

## “What Should We Do?” Planning Activities With Your Mentee

- Author:** Amy Cannata
- Duration:** 60 minutes
- Preparation:** Create a list and/or calendar of activity ideas for matches. Photocopy the list/calendar for this session.  
*Option:* Invite project partners or representatives from local youth centers to present their onsite activity schedules to your mentors.
- Materials:** Chalkboard or newsprint, chalk or markers, note cards or scratch paper
- Room set-up:** Place chairs in U shape facing the chalkboard or newsprint.
- Description:** Planning and deciding on activities can be a major challenge for mentoring pairs. Mentoring research illustrates time and again that effective matches allow the mentee to be the primary decision maker for match activities.<sup>1</sup> Yet, mentees are not always aware of the variety of activities available. This is why the mentor plays an important role in providing ideas and parameters for each meeting. This session explores ways for matches to figure out “what to do.”
- Goals:** By the end of the session, participants will:
- Understand the resources available in their community for match activities
  - Learn how to help their mentee decide on match activities that are relevant to their interests

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<sup>1</sup>Jekielek, S., K.A. Moore, and E.C. Hair (2002). *Mentoring programs and youth development: A synthesis*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

## Agenda & instructions:

### 1. *Introductions*

*10 minutes*

Have participants introduce themselves and tell the group what they did during their last match meeting.

### 2. *Activity: When I Was Your Age Visualization*

*20 minutes*

Ask the participants to think back to when they were a child. Now ask them to visualize themselves at the same age as their mentee. Use the following phrases to help them visualize:

- *How did your bedroom look?*
- *What books did you like reading?*
- *What was your favorite subject in school?*
- *What did you look forward to after school?*
- *What sports/hobbies did you enjoy?*
- *What did you like to collect?*
- *What made you unique?*

Ask them to keep those images in their mind. Now ask, “What was your favorite activity during this time in your life? What were you really into?”

Record their responses on the chalkboard or newsprint. Review the list and have the group talk about how the activities might be changed to appeal to the kids your program serves. Have the group expand one of the activities listed. For example, if a participant says that his/her favorite activity was playing on the jungle gym, talk about related activities that a match might pursue, such as researching famous Olympic gymnasts, attending a sporting event, designing the ultimate jungle gym using popsicle sticks, or using the Internet to learn about sports-related careers.

Have participants go through the same process of expansion using their mentee’s favorite activity or one of their own. Have them write down activity ideas on their note cards or scratch paper. Give them about five minutes to complete this task. Ask for a few more report-outs.

### 3. *Review Available Options*

*10 minutes*

Take a few minutes to review what type of activities mentors and mentees can participate in at their program site and in the community. Mention any free or low-cost activities on the horizon. Remind mentors of any group outings or school events that are scheduled. Review the calendar of events/activity list you created.

#### **4. Key Debrief Points**

**5 minutes**

- The expansion activity can also be done with mentees to help them generate ideas for match activities.
- Keep in mind that activities should adhere to program policies around off-campus outings (if applicable), amount of money that can be spent, and liability and safety issues. Remind them to check with program staff if they are unsure if an activity is okay.
- Encourage mentors to suggest activity ideas that take advantage of other program offerings (e.g., a group museum trip or open gym time) and that mesh with program goals.
- In a community-based program mentors should check in with the mentees' parents and program staff before embarking on any new or out-of-the-ordinary activities.

#### **5. Final Questions & Closing**

**5–10 minutes**

Have each mentor report an activity idea for his/her next match meeting.

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

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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>

*Connections From School to Career: A Journey with My Mentor into the World of Work*, by K. Faggella and J. Horowitz (Westport, CT: Ideas 'R' Popping, 1995).  
<http://www.creativementoring.org/cmweb/cmotherpublications.html>

*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>

*Mentoring: Suggested Activities for Mentors and Youth*, (Sacramento, CA: State of California, Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Reprinted 2000).  
<http://www.adp.ca.gov/rc/pdf/1001.pdf>

*My Mentor and Me: The High School Years. 36 Activities and Strategies for Mentors and Mentees To Do Together During the High School Years*, by S.G. Weinberger (Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, 2001).  
<http://www.preventionworksct.org/publications.html>

*My Mentor & Me: The Middle School Years. 36 Activities and Strategies for Mentors and Mentees During the Middle Years, Including Tips for Talking About Bullying*, by S.G. Weinberger (Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, 2003).  
<http://www.preventionworksct.org/publications.html>

*What on Earth Do I Do With My Mentee? 50 Mentoring Activities to Get You Started*, by M. Boyles (Atlanta, GA: Communities in Schools of Georgia).  
<http://www.cisga.org/PLC/MentoringProgram/MentoringActivities.pdf>

*A Year's Worth of Mentoring Activities*, (Sacramento, CA: Governor's Mentoring Partnership).  
[http://www.mentoring.ca.gov/pdf/mentoring\\_activities.pdf](http://www.mentoring.ca.gov/pdf/mentoring_activities.pdf)