

Finding Mentors, Finding Success

Facilitator's Guide

Overview

Many YouthBuild programs across the country have facilitated formal one-to-one and group mentoring activities by connecting students with caring adults, while other programs have taken a less formal approach utilizing staff as mentors and encouraging young people to find “natural mentors” in their networks. Whether young people in your program have had formal mentors, natural mentors, or are waiting to find their first mentor, successful people often have many mentors in their lives. The purpose of this unit is to teach young people how to find their own mentors throughout their lives.

The *Finding Mentors, Finding Success* guide features worksheets and planning tools that can help students find a mentor. As the facilitator of this unit, your role is to explain the concepts in the guide and help supplement the content with the activities presented here.

Activity Instructions

1. Introduction

Activity: My Mentoring Story

Set-up: Option 1: Copies of the “My Mentoring Story an Interview with Tommy McClam, Director of the YouthBuild USA National Mentoring Alliance” worksheet for each student to read on their own.

Option 2: Read the story aloud to the class or students read the story aloud in a round-robin format.

Option 3: Tell your own mentoring story by using the prompts from the “My Mentoring Story” handout.

Directions for facilitator:

Begin the session by explaining that they will be learning about finding mentors. Asking other people about mentors they have had in their life can be a great way to learn about the different roles mentors can play. Have students read or listen to the mentoring story.

Optional: Debrief this activity by using the following prompts:

- How did this person meet their mentor?
- What did the mentee gain from the relationship?
- What did the mentor gain from the relationship?
- When did they realize this person was their mentor?
- How did this person impact the mentee's life?

Handout: My Mentoring Story...

An Interview with Tommy McClam, Director of the YouthBuild USA National Mentoring Alliance

Where were you at in your life when you found your mentor? What were you struggling with/needing support for/unsure about?

I was in high school when I first met Audley McLean, a successful businessman (which I didn't realize at the time) and neighbor who lived down the street. I was struggling with direction in life, and growing up in a community where I had to make a decision between gang life, drug life, and "doing it right." This was a difficult decision for me to make on my own; everyone around me was doing what they had to do to survive.

How did you meet your mentor?

Audley lived down the street, the fourth house from the corner. He lived there for a number of years before I even noticed him. I had to walk past his house every day on my way to school, the store, and to the playground. One day, he just started talking with me. On that day, I was on the way to do something with some other guys that would have changed my life forever (not in a positive way). Later that evening, craziness broke out in the neighborhood, and I was spared from all that, because Audley took the time to talk to me. Maybe he knew something was up, and saw something in me that I did not see in myself. I don't know but it changed the direction of my life.

From that day on, Audley trusted me to protect his first grade daughter by walking her to and from school. He trusted me enough to take care of someone he valued, his daughter, and this allowed me to give something to the relationship. I believe it is important that a mentee be allowed to give something back to the mentor/mentee relationship.

How did you form a relationship with this person? How did you go about engaging them?

I didn't go out and ask him to be a mentor. I don't remember that conversation ever happening; it developed naturally. Over time, we both knew where we were in the relationship, but we didn't call it "mentoring" back then. Only when I started mentoring young people ("formal mentoring") in my early twenties, I began to understand that I had been in a mentoring relationship with Audley for five or six years.

But early on, Audley just took an interest in me and directed me. Then I began to see the value of having him in my life. What he did was push and encourage me in areas that I would have never been aware of without his help and guidance.

For example, he told me one day to meet him at an event at a hotel. He gave me a 3X5 card, with about two lines of text to read when he called on me. He told me ahead of time to wear a button down shirt and pair of khaki pants. He gave me a coat and tie when I got there. He then had me go into the ballroom area and there were about 3000 people in the ballroom. He told me to go out and recite the lines on the card and introduce him. He told me that he would be standing on the side of the stage and if I needed him, to just look over and he would come out and help me. I had a very bad stuttering problem, but he said to me, "Just slow down and let your mouth catch up with your brain."

I wanted to do well because he wanted me to do well. When I stepped out on to the stage I had never seen so many people in my life. It's something I'll never forget – he pushed me past my fears and stuttering problem. It was the most important two lines I ever read in my life.

One day many years later I called him – I was getting ready to speak to a large crowd in a stadium. He asked me if I was scared. I said, “No, I just have to let my mouth catch up with my brain.” We laughed and I hung up before addressing an audience of over 20,000 people.

What did your mentor provide to you? Did it match your expectations?

Early on, we met once a week. We went to the same church in those days, so we would naturally see each other at least after church on Sundays, but usually more than that.

As years went by, we would talk weekly by phone, then met monthly. He was one of the top sales people for New York Life Insurance and later a VP at HSBC, so he moved around a lot. Eventually, we moved into a regular check-in call (at least monthly), even to this day, forty years later!

My expectation was someone to help me find my way and someone I could talk to; someone I could be myself with and not be afraid to do so. His presence gave me an excuse to not do what everyone else was doing growing up in the 'hood. He gave me high cover to make different kinds of decisions. He made it normal to be abnormal. I believe he gave me that responsibility to take his daughter to school to make sure I went to school.

We had nothing in common (on paper) – he grew up in Jamaica, I grew up in Buffalo; he liked cricket, I liked basketball; but he did have what I needed in terms of encouragement and direction for life.

At times I struggled with balancing time with my own family and with my mentor. I wanted to make sure my family did not feel overshadowed by a mentor. I didn't want anyone to feel slighted. I don't know if they ever felt that way – my father and Audley got along very well. But even back then, when I was a teenager, I felt it was important to not attach too much to my mentor and throw away all those who helped me get to that point. I needed my mentor because my family didn't have the life experiences to take me where I needed and wanted to go. But that doesn't mean they didn't love and care about me.

I believe Audley and my father talked with each other about me. Between the two of them, I was able to make the difficult choices. Audley was reinforcing what my father already told us we should and should not do.

How did the relationship change over time? Is the relationship ongoing today?

He's helped me through education decisions (college was mandatory!), job changes, and the loss of our first child, and more recently, the death of my mentee who we lost through cancer. My mentor played an extremely important part in my personal development. He schooled me in business, and I have an inclination for accounting because his background is accounting. I thought if he can do it I can do it. He was not only a mentor but became a role model.

Over time, Audley moved from being a mentor to more of a friend and confidante. He's almost 80 now and calls me to give me advice and ask me for advice on financial matters, life changes, etc. I still respect him as my mentor, and I still need to see him at least once a year, no matter where I am. Since 16, every year I get a birthday card (40 cards!), and every year my wife and I get an anniversary card. This year, we will be celebrating our 33rd anniversary with Audley in Orlando.

2. Why should I get a mentor?

Activity 1: Where could a mentor help me out?

Set-up: Copies of the “Where could a Mentor Help Me Out?” worksheet for each student in the class (or they can use the one in their booklets)

Directions for facilitator: Once students have completed their worksheets debrief this activity by using the following prompts:

- Read the major area titles (career, family, community, etc.) and ask students to raise their hands if they identified something from this area as a top priority in their “Top 5 List”.
 - Make connections between the priority areas and groups of students and suggest that they can support each other as they work on similar goals.
- Ask students to pair up with someone else who shares the same top priority. Ask students to share their “Top 5 List” with their partner and describe how they think a mentor could help them in this area. Be sure both partners get a chance to share.
- Bring the group back together and ask for a few report outs from the pair-share conversations.

Activity 2: What can I bring to the mentoring relationship?

Set-up: Copies of the “What Can I Bring to the Mentoring Relationship?” worksheet for each student in the class (or they can use the one in their booklets); whiteboard or chart paper and markers for recording responses (optional).

Directions for facilitator: Before asking students to complete the worksheet get them thinking by asking for a few shout outs from the worksheet categories and record them on the whiteboard or chart paper (optional). Questions might include:

- What personality traits would make you a good mentee?
- What have you learned from life experience that you could share with others?
- Name a skill that you could offer to teach your mentor?
- What interests you? What are you passionate about? What do you like to do in your free time?

3. Who might make a good mentor?

Activity: What do I want in a mentor?

Set-up: Copies of the “What do I want in a mentor?” worksheet for each student in the class (or they can use the ones in their booklets); whiteboard or chart paper and markers for recording responses

Directions for facilitator: Once students have completed their worksheets, debrief this activity by using the following prompts:

- Ask students to shout out items that they included on their “Top 5 Most Important Characteristics” lists. Record these items on a whiteboard or chart paper.
- Next, ask students to shout out items that they included on their “5 Least Important Characteristics” lists. Record these items on a whiteboard or chart paper.
- Ask for example of items that are “must haves” and put a star next to them on the list.

- Ask for examples of items that are “deal breakers” and put an “x” next to them on the list.
 - Why are these characteristics “must haves?”
 - Why are these characteristics “deal breakers?”
- What happens if you meet someone who does not have all the characteristics you are looking for?

4. Where can I find mentors?

Activity: Map Your Connections

Set-up: Copies of the “Map Your Connections” worksheet for each student in the class (or they can use the ones in their booklets)

Optional: Work with the counseling staff to find out about upcoming networking opportunities for your students.

Directions for facilitator: Once students have completed their maps debrief the activity using the following prompts:

- How many of you have more connections than you originally thought?
- Thinking about the goal you identified in the “Who might make a good mentor” activity, do you have the right connections to lead you to people who can help you with your goal?
 - If yes, is there someone you would like to get to know better and potentially consider asking to be your mentor?
 - If not, how could you expand your connections in that area? (Encourage students to review the list of “Ways to make connections” and brainstorm.)
- What other activities did you list as ways to increase your connections?
- Optional: Share upcoming networking opportunities with students.

5. How and when should I ask someone to be my mentor?

Activity: Asking someone to be your mentor

Set-up: Copies of the “Ask” Role Play Scenarios (see page 7) for each pair of students to have at least one scenario. Cut the scenarios into strips.

Directions for facilitator: Organize students into pairs. Have each pair choose who will play the mentor and who will play the mentee. Have students conduct the first round of role plays. Shuffle the pairs so that each person has a new partner, a new role, and a new scenario. Secretly assign one or two mentors be “too busy” to mentor. Conduct round two of role plays. Before debriefing have students read each profile so others can hear the examples.

Debrief the activity using the following prompts:

- How did it feel to ask this person to be your mentor?
- How did it feel to be asked to be a mentor?
- What would you change if you had the opportunity to do this in real life?
- For those of you that had mentors that said no, how did you react to their response?

“Ask” Role Play Scenarios

1. H.S. Teacher

“S” is a high school art teacher. You met your freshman year of high school when you took painting class but lost touch once you went to YouthBuild. You have always admired his positive attitude and artistic ability and the fact that he was able to find a job helping kids and doing art. You recently ran into this person again at your sister’s high school graduation and later met for coffee a few times. Since you are heading to college this fall to become a teacher you think he would make a great mentor. You are ready to make the “ask.”

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2. Tile Setter

“K” is a tile setter and has been working in the industry for 20 years. You met recently on the job site when you were assigned to the tile work and really admired K’s attention to detail and knowledge of techniques for laying specialty tile. Plus K tells funny jokes. Because of this experience you are interested in pursuing a career as a tile setter. You have worked together now on and off for three months and will be graduating soon. You are ready to make the “ask.”

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3. Young Parent

“B” is a parent to a five year-old girl. You met at the playground near your house and have enjoyed discussing current events and parenting joys and struggles. B seems to have a great approach to parenting and you have already learned a lot from B about child development and managing stress. You would like to set up a day each week when you two meet to discuss parenting and get some exercise. You are ready to make the “ask.”

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4. Entrepreneur

“R” is a successful inventor who designed and patented a special shoe insert for runners. You recently met when your uncle introduced the two of you at a family celebration. You started talking with “R” and realized that he has lot of knowledge about designing, patenting, and marketing a product. You have several ideas for new products and want to pursue developing them. You started following “R” on Twitter and connected on Linked In. You have had a few on-line discussions and will be meeting for coffee next week. You are ready to make the “ask.”

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5. YouthBuild Alumni

“A” is a graduate of YouthBuild who successfully completed an associate’s degree and has been working as a radiologic technologist (x-ray technician) for the last year. You recently met when A did a presentation about her job to your class. You grew up in the same neighborhood and have a similar family background. “A” is the first person in her family to go to college and it was not easy. You have always been interested in the medical field and thought you wanted to be a physical therapist but this job interests you. You have emailed back and forth, met for a job shadow at the hospital. You are ready to make the “ask.”

6. What should I do to get the most out of my mentor?

Activity: Review the tips for getting the most out of a mentor found in the last section of students' booklets. Ask if they have any questions about these tips and ask them to brainstorm additional tips.

Final Activity

Stories of Finding a Mentor (Practice Scenarios) – These scenarios act as a “capstone” for the unit. Students should be able to flesh out these stories based on the content they have covered previously.

Set-up: Copies of the Stories of Finding a Mentor scenarios (see page 9)

Directions for facilitator: Students will complete the stories on the worksheet on their own. Once they have finished the worksheet, group them into three teams and assign each team a scenario to discuss. Ask each team member to share how he or she completed the scenario with the group. Once the groups are finished sharing, ask them to choose their favorite story from the group or combine several stories to make a “super” story. A spokesperson from each group reads its final story to the class.

Stories of Finding a Mentor

Scenario 1

“J” heard about a conference for computer programmers from a friend. He checked the event website and found out that they have a work-trade option for students. He can attend the event for free if he spends time helping at the registration desk each morning. While he is at the conference he makes new connections by [complete the story below]

Scenario 2

“A” would like to learn about investing money. She doesn’t have any money to invest yet but would like to be prepared when the time comes. She has a hunch that there is more to learn than what she can find on the internet. She finds a mentor by... [complete the story below]

Scenario 3

“T” is an amazing baker and wants to become a pastry chef and someday open a bakery in his neighborhood. He has enrolled in his first term of culinary arts classes at the local culinary school. “T” makes a list of criteria he would like to see in a mentor for his career. “T”’s list includes.... [complete the story below]