



Dare to Dream Jr. Manual

EMPOWERING YOUTH
IN FOSTER CARE TO
SUCCEED



**“A mentor is someone who allows you
to see the **hope** inside yourself.
A mentor is someone who allows you
to know that no matter how dark the
night, in the morning joy will come.
A mentor is someone who allows you
to see the higher part of yourself
when sometimes it becomes hidden
to your own view.”**

-Oprah Winfrey



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THE NEED

Recent data indicates that there are almost half a million youth in our nation's foster care system. Every year, over 20,000 youth in the foster care system age out, entering adulthood while losing essential support services, whether they have the skills to do so effectively or not.

While many youths in foster care are reunited with relatives after a short period of time, more than 28% of youth in foster care remain in the system for two years or longer. Young people who have grown up within the foster care system have experienced instability in their lives and often disproportionately suffer from learning disabilities, limited life skills, health issues, and emotional and behavioral struggles that lead to negative developmental outcomes.

In addition to the trauma caused by the disruption to their family and home environment, youth in foster care often have a wide variety of other serious emotional and physical needs including:



Difficulty forming healthy relationships with adults and peers



Chronic health problems



Substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, or involvement in risky behaviors



Delays in academics and educational progress, which put them behind their peers developmentally

"The consistent, enduring presence of a caring adult in a young person's life can be the difference between staying in school or dropping out, making healthy decisions or engaging in risky behaviors, and realizing one's potential or failing to achieve one's dreams."

(Bruce and Bridgeland, 2014)

BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP

Youth who spend time in the foster care system are often expected to be as resilient as their peers who have consistent parental support and guidance, not in foster care. Lack of support and available resources combined with the multiple complex developmental traumas these youth have experienced affects their success and overall well-being. They have to overcome a childhood of abuse and neglect, removal from their caregivers, unstable living arrangements as well as multiple placements, and weak support systems. Youth who have experienced foster care are expected to enter young adulthood without a solid foundation and support system upon which they can build their futures.

It is critical for youth to have the stability of safe and loving relationships for the success of their emotional, mental, and social development. The formation of healthy relationships serves as a key component in healing relational trauma, counteracting negative outcomes, and reaping the following benefits:



**BUILD
CONFIDENCE
AND SELF-
WORTH**



**INCREASE
COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT**



**IMPROVE
OVERALL
ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE**



**FORM
TRUST-BASED
RELATIONSHIPS**



**ENCOURAGE
POSITIVE SELF
WORTH**



**POSITIVELY
IMPACT PHYSICAL
& MENTAL HEALTH**

MENTORING YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In addition to our training and coaching, this manual will help equip you to make a real impact on youth in foster care. You will need to be ready to learn about trauma, listen and hear youth's stories, heartaches, and respond with compassion and understanding. You will learn what it means to give feedback that provides encouragement, affirmation, and appropriate guidance. You will be able to help youth set goals so they can start building the foundation to attain their dreams! You can make these youth feel safe, capable, and loved. You get the opportunity to help change and mold their self-perceptions and view of the world.

Mentoring is all about being a consistent friend, positive role model, and advocate.

It's knowing how to assess who you need to be in different situations.

END GOAL OF PROGRAM

Short-term goals: Each youth will have completed appropriately tailored milestones as well as their own goals that they have identified, the youth will see their mentor as an asset to their support system, and the mentor will be a consistent role model who initiates and follows through on their commitment.

Long-term goals: That each youth will have a sense of normalcy, placement stability, educational progress, independent living skills, and relational permanency.

Normalcy: Providing a child with typical childhood experiences helps promote positive mental health, emotional well-being, and identity formation. Mentors look for opportunities to help provide some of these typical experiences (i.e. sports, camps, extracurriculars, etc.).

ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD MENTOR:

- Consistent
- Good listener
- Patient
- Caring
- Positive role model
- Focuses on strengths
- Non-judgmental
- Empathetic
- Understanding
- Present
- Takes initiative
- Has time to commit

GETTING STARTED

MENTOR CHECKLIST



Complete initial intake phone call with your chapter's case manager.



Pay fees, sign a waiver and send two character references (personal and professional) and biography and photo to your assigned case manager.



Read the Dare to Dream Manual and pass an initial background check.



Get matched with a youth in foster care.



Get approved through the youth's agency. Send a copy of the driver's license and driver's insurance to the case manager.



Schedule and attend a 2 hour Dare to Dream training.



Attend an initial introduction between the case manager, youth, foster parent, and you.



Meet with the youth at least twice a month



Fill out an impact report form by the 10th of every month.

PROGRAM MILESTONES

Our 10 recommended milestones are tailored to each individual youth and are supplemented with goals that the youth and family identifies.

BUILDING RAPPORT

BUCKET LIST AND GOALS

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

HEALTHY HABITS

MINDFULNESS AND SELF-REGULATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SAFE CHOICES AND PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

MONEY GUIDANCE

CAREER AND ACADEMIC EXPLORATION

SELF-ESTEEM



"Virtually every aspect of human development is fundamentally shaped by interpersonal relationships. So it stands to reason that when close and caring relationships are placed at the center of youth intervention, as is the case in mentoring programs, the conditions for healthy development are ripe."

Dr. Jean Rhodes, Director, Mentor -
The University of Massachusetts Boston
Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring

MILESTONE 1

BUILDING RAPPORT

“From the moment we enter the world, our deepest need is to love and be loved by other human beings and to engage in lasting relational bonds.” - Danny Silk

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Mentors have to be willing to initiate and follow up. We know that meeting someone new in the context of mentoring can be intimidating. These youth feel the same way, so be intentional and consistent and don't overthink it! Relationships take time and effort.

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has built a trust-based connection with you. This milestone is foundational to successful mentoring and it is a process that never ends. Get to know each other, meet needs, connect, build trust, and dream together. *Keep in mind that needs are not always verbally expressed.*

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- What is an interesting fact about you?
- What are some of the things that bring you joy/make you happy?
- What is your favorite movie/show and why?
- If you had a whole day to do anything you wanted what would you do?
- After getting to know you what strengths will I discover you have?
- Who is your hero/ favorite superhero? If you could have a superpower what would it be?

THE TRUST CYCLE

These youth have not experienced much consistent trust in their life. Look for EVERY opportunity both big and small to meet needs, say YES, empower, and build trust. Every positive interaction strengthens brain chemistry and builds rapport.



PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Use these fun tools to create a ritual together

- Click [here](#) for a link to some get to know you cards (Totika Self Esteem Question Cards).
- Click [here](#) for a link to some get to know you cards (Hygge Question Game).
- Click [here](#) for an Ice Breaker tool (Ice Breaker Ball).

MILESTONE 2

BUCKET LIST & GOALS

"Autonomy isn't the opposite of accountability - it's the pathway to it." - Daniel H. Pink

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Goals provide a sense of accomplishment and personal agency. For our youth, they have had many decisions set for their best interest, but they have often not been involved in the decision-making process. As a mentor, you want to involve them in the process of prioritizing milestones and defining personal goals they are interested in working on. Setting goals gives youth a sense of control. Regular follow-up provides encouragement and accountability. Achieving goals boosts self-esteem. The whole process creates a space to learn resilience.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What do you want to achieve?
- How are you going to achieve it?
- How can I support you reach your goals?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Click [here](#) for access to a Printable 2021 Goal Kit.
- Let the youth pick out their own planner or journal to track goals or get matching ones and bring them to hangouts!
- Share in the journey and model the things that you yourself are working on.

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified, established, and achieved personal and academic goals. Create mirroring goals that you can work on together! Create a bucket list of things that they have always wanted to try/do. Tie achieving their goals into the fun bucket list items!

SMART GOALS

- Have specific and realistic goals.
- Help set up a plan for the youth with milestones achieved in a realistic time frame.
- Celebrate wins- get creative about using positive reinforcement.
- Establish specific and realistic goals (SMART). Ensure goals are **Specific**, **Measurable**, **Achievable**, **Realistic**, and **Time-bound**.
- Ex. In six weeks time, I'll have studied and passed the chemistry final.
- Ex. Before the end of the school year, I will have joined one extracurricular activity.
- Ex. In three months time, I will have trained and run my first 5k.

MILESTONE 3

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

"Interpersonal relational trauma requires authentic and intentional relational repair"

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Many of our youth have experienced negative, inconsistent, or harmful relationships. It's a mentor's role to engage in discussions around healthy and unhealthy relationships. As a mentor, you are committing to being a safe and positive person in their life.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Who is your support system?
- How do identify what makes a healthy and unhealthy relationship? Three things to look for are: Are they person safe? Are they loving? Are they supportive?
- Who can the youth identify as a healthy and positive person? *Be sure to ensure the youth has their contact information.*
- In what areas are there specific people you can rely on?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Visit [this](#) link for an interactive website that teaches kids how to stop bullying.
- Click [here](#) to read about how to arm children against bullying.
- Meet as many people within their support system that you can- see if you can bring lunch at school and meet friends/teachers!

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth have identified healthy relationships in their lives and can identify who makes a healthy friend/peer. Model how to identify and build healthy relationships.

IDEAL FRIEND ACTIVITY

Youth in foster care have disproportionately transitioned to new homes and schools and oftentimes struggle to make healthy sibling and peer connections. We know that our kids can oftentimes be socially/emotionally underdeveloped as much as half their chronological age. This trauma leads to them frequently becoming the bullied or the bully. Many will struggle with implementing basic social-emotional skills as they seek to build interpersonal relationships.

Talk with the youth about how to identify their ideal friend. What character qualities would they have? How would they show love and support? Have the youth draw them in a picture and use symbols to represent values and behaviors. Once complete, engage in the challenging question: Are you that friend to others?

MILESTONE 4

HEALTHY HABITS

“He who has health has hope and he who has hope has everything.” - Thomas Carlyle

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

A foundation to healing is healthy brain chemistry which is influenced by diet, hydration, and movement (exercise). Many of our youth have experienced food insecurity and struggle with healthy habits. Mentors need to provide access to nutritional foods and intentionally spend time outside with their youth. Encourage and model healthy habits and make sure you provide access to snacks and water (at least) every 2 hours! Make an effort to get the youth food if they are hungry.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What are activities do you enjoy doing? What is an activity that you have always wanted to try?
- What does food mean to you? What is your favorite meal to eat? What do you know how to cook? What is a meal that you have always wanted to try or learn to cook?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Read [this](#) blog post about Nutrition and Hydration through the eyes of trauma.
- DIET: Provide healthy snacks at hangouts!
- H2O: Provide a trackable water bottle sample [here](#).
- EXERCISE: Take walks during hangouts, do physical fitness classes together!

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has opportunities for healthy choices 1) nutritional diet 2) hydration 3) movement (exercise) Inquire if they are connected to their family's cultural foods

PRACTICAL APPLICATION CONTINUED

FOOD/COOKING:

- Bring over some cookbooks or online recipes. for the mentee to choose a meal from and go shopping for ingredients, cook together- incorporate favorite foods with new helpful healthy foods.
- Cook a meal for the foster family together.
- Order Hello Fresh, Blue Apron, etc., or attend a local cooking class together!
- Visit a local farmers market!

GETTING ACTIVE:

- Determine the physical activities they are interested in (yoga, hiking, basketball, dance, etc.)
- Playing team sports is a great opportunity for peer engagement and identity formation.
- Talk to your Case Manager about donations or discounts for the YMCA, gyms, and sporting events.
- Click [here](#) to read more about physical fitness for teens.

MILESTONE 4

HEALTHY HABITS

(CONTINUED)

WHY ARE FOOD GROUPS IMPORTANT?

- **Carbohydrates:** They are the main source of energy for our body and brain; fibers are complex carbohydrates that contribute to digestive and cardiovascular health.
- **Protein:** They play an essential role to support the development and repair of muscles, tissues, bones, hair, skin, nails, as well as the function of hormones, neurotransmitters, and countless other bodily functions. Proteins contain many essential and beneficial vitamins and minerals. Protein ensures satiety, which ultimately leads to increased focus and engagement.
- **Fats:** They are a source of energy that helps our body absorb certain vitamins like A, D, and E. Our brain also uses omega 3-fatty acids to build cells that are important for learning and memory.

WHY ARE VITAMINS AND MINERALS IMPORTANT?

- **Iron:** An essential nutrient our body cannot produce itself. The key role of iron is that it transports oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Iron is a key nutrient in the childhood years because of the rapid rate of growth and development. Studies have shown when children are iron deficient, results can be dizziness, headaches, lower IQ, increased social problems, and inattention.
- **Zinc:** A required nutrient the body is unable to make on its own. Zinc can be found in every cell within the body, and helps with immune function, growth, and development, assisting the body in creating proteins, the development of new DNA, wound healing, digestion, nerve function, and metabolism. It can be found in both animal and plant products alike.
- **Choline:** Choline is a nutrient that plays a role in memory, muscle movement, regulating heartbeat, creating DNA, and body cell structure.

TIPS FOR BUILDING A HEALTHY SNACK

Try your best to combine a carbohydrate source with a protein or fat source. The carbohydrate source is what will provide energy, and the protein and/or fat source is what will provide a sense of fullness. Together, they provide an energy-giving and satisfying snack! Some fun examples:

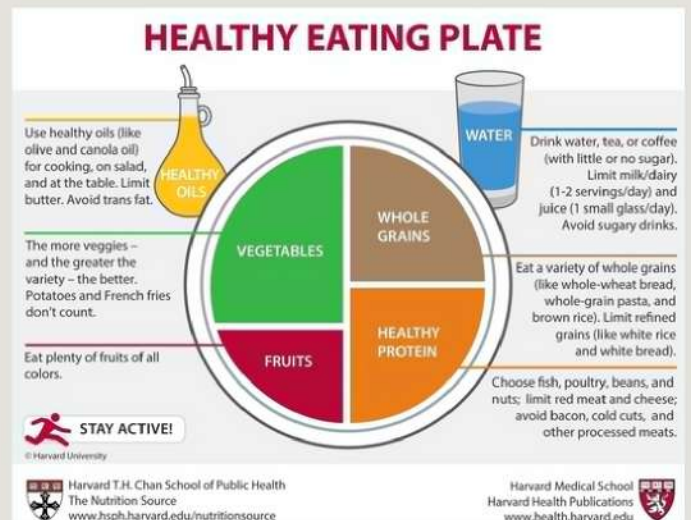
- Cheese and crackers
- Trail mix
- Apple and nut butter
- Baked tortilla chips and guac

TIPS FOR BUILDING A HEALTHY MEAL

The more colors involved in the meal, the more vitamins, and minerals are present. If appropriate, make it a fun game with your mentee for how many different colors can be part of a meal.

HYDRATION

Hydration helps regulate body temperature, minimizes infections, spreads nutrients through the body, and allows organs to function properly. Hydration increases mood and cognition and helps improve sleep.



MILESTONE 5

MINDFULNESS & SELF-REGULATION

"Mindfulness is a way of befriending ourselves and our experience." - Jon Kabat Zinn

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Encourage youth to develop healthy and positive mindfulness practices. Help youth identify what self-regulation practices they enjoy. Mindfulness and regulation is key for youth to achieve resiliency and build on their strengths to overcome the effects of trauma.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What helps you relax when you become stressed, anxious, or fearful?
- What is your sleep routine like?
- When do you feel most anxious? What are your triggers?

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified techniques to practice mindfulness and self-regulation strategies.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention to the present with our body, mind, and feelings. To be mindful is to observe one's thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad.



PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Try mindfulness practices like journaling, crafts, painting, meditation, and yoga.
- Try the 7-11 breathing regulation tool. Breathe in for a count of 7 and out for 11; repeat.
- Try mindfulness health apps like Headspace or Calm for meditation, breathing, and sleep.
- Try paying attention to what keeps you in the present. Music, board games, coloring books, exercise, fidget tools, or sensory toys.
- Make a coping skills box with ideas your youth comes up with to use when stressed.
- Have a journal you share with youth where they can write hard things they have trouble talking about and respond to them in the journal.

MILESTONE 6

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

"Small acts when multiplied by millions of people can transform the world." -Howard Zinn

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

We want to cultivate a heart of giving back and service for our youth. Engage youth in taking an interest in their community and finding where they "fit in" to serve best! For youth from hard places volunteering can be therapeutic and an important part of healing.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Have you ever volunteered before?
- What does volunteering mean to you? Is it important to you?
- What does it mean to you to help someone in need?
- What can you offer the world?
- What do you want to learn or achieve?

Disclaimer: Talk with the caregiver first to make sure whichever activity/event is chosen will not be a trigger based on their past trauma.

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has an opportunity to volunteer in the community with their mentor. Youth is able to identify the types of volunteering they enjoy.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Try a whole day of random acts of kindness.
- Find a community tree-planting group.
- Volunteer at an animal shelter.
- Purchasing a meal/drink in a drive-thru.
- Cook for the youth's family together.
- Go to a local park and pick up trash/recycle.
- Do yardwork for an elderly neighbor.
- Join a community garden.
- Deliver canned foods to a local food bank.
- Visit a local senior center.



MILESTONE 7

SAFE CHOICES & PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live." -Jim Rohn

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

We want mentors to feel empowered to have open conversations about safety and boundaries with their mentees. This milestone is not one big conversation to check a box, but a commitment to non-judgmentally listen and equip youth with trauma-informed tools to make positive and safe choices with their bodies and online. We want to engage caregivers to be a part of these conversations and act as a positive reinforcement to safe choices!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do you have a social media account?
- What do you think of social media?
- Who do you friend online?
- How do you use social media?
- How do you protect yourself online?
- What do you know about sex? Have you had a safe person share with you about sex and have you been able to ask questions?

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth have a basic understanding of positive internet safety and sexual health. Be an "askable" adult!

PRACTICAL APPLICATION - SEXUAL HEALTH

These conversations can be uncomfortable but with expressed permission from caregivers, we can have real, healthy, and hopeful conversations with youth about sexual health and healthy boundaries.

- Speak about the importance of consent, saying no, and feeling safe.
- Talk about condoms to protect against unplanned pregnancies and STDs/STIs.
- Click here for information on how to approach the sex education talk.

Youth have the right and ability to make informed choices about their bodies. It is our job as caring adults in their life to provide education, respect, and support for this life-long exploration. We commit to communicating with truth and honesty and do not stigmatize, shame, or create fear. We want to protect youth from being victims of unwanted sexual activity.

SAFE CHOICES & PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

(CONTINUED)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION - INTERNET SAFETY

- Describe the purpose of popular social networking platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok).
- Explain the function of a personal profile.
- Help to make their personal profile safer with permission.
- Explain three potential consequences of posting inappropriate photos/language on your profile.
- Engage in conversations about bullying/cyber-bullying and in-person bullying.
- Talk about "friending" people they know and unfriending people they do not know.
- Click [here](#) and [here](#) to learn more about youth internet safety.

Disclaimer: Make sure you have written permission from the youth's caregivers (text/email) to be "friends" on social media. Always let the youth initiate social media connection and if you choose to accept make sure that your profile is a reflection of you as a role model.

S.M.A.R.T - A GUIDE TO INTERNET SAFETY

S

SAFE: Share with the youth that they should not give out personal information such as their full name, email address, phone number, house address, or school name to people they don't know.



M

MEET: Tell them about the dangers of meeting with anyone they have spoken to online.



A

ACCEPTING: Explain the importance of not opening direct messages, emails, or files from people they don't know—they may include viruses or inappropriate content.



R

RELIABLE: Remind them that just because something is posted on the internet does not mean it is true. Emphasize that not everyone will be truthful about their identity or age.



T

TELL: Express that you are a safe space and your mentee can come to you with any questions, concerns, or worries.



MILESTONE 8

MONEY GUIDANCE

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. -Benjamin Franklin

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Support youth in understanding the basics of financial literacy: what it is, how it is used, and gaining general understanding. Learning how to manage money will help youth in long-term financial success. We want to engage caregivers to be a part of these conversations/action steps.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Money Mindset:

- What do you know about money? What does money mean to you? Do you like money? Is it important to you? How did your family view money? What does money do?
- Talk to them about what money means to you and the important lessons you have learned.

Allowance/Chore money:

- Are you making any money? Do you have an allowance or any form of ability to earn money? How can you make money? What do you spend your money on?

Savings/Investment (Long-term):

- Do you save money? How much would you like to save? What is something you want one day but don't have the money for?

**Talk about delayed gratification.*

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has basic comprehension and confidence about their money mindset.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Share openly (about the values) behind your spending choices when you are with them ex. Why we tip servers and how much etc., spending within means, the importance of generosity. etc.
- Provide them with a piggy bank.
- Give them a budget at the store or restaurant and give them autonomy to pick out what they want to buy or eat
- Research their dream job salary (for example, a teacher makes \$42,000/year). Then create a sample simple budget based on their dream job salary and projected expenses
- Play games like [these](#) to learn concepts!
- Click [here](#) and [here](#) to read about ways to talk to kids about money.

MILESTONE 9

CAREER/ACADEMIC EXPLORATION

"Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." -Warren Buffett

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Help youth dare to dream about their futures! It is never too early to talk about post-high school graduation options. Knowing their options can help provide stability and direction. Exposure to a wide variety of experiences and possibilities is so important. Genuine belief in themselves makes all the difference.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

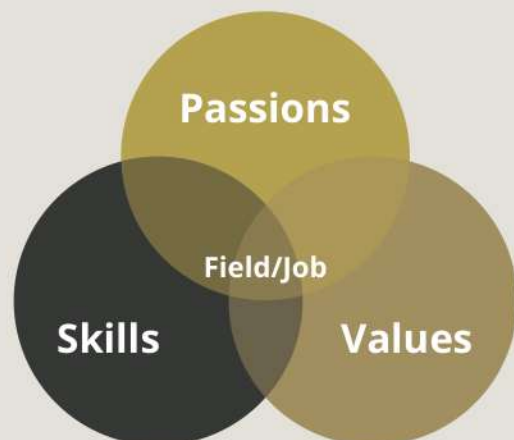
- What are you passionate about?
- What do you see yourself doing next?
- What fields are you interested in?
- Which subjects do I most enjoy and excel in?
- What kind of things do I like to do outside of school?
- Do you like helping others?
- Do you work better in teams/groups or independently?

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified an idea (or two!) that they are interested in for their future and have an opportunity to explore it in an age-appropriate way!

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Talk about youth's strengths and what they see in themselves (take [Strengths Finder test](#)).
- See if their school has any programs, clubs, special classes that can build on their skills or interests- help advocate for them to enroll.
- Have them visit you at work one day during the summer!
- Take them to meet someone in a field that they are interested in.
- Find their ideal field of interest using the Venn Diagram below:



MILESTONE 10

SELF-ESTEEM

"It's not who you are that holds you back. It's who you think you're not." - Denis Waitley

OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Youth from hard places often struggle with positive beliefs about themselves, we want to support, affirm, and encourage them to "dare to dream" and believe in who they are and can become!

MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified techniques to strengthen their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and positive self-regard.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Talk about youth's strengths and what they see in themselves (take [Strengths Finder](#) test).
- Explain how self-esteem is related to self-awareness and self-image.
- Describe how self-esteem is affected by the willingness to try new things.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Help youth develop a positive self-regard and a healthy worldview by empowering them to answer these questions:

- Who am I?
- What is likable and lovable about me?
- What am I capable of?
- How can I make sense out of what's happened to me?
- Who do I want to be in the future?
- How do I want people to feel about me?

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

DREAM BOARDS

STEP 1: Bring magazines — lots of them! Scissors, markers, tape, or push pins.

STEP 2: Buy or make a corkboard with a frame.

STEP 3: Identify personal, professional, academic, health, spiritual, family, financial, activity/ hobby, and social dreams.

STEP 4: Find and cut out pictures together that remind youth of goals.

FIND YOUR PASSION PROJECT

STEP 1: Draw three circles (think Venn diagram).

STEP 2: First circle: write passions.

STEP 3: Second circle: write talents/gifts/strengths

STEP 4: Third circle: write dreams, goals, and positive qualities people see in you.

REFLECT: Where do they intersect? what jobs, hobbies, activities accomplish all three?



ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Visit a native plant sale or plant nursery
- Train for and attend a 5K together
- Go to the movies/movies in the park during the summer
- Go to the park and have a picnic
- Go to an arcade
- Go bowling
- Go mini-golfing
- Volunteer together at an animal shelter or food bank
- Tutor the youth or help with homework
- Learn to do something creative, such as knitting, quilting, making pottery, taking photographs, or painting
- Do a puzzle together
- Take a trip to the library (make it extra fun by picking out a book for each other and discussing them at your next meet up)
- Go hiking
- Rent kayaks/paddleboards
- Go to a play or museum
- Go to a sporting event
- Play a board game together
- Go to their school and have lunch with the youth
- Take the youth on a tour of your workplace
- Go to a light show
- Take a yoga class
- Go shopping for back to school supplies or a first-day outfit
- Take them on a college tour
- Go go-karting
- Create a vision board together to help the youth visualize their goals
- Go on a food tour. Example: All the best BBQ places

CONVERSATION STARTERS

We want you to build a meaningful connection with your youth as their mentor/role model.

These are some ideas that can foster intentional communication Think of them as tips for success!

Good advice to give to your mentee that they may never have heard before:

- Do the best you can. No one can judge your best but you.
- Do more than you're asked. When someone hires you to perform a task, always deliver more than is expected of you.
- Take pleasure in your work. There are few things in life as satisfying as doing a task to the best of your abilities.
- Be on time. Make it a practice to always be early or on time for your commitments.
- Ask for what you want. There is no harm in asking and there is no harm in receiving.
- Be honest. You will generate trust, and trust will generate opportunity and respect.
- Stand up for what is right. Even if others disagree, don't compromise your core values or your integrity.
- There will be consequences. Doing the right thing is usually no more difficult or time-consuming than doing the wrong thing.
- Don't put things off. One of the keys to success in school and business is to do what needs to be done right away.

Tips when asking the youth questions:

- An open-ended question requires an answer greater than a single word or two. A closed-ended question can be answered with a simple "Yes," "No," or another very simple answer.
- After you've asked your open-ended question(s) and have not gotten the response you were looking for, it is then effective and acceptable to ask more specific questions like, "What happened?"
- Another technique that can help you generate a more thoughtful answer is to ask a closed-ended question followed up with "Why?" or "How?"

CONVERSATION STARTERS (CONTINUED)

When navigating conversations with the youth it is important to listen first and be both open-minded and non-receptive. Listen to what is being said, interpret the meaning, and then provide feedback based on what your mentee needs. This takes time as trust is formed, but can help in establishing healthy and honest communication.

Examples of open-ended questions:

- What does that mean to you?
- What do you think will happen next?
- How did you go about solving that problem?
- How did you make that choice?
- What information do you have about that?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Why do you feel that way?
- What have you considered as areas of growth for the year?
- What do you feel contributed to your success today?
- Imagine it is the end of the school year. What would you want to say about the year?
- How exactly did the fight between the two of you start?
- How did you and your best friend meet?
- Why do you seem upset today?
- What are some of the things that bring you the most joy?
- What interests do you and your siblings share, and which interests do you not share?
- Do you have a pet? What are they like?
- Do you like animals and why?
- When is your birthday? How do you like to celebrate?
- What do you usually do during rainstorms?
- What is your favorite flavor of ice cream and why?
- What is your favorite movie and why?



WORKING WITH FOSTER FAMILIES

National Angels is committed to working collaboratively with supportive and caring adults who are part of a youth's network. This can include but is not limited to: a foster parent, kinship parent, adoptive parent, guardian, biological parent, teacher, coach, CASA, RTC or group home staff, or caseworker.

This page outlines how mentors can interact with these persons in the best interest of successful support for youth in care.

Involving the caregiver in the mentor relationship is one of the best things a mentor can do to ensure the success of the program for the youth. Programs whose parents, guardians, and other caregivers work in partnership with mentors are more likely to see positive changes in youth and improved program outcomes. There are some aspects of involving caregivers that can be challenging, but the goal of our program is to build a cohesive connection with a collective goal to help the youth better themselves.

We have a few simple strategies to help navigate relationships with caregivers:

- We will make sure to communicate with caregivers why our Dare to Dream program exists and what it hopes to achieve for youth in care.
- During initial meet-ups (for youth in foster or kinship homes ages 11-17) your Regional Angels case manager will go over a Hot topic agreement with the mentee and guardian to ensure that you know which subjects of discussion the guardian is comfortable with them addressing. This helps foster trust and respect. Topics include politics and current events, health and puberty, sex education and birth control, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, and spirituality.
- As a mentor, it is important to keep the caretaker in the loop with your plans, clearly communicating where you will be with the mentee and about drop off and pick up.
- You can help reinforce the goals, values, and decisions of caregivers by supplementing with further wisdom and guidance. Open communication with the caretaker about things that they are working on with the youth can help keep everyone on the same page. Keep in mind however that participation in the program should not be used as a reward or punishment. Caregivers shouldn't keep the youth from seeing you as a punishment in hopes of modifying behavior.
- Lastly, you can get together with the foster or kinship family, share meals, or attend community events, picnics or group trips as a nice way of cultivating the mentor-parent relationship.

NATIONAL ANGELS RECOMMENDED BOOK LIST

TRAUMA-INFORMED BOOKS

- The Connected Child by Dr. Karyn Purvis
- The Whole-Brain Child by Daniel J. Siegel
- The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk, MD
- The Deepest Well by Nadine Burke Harris, MD
- Childhood Disrupted by Donna Jackson Nakazawa
- What happened to You by Bruce Perry and Oprah

TEEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOOKS

- StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath
- 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens by Sean Covey

MENTOR AND LEADERSHIP BOOKS

- Grit by Angela Duckworth
- Start with Why by Simon Sinek
- Dare to Lead by Brené Brown
- How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

MINDFULNESS BOOKS

- A Still Quiet Place for Teens by Amy Saltzman
- Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Daniel J. Siegal
- Stuff That Sucks: A Teen's Guide to Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can by Ben Sedley

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