

Giving the Young Person Voice and Choice in the Mentoring Relationship

In YouthBuild, as in all high-quality mentoring programs, young people are full partners in the process of deciding what activities you will do together. Giving your mentee voice and choice about activities will:

- Help build your friendship. It demonstrates that you value the young person's ideas and input and that you care about and respect him.
- Facilitate the development of decision-making and negotiation skills. These skills will in turn help YouthBuild students be successful in personal and professional relationships throughout their lives.

Some young people might be reluctant to drive decisions about match activities for a number of reasons:

- They don't want to seem rude. Often young people have been taught to let adults make all the decisions.
- It really is difficult for them to come up with ideas. Many YouthBuild students have had little opportunity to travel outside their neighborhoods and don't know what the possibilities might be.

Help your mentee make decisions with the following strategies:

- Provide a range of choices for possible activities you think your mentee will enjoy and let her choose among them.
- Create an "idea file" together. When your mentee is out of ideas, you can refer to it and choose something from the list.
- Listen. You can learn a lot about what might capture your mentee's interest as you get to know him better, which will help you come up with activities that complement those interests.
- Let your mentee know that her or his enjoyment is important to you. Some young people may feel they need to pick activities to please their mentors. Remind them that they are equal partners in the relationship.
- Encourage mentees to consider activities that can help them pursue their YouthBuild Life Plan goals.