

Mentoring *Matters*

An e-newsletter for the mentors of Chester County Futures, Inc.

October 2008

Teens and Communication

tips for effectively bridging the communication divide

Teens feel adults effectively communicate with them when they have:

good communication skills,
a willingness to listen,
a sense of humor,
flexibility, and
the ability to keep an open mind.

Adults feel teens effectively communicate with them when they have:

good communication skills,
self-confidence,
self-motivation,
maturity,
personable,
shows respect, and
energetic.

Active Listening

Three types of responses in active listening

Active listening is about focusing and concentrating on the person who is speaking. The way mentors can show they

are actively listening is to do the following:

- Ask good questions,
- Paraphrase, and
- Empathize with their teen.

First, as a mentor you train yourself to ask questions in a way that allows your teen to feel comfortable about answering truthfully—and about using his or her own terms. Second, you restate what you heard to make sure

that you understood what your teen was saying. Finally, you need to take the time to see things through your teen's eyes and get some understanding of how your adult-in-process is experiencing a given situation.

a. Asking questions

Active listening requires the speaker to look at the hidden meaning behind the question. People often ask questions that might make others feel pressured into coming up with the correct response. For example, you might feel pressured when someone close to you asks, "Do you think I have gained weight?" These types of questions tend to put the person being asked on the defensive. Often the person may shut off communication in order to protect him or herself.

c. Empathizing

Empathizing means that, as a mentor, you are able to put yourself in your teen's shoes. To empathize you must ignore your own adult perception of the situation for the moment and accept your teen's feelings, thoughts, and ideas of the situation as yours. See it with a teen's eyes—during your discussion.

- Empathizing does not mean you need to agree with your teen.
- Empathizing does not mean you need to give in to your teen or allow her or her to set his or her own rules—to avoid confrontation.

• Empathizing means you do not dismiss what your teen says as ridiculous or silly.

Your acceptance of your teenager's thoughts, ideas, and feelings increases the chance that your teen will talk to you about the problems and issues that he or she is facing. It is easy to know you are being empathic because:

- Your body language and tone match
- Your tone and your feelings match
- You are focused on what your teen is saying and meaning
- You do not impose your feelings, thoughts, and ideas throughout the conversation
- You refrain from immediately giving advice
- You are tired after listening because it takes a great deal of energy
- You ask yourself if you would make that same statement to an adult. If not, then think twice about making it.

FREE Opportunities for Mentors and Students

Peoples Light & Theatre Company

FREE for mentors and students

Tickets are available for any performance, with the exception of Saturday evenings.

To reserve tickets for a performance, please contact Holly Parker at 610-621-2683 or mentoroffice@ccfutures.org.

Save The Date(s)!!!!

Mentor Roundtable

November 17, 2008

West Goshen Township Building

Paoli Pike, West Chester

6:00 pm

Meet with your fellow mentors to discuss various joys and concerns and share tips. One of our seasoned mentors will be available to answer your questions. **RSVP to Holly Parker at 610-621-2683 or hparker@ccfutures.org**

Longwood Gardens Holiday Spectacular

December 6, 2008

Longwood Gardens

5:00 pm ticket distribution

Longwood Gardens Main Lobby (look for the blue and yellow balloons)
Join us with your student and family for an evening at Longwood Gardens. Tickets are free for mentors and students! Additional tickets can be purchased for a \$5 donation. **RSVP to Holly Parker at 610-621-2683 or hparker@ccfutures.org**

We want to hear from you!! Your feedback is crucial to the success of the Chester County Futures program.

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News You Can Use...

Popular Mentoring Related Movies to Share with your Student

Finding Forrester, Tuesdays with Morrie, School of Rock, Miracle, Remember the Titans, Rocky, Antwone Fisher, Dead Poets' Society, Good Will Hunting, Lean on Me, Mr. Holland's Opus, Mona Lisa Smile, The Hurricane, The Karate Kid, The Legend of Bagger Vance, Goodbye, Mr. Chips.

Ten Tips for Effective Mentoring

1. Maintain Regular Contact.

Mentors should assume they are the givers in the relationship. Consistent contact models dependability and builds trust.

2. Always be honest.

Trust and respect are the foundations on which mentorship is built.

3. Avoid being judgmental of a student's life situation.

Acceptance without conditions communicates that your concern comes without strings attached.

4. Avoid excessive gift giving.

And don't do for a student what s/he can do for him/herself. Your greatest gift is to help a person discover his/her own solutions to the problems.

5. Don't expect to have all the answers.

Sometimes just listening attentively is all people need.

6. Help your student access resources and expand support networks.

Discuss the importance of maintaining positive relationships.

7. Be clear about your expectations and your boundaries.

Set up ground rules and communicate them.

8. Avoid being overwhelmed by your student's problems.

Remain calm and dispassionate to help students solve problems.

9. Respect confidentiality.

Good friends do.

10. If the relationship seems to stall, hang in there.

Contact Futures if problems or concerns arise.

The Benefits of High Quality Mentoring

Less likely to initiate drug and alcohol use

Less likely to hit someone

Skipped fewer days of school

Felt more competent about their ability to do well in school

Received slightly higher grades

Reported more positive relationships with friends and parents

Improved academic performance

More likely to participate in college preparatory activities

More likely to attend college immediately after high school

graduation

Remained longer in college

Better attitudes toward school and the future

Used substances less frequently

Better school attendance

Better attitudes toward school, their family and communities

Better school attendance

Public/Private Ventures, 1998

HAVE QUESTIONS??

We would like to feature your mentoring related questions in our monthly newsletter.

It is important that we address your concerns. Please submit your questions to

Holly Parker at

mentoroffice@ccfutures.org