

Getting the Match Off to a Good Start

Everyone knows that first impressions are important to any new relationship. The first few meetings between you and your mentee will set the tone for the rest of the relationship. Consider the principles of developmental relationships from the beginning. Here are some key practices for getting the match off to the right start.

During the first match meeting:

- Get to know the young person by talking about shared interests.
- Create agreements for your relationship, including when you will meet; where, how often, and how to contact each other; and what to do if someone cannot make the meeting.
- Talk about your respective roles in the mentoring relationship.
- Ask the young person to tell you what he or she expects of you and share hopes for the relationship.
- Participate in any group kick-off activities offered by the program.

Early in the match:

- Begin learning about the young person's interests for match meetings and start brainstorming ideas for activities and projects.
- Let your mentee take the lead in choosing what you will do together.
- Be prepared to take the initiative to contact your mentee if he or she does not call you.
- Be flexible and creative if your mentee is unsure of what activities to do.
- Participate in activities and utilize resources provided by the YouthBuild program.
- Have fun and emphasize the relationship over specific goals. While you will eventually focus more intentionally on the student's YouthBuild Life Plan, it's important to build your relationship first in these early meetings.
- Establish your own match traditions.

Sample Match Icebreaker: Getting to Know Each Other

The first meeting between you and your mentee is important. Here are some tips for getting your relationship off to a good start.

Before you meet

- Be sure you know your mentee's name and how to spell and pronounce it!
- Review what your mentor coordinator has told you about the young person so you have an initial idea about his or her interests.

At the first meeting

- Greet the young person with a smile and a handshake. Introduce yourself and mention how you'd like to be addressed. Find out how the young person likes to be addressed.
- If you can, spend some of the time together doing something active, such as walking to a coffee shop or taking a tour of the YouthBuild site. Talking while moving feels more comfortable to many people than just sitting face-to-face.
- Rather than asking a lot of questions, start by briefly telling something about yourself, your family, work, or interests. Then, ask the mentee to tell you something about herself. You can also share each other's interest surveys to see similarities and differences.

Activities and conversations to break the ice

- **Share your most and least favorite things with each other.** *My favorite ... is ... because ...* These discussions can be serious or light. Take turns coming up with favorites to talk about. Examples:
 - My favorite movie is ... because ...
 - My favorite teacher is/was ... because ...
 - My favorite pizza topping is ... because ...
 - My favorite athlete/actor is ... because ...
 - My least favorite school subject is ... because ...
 - My least favorite way to travel is ... because ...
 - My least favorite thing to do on the weekend is ... because ...
- **Share a goal.** Each person shares a goal for the coming year or month: *One of the things I hope to do this year is ...* Talk about how you could help each other with those goals.
- **Talk about mentoring.** Share a time in your life when you had a mentor, either formal or informal. What was that like for you? What are your hopes for this mentoring relationship? Ask your mentee if he or she has any expectations for the relationship. Find out if there are specific areas of interest the mentee would like to explore with you. Remind the mentee about their YouthBuild Life Plan. Ask how he or she would best like to focus on the plan if one is already in place or about ideas for the Life Plan if it has not been completed yet.

Sample Match Icebreaker: Getting to Know Each Other (cont.)

Before ending your first session:

- Exchange preferred contact information.
- Agree that both of you will let the other person know if you cannot make a meeting.
- Review program expectations and any important rules.
- Decide when and how often you will meet, and set a date and time for the next meeting (plan to meet the following week to keep the momentum going).
- Ask the mentee if she or he has any questions about you or the program.

Remember that this first meeting may feel a little awkward or uncomfortable, but don't get discouraged. You are planting the seeds for a relationship that will take time to grow.