

rites of passage - mentors handbook

ORIKI THEATER

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PRESENTS

A Rites of Passage Program

Boys will come, Men will return!

MENTORING

Few bonds in life are more influential than those between a young person and an adult. A mentor is an adult who, along with parents, provides young people with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and a constructive example. Mentors are people who are good listeners, people who care, and people who want to help young people bring out strengths that already are there. A mentoring relationship can take many forms. In the best relationships, the adult helps the youth define and achieve his/her goals.

As a mentor, you might help your mentee:

- Plan a project for school
- Explore a topic of mutual interest
- Visit some of the exciting places where you live
- Set some career goals and start taking steps to make them happen
- Learn more about the community and how to help others through volunteering
- Strengthen communication skills and ability to relate well to all kinds of people
- Make healthy choices about day-to-day life, from food to exercise and beyond
- Express himself in new and creative ways demonstrating and expanded his talents

The list is almost endless!

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Becoming a Mentor

By deciding to become a mentor, you have put yourself in some pretty good company! Why do people choose to become mentors? There probably are as many reasons to become mentors as there are mentors! Mentoring a young person provides him/her with a wealth of benefits. From improved grades to an enhanced self image, research shows mentoring helps young people. However, mentoring provides significant benefits to mentors as well. Experienced mentors report that they actually feel like they get more out of their mentoring relationship than they give! While the benefits of mentoring are as diverse as the people who mentor, here are some themes we hear again and again. As a mentor, you will:

Make a difference in someone else's life:

When you mentor a young person, you have a chance to have a positive effect on the course of his or her life. Most people who have ever made something of themselves had an adult who believed in and encouraged them when they were young - it made a real difference. *You can be that person.*

Learn about yourself:

The mentoring relationship doesn't just affect the mentee! As you and your young friend talk, explore values, interests and goals, you will learn more not only about him but also about yourself. How often do we take time to have these types of talks with our friends, colleagues or ourselves? *It's a shared opportunity for learning and growth.*

Give back and contribute to the future:

Most of us can remember the teacher, coach, neighbor or other adult who believed in us and helped us believe in ourselves. Many mentors see mentoring as a way to repay that debt – and, also, as a way to make the community, nation and even world a better place, one future citizen at a time.

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Qualities of Successful Mentors

It is important to understand that you don't have to be brilliant or perfect to be a good mentor! If you want to be a mentor, and care enough to do it right, here is what we know about successful mentors. While the specifics of each mentoring relationship may vary, the qualities of an effective mentor remain the same, namely:

A sincere desire to be involved with a young person:

Mentors have a genuine desire to be part of other people's lives, to help them pursue their interests, achieve their goals, and handle tough decisions. They must be invested in the mentoring long enough to make a difference.

Respect for young people:

Mentors should not have preconceived notions that youth need to be "rescued". Mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship win the trust of their partners, and the privilege of being advisors to them.

An ability to listen actively:

It is relatively easy to give advice or express opinions. It is much harder to find someone who will suspend his or her own judgment and really listen. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions, and giving participants an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with a minimum of interference. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.

Empathy:

Empathy is the ability to understand, at a very deep level, what another person is going through - even without having had the same life experiences. It is very different from sympathy, which is sharing sad feelings. Of course you won't always understand completely what your mentee is going through - that's natural. The ability to empathize and the willingness to try to understand are the keys. Effective mentors empathize effectively - they can understand what a mentee is going through, without becoming caught up in the problem themselves.

A realistic view of solutions and opportunities:

Good mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by their mentees with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of a seeming jumble of issues and point out sensible alternatives.

Flexibility and openness:

Good mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their mentees, to learn new things that are important to their partners (music, styles, and philosophies), and even to be changed by their relationship.

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Your Role as a Mentor

You may be wondering what role you should play as a mentor. Defining roles can be challenging. So, let's start with something you probably are already familiar with. Most of us have had a supervisor - a boss - at some time in our lives. Let's think first about the job of a supervisor...

Supervisors are called on to wear many 'hats,' among them:

- Role model
- Cheerleader
- Coach
- Enforcer of policies
- Spokesperson to senior management
- Liaison between staff and organization

Just as a supervisor wears many "hats," so do mentors. Here are some of the roles a mentor does, and does not play:

YOU ARE	YOU ARE NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friend• Coach• Motivator• Companion• Supporter• Advisor• Advocate• Role Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An ATM• Social worker• Parent• Cool peer• Nag• Parole officer• Savior• Baby-sitter

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The Mentor/Parents Relationship

Parents play an important role in the mentoring relationship. It is important to meet your mentee's parents. Their support of your relationship with their child will help you to be a more effective mentor. Mentors and parents each have specific roles to play.

You will receive information from the student's questionnaire and the staff's debriefing of the parent(s). In addition, there are many things that you and your mentee's parent(s) can discuss during your first meeting. Some suggestions are:

- The parents' thoughts and experiences based on other mentoring programs.
- The parents' key expectations of the Rites of Passage Program.
- The parents' expectations of the mentoring relationship.
- The parents' preferred form of communication and feedback.
- Significant issues that might affect the student's participation in the program.
- The parents' view of how the mentee is doing in school
- Your expectations for the student/mentor relationship.
- Your personal/professional background and plans for the future.

NOTE: We suggest that you take notes during this discussion. You will be able to use these notes to assist with the mentoring process.

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Mentor/Parent Roles

Although your role as a mentor occasionally may overlap with that of a parent, it is important to remember that these are two distinct roles. You are involved so that your mentee can have another caring adult in his or her life - not to supersede parents, or to imply by your involvement that they're not doing their jobs. The best way to add value to your young person's life is to be another adult who cares and plays certain key roles, like adviser and coach. Trying to act as a father or mother - to discipline, make life decisions for a child - is a sure route to doing more harm than good. Remember that even with two great parents it still takes a village to raise a child - and as a mentor you are an important member of that village.

Role	Mentor	Parent
Confidant	X	X
Advisor	X	X
Disciplinarian		X
Teacher	X	X
Friend	X	X
Decision Maker		X

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What Young People Want from a Mentor

When asked, young people invariably say that they want a mentor to help in three key areas: advice, access and advocacy. Be sure to talk with your mentee to find out what he wants from you.

Advice:

As a mentor, you bring a wide range of life experiences to the relationship. As a result, you can be a great source of advice and information. From time to time, your mentee may need a second opinion or a different perspective that you can provide. Help your mentee gain a new perspective by sharing your experiences. What did you do in a similar situation? How did it work out? Be willing to share, but check to make sure your mentee is interested first! Remember that you and your mentee are different people. Your mentee will have his/her own values, which may be very different from yours, and may lead them to very different ideas about what to do. Your role is to offer insight, advice and suggestions. It is your mentee's role to evaluate the options, consider what you have said, and then make the best decision.

Access:

One of the most valuable things you can do for your mentee is to help open doors. That's what access is all about - helping your mentee find and get involved in new situations. You can help your mentee find people, opportunities and information that he/she might not have found on his/her own. You can take your mentee to new places, introduce them to new people and help him/her learn about resources that will help reach his/her goals. Improved access to resources is one of the most valuable benefits you can give to your mentee!

Advocacy:

Have you ever had someone stand up for you when you needed it or speak on your behalf? That's what advocacy is all about. If your mentee needs a job reference or a college recommendation, you can be a big help! But remember -- in order to be an effective advocate, you have to really get to know your mentee. You will have to create opportunities to get to know your mentee as a person. The more you learn about your mentee, the stronger an advocate you can be!

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Tips For Success

Now that you know what is expected of you, here are some Dos and Don'ts that you should remember.

Dos

- Appreciate any signs of growth.
- Listen carefully to what your mentee says.
- Ask good questions.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with your mentee.
- Remember to be on time.
- Try your best to be a good role model.
- Learn any special rules that are part of your program.
- Stay aware of the curriculum and assignments
- Be interested in your mentee.
- Show that you recognize the mentee's values and lifestyle.
- Strive for mutual respect.
- Be honest.

Don'ts

- Think you are going to change the world overnight.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Be judgmental.
- Forget communication means listening too.
- Forget how important you are to your mentee.
- Use poor grammar and inappropriate language.
- Get talked into things that you know are against program rules.
- Try to be a parent.
- Try to inflict your beliefs or values on a mentee; rather, demonstrate your values.
- Settle for rudeness or foul language.
- Think kids can't spot insincerity.

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Rites of Passage Program Support to Mentors

The Rites of Passage Planning Committee supports mentors individually and as a group. The Mentor Coordinator will schedule a mentor orientation before the program kickoff and a series of meetings throughout the program. The exchanges with other mentors during the meetings and consultations with the Mentor Coordinator will assist in guiding you through the mentoring process.

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The Mentoring Lifecycle: It's the BEST!

Mentoring relationships have ups and downs and go through certain phases. Learning about these phases will help you feel more comfortable since you will know what to expect. You will also be more supportive of your mentee. Most mentoring relationships go through four stages: Birth, Engage, Sustain and Transition (BEST). Remember that these stages are not clear-cut. They frequently overlap, and you may even find yourself returning to an earlier phase. This is all part of the normal development of the relationship.

Birth: During the Birth stage, you will meet your mentee and work on initial expectations. The birth of your mentoring relationship is where it all begins! During this phase, you will experience one of the most exciting events in the relationship - meeting your mentee for the first time. You also will talk with your mentee to find out what each of you is expecting from the relationship. Meeting your mentee for the first time is one of the most exciting points in the relationship. However, it can be a bit uncomfortable - for both of you! Both mentors and mentees often worry about the other person's opinion. Both often worry about what they will say. There are a lot of things you and your mentee can talk about during your first meeting. Here are some suggestions:

- What does your mentee hope to get out of the relationship?
- What ground rules should be agreed upon?
- What are three things we have in common?
- What are mentor's/mentee's favorite things to do?
- What are mentor's/mentee's least favorite things to do?
- What foods do the mentor/mentee like to eat?
- What do you - the mentor - hope to get out of the relationship?
- What are your - the mentor's - own goals/dreams for the future?

Engage: During the Engage stage, you will deepen your relationship and set up goals and objectives.

- Help a young person take a searching look at himself
- Help your mentee establish clear goals and objectives
- Identify activities you can do together that will support those goals

In the process, you and your mentee will have gotten to know each other better, building up shared experiences and a base of trust and good feeling. Success at engaging your mentee is the foundation of a good relationship that will grow and develop through the Sustain phase of your mentoring relationship.

Sustain: During the Sustain stage, you will continue to meet and work towards your mentee's goals.

- Assess the health of your relationship with your mentee.
- Give constructive feedback - feedback that the recipient can receive without defensiveness, and can put into action.
- Apply a problem-solving model to issues or concerns facing your mentee.
- Teach your young person how to use these skills now and in the future.

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Transition: During the Transition stage, you will move beyond your formal relationship. Some mentoring relationships do come to an end, often at the end of an agreed upon time. However, many mentors and mentees choose to stay in touch years after their formal interaction ends. When the time both of you have committed comes to an end, you need to come to a closure on your formal relationship. Your last formal obligation will be to attend the Rites of Passage Ceremony on the last day of the program to present your mentee to the community. Remember this does not have to mean "goodbye" - you can and should talk to your mentee about whether you would like to remain in touch – and, if so, how.

Conclusion:

You now have a good idea of the qualities and characteristics required to be a great mentor. The final ingredient is **commitment**. Can you commit? Keep in mind, though, that there's another way that mentoring is an ongoing cycle without an end: when a mentee grows up and decides to become a mentor to a young person, the cycle of giving - you might call it a 'virtuous cycle' - continues.

If we help them begin, they will continue!

Adapted from "The Mentors Tool kit" The Mentor Network

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Program Basis and Teaching Points

Attachment B: Participants' Mission, Affirmation and Principles

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Attachment A

BASIS

Oriki Theater's Rites of Passage program is designed to lead our teenage boys socially and spiritually into manhood: a status of responsibility, earned rights and privileges with corresponding duties and obligations to society. The axis on which this program pivots is a set of eight principles borrowed from traditional African rites of passage ceremonies.

Most African peoples have rites and ceremonies to mark a child's stages of growth and development. The rites of birth and childhood introduce the child to the corporate community, but this is only an introduction.

He must grow out of childhood into manhood physically, socially and spiritually. This is a change from a passive to active membership in the community.

In traditional African Societies, manhood is not defined in terms of gender or age. It is a status of responsibility where one inherits new rights and privileges with corresponding duties and obligations to society.

TEACHING POINTS

BASIS

Foundation or Starting point: A point from which something starts or is developed

MISSION:

Is a Calling: An objective or task that one believes is his duty to carry out and to which he attaches special importance and devotes special care

AFFIRM:

Declare something to be true: To state positively that something is factual

AFFIRMATION:

A positive statement and declaration **of truth** or the existence of something

A positive statement of achievement: A positive statement affirming that a desired goal has been reached or is within reach

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Attachment B

PARTICIPANTS' MISSION

In order to become an honorable person and make positive contributions to my family and society I will do my best to live by the Rites of Passage affirmation and principles.

THE AFFIRMATION and PRINCIPLES

The African man assumes an honored and proud place in society. A Status that is earned by acquiring certain qualities, namely:

LOVE for Self and others

RESPECT for Self and others

HONOR all that God has made

STRENGTH to soar above distractions

WISDOM to know what is right

COURAGE to stand up for what is right

PATIENCE to take your turn

PRIDE in who you are