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WYSE TRAINING COMPONENT 3:

The Role of a WYSE Mentor

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Who Is a Role Model?

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

Overview: Mentors should keep in mind that as mentors they may be perceived as role models by their mentees. It's important to understand how the expectations for a role model come into play and for mentors to identify who they see as their own role models.

Role models come into young people's lives in a variety of ways. They are educators, civic leaders, mothers, fathers, clergy, peers, and ordinary people encountered in everyday life. These top five qualities were the leading factors that identify role models for young people.

Passion and Ability to Inspire

Role models show passion for their work and have the capacity to infect others with their passion.

Clear Set of Values

Role models live their values in the world. Children admire people who act in ways that support their beliefs. It helps them understand how their own values are part of who they are and how they might seek fulfilling roles as adults.

Commitment to Community

Role models are *other-focused* as opposed to *self-focused*. They are usually active in their communities, freely giving of their time and talents to benefit people.

Selflessness and Acceptance of Others

Related to the idea that role models show a commitment to their communities, students also admire people for their selflessness and acceptance of others who were different from them.

Ability to Overcome Obstacles

As Booker T. Washington once said, "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which one has overcome." Young people admire people who show them that success is possible.



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The Five Stages of Mentorship

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

One of the most important things to remember about being a mentor is that your mentee may not immediately want to be your best friend. Being a mentor is a gradual process that takes time and a great deal of effort on your part. Typical mentoring relationships go through a series of phases:

1. Initiation
2. Development
3. Disillusionment or realistic appraisal
4. Parting
5. Transformation

1. Initiation

In the first stage, mentor and mentee start their relationship. In some cases, the mentee isn't sure about committing to this relationship, and doesn't know whether the mentor is someone they can trust or that can offer them something valuable. This phase can continue for weeks. It is important in this phase to plan group activities, with at least two mentees and two mentors present – this way the mentee doesn't feel uncomfortable.

Tips: Practice active listening.

- Try and find common interests.
- Build trust by always following through and having consistent attendance at session.
- Help the mentee feel comfortable by talking about uncomplicated subjects.
- Together decide the activities you will do together.
- Remember that you develop the direction for the relationship.
- Together set expectations and boundaries and decide where and when to meet.



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2. Development This is the longest stage of the relationship. During this phase, the mentor and mentee are meeting, learning from each other, and enjoying their relationship. The mentee is developing skills, gaining knowledge, and increasing self-confidence.

Tips:

- The mentor can keep momentum going and relationship interesting.
- The mentor can encourage the mentee.
- The mentor can perhaps offer advice.
- The mentor can introduce the mentee to others.
- The mentor can encourage the mentee to teach the mentor something, demonstrating that she values what the mentee knows and has experienced.

3. Disillusionment or Realistic Appraisal

At some point, the pair is likely to run into this phase, especially in long-term relationships. The mentee tires of being the learner and is ready to strike out on her own. This is a very healthy stage in mentoring relationships.

Key Tasks

- The mentor can talk about the value of formal relationships for a set period and how that will change
- The mentor can express confidence that the mentee has learned and can handle new situations.
- The mentor can ask for feedback on the relationship.



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4. Parting

In this stage, the mentee separates from the mentor. In WYSE, this separation occurs somewhat artificially at the end of the year, perhaps before the relationship is truly over. But physical separation does not need to translate into psychological disengagement. Although the formal part of the relationship ends, the most committed WYSE mentors simply see this stage as the relationship moving into the next phase. Some of our mentors have had the same mentee for the last five years!

Key Tasks

- The mentor can prepare in advance.
- The mentor can summarize the progress and growth seen.
- The mentor can talk about next steps, including how the relationship will be in the future.
- The mentor can help the mentee identify other mentors, both formal and informal.

5. Transformation

In this phase, the mentor and mentee become more like peers or friends, although the relationship is unlikely to be completely equal. The mentee may even provide mentoring for the mentor. Even if the two never meet again, the mentor usually remains in the mentees mind as someone who made a difference.

Key Tasks

- The mentor can avoid expecting much from the mentee in the way of thanks or acknowledgement, or from anyone else in terms of recognition. (*The choice is yours to give, but you can't expect anything in return.*)
- The mentor should maintain mentees information and show enthusiasm if contacted.
- The mentor can decide how much of herself to share in this new phase of the relationship.



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Mentoring Is in the Attitude

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

CHALLENGE: Looking at the statistics and “messages of despair”, not with a response of “Oh, how awful,” but rather, “where can I begin?”

LISTEN: Encouraging your mentee to talk about her hopes, fears and concern; giving her room to voice what she may be trying to articulate for the first time.

EMPATHIZE: Understanding and accepting your mentee’s feelings; not judging or pitying her.

BE ACCOUNTABLE: Making appointments with your mentee a priority; setting an example about responsibility, enabling trust to grow. Trusting that the interaction made with the mentee can make a difference without expecting her to weekly proof.

BE ATTENTIVE: Giving sincere and consistent attention to your mentee, who may not receive enough from other adults; encouraging her to recognize she is worthy of concern.

EDUCATE: Evaluating educational options; directing mentee to resources; helping your mentee stay in school. Being a role model as a woman continuing her education beyond high school.

INSPIRE: Trusting your instincts in creating positive experiences. Finding different ways to do all of the above. You and your mentee, together, will create the positive action.

NEVER GIVE UP! It isn't helpful to assume that person is hopeless or will never change. No matter what the mentees say or do, mentors should retain faith in the mentees.



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Tips for Successful Mentorship

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

- 1. Create A Relationship:** Establishing an accepting, supportive relationship takes time. Don't be disappointed if your mentee doesn't respond to you right away.
- 2. Establish Trust:** Consistency, confidentiality, and respect are the keys to trust. If your mentee starts talking about sensitive topics, make her aware of your obligation to report abuse to the police, under your states reporting law.
- 3. Avoid Judging:** Judging may make the mentee feel alienated or bad about themselves. You are there to encourage, question, and challenge your mentee; not to tell her what to do.
- 4. Be Honest:** Be honest with your mentee about what you know and don't know. Be yourself.
- 5. Avoid "Yes" and "No" Questions:** Open-ended questions stimulate richer responses. Explore feeling and thoughts, these can never be wrong.
- 6. Concentrate On "I" Statements, Not "You" Statements:** You are not the other person and you do not know how she feels or what she is going through. Talk about how you might feel and let her say how she feels.
- 7. Invite Mentees to Evaluate Their Own Behavior:** Encourage the mentees to assess their behavior and to determine how well it is working for them. If the mentee comes to the realization that they are not getting what they want from their behavior, there is a real possibility for positive change to occur.



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What WYSE Mentors Are Not

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

As a mentor, you may, at times, find your role ambiguous or frustrating. Most of the young women we serve confront, or will soon confront, a multitude of problems including sexism and racism. You will not be able to solve all of the problems your mentee will face, and you shouldn't feel you are a superhero.

Mentors shouldn't assume the role of a parent, professional counselor, or social worker. At times, you'll probably be tempted to lose sight of the boundaries of your role. This might be particularly true during a crisis for your mentee or her family.

Remember: good intentions, can, at times, backfire. For example, you may think you are being helpful if you take it upon yourself to discuss your mentee's problem with your grandmother, who is very worried. However, unless your mentee wants you to talk to her grandmother, you will only give her a reason not to trust you.



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Active Listening

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

A conversation with someone is an active exchange of words, thoughts, ideas and nonverbal cues. Below are the essential elements of effective communication that is necessary for both a mentor- facilitator and a mentor interacting with her mentee(s).

Constructive Assertiveness

Good facilitators are clear about their objectives and desires without trampling on other's points of view. They anticipate what questions will come up and how to problem solve the day to day occurrences and the bigger issues faced in our WYSE sessions. Constructive assertiveness means to be productive and positive in framing your assertiveness. Assertiveness is a type of way to behave. It can be placed on a continuum in the middle between aggressive and meek.

Giving Psychological Air - Listening Skills

Specialists have said that listening well to someone is giving them "psychological air". It provides a safe space for them to release their thoughts and feel validated. Mentors and mentees need to feel they are valued for their ideas and opinions. Listening is a key to communicating and shows by how you respond both verbally and nonverbally. Eye contact is very important to convey you are paying attention to someone. Repeating part of what the other person said can show that you understand what was said and that you can easily recall it.

Empathetic Responding

Empathy is defined as showing understanding and compassion. This type of responding should be part of your communication skills. Instead of judgment, advisement, anger, or ambivalence, a mentor should approach their mentee with an open mind and open heart.



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Conversation Checklist

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

What to Do in a Conversation with Your Mentee

- ✓ Paraphrasing
- ✓ Door Opening
- ✓ Probing
- ✓ Perception-Checking
- ✓ Verbal Communication
- ✓ Non-Verbal Communication
- ✓ Open-Ended Questions
- ✓ “I” Messages

What Not to Do in a Conversation with Your Mentee

- x Directing, Ordering, Commanding
- x Threatening, Warning, Punishing Moralizing, Preaching,
- x Obliging Persuading with Logic, Arguing, Instructing,
- x Lecturing Advising, Recommending, Providing Answers or Solutions
- x Criticizing, Name-calling, Blaming, Evaluating, Judging Negatively, Disapproving
Kidding, Teasing, Making Light Of, Joking, Using Sarcasm
- x Diagnosing, Psychoanalyzing, Interpreting, Reading-In
- x “You” Messages

Suggestions for talking with your mentee:

At first, it may be easiest to talk about more general or seemingly superficial topics, such as what movies she likes, what kind of food she likes to eat, who her best friends are, what she likes to do after school and on the weekends, etc. If your mentee tends to answer all of your questions with very simple answers or without enthusiasm, you can start to talk about yourself. A good way to get your mentee to talk is to start by telling your opinion, then asking a question about the same topic. For example, “I think that reality TV is so ridiculous, what so you think about it?”

When your mentee responds to one of your questions, it helps to focus on her responses and elaborate on her opinions. Ask more questions and show that you are



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interested in what she thinks. If you become absolutely stuck in conversation...you can tell a funny story about yourself or your friends, ask more questions, start talking about yourself, or bring up new pop culture stuff that she would know about.

Do not be shy about talking with your mentee about session topics! It is important that you are a resource for your mentee and you shouldn't feel awkward about discussing WYSE stuff with her. If she doesn't want to talk about a specific topic, that's okay, but you can totally ask her opinions on things discussed at session. Just say, "What did you think about the birth control session? What had you heard beforehand? What do your friends think about that kind of stuff? Etc."

Be honest and open with your mentee. Talking may be difficult at first, but if you are patient and persistent (not pushy), you and your mentee will become more comfortable around each other and conversation will start to come easier. Always pay attention to things that your mentee shows interest in and think of ways to get her talking about the things that she cares about.

How to establish a good relationship with your mentee:

When you get your mentee, hug her! Be more excited than you have ever been for anything in your life! Make a real effort to get to know her right off the bat. She will appreciate that you remember her fun facts and it will show that you are interested in her.

Make sure to establish a good relationship with your mentee's parents as soon as possible. This may require persistence, but it will make your individual outings go a lot smoother. Find a good way for you and your mentee to communicate with each other at least once a week. If you talk about it beforehand, you won't be constantly frustrated trying to get a hold of her.

When hanging out with your mentee, try to encourage her schoolwork and any hobbies that she may have. Helping her with her homework or making crafts, cooking, or watching a Broadway musical can be a great way to bond with her, and it will help her to focus on positive things outside of school. Be careful not to assume anything about your mentee and keep a very open mind.



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The Facilitator Toolkit

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

When facilitating discussions about tough topics, it can be tricky to help each participant connect with the material. These tools will help you learn how to direct discussion and create an open environment for sharing.

the hand – “yourself as a tool”

Setting the tone with body language, eye contact, and tone of voice. Using your personal style to develop a sense of comfort. Examples: smiling, warm eye contact, attentive body language, general aura of welcoming people and their comments.

the ally – “your partner”

Forming a good partnership with your co-facilitators is crucial. Planning, dividing up tasks and roles, supporting each other, checking in with each other, and modeling respect and good communication (verbal and nonverbal). During discussions, make eye contact with your partners. It’s okay to check in with them in front of the group. Example: “Maggie, I’m wondering if we should move onto the next section, since this topic will be covered then.”

the support – “establishing a secure structure”

Forming ground rules, physically setting up the space, making a circle; all in order to create a safe and comfortable space.

the screwdriver – “deepening a point”

Asking open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and redirection questions for the purpose of deepening discussion. Example: “Well, since it sounds like we all agree that we need to take personal responsibility, I’m wondering: How do you think we should do that?”

the balance – “equalizing”

Making sure participation is balanced. Convey inclusion and warmth non-verbally by making eye contact with ALL group members, etc. Also, verbally convey your desire to hear from everyone. Examples: “I notice that we’ve heard mostly from this side of the room – what do the rest of you have to say about this?” or “Do we all feel this way about this issue? Anyone who sees it differently?”

the prism – “splitting into many points of view”

Using a fact or statement to hear many opinions. Creating a multi-dimensional discussion from something that might have been just a block statement. Deepening and showing a kaleidoscope of ideas from what someone has said. Example: “Maria gave an excellent example of how to combat sexism – what other ways do you think we can combat sexism?” or “There’s a lot to what you just said, so let’s break that down into smaller components...”



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the hammer – “driving a point”

Paraphrasing, summarizing what you hear. In other words, pinpointing what has been said, ensuring accuracy (it’s okay to point out an inconsistency). Example: “So, basically, we’re saying that you should only have sex if you want to and feel ready to do it. Does everyone agree with that?”

the jack – “lifting support”

Affirming participants non-verbally and verbally with comments, nods, etc. Could be individual or to the group. The purpose of the lifting support is to validate group members and encourage discussion. Examples: “This is a great discussion we’re having here!” “You’re making a really mature observation!”

the adjustable wrench – “getting something that fits”

Being flexible by reading the group and adjusting your approach to fit what is happening. Dealing with silence by commenting on it or checking in with the group; moving to a leading question; adjusting the planned schedule (extending a hot discussion or cutting short one that becomes irrelevant).

the mirror – “reflecting back”

Especially useful when a difficult or challenging remark has been made. Repeating what someone has said and bouncing it back to the group to avoid reacting or stating your own opinion. Example: “So you’re saying that sometimes it is a person’s own fault, even if they are the victim. What do others think of that?” This tool is often useful if you feel that there may be a counterpoint or alternative opinion to what has been said. Again, you shouldn’t sound oppositional to the comment, just reflective and non-judgmental.

the saw – “cutting where something needs to be cut”

Time-keeping, either following the schedule or determining when to appropriately get closure and move on. Example: “I’m sorry, this is a great discussion we’re having, but because we don’t have a lot of time left we really need to move on to the next question [or activity].” You can sometimes add, “We can get at some of these ideas later in the session.”

the ruler – “taking measurements”

Observing the ‘vibe’ or process, commenting on the process, clarifying points that seem to have been misunderstood or missed altogether. Examples: “I see a lot of confused looks on people’s faces, should we go over that again?” “It seems like everyone got more interested when we brought up this topic.” Sometimes just the observation does the trick, other times these comments can be used in conjunction with the adjustable wrench, the prism, or the screwdriver.



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ACTIVITY: Mentorship Brainstorm

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

Objectives:

To identify qualities of effective mentors

To explore roles that mentors can play in the lives of children and youth

Length: About 30 minutes

You will need to supply:

- 3" x 5" index cards
- Newsprint and markers

Steps:

1. Give each participant an index card. Ask them to think back to when they were in middle school:
 - Identify one person, preferably someone who is not a relative, who was a kind of mentor for them
 - Think about why that person was important to them and the result for them of that person's interest
 - Recall the *qualities* of that person that made her or him so valued, and write down two or three of those qualities on the index card

2. Have participants talk briefly about the mentor they identified and the qualities they valued. As they speak, list those qualities on the newsprint. When a quality is repeated, put a check mark next to it each time it is mentioned. (For example, the first time someone says "good listener," write that phrase. Each time someone else identifies this quality in his or her mentor, put a check mark by the phrase.)

3. Review the items on the list. Note which were mentioned most often. Then have the participants identify which of the qualities might be categorized as "communication skills," such as listening, talking, asking questions, and being nonjudgmental.

4. Ask participants—again thinking back to the person they identified—to identify the *roles* a mentor can play in an adolescent's life. List their responses on the newsprint. (These might include friend, big brother, big sister, positive role model, resource, guide.) Lead a brief discussion about what each of these roles might involve. Be sure participants see that a mentor is NOT a parent, teacher, or counselor.

5. Allow time for participants to talk about their hopes and concerns in their new role. For example, which of the qualities that they admired in their "mentors" do they feel fairly confident they possess? Which do they need to work on developing? What other concerns do they have about their role?



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ACTIVITY: Identifying Role Models

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

Overview: Mentors will identify strong examples of role models and why.

Directions: On a wall, tape up different pictures or write names of famous women. They could be from all backgrounds, different degrees of fame or success. From Marge Simpson to Michelle Obama, Pair up mentors into small groups of 2-4. In each group, mentors choose 1 of the women they identify as a role model and why. Encourage mentors to think outside the box.

Discussion:

1. Who did you choose as a role model? Why?
2. Who as not chosen? Why?
3. Which of these women are leaders?
4. What expectations do we have for role models? What pressures do they face?



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ACTIVITY: A Day in the Life of a WYSE Mentor

Mentor Training Component: 3. The Role of a WYSE Mentor

Overview: Divide mentors into small groups, making sure there is at least one returning/experienced WYSE mentor in each group. The experienced WYSE mentor should use this time to briefly describe a typical day as a WYSE mentor. New mentors can use this time to ask specific and informal questions and get advice on what to expect. Possible points of discussion:

- How do you break the ice with your mentee?
- Where do you spend time with your mentee outside of session?
- What is your favorite WYSE game or activity?
- Has there ever been a time where you felt unprepared during session?
What did you do?
- What are some creative ways to connect and spend time with my mentee?
- What do mentors do for fun/bonding outside session?