



My Mentor's Role in My Life

SO WHAT'S A MENTOR REALLY SUPPOSED TO DO?

Mentors are people who are older than you who like kids and want to spend time with a special younger person like you. Through your friendship with your mentor, you'll get a chance to try fun things, learn

new skills, and have another person in your life that likes you just the way you are, a person you can turn to when you need support and comfort. Because every person is different, there is no one perfect way to be a mentor. But here are some basic things mentors are and are not.

YOUR MENTOR IS . . .

- . . . **a friend.** Like any friendship, mentors and mentees do fun things together. They also teach each other, help each other, and are honest with each other. And sometimes they might want to have conversations about things that make them feel worried or upset.
- . . . **a role model.** Mentors try to set a good example for how to live. Mentors are not perfect people. Your mentor will do his best to share with you what he's good at, and he should be honest about mistakes he has made or things he is not good at doing.
- . . . **a listener you can trust.** You may say things to your mentor that you don't feel comfortable saying to anyone else. Sometimes you may tell your mentor about your hopes, dreams, or fears. Other times you may reveal mistakes you've made. Mentors have your best interests in mind and try to be supportive of you, regardless of what you confide in them.
- . . . **someone who is proud of you.** Your mentor should be able to see all the talents you have and help you learn and grow. She can help you take actions that make a positive difference to others in your family, neighborhood, school, or community.

YOUR MENTOR IS NOT . . .

- . . . **a mentor to your family.** His role is to provide special attention to you. While getting to know your family can help him understand you better, his energy and attention should be focused on you.
- . . . **a social worker or doctor.** You may tell something to your mentor, or she may think something is going on in your life, and she may need to ask for help from other people in order to help you. This is because some problems you face may be complicated, and your mentor might need professional help in order to be the best mentor to you that she can be.
- . . . **a "fixer."** Your mentor is not trying to change you or make you "better." Of course, his support can help you overcome hurdles in your life. But don't forget that you have gifts and talents; you have a lot to offer the world. Your mentor's job is to help you build and use those gifts and talents to make a difference in your life and the lives of others.

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WHAT'S MY ROLE AS A MENTEE?

As a "mentee" (which means someone who has a mentor), you have a role to play in making a good relationship with your mentor, too.

REMEMBER TO...

- . . . **give your mentor a chance.** Nobody's perfect, and it may not seem at first like you have much in common. But give it some time, and try to get to know her. You may be surprised at how much you can enjoy being with your mentor once you get to know her.
- . . . **show your mentor you appreciate him.** Tell him when you've had fun with him. Thank him when he has spent time with or money on you. This will help your mentor feel good about the time you spend together.
- . . . **be open to new experiences.** Your mentor may ask you to try new things. Maybe it's a different kind of food, or maybe it's a trip to a museum. Give it a chance.
- . . . **share what you know.** Don't be afraid to share your talents and interests with your mentor. Maybe it's the words to your favorite song, or maybe it's advice on how to play tennis. You have important knowledge and skills to share.





Communicating with My Mentor

WHAT IF MY MENTOR WANTS TO TALK ABOUT THINGS THAT AREN'T EASY TO TALK ABOUT?

At some point in your relationship, your mentor may ask you questions about important stuff—how you're doing in school, what's going on with your family, or what you do when you're hanging out with your friends. Sometimes she might even bring up a topic that bothers you. Maybe she asked you about something that upsets you or makes you uncomfortable. Or maybe you're just not interested in talking about some things.

Here are some ideas to keep in mind as you learn to talk with your mentor:

→ **Take things slowly.** Get to know each other before you start talking about really important things.

→ **Be honest with her.** If you already know that talking about school just stresses you out, for example, tell your mentor. One mentee told his mentor the first time they met that he never wanted to talk about school. For nine years his mentor never brought up the subject of school. It worked great for them.

→ **You don't have to share deeper conversations with your mentor until you feel good and comfortable.** There's nothing wrong with your mentor and you keeping your conversations and activities about fun things, even for a long time. After a while, you may trust her enough to

talk about important issues and concerns in your life, but for some people it takes a long time to get to that point.

→ **Test it out when you're ready to discuss deeper things.** Try talking about one thing that makes you a bit uncomfortable. Your mentor might be a great listener or have some helpful ideas. Start by saying, "I've been thinking about something, but I'm feeling a little shy about discussing it." This will help your mentor be respectful and kind while you are talking.



→ **Be kind to your mentor.** Chances are your mentor doesn't mean to make you upset when he brings up tough issues. More likely, he's bringing them up because he cares about you. When you tell him you don't want to talk about something, try saying, "I'm glad you care about this, but I just don't want to talk about it."