
Mentoring a Teenager

Helpful Tips for Mentors



1. Arrange a schedule of appointments, in which you will see your mentee(s) and make sure that you're keeping said schedule.

This means making sure that you and your mentee are seeing each other when and where you both plan on seeing each other, and also making sure that the time is spent efficiently by giving them the opportunity to talk about what's going on for them and any problems that they may have. If your mentee isn't turning up, then you should find out what's really going on; they might not be turning up because something is happening. You will need to be seen as a reliable person so make sure that you turn up, too, and show them that extra mile of respect by being punctual.

2. Build up trust with your mentee.

This is a two way thing- not only do you have to be trusted by your mentee, but you will need to trust them, too. You can start off by making sure that you're at least on friendly terms with each other. You can achieve this by, for example, contacting each other every now and then and start talking about general things and/or things that aren't too personal for them. You could even try to encourage them by mentioning any problems that you had during your teenage years. Once you're at that level with them, keep your promises, tell the truth, be reliable, and most of all, motivate them and give them advice wherever and whenever possible.

3. Listen to what they have to say with respect and understanding.

Wait until they've finished speaking until you start speaking yourself. Show interest in what they're saying and empathize with them where necessary; some teenagers don't really want too much pity but to know that they can just talk about it anyway can make them feel that little bit better; it will then be up to you to give them guidance and it will furthermore be up to them to listen to you and take on your words of wisdom in order to make them feel better.

4. Ask them about anything that's concerning you- even if they don't say it first.

If you notice any change in their behavior or any signs of physical harm, encourage them to talk about it to you and take action by intervening where and when necessary. Let them know that you do care about them and that you'll always be prepared to listen to them no matter what.

5. Encourage them.

This could be a lot of things. You could encourage them to, for example, plan their career, stop smoking, start attending school daily, have faith in themselves, etc. With encouragement, comes confidence- the confidence that they can change and be exactly who they want to be. Some teenagers wouldn't mind if you set them challenges that come with rewards, while others may find it "childish". Find out what methods work best for them and adapt to it. It helps to give them the mindset that if they live their lives "the right way", good things will come their way.

6. Have faith in them.

Believe that they do have the power to change and that it sometimes takes more than just a push but a great leap. Showing that you genuinely believe in them will help you build your relationship with your mentee, which will give them the confidence to confide in you more often and listen to what you have to say, which in turn would motivate them to become a step closer to change and/or figuring out their problems.

TIPS

- You won't get anything out of a teenager who doesn't trust you. Get an idea on how to build trust with them and try your best. Don't give up because not everyone will trust you within the same time frame.
- Communicate with your mentee on a regular basis so that you can become more comfortable with each other. Occasionally ask them how they are doing and make them feel as if they should be open to express any thoughts/opinions/situations/feelings to you.
- Not every teenager that you may mentor will be in a bad situation. Some of them might just be seeking some ways of boosting their confidence, for example, but that's not to say that they won't be. Be prepared.