



Becoming a Better Mentor
Strategies to Be There for Young People

Making Room for Fun & Play





MENTOR

MARYLAND | DC

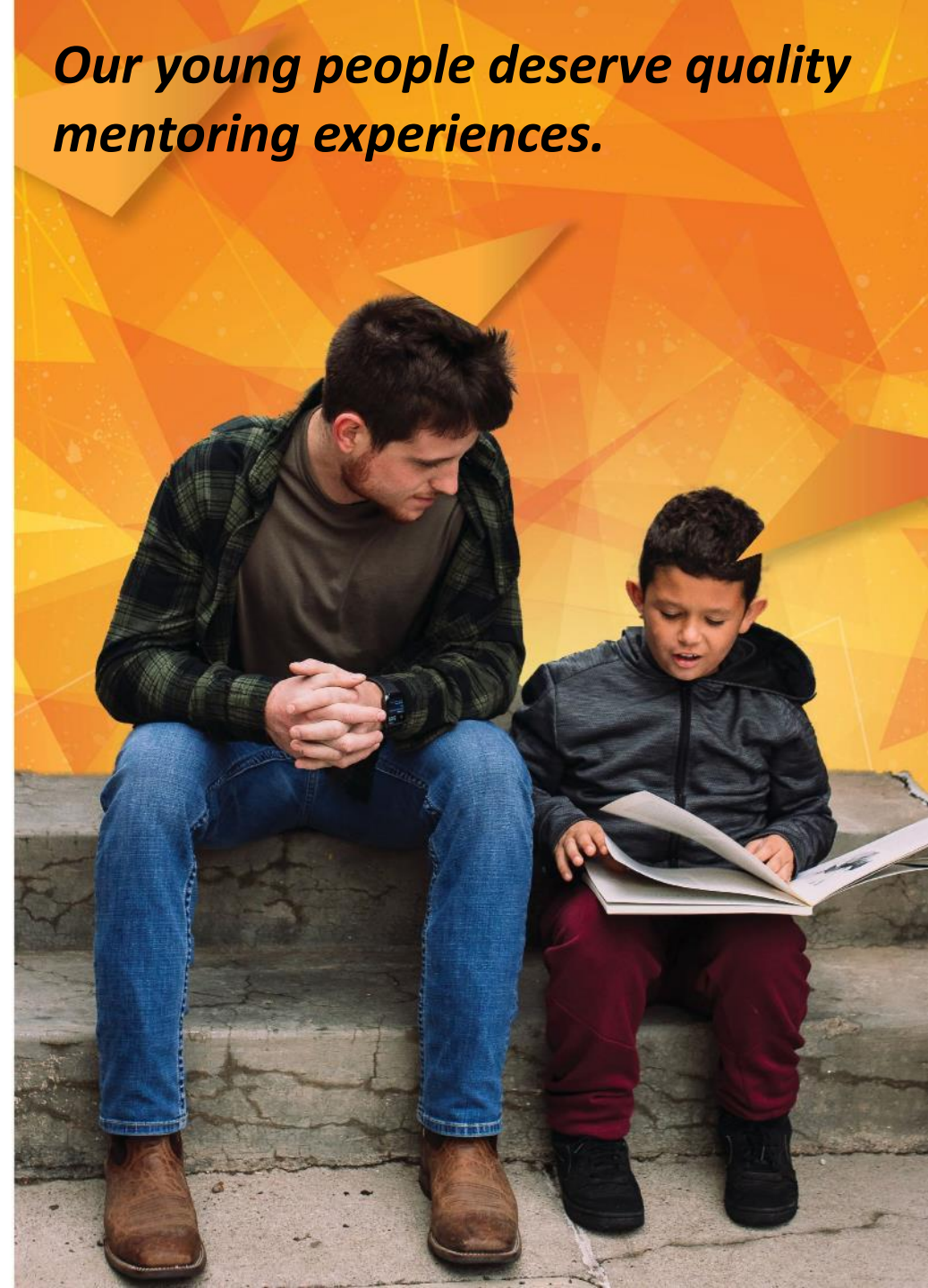
Since Maryland's affiliate of [MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership](#) launched in 2018, **MENTOR Maryland | DC** has sought to uplift the urgency of a march toward quality mentoring. We officially expanded into DC in 2021.

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

FREE Program Consulting/Technical Assistance via NMRC (National Mentoring Resource Center) – www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org

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

Local, customized trainings, roundtables, communities of practice – <https://mentormddc.org/events/>

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

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



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Virtual Logistics

Mute Stop video Share Hand Raise Smiley More Close

Apps Participants Chat More

Joining as a participant? # Enter code here →

Ready, set, chat 🚀
Start with a message, a link, or even a fun GIF.

Tt 😊 GIF @

Write a message to Everyone

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Welcome to
BBM Fun & Play
Jan 15 - 21, 2025

Passcode *

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Community Standards



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.

What is National Mentoring Month?



National Mentoring Month is a time to set course for the personal impact we want to make in the days and months ahead. We hope that neighbors, friends, caregivers and those who simply care will choose to share their time and wisdom with young people in communities nationwide. This is important because we know that there's no such thing as other people's children. So, let this month be the start of your investment in every child, every young person in real and impactful ways; let it start with being a mentor.

Jermaine Myrie, MENTOR CEO

Chapter 3: Making Room for Fun and Play

Michael Karcher – University of Texas, San Antonio

BECOMING A BETTER *Mentor*

Strategies to Be There
for Young People



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What game or activity was your absolute favorite when you were a kid?

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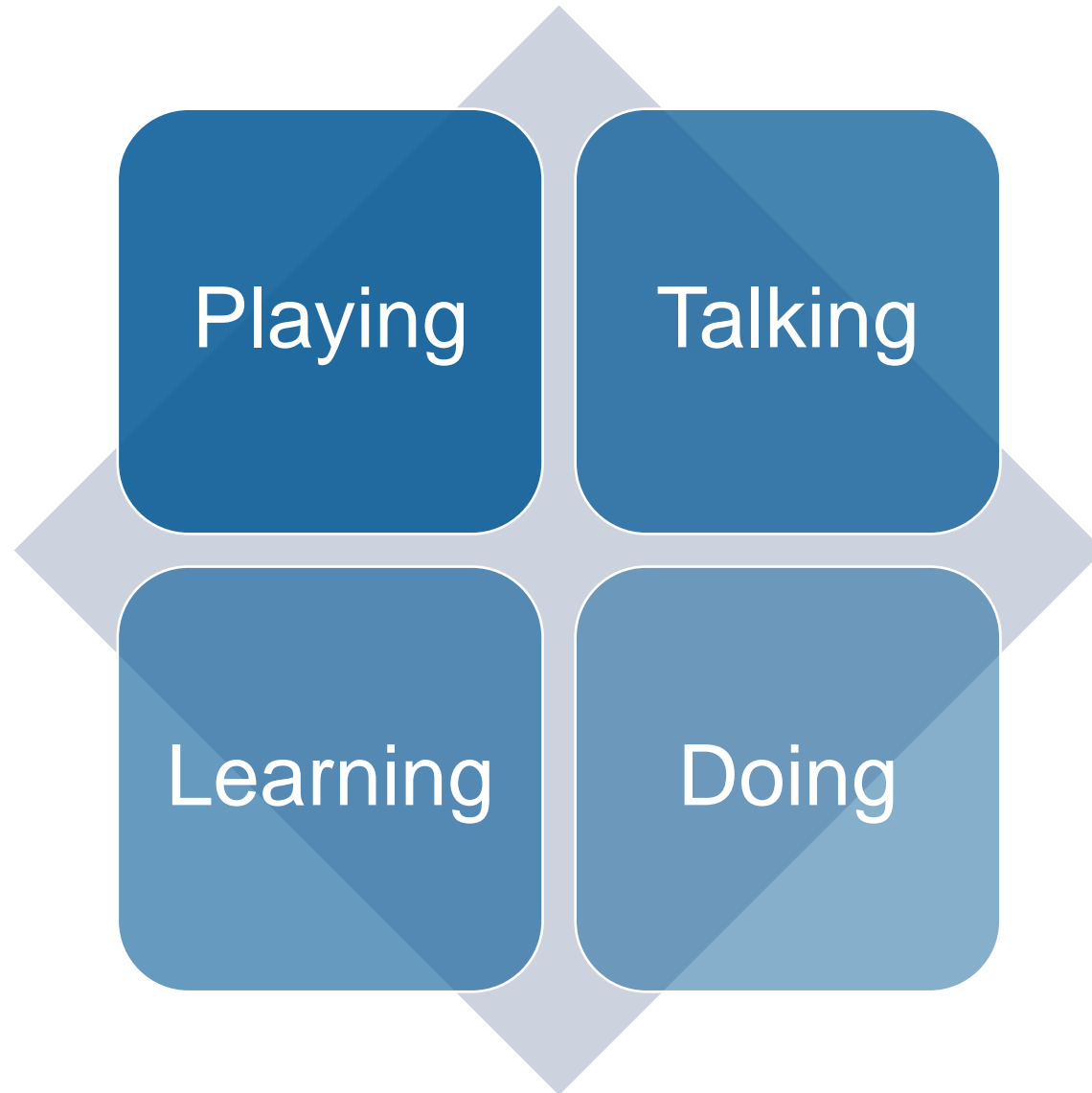
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When you were playing your absolute favorite game as a kid, how did it make you feel?

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Four Core Types of Mentoring Activities



A child who does not play is not a child, but the man who doesn't play has lost forever the child who lived in him and who he will miss terribly.

-Pablo Neruda

What does making room for fun and play mean?

- Being a playful mentor means expressing your joy when you meet with your mentee.
 - You experiencing joy, and expressing it to your mentee
- Find joy in your mentee's engagement in activities
- Sharing something that brings you joy with your mentee
- Sharing something personally meaningful and pleasurable in your life with your mentee

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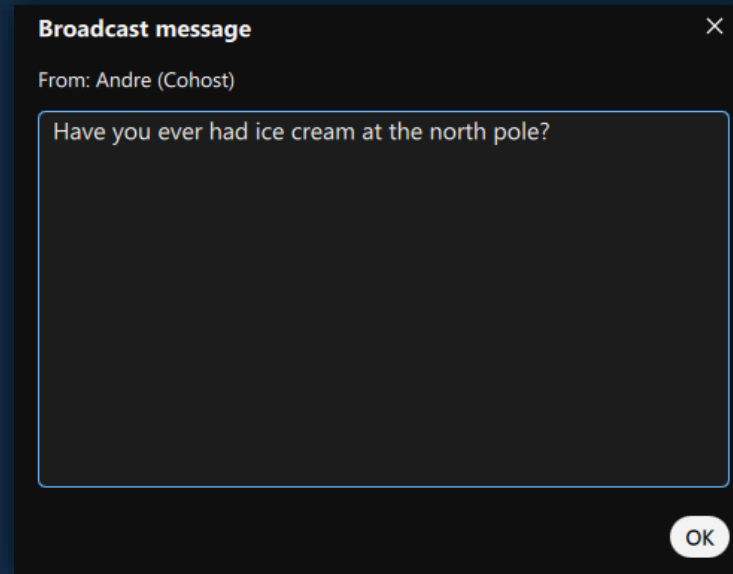
**Do you feel you have enough
"room" for fun and play in
your mentoring relationships?**

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Why Play is Important in Mentoring Relationships

- Play can serve to equalize the power imbalance between mentees and their mentors.
- Playful interactions can form bridges that transcend differences and mistrust.
- Failures when trying to inject humor into a match can provide opportunities to deepen the relationship and build trust.
- Playful mentoring interactions can build a safe-haven at times when the nature of a planned activity brings up the mentee's insecurities or anxieties.
- Losing oneself through complete engagement in an activity is a form of play.
- Infusing play into structured, formal, and goal directed mentoring pays dividends to both mentors and the youth they work with.

Let's play a game!
Have you ever.... ?



Have you ever.... ?

What happened?

Ways to Play in Mentoring

- Play as a backdrop for conversations.
- Play as context to communicate appreciation of the mentee's focused engagement.
- Play as a way to connect, bridge differences, and share experiences that deepen the relationship.
- Sharing funny stories from your own life can make you appear more real, personal, and open in a way that helps forge a connection.
- Bring a playful stance to a planned mentoring activity that otherwise seems boring.
- Contextual Considerations:
 - Age, Gender, Where you are in the mentoring lifecycle

**Who was an adult who
played with you?**

How did it make you feel?

**What was the impact of play
on your relationship with
them?**

Key Points: Making Room for Fun & Play

- Being a playful mentor means expressing your joy when you meet with your mentee.
- Playful mentoring can happen in “big” ways, such as by choosing something fun to do during your time together (e.g., playing a game together); or playful mentoring can occur in smaller, unplanned ways, like through spontaneous sharing of funny stories with each other, or a playful, momentary digression from a more goal-oriented task.
- Mentors empower young people, embolden them, encourage them, and respect them by being playful, because youth know that’s their zone, not yours.

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How will you incorporate fun and play into your mentoring relationships?

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**How will you incorporate fun
and play into your mentoring
relationships?**

**How will you know you're
successful?**

Additional Reading and Resources

The print titles listed here should be available through local or online bookstores or through your public library.

Two books focused on helping adults bring play into their relationships with youth:

- ***Playful Parenting***
(2001) by Lawrence Cohen – This book provides step-by-step suggestions on ways to introduce play as well as how play can address parents' concerns.
- ***The Power of Play***
(2007) by David Elkind – This book provides an overview of the importance of play for youth in their development, generally and in specific contexts, like at home and at school.

Two books focused on helping adults bring play into their relationships with youth:

- ***You've Got to Be Kidding: How Jokes Can Help You Think*** (2009)
- ***A Time to Laugh: The Religion of Humor*** (2005)

You can also find a wide world of books of both jokes and fun in-person games through the library, as well as through collections of jokes online. Websites where teachers provide ideas for jazzing up boring lessons and invite fun or competition into teaching are also a good source of fun mentoring activities.

Thank You



<https://bit.ly/MDDCtrainingeval>

