



Supporting Your Child's Relationship with a Mentor

What Can I Do to Help Make This Work?

By involving your son or daughter in a mentoring relationship, you have taken a very important step to making sure your child gets what he or she needs in life. Every young person benefits from having another caring adult in his life—someone who supports your child, believes in him, and can be another person your child turns to when he's having a tough time—so kudos to you for welcoming a mentor into your child's life!

A good mentor–mentee relationship takes time to develop. Just like the start of any friendship, the mentor and your child will need to spend some time getting to know each other. They may encounter difficulties or misunderstandings along the way. There will be ups and downs.

You as a parent or caregiver can play a very important role in helping their friendship grow and develop, regardless of whether or not you have much direct contact with the mentor.

Here are some tips to help you support your child's new mentoring relationship:

- **Be positive.** Let your child see that you are happy she has a mentor in her life. When your child tells you about her visit with her mentor, listen for the positive experiences, even if your child doesn't seem very excited about the visit. (For example, you might point out, "Well, it sounds as if you two have some things in common. Getting to know someone isn't always easy, but give it time.")
- **Tell your child the positive skills and behaviors you see her developing as a result of having a mentor,** and let him know that you are pleased with those changes. ("I've noticed that since you started hanging out with Joe, you've gotten your homework done on time more often. I'm proud of you!")
- **Let the mentor know how much you appreciate that she is a part of your child's life.** An occasional card or just telling her "thank you" can do much to make the mentor feel she matters.
- Encourage your child to **show his mentor that he appreciates him.**
- If you are present when your child and mentor get together (for example, during pickup and drop-off), **be available but not overbearing.** Show your interest by asking some questions, but try not to make demands.
- **Share feedback from your child with the mentoring program's staff.** If you are allowed to talk with the mentor privately, check in occasionally and see how the relationship is going.
- **Help your child remember when her next visit with her mentor is scheduled.** Help her use a calendar or day planner to keep track of visits with her mentor, as well as other activities going on in her life. Try to be as flexible as possible with the scheduling of activities.

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- **Give your child's mentor copies of school calendars** so that he knows about time off for holidays, opening and closing days of the school year, special events, and other considerations.
- The program may take care of this, but it's always a good idea to **provide your child's mentor with emergency contact information** for someone with a phone, just in case something happens and the mentor cannot reach you.
- **Let the mentoring program's staff or your child's mentor know if there has been a change or incident in your child's home life that the mentor should know about.** Did you two have a particularly bad fight recently? Has there been a death in the family? Are there financial stresses in the household right now? Is one of her siblings in need of extra attention right now? This kind of information will help the program and the mentor to more effectively support your child. You may also want to make some suggestions about how the mentor can be supportive in these situations.
- **Be prepared in the back of your mind for the inevitable end to the mentoring relationship.** Every mentoring relationship ends at some point. Some mentoring programs are designed

so that the mentor and mentee are together for a limited time. If the relationship is strong and life remains relatively stable for the mentor and your child, it may not end until your child graduates from high school. The fact that your child's mentor has gone through a recruitment, training, and screening process is a good sign that she is committed to staying involved with your child over a significant period of time. Unfortunately, sometimes things change in either the mentor's or your child's life that are out of either one's control, and a relationship may need to end prematurely. Remember that sometimes a mentoring relationship ends in a healthy way for good reasons. For example, your child may get swamped with school activities like band and sports, or the mentor may be busy with a new baby. No matter what the reason, you can be ready to listen and provide extra support when the relationship ends.

- **Remember that the mentor is not going to replace you.** You are still your child's parent, and nothing will ever change that. The mentor can complement and reinforce what you are doing as a parent, helping you be even more effective.