

Effective Communication in the Mentor/Mentee Relationship Cycle

- Author:** Christian Rummell
- Duration:** 90 minutes
- Materials:** Chalkboard or newsprint, chalk or markers, note cards
- A/V:** None
- Room set-up:** Place chairs in rounds or U shape facing the chalkboard or newsprint
- Description:** Communication can be a challenge at any point in the mentor/mentee relationship. This session explores the mentoring relationship cycle and offers suggestions for promoting effective communication during each stage of the relationship. This session allows participants to gain time-appropriate communication skills and provides an opportunity to actively problem-solve current challenges they are facing.
- Session goals:** By the end of the session, participants will:
- Learn more about the mentor/mentee relationship cycle
 - Gain insight into strategic ways to communicate during each phase of the mentor/mentee relationship cycle
 - Actively problem-solve current communication challenges that mentors are facing

Agenda & instructions:

- 1. Introductions** **10 minutes**
Have the mentors introduce themselves and tell the group how long they have been matched with their mentees.
- 2. Presentation: Mentor/Mentee Relationship Cycle** **10 minutes**
Present the characteristics of the mentor/mentee relationship cycle, using Handout 1. Draw from your own mentoring relationships to give examples of behaviors found within this cycle.

3. Activity: Four Corners

20 Minutes

In each corner of the room, make a sign that reflects one of the four phases of the mentoring relationship. These signs should be large enough for each participant to read from across the room.

Ask the participants to move to the corner of the room that they feel best describes where they are in their mentoring relationship. If all started with their mentees at the same time, you can randomly assign corners to make sure that each “phase” is represented.

Once participants are at their “corner,” ask them to create a list of 5–10 communication challenges they face at that phase and 5–10 strategies they can use to promote effective communication in their relationship.

Walk around the room to offer assistance and give feedback.

4. Activity: Large Group Debrief

20 minutes

Have each group present its challenges and strategies. Ask other groups if they have any additional suggestions or possibilities for effective communication. After each group has finished its presentation, give the suggestions found in Handout 2. This can be done by either pre-writing the suggestions on newsprint and placing it next to the appropriate corner, or by simply reading the suggestions aloud. Pass the handout to participants after all categories have been read.

This can be a very difficult and rewarding part of the workshop, offering many great creative ideas. Your job, as the facilitator, is to keep your participants thinking strategically and make sure they don't get mired in the challenges.

4. Key Debrief Points

5 minutes

- Mentors should recognize communication challenges and potential solutions for each stage of their relationship
- Consistent use of effective communication is essential for building trust
- Mentors should always avoid prescriptive communication, especially during the first phases of the relationship
- Mentors should strategically use disclosure to build greater trust and strengthen the bond with their mentee

5. *Final Questions and Closing*

10 Minutes

Ask participants for any final questions or comments about what was just covered. Pass out a session evaluation form. Remind folks about any upcoming events/trainings as they leave.

Mentor/Mentee Relationship Cycle

<p><u>STAGE 1</u> The Beginning of the Match</p>	<p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to know each other • The first impressions • Trying to see the positive in the relationship • Bonding
<p><u>STAGE 2</u> Challenging and Testing</p>	<p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentee challenges • Testing phase • Rethinking first impressions • Difficult feelings or emotions may surface
<p><u>STAGE 3</u> "Real" Mentoring</p>	<p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship begins feeling right again • Trust is established • Growth in the mentee can be observed • A "deeper" bond and connection has been formed
<p><u>STAGE 4</u> Ending</p>	<p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for closure • Relationship may become deeper or mentee may start pulling away • Reflection

Mentor/Mentee Relationship Cycle Communication Tips

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>STAGE 1</u> The Beginning of the Match</p>	<p>Effective Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open-ended questions • Use body language that is open and not guarded • Active listening • Demonstrate empathy • Avoid “prescriptive” communication • Use prompts • Speak with language that you feel comfortable with • Don’t be afraid of silence
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>STAGE 2</u> Testing and Challenging</p>	<p>Effective Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be consistent in your communication, even if it is difficult • Demonstrate respect • Build in problem-solving techniques in your open-ended questions • Raise sensitive issues at the beginning of your interactions • Make sure to separate behaviors from who the mentee is • Disclosure of personal feelings and experiences when appropriate
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>STAGE 3</u> “Real” Mentoring</p>	<p>Effective Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with disclosures when appropriate • Avoid advising, and allow youth to actively problem solve • Build off your knowledge of your mentee’s strengths to foster deeper discussions • Give positive feedback and don’t be afraid to let your mentee know when something has hurt you.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>STAGE 4</u> Ending</p>	<p>Effective Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find common language to sum up your feelings • Provide feedback that describes growth that you observed • Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that your mentee may have

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RESOURCES

Becoming a Co-pilot: A Handbook for Mentors of Adolescents. Effective Skills and Strategies for Reaching and Encouraging Middle and High School Youth, by R.P. Bowman and S.C. Bowman (Chapin, SC: YouthLight, 1997).

<http://www.youthlight.com/main.html>

Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors, by L. Jucovy (Tech. Assistance Packet No. 4). (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, National Mentoring Center, 2001).

<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/packfour.pdf>

Designing an Effective Training Program for Your Mentors, (Folsom, CA: EMT Associates, 2001).

<http://emt.org/userfiles/DesigningAnEffectiveMentorTraining.pdf>

Mentoring Answer Book, by C. Klapperick (McHenry, IL: Big Brothers Big Sisters of McHenry County, 2002).

<http://www.mentoringanswerbook.com>

Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults, by K. Probst (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2006).

<http://www.search-institute.org/catalog/product.php?productid=16424>

Responsible Mentoring: Talking About Drugs, Sex and Other Difficult Issues, by D. North (Folsom, CA: EMT Associates, 2002).

<http://emt.org/userfiles/RespMentoringBooklet.pdf>

Strengthening Mentoring Programs: Resources and Mentor Training Materials. Module 9: Connecting and Communicating (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, National Mentoring Center).

<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/Mod9.pdf>

Talk Time: Student and Mentor Conversations, by K. Faggella and J. Horowitz (Westport, CT: Ideas 'R' Popping, 2000).

<http://www.creativementoring.org/cmweb/cmotherpublications.html>

Training New Mentors by L. Jucovy (Tech. Assistance Packet No. 5). (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, National Mentoring Center, 2001).

<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/packfive.pdf>

Volunteer Education and Development Manual, (Philadelphia, PA: Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 1991).

<http://www.bbbsa.org>