



a CP ebook

WHY YOUR STUDENT NEEDS A MENTOR

(Other Than You)

By Abigail Endsley

Ideas of

MENTORSHIP

Everyone has their own ideas about mentorship. When you think about the term mentorship, you might envision your pastor, a good friend, or even yourself filling the role for your student.

All of those are true.

And as the parent of a young adult, you might often think to yourself, “my kid is doing just fine. I’m there to answer questions. Do I really need to seek out mentors for him/her?”

The answer is a resounding yes.

But before we move on to explain why, let’s start at the beginning.



What is

MENTORSHIP?

Mentorship is simply a one-on-one developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person.

Age makes no difference. A mentor can be older or younger than the person they're mentoring. However when it comes to mentoring students, that mentor should be at least a few years older. This will help them gain a better perspective of the world and life in general (more on that later).

The type of mentor one seeks depends on the area they're trying to grow in. And it may be difficult knowing what kind of mentor your student needs because, especially at such a young age, **they need mentorship in multiple areas of their life.**

Types of

MENTORS

Parents are the first mentors anyone has, and they're the ones who last a lifetime. You know this well from your experience on both sides of the fence. Parents are the catch-all mentor, the ones a child will go to first, and the ones who can often point to the right path—even if that path is simply into the hands of a more experienced mentor.

School Advisors help students set out what classes they'll be taking. Whether it's a high school advisor or a college one, these types of mentors are really more like technical guides. More often than not, very little true advisement happens in these sessions beyond “these are the classes you need to take if you want to pursue this degree.” Their job is to help students navigate the technical side of college and high school and nothing more.

Career Mentors can be coaches, advisors, bosses, or even colleagues. Anyone who takes another under their wing and helps develop them professionally can be considered a career mentor. Whether it's helping their mentee prepare for a job interview, or just passing on helpful career-related advice, these mentors tend to be varied in their approach and in the formality of their relationship.

Spiritual Mentors often take the shape of a pastor or church elder, but can also be found in friends or parents. This person will be further developed in their faith than their mentee and will impart spiritual truths and help guide their student closer to Christ.

Life Coaches are mentors (often paid) who help people in all areas of life. Whether they're working with students, parents, or career-oriented businessmen, life coaches help their students develop the best plan possible and execute it wisely.

Which type of mentor does your student need?

The idea of an academic advisor is appealing for this major life transition, but the truth is, **academic advisement alone simply isn't enough** for a child who is quickly growing into a man or woman of God.



A young adult needs *all* of these types of mentorship as they face the new challenges life has for them.

Benefits of

MENTORSHIP

One of the best ways to sum up the benefits of mentorship lies in a theory called **The Zone of Proximal Development**, proposed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The Zone of Proximal Development is:

“the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

In other words, as a student is learning new skills, there is only so far he can develop his own mind. Without a parent or teacher coming alongside, helping him expand his mind to learn new concepts, that child will never reach his full potential.

Instead of allowing the child to struggle on their own, a good teacher will shoulder some of the burden. By handling those elements of the tasks that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, the teacher (or mentor) permits the student to concentrate upon only those elements that are within his range of competence. **This is known as scaffolding, or guided learning, and it's one of the most important services a mentor can provide.**

When your student is paired with someone more experienced, you are providing them the scaffolding they need to continuously take on more and more responsibility one step at a time, eventually expanding their zone of development.

Put yourself in your student's shoes and think of this process like working with a personal trainer in a gym. While that trainer expects you to do all the heavy lifting, they will make sure you're not biting off more than you can chew. At the same time, they're making sure you don't bite off any less either.

Mentorship also relieves anxiety when it's time for your student to take big steps.

This happens in 3 ways.

- 1. They know when to let go.** Your student's mentor knows exactly when it's the right time to take down bits and pieces of the scaffolding, and they're unafraid to do it. This allows your student to experience multiple "wins" and gain confidence with each step.
- 2. A mentor knows the trail.** A mentor has done this before. While your student's path is unique, it probably won't hold many surprises for their mentor.
- 3. We listen to experts.** When your student's mentor offers her encouragement, she is far more likely to listen. Why? Because of point 2. Her mentor has been through it before, which means they are the expert. And when an expert praises hard work or confirms a choice, your student knows they indeed did the right thing.

Mentors offer impartial advice when asked, since they want your student to succeed. A good mentor will offer clear, defined, actionable steps that will challenge your student to reach farther than they may have expected to. At the same time, a mentor will cheer your student on, celebrating your student's wins and helping them recover from failures.

Mentors are future-focused. They take time to understand where your student has been and where they are. Then they help your student implement the steps they need to in order to reach their goals. Also, by acting as a sounding board, asking the right questions, and giving critical feedback, a mentor helps your student think through and actively work to solve real problems for himself. (This is one of the most valuable skills your student can learn in his or her high school years.)



But not only does a mentor's teaching and guidance help students, but studies show the **very presence of a mentor increases motivation.**

A [2008 study](#) clearly showed a positive correlation between mentorship and motivation. Stating in their initial hypothesis:

“...Role modeling can expose protégés to educational and social opportunities, which may open their eyes to different possibilities and motivate them to seek out new experiences. Motivation also may be enhanced by helping protégés set achievable goals and realize personally relevant outcomes. Moreover, mentors may help protégés stay focused on tasks and steer them away from superfluous activities.

Based on this, we propose:

Hypothesis 5: Mentoring is associated with positive motivational outcomes.”

Their hypothesis turned out to be right. Not only did they find mentorship significantly increased motivation, but **they also found positive changes in the students' behavior, attitude, health, interpersonal relations, motivation, and career outcomes.** Mentorship also fostered a decrease in withdrawal behavior, withdrawal intentions, deviance, substance use, and psychological stress & strain.

Mentors provide an expanded perspective. They come from a different background, have lived a different life, and have completely different thought processes than either you or your student. They have worked and interacted with many different kinds of people and have learned from their own real-life experiences. All that knowledge and background can be immensely helpful in pulling your child out of their limited, childlike point of view and forcing them to look at their options in a new way.

This kind of relationship is not only healthy, but needed if you want your student to have the tools they need to reach their fullest potential.



Mentorship for

YOUNG ADULTS

The Young Adult phase (approximately ages 16-22) is one of the most critical phases in a person's life.

Within this time, new and completely foreign concepts rapidly become very real as students have to start making decisions related to their education, career, finances, relationships, and even living situations. In just a few short years they progress from being a dependant child to a full-grown independant adult with their own life apart from Mom and Dad.

While it would be nice to take the burden of many of these decisions off your child with strict rules or pre-determined plans, that's not always healthy. And it may cause your student to come out of that situation either a) dependant on your support, or b) resenting it.

The training wheels have to come off some time. **That's why it's so important to teach your student how to find mentors who are *not* you.**

Parents can't act as sole mentors in this phase of life because your children are already used to your help.



In the early stages, they ran to you with cut knees and asked for help on math problems. They tested their boundaries and learned to respect you, but with a more familiar, less formal respect than they would have for a boss, coach, or teacher.

Young adults need freedom and they need perspective. As they begin to take hold of their education, their faith, their lives, and define who *they* are as independent people, **an outside perspective is needed.**

While your child still *needs* parental support through this stage, they'll get the opportunity to develop even more fully if that support is combined with a push from outside the family circle.

How to find a **MENTOR**

The first question to ask when looking for a mentor, is *why*?

What does your student need help with? Do they need career advice? Are they beginning college? Are they in need of spiritual development? This will help you narrow down what kind of mentor your student should be looking for.

Once you've thought through some of those questions and come up with your answer, begin thinking about the people in your child's life. Do you know of anyone who would be a good fit for this role?

You want someone who:

- is knowledgeable in the area needing development
- has the same values as you (and your student)
- is older than your student
- is trustworthy
- is unafraid to tell you and your student like it is
- is eager to pray with you and your student
- is wise
- asks good problem-solving questions
- has a perspective and advice you respect
- is the same gender as your student (this is a safety protocol as well as one that fosters a deeper connection)



Do you know of someone who fits this role? Take them out for coffee! Tell them you'd like to pick their brain, and find out if they'll be willing to help you. (Just make sure the pairing is something not only you and your student want, but the mentor wants as well.)

It's okay for you and/or your student to have a few conversations with a potential mentor to find out if they'll be a good fit before agreeing to anything long-term. But once your student is sure about his or her choice, they should meet with their mentor one-on-one every couple of weeks to discuss progress.

As great as it is to enlist a close friend to fill this role, sometimes you might get better results by enlisting a professional. Professional life coaches, as we discussed before, are highly trained, highly experienced mentors. They've had years of experience guiding their clients to success. Often times, this makes them the best equipped to walk your student through the next phase of life.

CollegePlus

MENTORSHIP

High school and college mentorship is what we at CollegePlus are passionate about.

Through CollegePlus, we will pair your student with a personal life coach who will walk them through their high school and/or college journeys. Having worked with hundreds of students before, these individuals have a unique perspective on life and can help your student discover their life purpose, make a plan, and execute it brilliantly.

At the same time, our Coaches will help your student take ownership of their high school and college work, equipping them for the future and opening up a world of possibilities. By the time your student is finished working with a CollegePlus coach, they'll be fully prepared to enter the world as a confident adult—including the expertise they need to continue finding appropriate mentors for all stages of their life.

[Learn more about CollegePlus](#)



Now Do It.

Helping your student find a mentor can be scary. But this is an area it's severely unwise to skimp on. You want your student to be successful, don't you? Give it a shot! What do either you or your student stand to lose?

Whether you want to pair your student with one of our Coaches, or you just want some free advice on how to help your student pursue high school and college, [feel free to talk to one of our Student Counselors](#). They're well versed in both college and high school matters and can send you in the right direction.

Talk to a Student Counselor