

6 Mentoring Stages

1. Introductory Stage

Primary Objectives:

- Get to know each other
- Begin establishing a sense of trust

Important Elements:

- The mentor should be predictable, consistent, and involve the mentee in deciding how to spend time together.
- Ask open-ended questions about what your mentee likes.
- Try to find common ground and interests.

Boundaries:

- It's okay to be clear about appropriate behavior and set simple consequences for misbehavior (e.g., ending an activity early if it's causing their misbehavior.) This helps the mentee understand the boundaries about what's acceptable conduct in the relationship.

Confidentiality:

- Once the mentee begins to open up, discuss how confidentiality plays a role in your relationship.

2. Trust-Building Stage

Primary Objectives

- Solidify a sense of closeness and trust by doing things together that are mutually enjoyable, foster a sense of attachment, and build shared memories.
- Do things that naturally lead to opportunities for conversation vs. forcing them to "open up".

Trust the Process:

- Each relationship progresses at its own pace, and you may not even realize how important you've become to your mentee.

Check In With CIS:

- Remember to get support from your CIS Program Manager.

3. Growth Stage

Primary Objectives:

- Encourage mentee's social, emotional, and cognitive growth.

Important Elements:

- You feel fairly comfortable with your mentee.
- Mentees may begin to open up more— possibly even about problems they are experiencing. Control the impulse to give advice or fix the problem. Instead, guide them in developing problem-solving skills.
- Advocate for your mentee, and work with CIS Staff to find additional resources.

Trust & Challenging Behaviors:

- Because a certain level of trust is established, your mentee may feel more comfortable challenging you or allowing conflict to occur—(acting bored, make inappropriate requests for food or gifts, say they prefer to see a friend instead of meeting for mentoring)
- Don't take these behaviors personally!
- Don't assume they mean your mentee no longer needs or values the relationship.
- The mentee may be testing your commitment again, needs some space, or is having a personal problem that is affecting their mood or behavior.

4. Maturation Stage

Primary Objectives:

- The relationship continues to strengthen and you will truly feel like good friends.
- Continue to let the mentee take the lead in what you do or talk about.
- Your mentee may also turn to you more often for your opinions and may show increasing interest in understanding you better.

Goals:

- Working with your mentee on their life goals can be productive during this period. (Examples include: improving academically, mastering a sports skill, making new friends, developing a plan for college)
- It's important to help the student map out their goals, and follow up with them on how they plan on achieving them.

5. Transition Stage

Primary Objectives:

- Transitions in mentoring relationships happen for a wide variety of reasons. For example, your mentee may be getting older, a physical move may occur, family issues may interfere, or your own life circumstances may change. Such transitions may lead to a redefinition of the relationship to include closure or termination.

Include CIS Staff:

- If a transition is taking place for you or the student be sure to include the CIS Program Manager in the process of redefining or terminating the relationship.
- This can be a delicate and confusing process for the mentee.

6. Termination Stage

Primary Objectives:

- The relationship ends.
- For CIS mentors, termination usually happens at the end of the school year.
- Sometimes mentors are able to return after the summer break and be matched with the same student. However, this isn't always possible, so even if you plan to return, saying goodbye is important!

Positive & Healthy Termination:

- Mentors may understand that the end of the school year means an end to their relationship. However, mentees may not know this.
- It's important to provide a clear, honest, and open discussion about closure and create a plan for saying goodbye that eliminates confusion or hurt feelings.

Gail Manza & Susan Patrick, (2012). The Mentor's Field Guide. Search Institute Press, Minneapolis, MN

MENTOR FAQs

- 1) Won't young people and their parents be leery of a stranger like me trying to be their friend?** The CIS mentoring program is set up to where youth choose to have a mentor, volunteers are screened and trained, and parent consent is provided before a match takes place. Even with the student choosing mentoring as a resource, they may still be weary of you at first before you've gained their trust.

- 2) Young people's problems are so complex. What can I possibly do?** Try not to think of yourself as a "problem fixer". Instead, youth need adult role models who serve as friends and guides. Many students have a variety of adults in their lives, but most don't have a friendly adult face to share ideas, laugh with, or talk about their future plans.

- 3) I'm not exactly "cool"...will my mentee even like me?** Don't think you have to be an expert in the latest music, slang, clothes, or trends to make a connection with a young person. What's more important is being authentic. If you can show sincere interest in young people as unique human beings with gifts to be discovered- that's really all it takes. You'll be surprised how fast you connect with your mentee when you genuinely take an interest in who they are.

- 4) What if my mentee won't talk to me?** While shyness or silence is especially common at the beginning of a relationship, even prolonged silence is not necessarily an indication that you're not connecting. Try to avoid bombarding your mentee with lots of questions— this can feel overwhelming. One elementary school girl told her mentor, "This is the only time in my week when things aren't chaotic. I like the calmness of our time together. And, it's the only time that I get to play games with someone without getting interrupted by my siblings or other classmates." For this student, having a calm space and the mentor's undivided attention was most important.

- 5) What if I say the wrong thing?** Mentors aren't perfect. You may find yourself saying something embarrassing, hurtful, or even offensive to your mentee. When you realize that you've made a mistake, use the opportunity to model humility. Offer an apology. Admit you were wrong. You may be the first adult who has ever shown your mentee this type of respect. Seeing adults acting in this way encourages youth to do the same.