



STRIVE Mentorship

Expectations, Fears, and Preparation



Expectations:

- Hard conversations:
 - You are going to hear things from kids that you never thought you'd hear. Abuse, neglect, addiction, hatred, prejudice, etc. Prepare yourself mentally for this. Don't act shocked when you hear these things. Simply listen, respect, and allow your kid to process.
- Failure:
 - Your kids are going to fail, expect it, accept it, and listen. You are not there to fix them. You are there to be a positive role model in the life of your student. You may be the only person in their life to simply listen, not judge, and give positive feedback. Actively listen to what they're saying. Don't react to their decisions, rather, ask for feedback as to why they make those decisions. You may be surprised by what you hear.
- A quiet beginning
 - Many of these kids have broken relationships with adults. They are told everyday by their educators, parents, bosses, etc. that they need to be better. Or they believe that is all the adults in their life are telling them. Use the first few weeks to get to know them, DO NOT jump right into the problems/flaws of their life.
- A Meaningful Relationship
 - If you attend every meeting, invest in your student, and actively listen you will have a meaningful relationship. For some of your kids improvement will be small, for others it will be life changing. Your goal as a mentor is not to change your kid, your job is to invest in their life the same way you would a business, club, organization, etc.
- Go the "Extra Mile"
 - You will have 18-20 hours of investment this year in your student through STRIVE. Maximize on this relationship. Invite them to a Gopher game with you sometime. Grab coffee with them before school and ask if they need a ride. Try to find time to do a few extra relational things with them, create shared experiences.



Science of an adolescent (livescience.com article):

- Due to an increase in brain matter, the teen brain becomes more interconnected and gains processing power. They are starting the process of computation and critical thinking skills. They are growing computers!
- The amygdala is thought to connect sensory information to emotional response. Its development, along with hormonal changes, may give rise to newly intense experiences of rage, fear, aggression, excitement, and...other things...
- As teens become better thinking abstractly, their social anxiety increases according to research in the Annals of the NY Academy of Sciences (2004).
- The hormone changes at puberty affect the brain by spurring production of more receptors of oxytocin, described as “bonding hormone.” This increases sensitivity which causes severe self-consciousness, making an adolescent feel like everyone is watching all the time. It’s the first time they are seeing themselves in the world.

Fears:

- Every adult is secretly scared of teenagers. When you step into the life of an adolescent teenager you are stepping into messiness. You step into puberty, sex, high school education, bullying, broken families, physical limitations, addiction, all while having a frontal lobe that is not fully developed.

- What are some of the fears you are experiencing stepping into this role?

• **How to handle fear/reservation prior to mentoring:**

- Know you are not alone in this journey, all the mentors around you are joining together to invest in the next generation.
- Take the weight of “fixing” off your shoulders. You’re simply there to talk, don’t allow their failures to become your failures. Your identity as a person is not defined by the kid you mentor. You are NOT defined by your STRIVE kid.
- Process the information you hear. If a kid tells you a story that is emotionally affecting you communicate with Dave, Max, or Cindy. We are here to help you process. You are not the only adult stepping into messiness.

- **Earning the right to be heard:**
 - Scott County Young Life uses the phrase “earning the right to be heard” meaning: showing up, being present, and allowing kids to trust you so you can speak into their lives.
 - Use your 18-20 hours to earn the right to be a mentor in their life. Be at every meeting, actively listen, follow up on their goals, don’t be afraid of them, don’t act shocked when they share a vulnerable secret with you.
 - Earn the right to be a 5:1 mentor in their life.
- **Preparing questions to avoid “awkward silence”:**
 - Some ideas to prepare you on this student include:
 - Chat with Dave about your student. Know what your student enjoys ahead of time so you have “jumping off points” for discussion.
 - Prepare 5-10 questions ahead of time to ask your students prior to showing up. This allows you to avoid awkward silence and makes you seem very friendly. Make the kids the experts. Examples include:

*What is your favorite kind of music?
What do you do when you are not in school?
Movies or TV? What’s your favorite show/movie and why?
What do you want to do for work after school?
What’s on your bucket list?
What are you most passionate about?
What do you like/hate about Bridges?*

- **Active Listening**
 - Is a communication technique used in counseling, training, and conflict resolution. It requires that the listener fully concentrate, understand, respond and then remember what is being said.
 - Active listening requires that WE become the listener, not the speaker. We look to listen, process, and respond in questions that allow the communicator to go deeper.
 - Listen to hear what the other communicator (your student) is saying, not to respond or “fix” a problem.
 - Do your best to prepare to listen, be an active listener.
 - Respond to answers they give with more questions (Exp):
Mentor: *“What kind of music do you like?”*
Student: *“I really like Rap music.”*
Mentor: *“Cool, I don’t know many artists who do you like in particular?”*

- **Setting Goals**
 - Try to find an effective way to build goals with your student:
 - Build a spreadsheet that you track, printout, and give to them every meeting.
 - Document their goals and follow up with them every week. Don't judge, remind them of their goals.
 - Have them write their goals and create two copies, one for you and one for them to follow along with.
 - Build strategies that are achievable with your individual student.
 - Discuss these strategies together, help them choose their goal:
 - Mentor: "What do you want as an academic goal?"*
 - Student: "I would like to attend all my classes."*
 - Mentor: "Great! What's going to help you do that?"*
 - Student: "Maybe getting up on time... I don't go to sleep really early."*
 - Mentor: "Why don't we set a goal of going to bed at 11 or 12 at night as opposed to 1? That way you're not as tired."*
- **Enjoy the journey!**
 - You will see growth. It may be in a kid attending school 1 more day a week, or a kid graduating. Nonetheless you must know that you are an asset and gift in this process. THANK YOU for serving as a positive influence in the lives of the kids that need it the most.
- **Recommended Reading and Acknowledgements:**
 - <https://www.livescience.com/21461-teen-brain-adolescence-facts.html>
 - <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124119468>
 - Ginny Olsen - Teenage Girls: Exploring Issues Adolescent Girls Face and Strategies to Help Them
 - Steven Gerali - Teenage Guys: Exploring Issues Adolescent Guys Face and Strategies to Help Them
- **Questions? Concerns? Smart Remarks?**