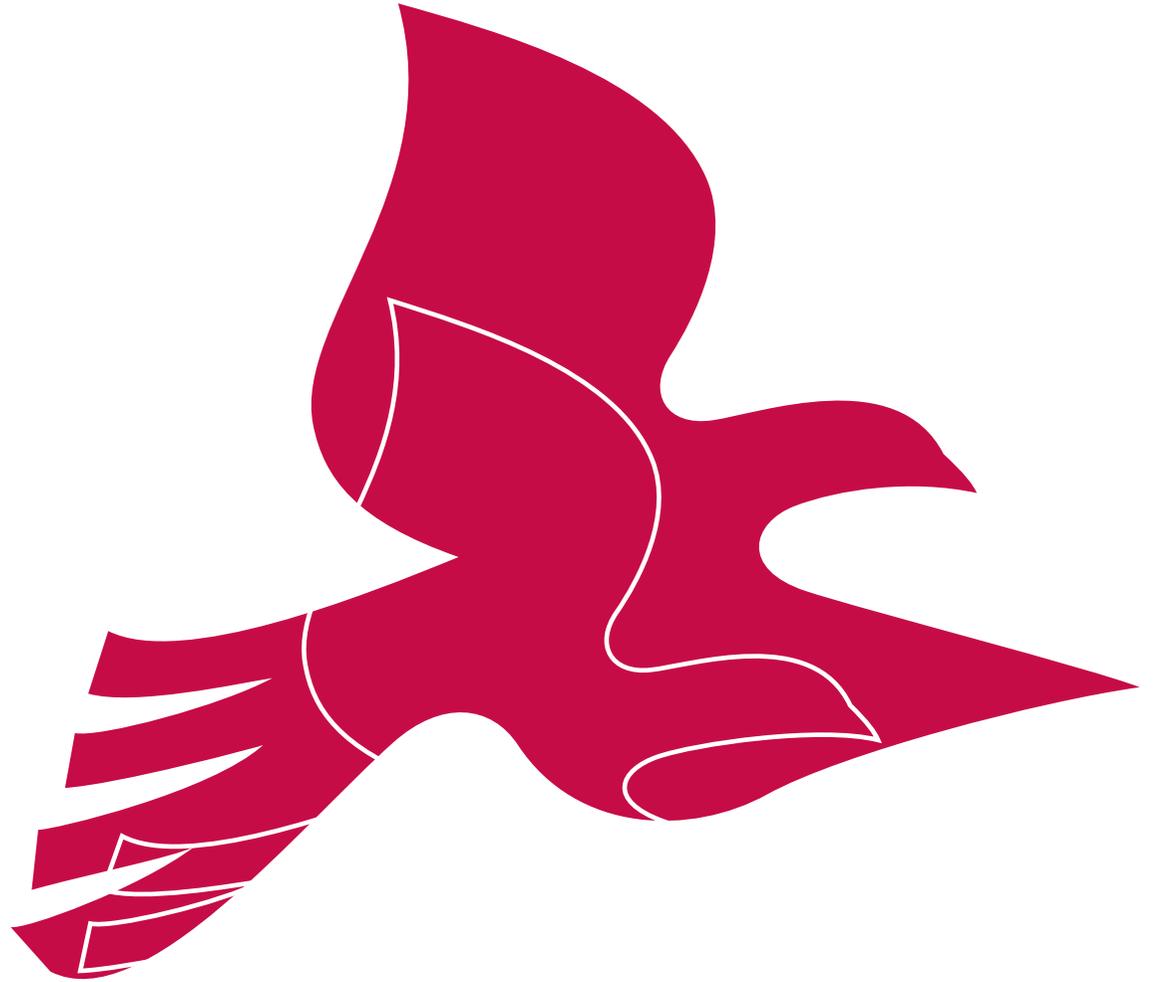
Search the Internet, talk about the future, talk about your first job, give a tour of your current job, create a résumé, role-play an interview

### cultural

Go to the movies and discuss what you see, go to a museum, read a book together, go to a concert or the library

\*Source: "Building Relationships, a Guide for new mentors", written by: Public/Private Ventures, April 2001

# dos & don'ts



# DOs

It is not possible to anticipate every situation and the appropriate behavior to apply when one is mentoring. Here are a few suggestions, however, to use as general guidelines for following through on projects and commitments.

## Do

- . . . greet and welcome your mentee.
- . . . get to know your mentee.
  - Try to really understand how things are different for him/her now.
- . . . tell your student about yourself, especially what you remember from your high school years.
- . . . encourage individualization and experimentation.
- . . . show appreciation for contribution and demonstrate confidence and faith in your mentee.
- . . . have your mentee assume responsibilities and be held accountable.



# DOS

**please remember that your mentee is not a business colleague and is learning standard business practices from you.**



- . . . develop a project that you and your mentee can work on together.
- . . . have activities prepared in advance. Plan activities with your mentee.
- . . . introduce your mentee to the decision-making process.
- . . . suggest small steps in new or difficult tasks.
- . . . have reasonable expectations.
- . . . help your mentee use mistakes as learning experiences.
- . . . provide your mentee with a sense of personal worth.
- . . . identify your mentee's talents, strengths and assets.
- . . . call your program or school coordinator first if you have a question or a problem arises.
- . . . contact or meet parent(s) only with the knowledge and consent of the mentee.
- . . . provide your mentee with a means of reaching you (phone number). Advise your mentee as to when it is, and when it is not, appropriate to call.
- . . . set, and know, your own limits. How much are you willing to commit yourself and your family to this project? The mentee needs to know your limits.
- . . . establish a regular time and place for meeting. Remember that effective time management is a skill that adolescents need to develop.
- . . . learn to appreciate your mentee's cultural and ethnic background. Strive for cultural reciprocity.
- . . . be open to what your mentee can teach you or share with you.

# DON'Ts



“ Don't sign up without fully **making a commitment** to being a mentor. ”

- ... expect to have instant rapport with your student.
- ... condone antisocial behavior.

You may think you understand why a mentee believes s/he has to do some things; however, your silence expresses support. You may want to explore with the mentee other ways to deal with the possibility of incurring dangerous or unhealthy situations. The “odds of eventually getting caught” should not be the only reason explored as to why some behaviors are or are not appropriate.

- ... lend money.
- ... spend money lavishly on your mentee.
- ... drive your mentee in your family car.
- ... arrange sleepovers.
- ... be convinced that what the student says is always what s/he means.
- ... give advice of a personal or controversial nature.
- ... give your mentee the impression that s/he is not wanted.

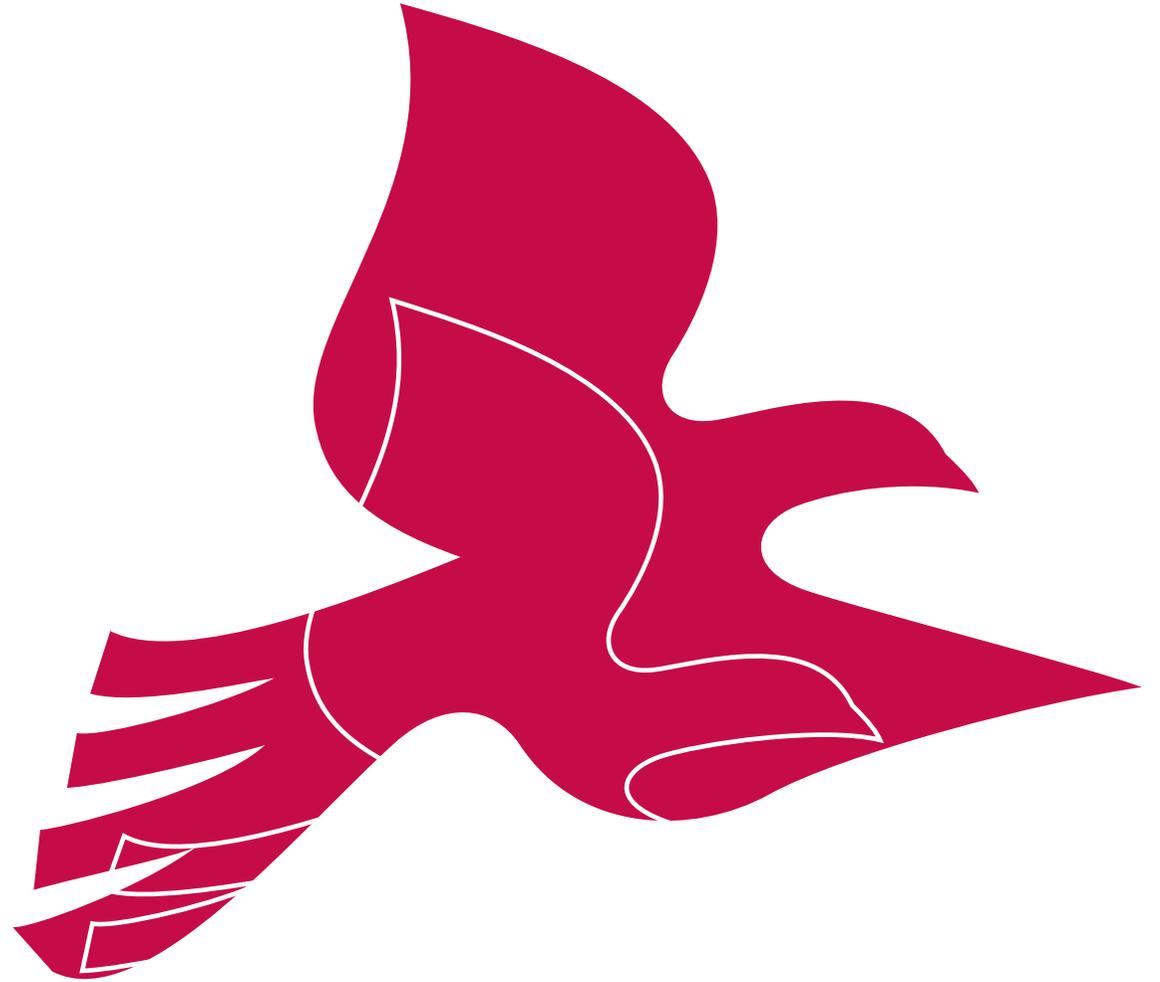
# DON'Ts

- . . . lecture, moralize or preach.
- . . . be serious all the time.
- . . . focus on school exclusively.
- . . . treat your mentee as an hourly employee.
- . . . violate confidences, with the single exception of crisis-intervention situations, in which case you must contact the school or company coordinator privately and immediately.
- . . . pose your questions as if you are trying to pry or interrogate.
- . . . be afraid to admit that you do not know an answer or that you have made a mistake. Find the correct answer and learn together. It helps the student to see that you are learning too.
- . . . make any promises that you cannot fulfill.
- . . . expect immediate visible results from your student.  
In most cases, it takes time to see improvement and establish rapport.
- . . . interpret the student's sometimes lack of enthusiasm as a personal rejection of or reaction to you.
- . . . forget your own adolescence.  
What do you wish an adult had said to you or done for you at that time of your life?
- . . . attempt to become a surrogate parent to your mentee.

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# setting goals



## setting goals

As mentioned elsewhere in this guide, the art of mentoring involves nurturing a young person and steering him/her onto the path of adult life. Now is the time to help students find their direction. You can begin by encouraging your student to think about his or her present life and future goals.



### helping high school mentees set their goals

What does the mentor wish to accomplish with the mentee?

1. Improve the mentee's self-image.
2. Explore new experiences and resources with the mentee.
3. Teach self-reliance.
4. Give them a friend who can be trusted.
5. Teach them how to set and achieve goals.
6. Instill an appreciation for earned merit vs. instant gratification.
7. Encourage long-term thinking and future goals.
8. Help them develop and capitalize on personal talents and abilities

Whatever the reason for the establishment of the relationship, the reason the mentee returns week after week to meet with the mentor must be based on the accomplishment of mutually agreed-upon achievable goals, trust and friendship. The following outline offers some questions for the students to consider when working with their mentors to set their goals.

### future plans

1. Identify the knowledge and skills they would like to learn as a result of going to and completing high school.
2. If they went to college, what would they want to learn? What schools offer that course of study? What do they need to do to qualify for admission? What are the costs? Where can they obtain the funds?
3. What should they look for in college bulletins? How can they get a copy of a college bulletin?
4. What do they really want out of school?
5. What does it mean to have a priority?



**In a study by Big Brothers Big Sisters, mentors who took these approaches were the ones able to build a friendship and develop trust.**

## getting a job

1. What kinds of jobs can they get with their skills? What kinds of salaries and benefits are provided for someone with their skills? Is there a career ladder? How do they prepare for a better job with more responsibilities and higher pay?
2. What is their ideal job, regarding the following: salary, benefits, profit sharing, location, responsibility, concern for others, being able to see the results of their work, having others see their work, appreciation, fame? What kinds of jobs fit this ideal model?
3. How do they find a job? Where do they look? How do they understand a “want ad”? What kinds of jobs require a written test, lie detector test, urine sample, blood test, driver’s license, and so on? Why are these things required? What kinds of questions can’t be asked in an interview? What does a “nondiscriminatory” policy mean?

4. How do they follow up on a job lead? What is a job application? What information do they need for an application? What is an interview? What do they wear to an interview? How do they make and change an appointment? What is a reference letter?

## what can be taught?

1. What are entry-level skills?
2. How can they develop skills, talents and athletic abilities into hobbies and areas for potential employment?
3. How do they travel around the city?
4. What are their rights as a citizen, student, child, parent?
5. What are their entitlements as a citizen, student, child, parent?
6. What are their responsibilities as a citizen, student, child, parent?



## family living skills

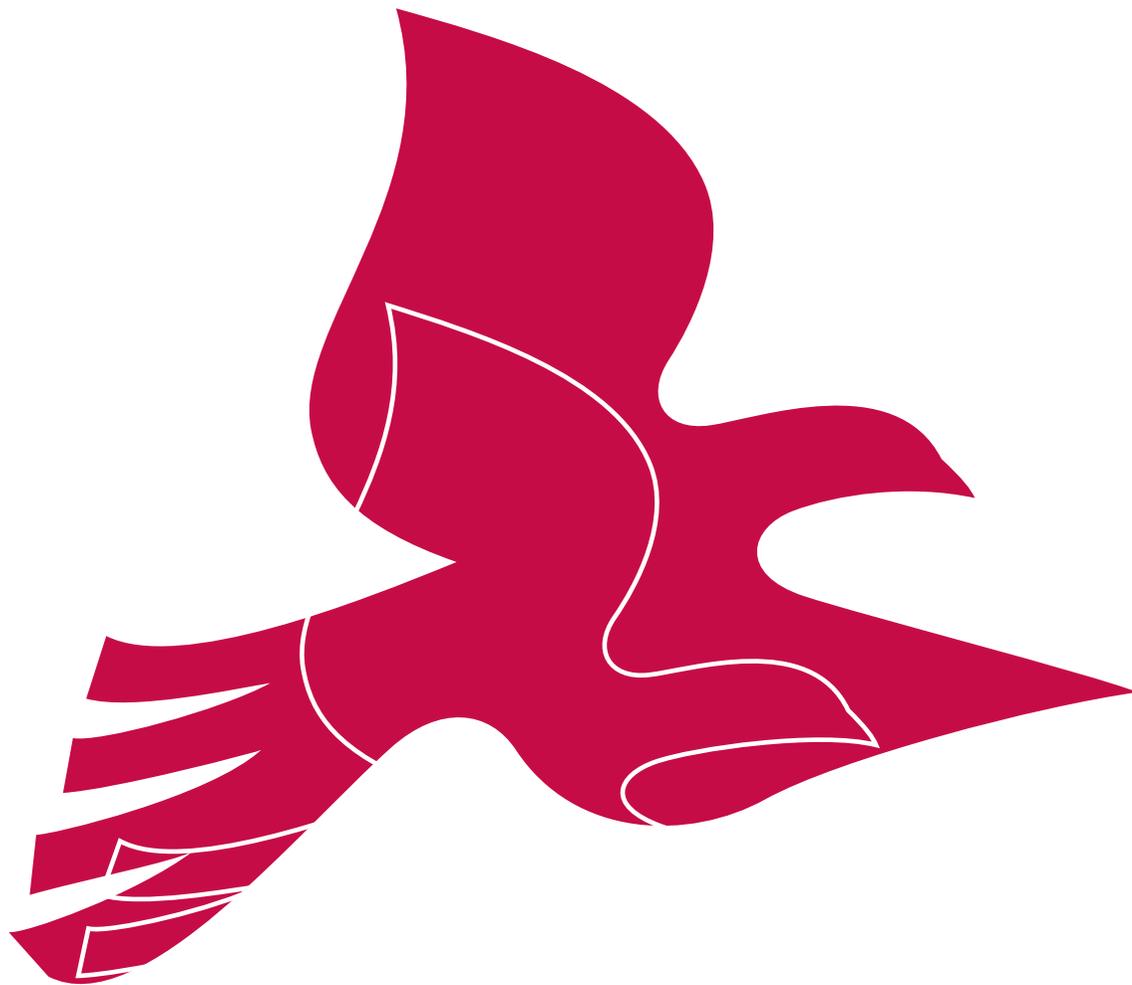
1. How do I get health care? What is preventive care?  
What is primary, secondary, tertiary medicine?
2. What plans should I make for my baby's future? How can I take care of my baby's needs?
3. How can I control my anger?
4. How did I get into my current living situation? How can I afford to live on my own? How can I get out and stay out?
5. How can I keep my family together? What's wrong with drugs?
6. What current issues pose implications for hurting my offspring or myself, such as AIDS, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol abuse?

## independent living skills

1. How do I find an apartment? How do I read rental ads? What are my rights? Responsibilities? What is a "security deposit"? What is fair rent? How do you interview for an apartment?
2. What is a budget? What is a checking account? How do I get interest? Can I get a loan?
3. How can I get a telephone? Furniture? Utilities?

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# nurturing self-esteem





## developing self-esteem in young people

The following four conditions that affect self-esteem can be utilized by the mentor to assist the mentee in developing self-esteem:

**1. connection:** Being a part of a family and community, knowing your personal history and culture, enhances self-esteem.

- Share your interests, hobbies and life concerns.
- Do something special for your mentee that meets his/her needs.
- Encourage participation in cultural programs and community service.

**2. uniqueness:** Developing a special sense of self and recognizing uniqueness is important to self-esteem. A young person may be unique in appearance, talents, vocational interests, hobbies or other interests.

- Notice and affirm special characteristics.
- Encourage your mentee to express ideas, even if they are different from your own.
- Ask your mentee to use his/her special talents or interests to benefit others.

**3. power:** Having the resources, opportunities and capabilities to control one's own life enhances self-esteem. Young people are empowered when they are taught to make decisions, set personal limits, take responsibility, solve problems and teach others.

- Encourage personal responsibility—being responsible for what you feel.
- Help your mentee become aware of his/her own decision-making process.
- Take your mentee through the steps of problem solving
- Encourage your mentee to set goals—short and long-term.
- Set standards for achievement, but allow for mistakes
- Emphasize strengths, not weaknesses.

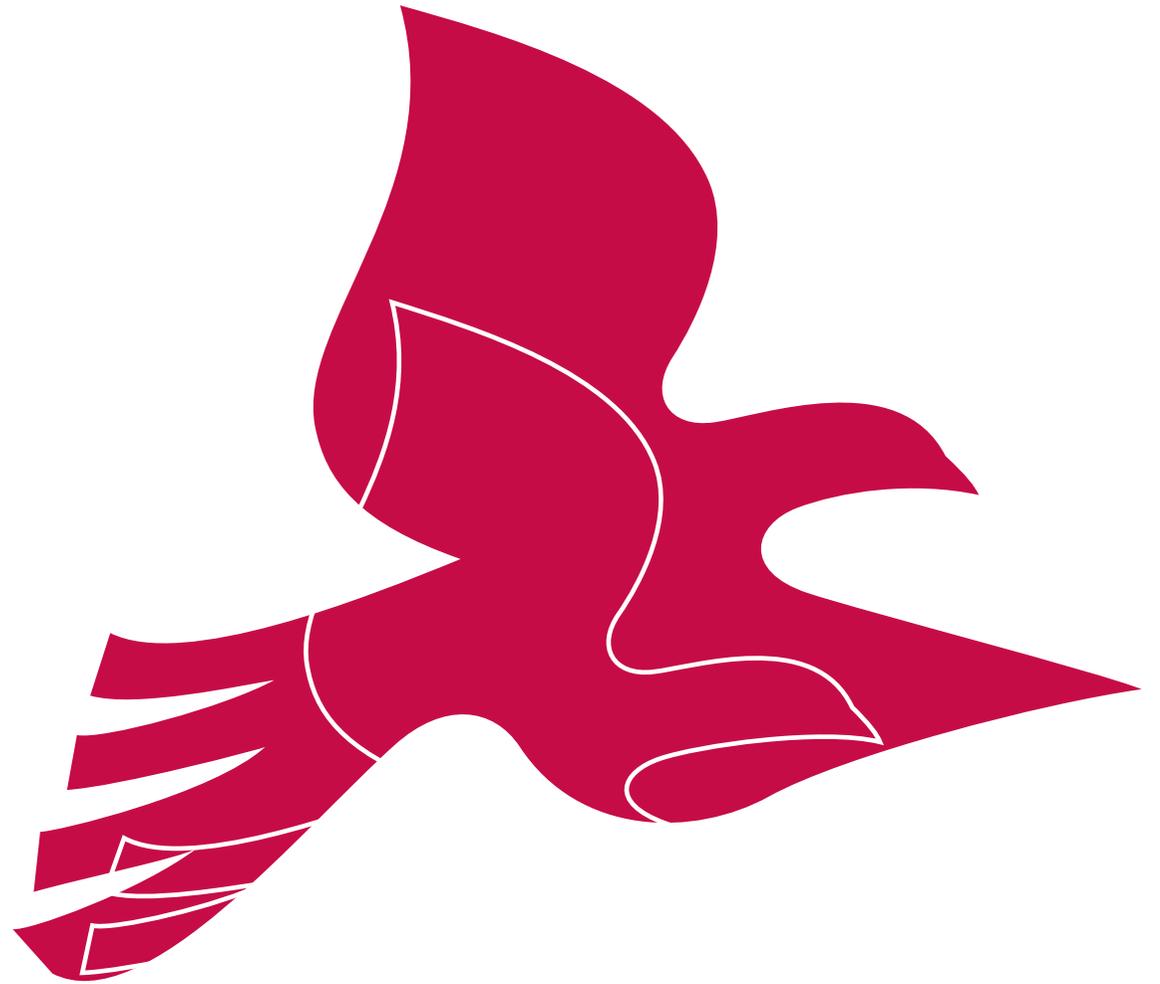
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**4. models:** Good role models can affect self-esteem. Models serve as examples to help young people establish their own values, goals, ideals and personal standards. Being in contact with someone that you admire can make you feel good about yourself.

- Expose your mentee to people you admire.
- Help your mentee think through what is important to him/her.
- Help your mentee face the consequences of his/her behavior.
- Spend time teaching the how and why of tasks that your mentee hasn't learned yet.
- Share your own values, goals, ideals and personal standards.
- Encourage discussions around values, beliefs and interests.

# about us





164 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10010

T: 212 807 1990 / F: 212 807 1799  
E: [mentoring@aiga.org](mailto:mentoring@aiga.org)

AIGA, the professional association for design, is the oldest and largest organization for professionals engaged in the discipline, practice and culture of designing. AIGA was founded in 1914 and now represents more than 18,000 designers through national activities and local programs developed by 55 chapters and more than 150 student groups.

AIGA supports the interests of professionals, educators and students who are engaged in the process of designing. The association is committed to stimulating thinking about design, demonstrating the value of design and enabling success for designers throughout the arc of their careers.

Through conferences, competitions, exhibitions, publications and websites, AIGA inspires, educates and informs designers, helping them to realize their talents and to advocate the value of design among the media, the business community, governments and the public.

Worldstudio



FOUNDATION

200 Varick Street, Suite 507  
New York, NY 10014

T: 212 366 1317 / F: 212 807 0024  
E: [mentoring@worldstudio.org](mailto:mentoring@worldstudio.org)

Worldstudio Foundation is a nonprofit organization that offers scholarships and mentoring programs in the fine and applied arts. Acting on the belief that creativity holds enormous power for social change, graphic designer David Sterling established the organization in New York City in 1993 and developed it with his business partner Mark Randall. Since its inception, the Foundation has launched several programs dedicated to helping the next generation of artists, architects and designers realize their dreams while being proactively involved in their communities. Mentoring programs pair at-risk high school students with creative professionals to work on collaborative projects. Scholarships are aimed at increasing diversity in the creative professions and building a more socially responsive creative studio of the future. The first nonprofit in the United States devoted exclusively to encouraging social responsibility in the design and arts professions, Worldstudio Foundation dares young artists to dream—of new lives, new careers and new solutions for the world in which we live.