

# **Becoming a Better Mentor:** Honoring Youth Voice and Building Power

**Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Renee Angelo-Mauk, SHRM-CP, PMQ  
Master Trainer of Mentoring Practices**



The Y in Central Maryland



**MENTOR**  
MARYLAND | DC



# MENTOR

## MARYLAND | DC

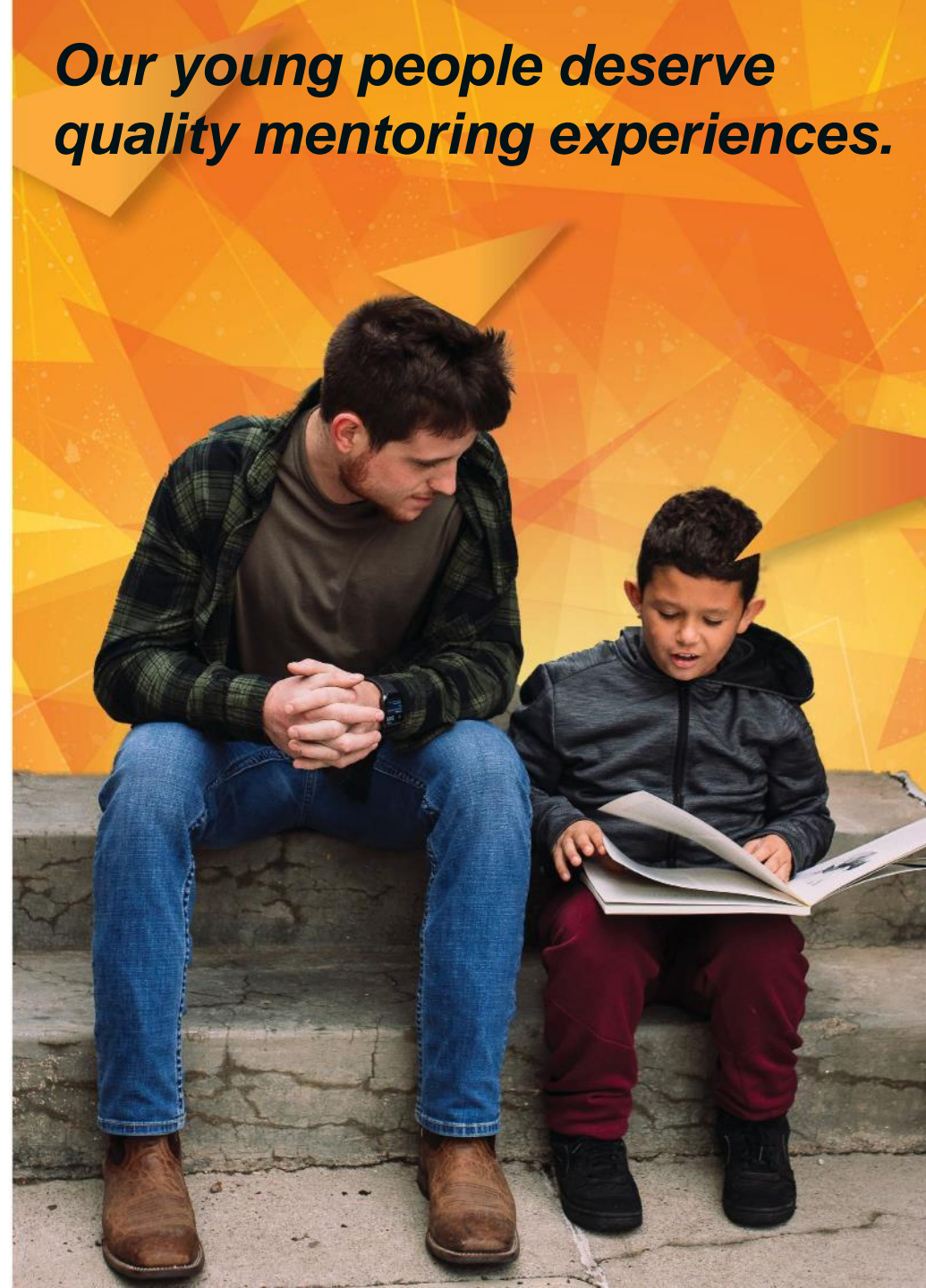
Since Maryland's affiliate of [MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership](#) launched in 2018, **MENTOR Maryland | DC** has sought to uplift the urgency of a march toward quality mentoring. We officially expanded into DC in 2021.

With the mission and vision to increase the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships across the country and to **close the mentoring gap**, we know programs can only do this when they feel supported, empowered and have the tools and resources to sufficiently carry out safe and effective mentoring relationships.

[MENTOR Maryland | DC](#) is a non-partisan organization that galvanizes the Maryland mentoring movement. We serve as community-based experts and create statewide infrastructure to expand quality relationships for young people.

We fulfill this role through our unique role as a unified clearinghouse for training, research, public awareness, mentor recruitment, and advocacy. MENTOR Maryland | DC provides the critical link between MENTOR's national efforts and local organizations and programs that foster and support quality mentoring relationships across the state.

*Our young people deserve quality mentoring experiences.*



# Offerings from MENTOR MD|DC

**Connection to National Mentoring Partnership; resources, best practices, trainings, etc. (including National Mentoring Summit) – [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)**

**FREE Program Consulting/Technical Assistance via NMRC (National Mentoring Resource Center) – [www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org)**

**Access to Mentoring Connector – <https://mentormddc.org/mentoringconnector/>**

**Local, customized trainings, roundtables, communities of practice – <https://bit.ly/MENTORMDDCevents>**

**Promotion of mentoring best practices: [The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#)**

**Access to NQMS (National Quality Mentoring System)**

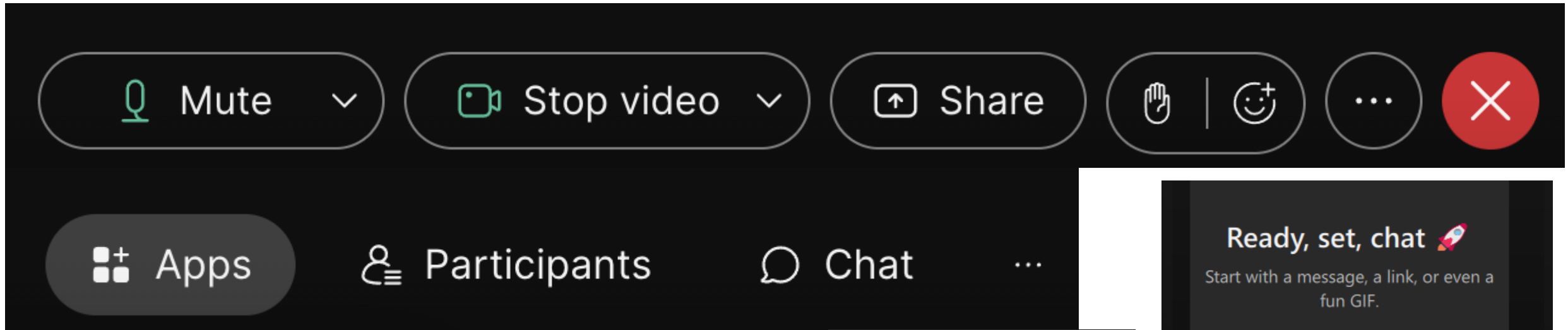
**Connection to funding opportunities – [www.grants.maryland.gov](http://www.grants.maryland.gov)**

**Access to <https://www.mentoring.org/resource/start-a-program/>**

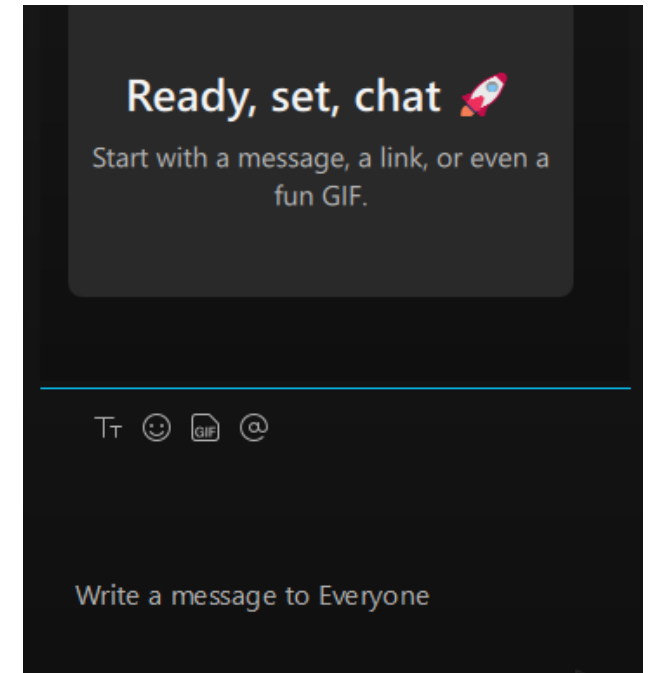


**MENTOR**  
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# Virtual Logistics

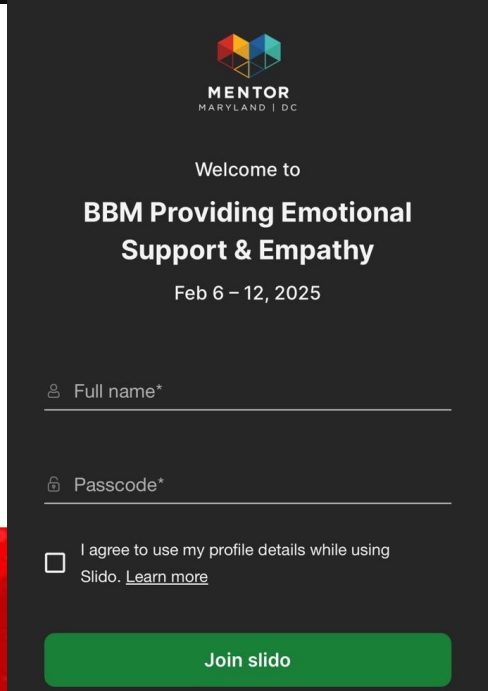


A dark-themed Zoom meeting control bar. From left to right, it contains: a 'Mute' button with a microphone icon and a dropdown arrow; a 'Stop video' button with a video camera icon and a dropdown arrow; a 'Share' button with a screen icon; a hand icon; a smiley face icon; a three-dot menu icon; and a red circular button with a white 'X' icon.



A Zoom chat interface. At the top, it says 'Ready, set, chat' with a rocket icon. Below that, it says 'Start with a message, a link, or even a fun GIF.' At the bottom, there is a text input field with the placeholder 'Write a message to Everyone' and icons for text, emojis, GIFs, and mentions.

Joining as a participant? # Enter code here →



A Slido join screen. At the top is the MENTOR MARYLAND | DC logo. Below it, it says 'Welcome to' followed by 'BBM Providing Emotional Support & Empathy' and 'Feb 6 - 12, 2025'. There are two input fields: 'Full name\*' and 'Passcode\*'. Below these is a checkbox for 'I agree to use my profile details while using Slido. [Learn more](#)'. At the bottom is a green 'Join slido' button.



# Community Standards



**MENTOR**

MARYLAND | DC

# MENTOR MD|DC Community Standards

- Our community is open to ALL - but we also acknowledge the deep-seated racism, sexism, homo and transphobia, misogyny, and ableism that is pervasive in our country. We stand against these isms and actively work to this aim, especially with our youth. This means we must acknowledge that we also approach our work differently and beautifully.
- Share openly. Listen more openly. But be open when your sharing might hurt.
- Be generous with positive assumptions but don't be afraid to ask genuine questions.
- No matter your role here today, be a host.
- We don't endeavor to create safe or comfortable spaces, but rather brave spaces where discomfort can be explored, and beliefs and practices challenged.
- We want this community and experience to be supportive and educational, but also fun! Please bring your full (present) self - it is welcome!
- No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

# Renee Angelo-Mauk, SHRM-CP, PMQ

- 18+ year in non-profits & youth development
- 12 years working in mentoring & living in Baltimore City

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer

AmeriCorps Alum

3<sup>rd</sup> generation Italian American

They/them, queer identified

Dynamic disabilities, neurodivergent



# BECOMING A BETTER *Mentor*

Strategies to Be There  
for Young People

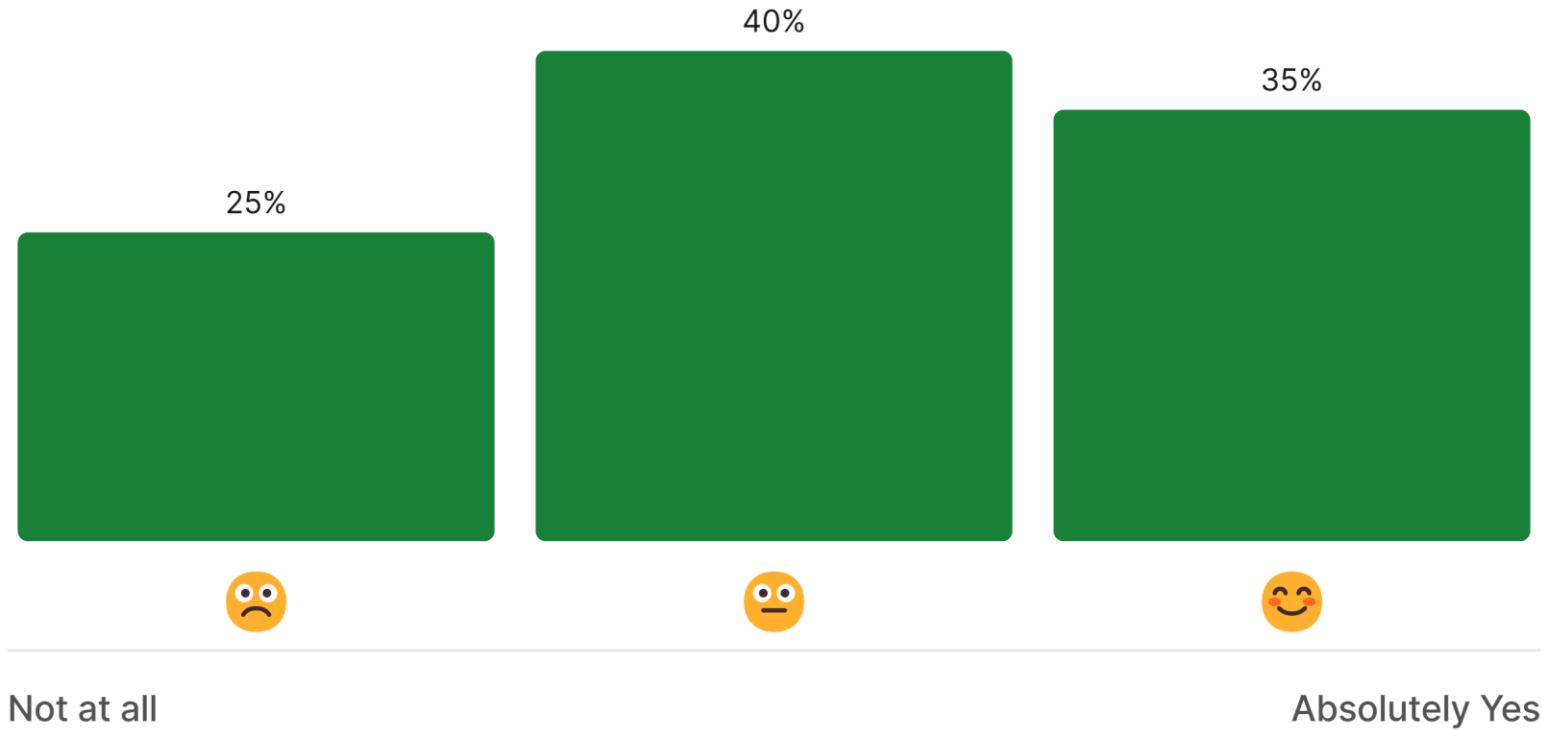




Think back to when you were a child. Do you remember any adult who treated you like a regular person, not just a kid?

Rating Poll  20 votes 20 participants

Score: 2.1






## In a word, how did it make you feel?

Wordcloud Poll  23 responses  18 participants



 The adults that treated you like a regular person, what did they do that was different from most other adults?

Open text poll  17 responses  16 participants

- E** Eugenia Dunn  
My mentors joined in the activity, be it water-play or role play or dancing. Fun!
- K** K. Patricia  
She listened to me and heard me
- N** Nick Ocasio  
Participated and did not engage only as a bystander.
- M** Malik Turner  
They understood me
- L** Laura Meares  
took what I said seriously
- C** Chelsea Stroud  
The way they told me stories not for the purpose of teaching me a lesson
- M** Mr. Harrison  
They allowed me to help
- R** Rebecca  
Allowed me to make my own choices

- E** Eugenia Dunn  
My mentors back then were not different from parents, but all activities fun and age-appropriate.
- B** Bert Vaughan  
They heard me when they listened.
- A** Alex Rounds  
shared their feelings and listened to mine.
- M** Mike Kane  
listened
- P** Patricia (Pat) Bertsche  
asked me what I think or wanted
- A** ArKita  
listened to me when I talked to them
- B** Brittany Dowdy  
Ask for my input
- E** Esther Harper  
put me in charge
- S** Sara Foster  
Specifically, they spoke in their regular voice. Not a "baby voice."

# Becoming a Better Mentor



Adults interested in elevating youth voice must learn how to **listen critically** and be willing to take a step back and **share power** with young leaders.

**“There was a lot of distrust between me and adult figures, I always felt beneath and belittled by authority figures. By having that trusting relationship with my mentors, it taught me to have better relationships with adults later on in life. Now I’m more assertive and more comfortable with adults . . . Even though there is a certain level of respect I need to give [adults], [I learned that] I also demand a certain respect that young people aren’t given just because we are younger.”**

**—Sesha, 18, Maximizing Youth Voice, January 2021**

# What & Why? Youth Voice

- Honoring youth voice and building power can mean many things, from taking a step back and letting youth take charge in planning activities and discussions, to listening to youth interests and stated needs then making connections to broader contexts for them, to intentionally creating a relationship dynamic that gives youth a sense of agency.
  - At their core, mentors need to have an unconditional positive regard for their mentee and a belief that all youth are poised for greatness
- Your role as a mentor then becomes a knowledgeable navigator, a nonjudgmental sounding board, and a partner whose goal is to affirm, support, and encourage.
- Knowing when to lead and when to follow, when to share your point of view, and when to open yourself to a different way of thinking, requires practice and skill.
- Honoring youth voice and building power can look different depending on your mentee's age as well as the program or community context.



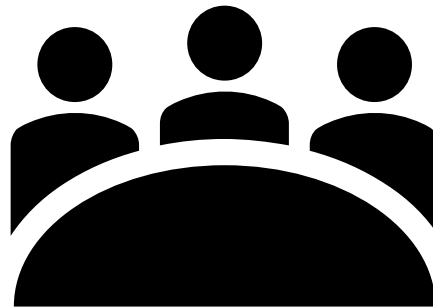
**“The relationship that my mentor and I have has taught me that collaboration is important and sharing power is even more [important]. I think it’s important that adults and elders and mentors guide us, don’t suffocate us, and join us as we are going through this. Support us.”**

**—Aniya, 18,**

**Black Youth Town Hall, June 2020**

# Practice: Share Power

- **SHARE POWER**: *Treat me with respect and give me a say.*
- **Respect Me**: Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
- **Include me**: Involve me in decisions that affect me.
- **Collaborate**: Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.
- **Let me Lead**: Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.





# Practice: Unconditional Positive Regard

“My mentor did a great job breaking down those boundaries... Every time I would greet [my mentor], she would greet me with ‘Hello, my friend.’ Just her letting me know that we were in fact friends and that she wasn’t just an adult telling me what to do, that meant a lot to me.”

—Kyndall, 17, Maximizing Youth Voice, January 2021

*When you have unconditional positive regard for someone, nothing they can do could give you a reason to stop seeing them as human and lovable.*



# Practice: Unconditional Positive Regard

- Why do you want to be a mentor? What motivates you?
- Do you appreciate and seek to understand different perspective, especially when they are unlike anything you have personally experienced?
- Do you respect adults and youth equally?
- Are you willing to learn from young people, acknowledging they have knowledge to impart?
- Do you focus on potential rather than what you can already do?
- Do you recognize that young people can be –and are– leaders in their communities?



# Practice: Honoring Youth Voice

- Provide your mentees with choices and respect their choices
- Be open to learning from your mentee
  - “What means a lot to me, is asking a young person’s insight on something. It show that you really care about their perspective and what they care about, and that you’re willing to have conversations with them and willing to learn from them. Showing them that you’re viewing them not only as a young person you’re teaching things, but a young person who can teach you things. That’s an extremely important and crucial way to really make your mentee feel like they have a say in the relationship.” -Kyndall, 17, Maximizing Youth Voice, 2021
- Practice proactive listening and actively ask questions seek insights
- Hold yourself and your mentee accountable for next steps
- Regularly check in and encourage mentee feedback

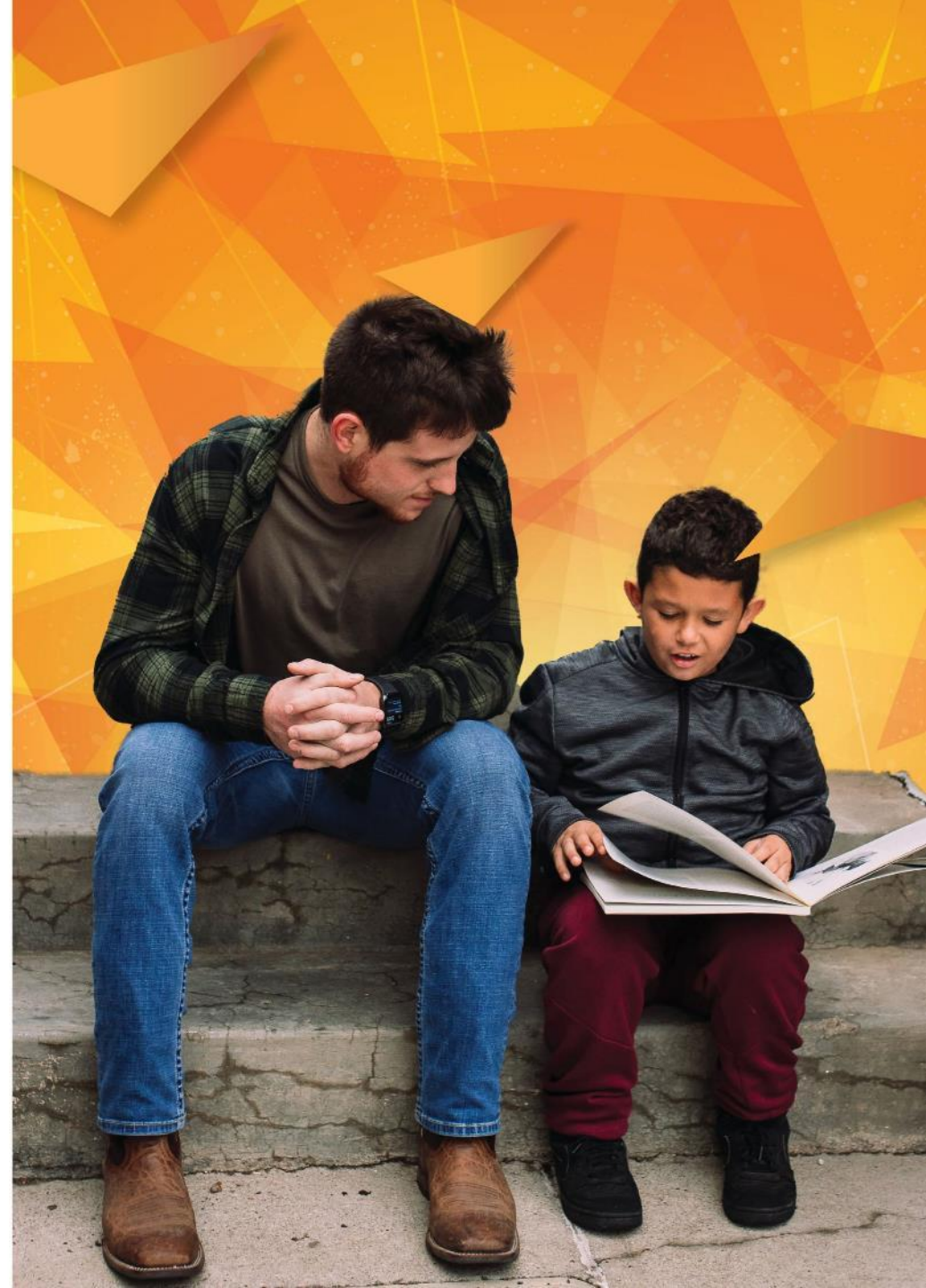
# Pitfalls to Avoid

- Be prepared to be challenged by youth
- Check your biases
- Don't patronize



# Active Listening

- I. Why do you think it was powerful for Celeste to listen to Aaron and his story?
- II. How did Celeste show Aaron that she was really listening to him?
- III. Why do you think it was important to Aaron that his teacher, Celeste, listened to him and his story? How do you know?



# Active Listening

- Active listening involves attentively seeking to understand a speaker's message, rather than passively hearing the words that a speaker says.
- Active Listeners provide verbal and nonverbal feedback to show their sincere investment in what the speaker is sharing.
- Active listening can help to build trust within a conversation, thereby allowing the speaker to communicate more easily, openly and honestly.

# Case Study

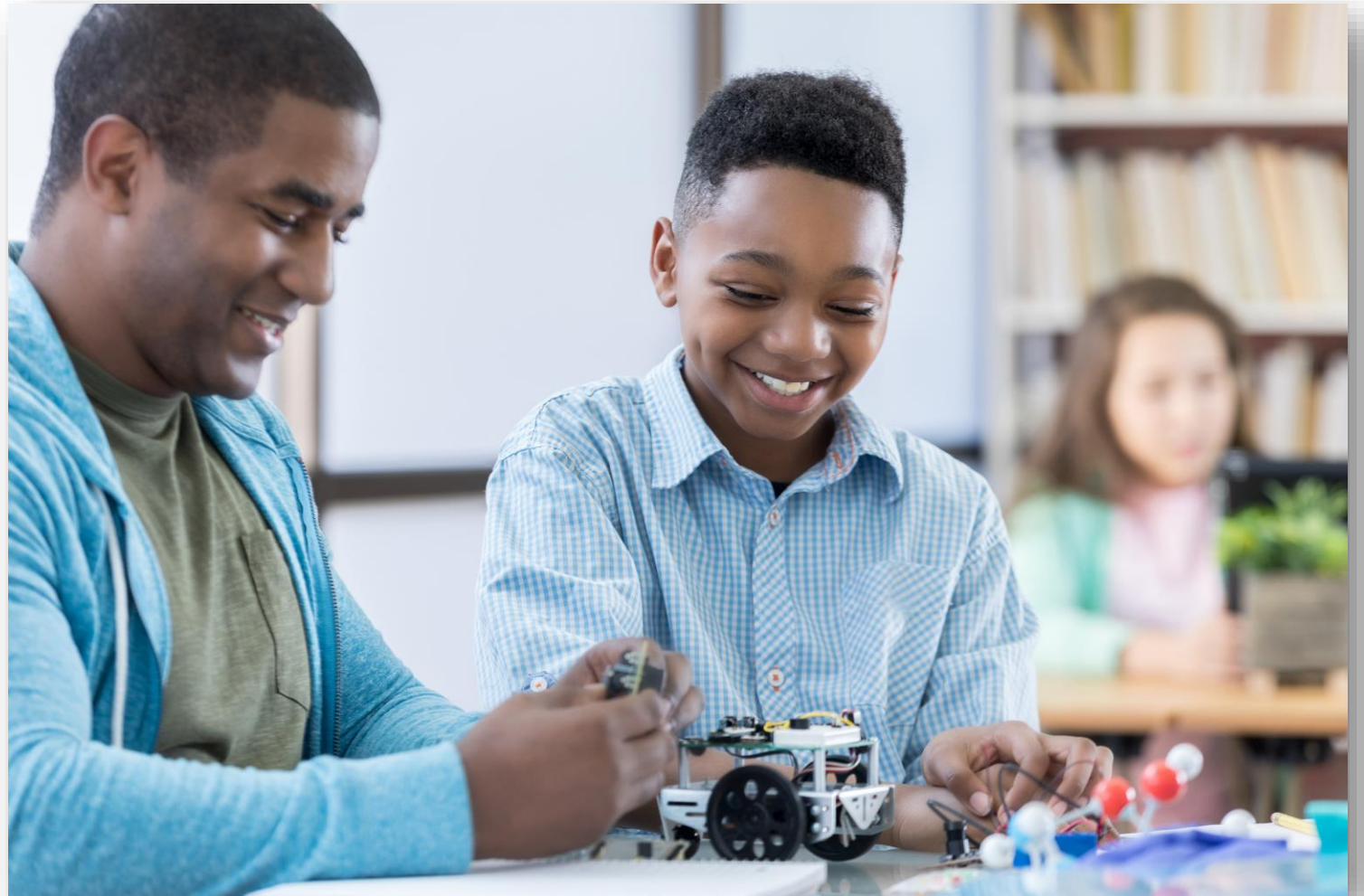
<https://bit.ly/SandyMarie>



Photo courtesy of MENTOR Nebraska, 2023


# Contextual Considerations

- Mentee's age
- Where you're mentoring
  - Program
  - Natural mentor



# Wrap Up: Y-AP Model

- Y-AP (youth-adult partnership)
- Youth and adults working together for a common purpose
- How to apply:
  - Jointly identify a problem
  - Work together to design possible solutions
  - Implement those solutions

 In what way can active listening help us honor youth voice and begin to empower our mentees?

Open text poll  9 responses  9 participants

- A** Alden  
Make them feel Heard letting them know their input is as valid as any other person. Truly try to understand where they're coming from.
- E** Esther Harper  
Youth feel that their opinions matters and the more questions we ask, show them that we are actively listening and want to hear what they have to say.
- D** Dion Mungo  
Ways that active listening can honor a child's voice is that it models for them that an adult can value their perspective. Also that their critical thinking and instincts can lead to quality results in their lives.
- L** Laura Meares  
It lets them know you are genuinely interested in them and what they have to say.
- M** Mike Kane  
Lets them know you care about them
- B** Brittany Dowdy  
It validates their input and show that they matter. That we are working WITH them not people in positions of power over or talking around them.
- b** brenda der-sanchez  
all through perspective and always being open to feedback and change. At the end of the day people want to feel valued and important
- A** Alex Rounds  
The mentee can start to believe that their are positive adults who care out in the world. And not give up.
- M** Mr. Harrison  
Validate them

Thank You

[bit.ly/mentortrainingeval](https://bit.ly/mentortrainingeval)

