

GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS: DO's and DON'T's

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

1. Greet and welcome your mentee.
2. Get to know your mentee. Try to really understand how things are different for him/her now.
3. Tell student about yourself, especially what you remember from your high school years.
4. Encourage individualization and experimentation.
5. Show appreciation for contribution and demonstrate confidence and faith in your mentee.
6. Have your mentee assume responsibilities and be held accountable. Please remember that your mentee is not a business colleague and is learning standard business practices.
7. **Take the initiative.** A mentee who fails to call or attend must be pursued and the school coordinator notified of the situation so that issues can be resolved and sessions can begin again.
8. If you must miss a mentoring session, contact the student directly if possible. If you cannot reach him/her, call the school coordinator and leave a message for the student. Alternatively, notify your mentor coordinator and he/she will follow up. It is important to let the student know that you did not forget about the mentoring session.
9. Develop a project which you and your mentee can work on together.
10. Have activities prepared in advance. Plan activities with your mentee.
11. Introduce your mentee to the decision-making process.
12. Suggest small steps in new or difficult tasks.
13. Have reasonable expectations.
14. Help your mentee use mistakes as learning experiences.
15. Provide your mentee with a sense of personal worth.
16. Identify your mentee's talents, strengths, and assets.
17. If you have a question, call your coordinator
18. Contact or meet parent(s) only with the knowledge and consent of the mentee.
19. Provide your mentee with a means for reaching you (work or home phone number). Advise mentee as to when it is, and when it is not, appropriate to call.
20. Set, and know, your own limits. How much are you willing to commit yourself and your family to this project? The mentees need to know your limits.
21. Establish a regular time and place for meeting. Remember that effective time management is a skill which adolescents need to develop.
22. Learn to appreciate your mentee's cultural and ethnic background. Strive towards cultural reciprocity.
23. Be open to what your mentee can teach you or share with you.

[Adapted from a handout created by The New York City Mentoring Program]

DON'T

1. **Sign up without fully making a commitment to being a mentor.**
2. Expect to have instant rapport with your student.
3. **Condone anti-social behavior.** You may think you understand why a mentee believes he/she 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.
4. **Lend money.**
5. **Spend money lavishly on your mentee.**
6. **Drive your mentee in your family car.**
7. **Invite your mentee to your home or arrange “sleep-overs.”**
8. Be convinced that what the student says is always what they mean.
9. Give advice of a personal or controversial nature.
10. Give your mentee the impression that he or she is not wanted.
11. Lecture, moralize, or preach.
12. Be serious all of the time.
13. Focus on school exclusively.
14. Treat your mentee as an hourly employee.
15. Violate confidences, with the single **exception of crisis intervention situations**, in which case you must **contact your coordinator privately and immediately**. If you are concerned about the health or safety of your mentee with regard to any of the following situations, please notify your coordinator as soon as possible:
 - (a) obvious or suspected physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
 - (b) in the rare instance of depression or potential suicide
 - (c) involvement in illegal activity
16. Pose your questions as if you are trying to pry or interrogate.
17. 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.
18. Make any promises that you cannot fulfill.
19. Expect immediate visible results from your student. In most cases, it takes time to see improvement and establish rapport.
20. Interpret their sometimes lack of enthusiasm as a personal rejection or reaction to you.
21. Forget your own adolescence. What do you wish an adult had said to you or done for you at that time of your life?
22. Attempt to become a surrogate parent to a child.

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