

Stages of a Mentoring Relationship

- Beginning of the Match

The beginning of any relationship is often awkward, and mentoring relationships are no exception. Your first few months will focus on getting to know each other, exploring similar interests, discussing expectations, and starting to form norms and bonds that will shape the rest of your first year together.



Beginning of the Match

Stage one

- During this phase mentors should work with their mentees to set parameters for the match, such as when to meet and for how long, what kinds of activities will take place, and how to contact each other.



Characteristics of stage one

- Getting to know each other
- The first impressions
- Trying to see the positive in the relationship
- Bonding



Effective Communication

- Ask open-ended questions
- Use body language that is open and not guarded
- Active Listening
- Demonstrate empathy
- Avoid “prescriptive” communication
- Use prompts
- Speak with language that you feel comfortable with
- Don’t be afraid of silence



Challenging and Testing

Stage two

Once the mentoring relationship is off the ground, it is normal for your mentee to start testing boundaries of the relationship. Though you have spent time affirming that you appreciate and enjoy your mentee, he/she may still want to see how far your commitment really goes. Because mentees often come from situations in which adults can't always be relied on, trusting another adult is difficult for them, and they may even try to sabotage the relationship by "acting out."



Characteristics of stage two

- Mentee challenges
- Testing phase
- Rethinking first impressions
- Difficult feelings or emotions may surface



Effective Communications

- Be consistent in your communication, even if it is difficult
- Demonstrate respect
- Build in problem-solving techniques in you open-ended questions
- Raise sensitive issues at the beginning of your interactions
- Make sure to separate behaviors from who the mentee is
- Disclosure of personal feelings and experiences when appropriate



Real Mentoring

Stage three

In this stage, the mentoring relationship has reached full maturity. Trust and closeness have been established and the match is comfortable having fun and relating to one another. It is during this phase that mentors can use the trust they have built to move their mentees along the development pathway, asking them to think about their goals or try new things. There still may be testing or behavioral issues, but they do not jeopardize the relationship itself. Mentors that reach this stage must be prepared to maintain this hard-won status, this is where the real impact of mentoring happens.



Characteristics of stage three

- Relationship may become deeper or mentee may start pulling away
- Reflection
- Preparing for closure



Effective Communication for stage three

- Find common language to sum up your feelings
- Provide feedback that describes growth that you observed
- Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that your mentee may have



Transition toward closure

The transition toward closure can be a difficult time for both mentors and the youth. There may be many strong feelings about the match ending and it is important to not let the process of ending the match negate the many positives it provided to everyone involved. As the end of your match approaches, work closely with your match supervisor to end on a high note and make sure that the transition leaves the youth feeling positive and fulfilled about the experience.

