

Challenges Faced by Mentors *Between 5-8 Months of Mentorship*

A. CHALLENGE: LOSS OF INTEREST BY THE MENTEE

1. Question: If my Mentee seems less interested in meeting with me because other interests or friends have crowded into his/her life, what should I do?

- As children age or grow, they may lose aspects of their initial interest
- Use an “I Message”: “When you’re late (etc.), I’m wondering if there are other activities, conversations, career focus you’d enjoy?” Be sure to listen carefully to your mentee’s reply and adapt your activities accordingly.
- Look at some new activities and perhaps limiting the amount of time you meet
- If your mentee is interested in being with his/her friends, see if one or two of them could go out on an occasional outing with you, if your program coordinator permits. At middle school age (and older), youth are often most concerned about fitting in with their friends. You may find that by including his/her friends part of the time, that your mentee is more interested in special 1:1 time for just the two of you! Ask your mentee whether he/she still wants to continue with the relationship.
- After trying the suggestions above, you may decide to ask your mentee whether he/she still wants to continue with the relationship
- If you truly believe that the relationship is over, talk over this decision with your match support coordinator. Consider—and follow up on—your coordinators’s specific suggestions for extending the length of the match.
- If your coordinator agrees that closing the match is appropriate, prepare your mentee (see suggestions below.) If you still want to mentor, request another mentee.

2. Question: I can see that my mentee could benefit from a range of added skills, but I'm not sure how to introduce those in the relationship. What can I do?

Helping expand a young person's lifeskills can be one of the most important things a mentor can bring to their mentee. Whenever possible, try to offer choices and allow your mentee to choose an area that he/she is interested in.

Examples of areas to discuss might include:

- Work on a project that you choose together—planting a garden, building something out of wood, doing a craft project that takes more than one week to complete, seeking out information for a school assignment
 - As you go, note aspects of the plan—“In what order might we do the steps required to complete this project?” If possible, list some of the steps on paper. You could come back and check various steps as you complete them.
- Open a savings account with money he/she has been given or earned. Talk about how money grows.
- Make decisions together whether it's choosing an activity for the next time you're together or talking about a problem your mentee is facing. Check out the One-Pager on Alternatives on this website or go back to the Participant Packet from your Making of a Mentor training and review. Note that brainstorming ideas together, determining the strengths of each idea, then categorizing those choices is a very important exercise. Don't rush. Helping your mentee learn the process for thinking about making decisions is a vital real-world skill!
- Talk about future work but focus on discovering skills that your mentee has or is interested in developing, rather than job titles like teacher or graphic designer. Work on helping him/her further develop those skills rather than focusing on how to “fix” traits that you see as less desirable. Bring magazine or newspaper articles that may relate to areas of his/her interest—sports, the environment, school or city issues or opportunities.