



# *Rising Stars*

*Mentor Handbook*

*Dear Mentor,*

*It is with great appreciation we welcome you to the esteemed group of volunteers who serve as mentors for Rising Stars. Your willingness to dedicate time and energy to serve as a role model to a student does not go unnoticed, especially by the student you help.*

*The Rising Stars mentoring program supports the goals of the National Black MBA Association (NBMBA) for high student achievement by providing guidance in a safe and nurturing environment. Young people today face far more personal and social pressures than any previous generation. Research indicates that intervention through structured mentor relationships may help give young people the tools needed to deal effectively with these pressures.*

*A positive self-image is crucial to learning and evolving into a person of strong character. How we view ourselves determines our goals, behaviors, and responses to others. Students need to know someone cares and is willing to encourage and help them learn to set appropriate goals. As a mentor, you will provide that encouragement, guidance, and assistance.*

*Your involvement as a caring, committed adult will mean more to your assigned student – and you – than you can imagine. By notating two hours each month, you are positively influencing the life of a young adult and ultimate the future workforce and leaders of our community and world.*

*We hope this will be a rewarding and memorial experience for you. Thank you for everything you do for all the young adults associated with Rising Stars. It is through your dedication we will reach our goal of ensuring these young adults are headed on the right path!*

*Sincerely,*

*Belinda Matingou*

Belinda Matingou

NBMBA Austin Chapter President



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## THE STARFISH

Once upon a time, there was a wise man  
who used to go to the ocean  
to do his writing.  
He had a habit of walking on the beach  
before he began his work.  
One day he was walking along the shore.  
as he looked down the beach,  
he saw a human  
figure moving like a dancer.  
He smiled to himself to think of someone  
who would dance to the day.  
So he began to walk faster to catch up.  
As he got closer, he saw  
that it was a young man a  
and the young man wasn't dancing,  
but instead he was reaching  
down to the shore,  
picking up something  
and very gently throwing it into the ocean.  
As he got closer he called out,  
"Good morning! What are you doing?"  
The young man paused,  
looked up and replied,  
"Throwing starfish in the ocean."  
"I guess I should have asked,  
"Why are you throwing starfish in the ocean?"  
"The sun is up and the tide is going out,  
and if I don't throw them in they'll die."  
"But, young man, don't you realize that  
there are miles and miles of beach  
and starfish all along it?  
You can't possibly make a difference!"  
The young man listened politely.  
then bent down, picked up another starfish,  
and threw it into the sea,  
past the breaking waves and said—  
"It made a difference for that one."



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*The goal of the **RISING STARS** Mentor Program is to facilitate the development and enhancement of mentor relationships at the college level. The purpose of the program is to bring college students and professional from the community to help them navigate their professional development while still in college.*

## **PROGRAM POLICIES**

**RISING STARS** wants to ensure the mentor program benefits all of our participants in a meaningful way. The following program policies are designed to protect the mentor, mentee, and the program. These policies must be adhered to at all times.

1. Mentors must be at least 21 years of age, complete an application, and commit to the program.
2. Mentors must abide by **RISING STARS** Code of Ethics by adhering to and maintaining the confidentiality of the mentor/mentee relationship.
3. Interactions between mentor and mentee shall remain on a professional level.
4. Mentors should be cautious about physical contact with a mentee. A friendly gesture may be misinterpreted.
5. Mentors should not engage in any inappropriate communication with mentees. Inappropriate includes, but is not limited, to verbal abuse, swearing, conversations that include or refer to sexual content, and racist, sexist, or homophobic language. Such communication is expressly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the program.
6. Mentors should not give any kind of medication to a mentee.
7. Mentors are discouraged from buying gifts and/or meals for their mentees.
8. Mentors are not responsible for disciplining mentees. If you are concerned about a mentee's behavior or their behavior becomes unacceptable, contact the mentor coordinator at once.
9. Mentors are required by law to report any information a person might share that relates to homicide, suicide, physical/emotional abuse, or any illegal activity.

## **MENTOR CODE OF ETHICS**

- *I will not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, or handicap in any of my activities or services.*
- *I will dress appropriately when with my mentee. Clothing should be modest with no references to sex, drugs, or alcohol.*
- *Each mentee deserves and will receive my undivided attention.*
- *I will use appropriate language and will refrain from using profanity.*
- *I will never use a mentoring situation to exploit a student in any manner or impose my own personal beliefs or values.*
- *Personal relationships with students interfere with the objective of the program as well as professional relationships and are to be avoided.*
- *I will respect the dignity of all students and respect them without judgment.*
- *The students I mentor will be constantly encouraged, but never deceive with false hopes or flattery.*
- *I will respect the privacy of students and carefully guard the confidentiality of any personal or academic information regarding them.*
- *I will strive to be punctual in keeping appointments, not only out of courtesy, but also as an example of students to follow.*
- *The student I deal with will always understand that my role is never to do their work for them.*
- *I will count on each student I work with to teach me new ways of doing a better job.*

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***What are the mentee's responsibilities?***

- *Agree to meet regularly with their mentor.*
- *Agree to respect confidentiality.*
- *Agree to not expect mentors to provide money, clothing, or transportation.*

### ***What are the mentor's responsibilities?***

- *Agree to consistently honor their commitment for the entire school year.*
- *Agree to respect confidentiality in the mentor/mentee relationship.*
- *Agree to follow program policies.*

## **THE MENTORING LIFE CYCLE**

*The mentoring relationship typically goes through multiple stages that include developing rapport and building trust, setting and teaching goals, navigating rough spots, and eventually closing the relationship.*

### **PHASE ONE: DEVELOPING RAPPORT AND BUILDING TRUST**

*The “getting to know you” phase is the most critical stage of the relationship and may take weeks or even months. It is especially critical in this stage, to be both predictable and consistent. If you schedule an appointment, keep it. Things to expect and work on during Phase 1 include:*

#### **Testing**

*Testing is used as a coping or defense mechanism to determine whether the mentee can trust you. They will test to see if you really care about them. A mentee might test the mentor by not showing up for a scheduled meeting to see how the mentor will react.*

#### **Establish Confidentiality**

*During the first stage of the relationship, it is important to establish confidentiality with your mentee. This helps develop trust. The mentor should let the mentee know that whatever he or she wants to share with the mentor will remain confidential, as long as (and it’s important to stress this point) what the mentee tells the mentor is not going to harm the mentee or someone else. It is helpful to stress this up front, within the first few meeting with the mentee. That way, later down the road, if a mentor needs to break the confidence because the information the mentee shared was going to harm him or her or someone else, the mentee will not feel betrayed.*

#### **Goal Setting (transitions into Phase 2)**

*It is helpful during Phase 1 to take the time to set at least one achievable goal together for the relationships. What do the two of you want to get out of this relationship? It’s also good to help your mentee set personal goals. Mentees often do not know how to set goals and this will provide them with the opportunity to set goals and work toward achieving them.*

## **PHASE TWO: SETTING AND REACHING GOALS**

Once the “testing” is over, the rocky part of the relationship usually ends and the mentee becomes more committed. At times, however, odd behaviors may appear, usually if the mentee is under stress. Now the mentor and mentee should identify and work towards some short-term goals.

### **Setting Goals**

Once trust and rapport has been established, base your relationships around clearly defined goals.

- *Involve your mentee in setting goals. Your mentee’s goals must be his or her own.*
- *Ask your mentee to make a commitment with you to carry out the goal through a handshake or written agreement. The mentee must be committed to his or her goal or it will never be achieved.*
- *Try articulating a long-term goal before determining a short-term goal. A mentee may not see the need to work toward a short-term goal unless the mentee sees the relationship of the short-term goal to a long-term goal.*
- *After discussing a long-term goal, select a short-term goal that can be immediately achieved by our mentee (i.e. read an article and meet to discuss)*
- *Set goals that are realistic but challenging. If too difficult, the mentee may become frustrated and give up; but if too easy, there is little incentive for achievement.*
- *Set goals that are specific and measurable and agree on a deadline. Assess progress and pitfalls no less than weekly but no more than monthly.*
- *Celebrate or problem-solve the results (consider charting the results).*
- *Consider purchasing a journal to record the goals you set with your mentee.*

*If your mentee fails to achieve his or her goal, the following points should be examined:*

- *The goal may have been too difficult or time-consuming for the mentee to achieve.*
- *The goal may have been developed without the active involvement and/or commitment of the mentee.*
- *The mentee may be fearful of achieving a goal. Many college students lack self-confidence and become accustomed to making poor choices, which reinforce their negative self-image.*

## **PHASE THREE: NAVIGATING ROUGH SPOTS**

### ***Young college students care about an adult's opinions.***

*They worry about being liked or disliked or not respected by peers and adults. Even though mentees may occasionally seem nonchalant in attitude, your opinion is always important. Understand your influence as an adult. Recognize that you or mentee looks to you for guidance. Always take his or her concerns seriously.*

### ***Mentees need validation.***

*While their problems may seem trivial, recognize that they are very real to your mentee. Establish productive communication. If she or she is upset, do not trivialize his or her feelings. Ask him or her to tell you how he or she feels, and then listen. Be sure to establish eye contact. Do not interrupt, and keep an open mind.*

### ***Many mentees have difficulty succinctly expressing their innermost feelings.***

*Their emotions can be like a maze, and it may take them time to understand and unravel all that they are feeling. Help your mentee clarify his or her feelings. Repeat back what he or she tells you. Ask questions to help him or her clarify what he or she means while he or she talks. But always pay attention and stay focused on the mentee and what they are saying.*

### ***A mentor has a unique role.***

*Mentors are not parents, principals, or another, similar authority figure. The trust between a mentor and mentee is built on that premise. Established trust will move your mentee to confide in you. Do not breach your mentee's confidence unless necessary. If there ever comes a time when you feel a breach is unavoidable, first inform your mentee of your plans to talk to someone outside.*

### ***All relationships have problems.***

*Changes in your mentee's life can affect his or her behavior around you. Do not expect perfection. The majority of problems is not severe, and can easily be overcome. Stay levelheaded and calm. Be sure to use communication tools to get to the heart of an issue.*

### ***Occasionally, a mentee will have a serious problem.***

*Though this arises infrequently, you may be asked to help him or her with problems for which you are not qualified. Recognize your limitations and do not exceed them. You are not a psychologist, psychiatrist, drug counselor, or social worker. Instead, connect your mentee with qualified, experienced professionals if the need arises.*

***PHASE FOUR: CLOSURE***

## **QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL MENTOR**

### **A MENTOR**

*Is a positive role model*

*Is not judgmental*

*Reacts well to, and tolerates, stressful situations*

*Is patient*

*Nurtures a relationships that respects the mentee's dignity*

*Reinforces the mentee's successes*

*Is caring*

*Has a good sense of humor*

*Does not try to replace the parent or teacher*

### **PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO BE INVOLVED WITH ANOTHER PERSON FOR AN EXTENDED TIME.**

*Mentors should have a genuine desire to be part of other people's lives, to help them with tough decisions, to see them become the best they can be. They should be invested in the mentoring relationship for an extended period to be there long enough to make a positive difference and be effective.*

### **RESPECT FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FOR THEIR ABILITIES AND RIGHTS TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES.**

*Mentors should not come with the attitude that their ways are better or that participants need to be "rescued." Mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship win the trust of their mentee and the privilege of being advisors to them.*

### **ABILITY TO LISTEN AND TO ACCEPT DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW**

*Even without having had the same life experiences they can empathize with their mentee's feelings and personal problems. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions, and giving mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with minimum interference.*

## ***FLEXIBILITY AND OPENNESS.***

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*Good mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their mentee, to learn new things that are important to their mentees (i.e. music, styles, philosophies, etc.) and even to be changed and positively impacted by their relationship.*

## **PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETINGS**

### **THE INITIAL MEETINGS**

*It takes time to get to know someone. You should have a back-up plan in case your first meeting does not go as planned. The “Getting to Know You” exercise is a great way to break the ice. You may be tested during your initial meeting, so be patient and remain calm.*

### **THE VALUE OF PLAY**

*If it appears your mentee would rather play every time you are together than pursuing any other activities, just remember that it is not the location or the amount of time you spend together that is as important as doing something you both enjoy. While you think play is wasting time, please remember its value.*

### **PLAY AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING**

- *Active, hand’s-on, multi-sensory experience*
- *Part of the overall development process*
- *Promotes mental capacities*
- *Relieves stress*
- *Stretches the attention span*
- *Develops perseverance and problem-solving skills*
- *Equalizes emotions*
- *Encourages negotiating, speaking up for one’s ideas*
- *Develops physical skills, muscle coordination*
- *Reduces anxiety*
- *Learning how to learn*

### **CELEBRATING ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Encourage your mentee each time you are together. Identify and acknowledge your mentee's strengths. If your mentee is not successful in an endeavor, help him or her to understand that there are many ways in which he or she has been successful and there are many ways in which he or she can succeed. It is important to tell you mentee you are proud of him or her.

## **WAYS TO SPEND AN HOUR**

### **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

Verbalize that you are happy to see your mentee. Example: "I am so happy to see you again." "I have been looking forward to see you."

- Shake hands
- Maintain eye contact
- Compliment your mentee. Example: "You look nice today." "I like your shirt."
- Ask your mentee to share with you. Example: "Tell me two good things that have happened to you since the last time we met." "Tell me what you are currently involved in." "What caught your interest this week?"

### **COMMUNICATE**

- Talk about something of interest to the student.
- Review previous goals.
- Discuss skills a mentee may be lacking in and explain the importance of.
- Build/strengthen interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

### **SETTING GOALS**

- Assist in developing goals.
- Develop two goals you wish to accomplish during the next
- Week/month and record in your journal.

### **CLOSURE**

- Verbalize. Ask your mentee what he or she would like to work on for next time and say you are looking forward to meeting with him or her soon.
- End with a positive note. Shake hands and say you are confident that he or she will have a great week!

## **MENTORING ACTIVITIES**

### **MONTH 1 (SEPTEMBER)**

- *Get to know you lunch*

### **MONTH 2 (OCTOBER)**

- *Mentor visits mentee's workplace, sits in on a class, participates or observes an activity that Mentee is involved in.*

### **MONTH 3 (NOVEMBER)**

- *Mentee visits mentor's workplace, sits in on a class, participates or observes an activity that Mentor is involved in.*

### **MONTH 4 (DECEMBER)**

- *Pulse check on progress – Is the Program Meeting Both Mentee/mentor's Expectations? Good time to get together for lunch or over a coffee.*

### **MONTH 5 (JANUARY)**

- *Attend a professional networking function together, i.e. Diversity Program, Recruiter Summit, NBMBA Monthly Mixer, etc.*

### **MONTH 6 (FEBRUARY)**

- *Bring an article to review together and discuss implications in your workplace, school, environment, etc.*

### **MONTH 7 (MARCH)**

- *Suggest a book on a topic of discussion. Discuss.*

### **MONTH 8 (APRIL)**

- *Attend the NBMBA monthly meeting together to receive certificate of program completion*

### **OTHER SUGGESTIONS:**

- *Remember the mentee with a card on his or her birthday.*
- *Bring in a proverb or saying each meeting to discuss.*
- *Read the newspaper together.*
- *Play a musical instrument together or attend a free concert together*
- *Discuss your favorite sports team or player.*
- *Play a board game. Stress obeying rules and good sportsmanship.*

- *Email interesting/funny/amusing/informative items.*

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

**WHO AM I – MENTOR**

Instructions: Complete each sentence or thought

My first name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Three things my friends like about me are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

I wish I could improve \_\_\_\_\_

I love \_\_\_\_\_

I dislike \_\_\_\_\_

I am afraid of \_\_\_\_\_

What I need now more than anything else is \_\_\_\_\_

Someday I will \_\_\_\_\_

There are times when I \_\_\_\_\_

What I like most about my job \_\_\_\_\_

What I like least about my job \_\_\_\_\_

When I get enough time, I like to \_\_\_\_\_

My hobbies are \_\_\_\_\_

If this weekend was three days long, I would \_\_\_\_\_

I feel most bored when \_\_\_\_\_

If I had no TV, I would \_\_\_\_\_

If I could go on vacation, I would like to visit \_\_\_\_\_

---

*I feel most satisfied when* \_\_\_\_\_

*I enjoy being* \_\_\_\_\_

*My fondest memory is* \_\_\_\_\_

*I can really get excited about* \_\_\_\_\_

*My favorite foods are* \_\_\_\_\_

*My favorite sports are* \_\_\_\_\_

*My favorite music is* \_\_\_\_\_

*On a rainy day, I like to* \_\_\_\_\_

*The person who is a mentor to me is* \_\_\_\_\_

**GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER**

**WHO AM I – MENTEE**

*Instructions: Complete each sentence or thought*

*My first name is:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Three things my friends like about me are:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*I wish I could improve* \_\_\_\_\_

*I love* \_\_\_\_\_

*I dislike* \_\_\_\_\_

*I am afraid of* \_\_\_\_\_

*What I need now more than anything else is* \_\_\_\_\_

*Someday I will* \_\_\_\_\_

*There are times when I* \_\_\_\_\_

*What I like most about my job* \_\_\_\_\_

*What I like least about my job* \_\_\_\_\_

*When I get enough time, I like to* \_\_\_\_\_

*My hobbies are* \_\_\_\_\_

*If this weekend was three days long, I would* \_\_\_\_\_

*I feel most bored when* \_\_\_\_\_

*If I had no TV, I would* \_\_\_\_\_

*If I could go on vacation, I would like to visit*

---

*I feel most satisfied when* \_\_\_\_\_

*I enjoy being*

---

*My fondest memory is* \_\_\_\_\_

*I can really get excited about*

---

*My favorite foods are* \_\_\_\_\_

*My favorite sports are* \_\_\_\_\_

*My favorite music is* \_\_\_\_\_

*On a rainy day, I like to* \_\_\_\_\_

*The person who is a mentor to me is*

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## **ACTIVITIES TO BUILD PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS**

*List skills each of you possess and compare them. Think of a project that would require each of you to share different skills. Discuss how each of you is able to contribute something unique and the value of working as a team versus working individually.*

<http://wilderdom.com/games/InitiativeGames.html>

*(To be discussed)*

## ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP BONDING

- *Discuss books of common interest*
- *Go for a coffee together*
- *State appreciation for the mentee's efforts*
- *Attend events together (especially professional development events)*
- *Get involved in social activities/network together*
- *Include your mentee in activities that you enjoy*
- *Invite your mentee to your professional association meetings*
- *Stay in touch through email and phone*
- *The best way to engage your mentee is through frequent*
- *asking of questions about their lives and work and then*
- *Listening to their response to discern their needs.*
- *Make a photo album of all the activities you do together each time you meet. Take along a camera, photo book. Each time you visit with your mentee, take a picture or two of what you do together. By the end of the year, you have created a whole book of your times together!*
- *Play board games*
- *Play cards*
- *Build a model or fly a kite together*
- *Put together a puzzle*
- *Play sports, attend sporting events*
- *Workout together*
- *Ride bikes*
- *Talk about how you spend your day*
- *Introduce the joy of a good book*
- *Make a dream map together.*

- *Create a time capsule*
- *Encourage your mentee to join a club and see if you can get involved too – i.e. toastmasters*
- *Teach each other about your culture*
- *Teach/practice proper etiquette*
- *Talk about your pets.*
- *Share your musical tastes*
- *Invite to come to your job to witness what you do and then have lunch*

## **MENTEE RESISTANCE**

*Your mentee may at some time become resistant in your relationship. This resistance may only occur during a few meetings or it may last for a few months. If you observe this in your mentee, be sure not to take it personally. Remember, you will be working with a young person who has probably never met anyone quite like you. It may take some time for you to become comfortable with each other.*

### ***Behavioral indicators of resistance***

*The following behaviors, if they are frequently and continually observed, may indicate that your mentee is resisting the relationship. If these behaviors continue for more than two meetings, seek guidance from the mentoring committee*

- *Miss meetings*
- *Won't return phone call, answer emails, etc.*
- *Quiet and not talkative*
- *Uncooperative*
- *Oppositional body language (such as rolling of the eyes, crossed arms)*

### ***Reasons behind mentee resistance***

- *May feel pressured or pushed into being involved*
- *May not like you*
- *Unfamiliar territory – your mentee sees the mentor as someone*
- *Who is different from him or her and is unsure how to relate. There may also be a fear of intimacy, a fear of closeness, or fear of loss.*
- *Fear of loss – The mentee is afraid to allow any relationship to*
- *Develop that might result in emotional pain. They may have the mentality that “everyone leaves me.”*
- *Peer influence – the mentee is afraid that his or her peers will ridicule him or her for having a mentor.*

## **TIPS FOR HANDLING RESISTANCE**

### ***Do more and talk less.***

*Back off from asking too many questions and invite your mentee to do some activities with you. Ex: take a walk, play catch or play a game. Check the list of activities to do with your mentee and ask him/her what they would like to do.*

### ***Follow the mentee's lead.***

*As much as possible, let your mentee determine what you will be doing or talking about during your time together. Use more of a learner/follower approach rather than a leader/teacher approach; especially in the beginning of the relationship. Later, after the relationship builds, you mentee will be more receptive to your taking the lead sometimes.*

### ***Be persistent.***

*Do not give up. Persistence is one way you can show your mentee you are more genuinely caring than other "helpers" he or she has known.*

### ***Try yielding.***

*If working within your mentee feels like trying to open a locked door, try "yielding." This is a term used in some martial art styles that describes a creative backing-off approach as a way to weaken an opponent's attack. You can try this backing off from your mentee's resisting behaviors by acknowledging your feelings of discouragement. Invite your mentee to reveal his/ her real feelings about working with you. If your mentee discloses any feelings to you, listen to them carefully. This strategy may provide the "break through" opportunity for which you have been hoping. It can provide a new beginning in your relationship.*

### ***Seek assistance.***

*If all else fails, explore the situation with your mentor team or other mentors.*

## **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Talking and communicating are not the same! There are three basic skills: **LISTENING, LOOKING, and LEVELING.**

### **LISTENING**

Listening does not have to be passive. It can be as active as talking if you do it right. To listen effectively, you should:

- Pay attention.
- Don't think ahead to what you are going to say.
- Don't interrupt.
- Listen for feelings underneath the words.
- Keep an open mind. Don't judge immediately.
- Encourage the mentee to continue and clarify what has been said.
- Avoid distracting actions or gestures.
- Ask open-ended questions that require more than just a one or two word response.

### **LOOKING**

People communicate verbally and through body language. Pay attention to the whole person. Take note of facial gestures and body movements. There are clues that will help you more fully understand what the person is saying.

- Make eye contact.
- Show that you are listening by leaning forward in your chair, saying "uh huh" or "go on."
- Check out what you understand by repeating back what you heard. Ask if that is what the mentee said/meant.

### **LEVELING**

Leveling means being honest about what you are feeling and thinking.

- Be honest in what you say.
- Speak for yourself. Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements.
- Deal with the other person's feelings. Do not give unwanted advice or try to change someone's feelings. Just listen and try to understand.

## **ROADBLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION**

*Just as there are common mistakes and barriers to good listening, the same can be said of talking – verbal communication. Some communication styles tend to get in the way of a good interaction.*

**ORDERING Telling** your mentee what he or she should do. Ex: “Stop complaining that your professor gave you a failing grade. Go into school tomorrow and talk to her about it.”

**THREATENING Telling** your mentee to do something, “or else...” Suggesting there is only one acceptable course of action. Ex: “If you don’t start studying more, I’m not going to work with you on your home work anymore.”

**PREACHING Telling** your mentee how to act or behavior – usually has a moralistic, “this is the right thing to do” tone. Ex: “You shouldn’t talk about other people like that.” Avoiding – trying to avoid problems or uncomfortable situations in the hope that they may do away on their own. Ex: “Oh, let’s not talk about that right now. It’s so depressing. Let’s try to find something happy to talk about.”

**PACIFYING Trying** to make your mentee feel better without really addressing the problem. Ex: If your mentee says, “I feel bad because I didn’t do my best.” You reply, “Oh, don’t worry about it; you’ll do better next time.” Even though you may be sincere, you have not helped your mentee resolve the issue.

**LECTURING** Giving your mentee unsolicited advice. Ex: “If you want to get ahead in life you must finish college and go to graduate school.”

## **MODELING & SHARING VALUES**

*Values are general principles that are of fundamental importance to people. Examples include equality, tolerance, honesty, privacy, security, education, and service. People generally feel very strongly about their values, although they may find them difficult to discuss or describe.*

## **A PERSON'S VALUES GREATLY AFFECT HIS OR HER:**

### **OPINIONS**

*Views or judgments about a particular matter.*

### **BELIEFS.**

*Ideas of what is true that is strongly supported by evidence or feelings.*

### **ATTITUDES.**

*Feelings or emotions about things.*

*A person's individual values may develop during childhood because of the influences of family, peers, religion, culture, and/or society in general. Values may also change over time. Values influence a person's most important decision about education, work, friends, and life.*

## **SHARING VALUES**

*As you build a relationship with your mentee, you will begin to see similarities and differences in values both of you have.*

*When communicating with mentees, it is important for mentors not to force their values on their mentee.*

*Sharing personal values needs to be done without passing judgment on a mentee's personal values.*

*As a mentee forms his or her own values and beliefs, he or she may ask why the mentor has some of the values they do. This is an opportunity for the mentor and mentee to talk about some of their personal experiences and how those experiences have impacted them and each value.*

## **BRIDGING DIFFERENCES**

### **EMBRACING DIFFERENCES AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

*Learning to embrace the differences between you and your mentee may be one of the greatest challenges in your mentoring relationships. It is normal to feel apprehension about meeting someone for the first time; especially if it's expected that you will become trusted friends. This is an important issue in mentoring when you include a difference in age, socioeconomic status, and/or race and ethnic background.*

*Culture defined in its broadest sense is the underlying fabric that holds together a person's world. Culture is more than race or ethnicity. It encompasses values, lifestyle, and social norms including such things as language, communication styles, mannerisms, ways of dressing, family structure, traditions, and response to authority. Additional factors that can influence a person's lifestyle and values are environment (urban, suburban, or rural), physical abilities, and education.*

*Cultural sensitivity refers to an attitude of respect, openness, and acceptance towards people, whatever their culture. All genuinely supportive relationships are built on a foundation of trust and safety, which comes from feeling appreciated for the way one is. Our primary role as mentors is to honor the inherent worth that each student brings into the world and to respect their special and individual backgrounds.*

### **EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO EXPLORE DIFFERENCES:**

**Ethnic Diversity** *If your mentee comes from a different ethnic background, learn about the values and traditions of that culture. It is your task as a mentor to learn about ethnic diversity from your mentee and from your observations. It is also important for mentors to share their culture as well.*

**Socioeconomic Diversity** *Many things you take for granted may not necessarily be common to your mentee. These types of differences are often seen in mentor/mentee relationships and require understanding by all involved.*

## **MENTEES AND LYING**

*Some mentees, who otherwise seem responsible, can fall into a pattern of repetitive lying. They often feel that lying is the easiest way to deal with the demands of parents, professors, school, and friends. These students are usually not trying to be bad or malicious but the repetitive pattern of lying becomes a bad habit.*

*There are also some students who are not bothered by lying or taking advantage of others. Other students may frequently use lying to cover up another serious problem. For example, a student with a serious drug or alcohol problem will lie repeatedly to hide the truth about where they have been, who they were with, what they were doing, and where the money went.*

### ***What to do if a student repetitively lies:***

*When a student repeatedly lies, mentors should consider taking some time to have a serious talk and discuss:*

- *The importance of honesty, integrity, and having a good name.*
- *Maintaining a negative reputation of one's self will affect school, themselves, their reputation, and possible career and financial consequences.*
- *If a student develops a pattern of lying that is serious and repetitive, then professional help may be indicated.*

## **ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS**

College students may be involved with alcohol and/or legal or illegal drugs in various ways. Experimentation with alcohol and drugs during college is common. Unfortunately, college students often do not see the link between their actions today and the consequences tomorrow. They also have a tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the problems that others experience. Using alcohol and tobacco at a young age increases the risk of using other drugs later. Some college students will experiment and stop, or continue to use occasionally, without significant problems. Others will develop a dependency, moving on to more dangerous drugs and causing significant harm to themselves and possibly others.

College is a time for trying new things. Students use alcohol and other drugs for many reasons, including curiosity because it feels good, to reduce stress, to feel grown up, or to fit in. It is difficult to know which student will experiment and stop and which will develop serious problems and consequences. Students at risk for developing serious alcohol and drug problems include those:

- With a family history of substance abuse
- Who are depressed
- Who have low self-esteem; and
- Who feel like they do not fit in or are out of the mainstream.

College students abuse a variety of drugs, both legal and illegal. Legally available drugs include alcohol, prescribed medications, inhalants (fumes from glues, aerosols, and solvents), and over-the-counter cough, cold, sleep, and diet medications. The most commonly used illegal drugs are marijuana, stimulants (cocaine, crack, and speed), LSD, PCP, opiates, heroin, and designed drugs (Ecstasy). The use of illegal drugs is increasing, especially among young adults. The average age of first marijuana use is 14, and alcohol use can start before age 12. The use of marijuana and alcohol in college is common.

Drug use is associated with a variety of negative consequences, including increased risk of serious drug use later in life, school failure, and poor judgment that may put students at risk for accidents, violence, unplanned and unsafe sex, and suicide.

### **Warning signs of student alcohol and/or drug abuse may include:**

**PHYSICAL** Fatigue, repeated health complaints, red and glazed eyes, and a listing cough.

**EMOTIONAL** Personality change, sudden mood changes, irritability, irresponsible behavior, low self-esteem, poor judgment, depression, and a general lack of interest.

**MENTOR** Starting arguments, breaking rules, or withdrawing from the mentor.

**SCHOOL** Decreased interests, negative attitude, drop in grades, many absences, skipping class, and discipline problems.

**SOCIAL PROBLEMS** New friends who are less interested in standard school activities, problems with the law, and changes to less conventional styles in dress and music.

Some of the warning signs listed above can also be signs of other problems. Mentors may recognize signs of trouble but should not be expected to make the diagnosis. If you suspect that a student is using drugs, report it to the RISING STARS Mentor Coordinator.

## **STUDENT SUICIDE**

*Suicides among college students continue to be a serious problem. Each year in the U.S., many college students commit suicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24-year-olds.*

*Students can experience strong feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, and other fears while in college. For some students, moving to a new community for college can be very unsettling and can intensify self-doubts. For some students, suicide may appear to be a solution to their problems and stress.*

*Depression and suicidal feelings are treatable mental disorders. The student needs to have his or her illness recognized and diagnosed and appropriate treatment plans development. When mentors are in doubt whether their mentee has a serious problem, a psychiatric examination can be very helpful. Many of the symptoms of suicidal feelings are similar to those of depression.*

### **Mentors should be aware of the following signs of college students who may try to kill themselves.**

- *Change in eating and sleeping habits.*
- *Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular school activities*
- *Violent actions, rebellious behavior*
- *Drug and alcohol use*
- *Unusual neglect of personal appearance*
- *Marked personality change*
- *Persistent boredom, difficult concentrating, or a decline in the quality of school work*
- *Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.*
- *Loss of interest in pleasurable activities*
- *Not tolerant of praise or rewards*

### **A student who is planning to commit suicide may also:**

- *Complains of being a bad person or feeling rotten inside.*
- *Give verbal hints with statements such as: I will not be a problem for you much longer. Nothing matters. It's no use. I won't see you again.*
- *Put his or her affairs in order. Ex: Give away favorite possessions, clean his or her dorm room; throw away important belongings, etc.*
- *Become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression.*

- Have signs of psychosis (hallucinations or bizarre thoughts)

*If a student says, "I want to kill myself," or "I'm going to commit suicide," always take the statement seriously and immediately seek assistance from a qualified mental health professional. People often feel uncomfortable talking about death. However, asking the student whether he or she is depressed or thinking about suicide can be helpful. Rather than putting thoughts in the student's head, such a question will provide assurance that somebody cares and will give the young person the chance to talk about problems.*

*If one or more of these signs occurs, mentors should notify the **RISING STARS** mentor coordinator immediately. With support from you, family, faculty, and professional treatment, students who are suicidal can heal and return to a productive life and positive college experience.*

## **SEXUALITY**

### **GAY, LESBIAN, & BISEXUAL STUDENTS**

*Attending college is a demanding and challenging task for every student. One important aspect is forming one's sexual identity. College students may explore and experiment sexually as part of normal development. This sexual behavior may be with members of the same or opposite sex. For many students, thinking about and/or experimenting with people of the same sex may cause concerns and anxiety regarding their sexual orientation. For others, even thoughts or fantasies may cause anxiety. These feelings and behavior do not necessarily mean an individual is homosexual or bisexual.*

*Homosexuality is the persistent sexual and emotional attraction to someone of the same sex. While the reasons for homosexuality or bisexuality are not fully understood, mentors need to understand that sexual orientation is not a mental disorder or even an issue.*

*Despite increased knowledge and information, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students still may have many concerns. These include.*

- *Feeling different from peers.*
- *Feeling guilty about their sexual orientation.*
- *Worrying about the response from their families, friends, mentor.*
- *Being teased and ridiculed by others.*
- *Worrying about AIDS, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases.*
- *Fearing discrimination when joining clubs, sports, and finding employment.*
- *Being rejected and harassed by others.*

*Gay, lesbian, and bisexual students can possibly become socially isolated, withdraw from activities and friends, have trouble concentrating, and develop low self-esteem. Some may develop depression and think about suicide or attempt it [see previous section on suicide]. Mentors and others need to be alert to these signs of distress because recent studies show that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students account for a significant number of deaths by suicide during college.*

*Gay, lesbian, or bisexual students should be allowed to decide when and to whom to disclose their chosen sexuality. Telling a person's sexuality before they are ready is called "outing" and can be traumatic. Parents and other family members may gain understanding and support from organizations such as Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).*

*Counseling may be helpful for students that are uncomfortable with their sexual orientation or uncertain about how to express it. They may benefit from support and the opportunity to clarify their feelings. Therapy may also help the student adjust to personal, family, and school-related issues or conflicts that emerge.*

## **EATING DISORDERS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS**

*It is common for young people – particularly college students – to be concerned about how they look and to feel self-conscious about their weight. During college, students are facing increased social pressures, like attraction to the opposite sex. Unfortunately, for a growing proportion of students, that concern grows into an obsession that causes dramatic weight fluctuation, interferes with normal daily life, and damages vital body functions.*

*College students develop eating disorders, abnormal attitudes, and behaviors with foods, which include anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa. For most students, eating disorders begin when they are 11 to 13 years of age. While they are more common among girls, boys can experience eating disorders too. Unfortunately, many students successfully hide their disorder from their families and friends for months or years.*

### **Warning signs of Eating Disorders.**

*It can be a challenge to know the difference between a student's normal self-image concerns and warning signs that a student may be developing an eating disorder. Students – girls in particular – are going to be self-conscious, compare themselves to others, and want to diet. However, those concerns do not necessarily mean that they have an eating disorder. IN students with an eating disorder, there are glaring abnormal behaviors and physical signs.*

#### **In anorexia (do not want to eat), these signs include:**

- *Significant weight loss (15% below the normal weight for height)*
- *Continual dieting (although thin)*
- *Feelings of fatness, even after weight loss*
- *Fear of weight gain*
- *Lack of menstrual periods*
- *Preoccupation with food, calories, nutrition, and/or cooking*
- *Preference to eat in isolation*
- *Compulsive exercise*
- *Binge eating and purging.*
- *Insomnia*
- *Brittle hair and nails*
- *Depression*
- *Social withdrawal*

#### **The warning signs of bulimia (throwing up after eating) include:**

- *Uncontrollable eating (binge eating)*
- *Purging by strict dieting, fasting, vigorous exercise, and/or vomiting.*
- *Abuse of laxatives or diuretics (“water elimination pills”) to lose weight*
- *Frequent use of the bathroom after meals*
- *Reddened finger(s) – from inducing vomiting*
- *Swollen cheeks or glands – from induced vomiting*
- *Preoccupation with body weight*
- *Depression*
- *Mood swings*
- *Irregular menstrual periods*
- *Dental problems, such as tooth decay*
- *Heartburn and/or bloating*
- *Problems with drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, or crime*

*If you suspect your mentee has an eating disorder, it’s important to talk to the mentee and approach him or her about seeing a doctor to discuss their eating habits.*

### ***When You Suspect an Eating Disorder***

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*If you suspect your Mentee has an eating disorder, it’s important to notify the Mentor Coordinator immediately.*

*It is common for students with eating disorders to act defensive and angry when confronted for the first time. They often have trouble admitting, even to themselves, that they have a problem. Trying to help the student who does not think he or she needs help can be hard. Remember that it is not your job to diagnose – only a doctor can do that.*

*It is important to approach the mentee about your concerns in a loving, supportive, and non-threatening way. It is a good idea to bring up your concerns at a time and in a setting where the mentee feels comfortable and relaxed, and where there are no other distractions.*

*The mentee may be more receptive to a conversation if you focus on your own concerns and use “I” statements, rather than “you” statements. For example, you may want to avoid statements like “you have an eating disorder” or “you’re obsessed with food,” which may sound accusatory to the mentee and only illicit anger and denial. Instead, you may want to say “I imagine that it’s very stressful to count calories of everything you eat” or “I’m worried that you have lost so much weight so quickly.” It is also a good idea to explain specifics the student has said or done that have made you worry.*

## **Preventing Eating Disorders**

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*Your approach to food and nutrition can play a powerful role in the student's development of healthy attitudes about food and nutrition.*

*Your own body image may influence your mentee. If you constantly say, "I'm fat," complain about exercise, and practice "yo-yo" dieting, your mentee might feel that it is normal and acceptable to have a distorted body image.*

*At a time when there is a lot of societal concern about obesity, it can be particularly tricky for mentors to feel comfortable talking about their eating habits. The best thing to do is to emphasize health rather than weight.*

*Finally, take an active role in modeling a healthy lifestyle for your mentee. Let the mentee know that it is ok to eat when hungry and to refuse food when you are not. Also, advise the mentee to make exercise a fun and rewarding activity, as well as a regular one. If you have healthy attitudes about food and exercise, your mentee will have a good example from which to learn.*

*THE END*

