

THE RELATIONSHIPⁱ

The speed with which your particular relationship develops will depend on many things, some that you can control such as how you spend your time and how often you see your mentee, and some that you can't such as your mentee's individual personality. It's helpful to know the typical stages of development for mentoring relationships so that you do not get discouraged if things do not go as you expect.

Stage 1: Developing Rapport and Building Trust

The "getting to know you" phase is the most critical stage of the relationship. Things to expect and work on during Stage 1 include:

- **Predictability and consistency**
During the first stage of the relationship, it is critical to be both predictable and consistent. If you schedule an appointment to meet your mentee at a certain time, it's important to keep it. It is understandable that at times things come up and appointments cannot be kept. However, in order to speed up the trust-building process, consistency is necessary, even if the young person is not as consistent as you are.
- **Testing**

Stage 2: The Middle—Reaching Goals

Once trust has been established, the relationship moves into Stage 2. During this stage, the mentor and mentee can begin to start working toward the goals they set during the first stage of the relationship. Things to expect during Stage 2 include:

- **Closeness**
Generally, during the second stage the mentor and mentee can sense a genuine closeness in the relationship.
- **Affirming the uniqueness of the relationship**
Once the relationship has reached this stage, it's helpful to do something special or different from what the mentor and mentee did during the first stage, which helps affirm the uniqueness of the relationship. For example, go to a museum, sporting event, special restaurant, etc.
- **The relationship may be rocky or smooth**
All relationships have their ups and downs. Once the relationship has reached the second stage, there will still be some rough periods. Mentors should be prepared and not assume that something is wrong with the relationship if this happens.
- **Rely on staff support**

Stage 3: Closure

- **Address appropriate situations for staying in touch**
Mentors should check with the mentoring program coordinator to find out the policy for staying in touch with their mentees once the program has come to an end.

ⁱCourtesy of Mass Mentoring Partnership, Mentoring 101 Train the Trainer Curriculum.