



[00:00:06.00] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

All right. Thank you all for joining me today. My name is Renee Angelo-Mauk. The topic of today's session is Becoming a Better Mentor: Strategies to be There for Young People, specifically the chapter on Making Room for Fun and Play. I have a lot planned for us, so I want to jump in, but I appreciate you all being here and taking the time to learn something new during what feels like a very busy kickoff to the year, to say the least. I appreciate you all being here. I'm going to drop one last link to download Webex while we get started, and we'll keep it moving. If you're not familiar, we are [MENTOR Maryland | DC](#). That is who is putting on this training for you today. We are an affiliate of MENTOR [The National Mentoring Partnership](#). Specifically in this region, where we were launched in 2018, but there's about two dozen affiliates across the US working to ensure that there is enough mentoring and quality mentoring for all young people and to close the mentoring gap. We do that in a lot of ways. We have some advocacy opportunities coming up. We're advocating for legislation that supports mentoring and effective mentoring.

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We have tons of services to offer you, including these trainings. So that looks like a lot of different things. Again, connected to the National Mentoring Partnership, the National Mentoring Partnership, they host their own trainings. They have their [Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series](#), which I do recommend you get on that newsletter and go to those. They're amazing. We also host the National Mentoring Summit, which is happening in less than two weeks in DC. If you are going to be in the summit, I hope you come to my workshop because I'm also facilitating a workshop there. But it is an amazing opportunity. They help us also during the summit go to Capitol Hill to do some of that advocacy. So So that is because of our relationship with the National Mentoring Partnership. So lots of opportunities there. If you stay connected with us and them. We also have our [No Cost Program Consulting and Technical Assistance](#) through the [National Mentoring Resource Center](#). Holla in the chat if you have received TA from us. You most often hear us calling it TA, but this is an opportunity to get a certain amount of consulting hours with one of us, a staff member, or one of our mentoring expert consultants to meet with your program to help develop an area of your programs, whether that's your recruitment, policies and procedures, training, and things like that.

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That is a no-cost opportunity for you that we really want you to get engaged in. I will say we have a lot of hours left to offer in this fiscal year for TA, so jump in. Now is the time. Access to

the [Mentoring Connector](#). If you didn't know, it's National Mentoring Month, which we'll talk about in a second. But during National Mentoring Month is when folks are most likely to Google how to become a mentor. When they Google that, the Mentoring Connector is likely to pop up. The Mentoring Connector is the national database of mentoring programs and mentoring opportunities. Folks can go to the Mentoring Connector, search the area. We manage the regional database here for Maryland and DC. Mentors can go, search their zip code, what mentoring they're looking for, and your program may pop up, and they can apply directly to your program. If you're not already in the Mentoring Connector, get in there. Then we do things like these trainings. Let us know in the chat if you've been to any of our Round tables, we do those as well. Yes, we are recording and everyone will get access to the slide, so no worries about that.

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But the point of story is we have a lot to offer you, most of which is free. So please keep in touch with us, and we appreciate you engaging with us in this training as one of those opportunities, right? Yeah, tell us about those round tables. But yes, so we're going to jump in now into our topic for the day and just some general logistics. So as you see, we are in the virtual space and we are using a new platform, Webex. So we really appreciate your patience in trying a new platform with us. Zoom out here, doing too much. It has not been working for us. We're in Webex today and we appreciate that. And we appreciate your space and grace in this virtual space. We have tested as many things in advance, so things can go smoothly. But so if this is where it is new to you, at the bottom of your screen, you should see this little toolbar where you can meet yourself, unmute yourself, start and stop your video, which there will be times where I'm going to ask for videos on. This little hand, you can raise your hand, you can have an emoji reaction, and then you can press those three buttons for some more options buttons as well.

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In the bottom right of your screen, you should see some three buttons where you can access apps. If you go to... I don't know if I have the apps up right now because I want to turn on We will get to that in a little bit. But, excuse me, you can see who else is here, all your friends here, give them a shout out, and then you can send them a direct message in the chat. When you go to the chat, at the top, not pictured in this little thing here, but at the top, you can do message everyone or send a direct message. You can send a direct message to me if needed. But send an emoji, send a gif. Put it in the chat right now. Let me see that you I don't know how to use it. I know that you have because you've been saying hi, but that is there for you and to share things. So please keep our chat lively. And then we're also going to use something called

Slido today. We're going to send different pulls and things like that. It is quite easy. So the directions on how to log in will be on every slide.

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But when you go... Nice. Seeing some gifs. When you go to Slido, you will see this at the top of the website. It'll say, joining as a participant, which you are. You'll be given a code. It's all quite easy. After that, then you'll see this where it says, welcome, you're in the right place, and you'll be given the pass code, which again, every time we're interacting with Slido, that login That information will be on the screen so you can see. We want to make sure that you just have an idea of what you'll be looking for so we can keep it moving. But, yeah, excited. I love seeing this in the chat. It's really fun. Thanks, guys. Cool. So if you've ever been in with a training with us, we do have our community standards. I don't want to spend too much time here, as I'm sure you've seen them many times, but our goal is to be open to all, to share openly, to be positive with our assumptions. Never be afraid to ask questions, please. No matter what your role here today, be a host. We'll be in breakout spaces with each other.

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We want everyone to feel invited. And it's not just, anytime we're in smaller spaces with each other, we're inviting everyone into a new space. You'll be a host in a breakout room in a way. We want everyone to have a good time, especially considering today's training topic. Keep that in mind. This will be an interactive training for learning. We're going to play some games as well. We appreciate your interactions in the chat. Again, we will ask for some video on a little bit later, but our goal always in these spaces is to be supportive and educational and to have fun. And your full self is absolutely welcome. So we appreciate you being here. I'm going to talk quickly about National Mentoring Month. It's National Mentoring Month. Get lit. National Mentoring Month celebrates the positive role mentorship played in the lives of young people and promotes, pardon me, promotes the role of mentorship and helping to create more equitable schools, communities, workplaces. We have notable national partners and local partners for National Mentoring Month, including all the mentor affiliates, of course, but mentor recognizes January as National Mentoring Month. So this is a A message from a Jermaine Mairie, the CEO of MENTO, and he says, National Mentoring Month is a time to set course for personal impact we want to make in the days and months ahead.

[00:08:40.24] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

We hope that neighbors, friends, caregivers, and those who simply care, will choose to share their time and wisdom with young people and 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, and let us start with being a mentor. So we appreciate I appreciate you celebrating National Mentoring Month by being here to talk about our topic today. But we hope you will celebrate in your communities at your mentoring programs in your neighborhoods. So we might call that now is the time to celebrate the great work that you're doing, that your mentors are doing, and that anybody involved in mentoring relationships. So we're really excited. It's our favorite time of year. Apologies if you hear my dog barking in the background. Okay, So today, like I mentioned, we are talking about one of the chapters of the [Becoming a Better Mentor Resource](#). So Becoming a Better Mentor was the first research-based, first research-backed resource made by Mentor National that was specifically guided towards mentors. So typically, they are creating resources and research for mentoring programs for a practice, and things like that.

[00:09:55.12] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

But this is speaking directly to mentors. But as we know, the people who work on mentoring programs also are mentoring programs, also our mentors. So I dropped the link there. There's 12 chapters to this very amazing resource. But today we're going to talk about Chapter 3, Making Room for Fun and Play. And this was written by Michael Karcher, who is a researcher at the University of next is San Antonio. So why mentors may need a refresher on something so basic as having fun or being playful? And that is because we are grownups, right? You are in charge. You are the adult in the room. You've mentored into mentoring Mentoring relationships either through a natural connection or being part of a program because you know the stakes with the youth you mentor are high. You know you can make a big difference in your mentoring life if you do it right. We know that you take mentoring seriously. But most adults struggle to retain and regain and reengage their playful selves. That's why we're reviewing it today. What we know about Making for Fun and Play is that by centering joyful experiences and mentoring relationships, mentoring our mentors can form stronger and more meaningful connections with their mentees, which I know is for those of you who are part of programs, that that is what you're looking for and looking to do.

[00:11:12.15] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Okay, so we are going to engage in our first Slido today. You will want to go to slido. Com, and you will want to keep that tab open because it will automatically change in every poll that we go through. But you go to slido. Com, you will enter that code, B It's a BM Fun Play. I believe it's case sensitive. Use the passcode NMM. Then you are going to answer this question. What game or activity was your absolute favorite when you were a kid. Take some time, give an answer or two, and then we will see our answers on the screen. What game or activity was your

absolute favorite when you were a kid? If you can try to answer those questions into Slido, but I appreciate the chat. Red Rover, Nintendo 64, video games. The code is on the screen. It's DBM Fun Play is the code. Pass code is NMM. Whoa, jump roping, uno, freeze tag, monopoly. Oh, I love a fellow Monopoly lover. There are so few of us playing outside. Playing foggie with my mom. She never let me win. That's rough. Pardon me. Dodgewell, capture the flag. Pretend. Climbing Trees.

[00:12:46.05] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Poptrapica. Right in the chat, I want to hear about what that is. Four Square. I want to hear about sardines, too. What is that? Risk. Anything crafty. Friendship bracelet, beads, clay, painting. Risk is real. Jump rope and jacks. Love that. I hope you saw the Jacks in our marketing for this. Some more in the chat. Double Dodge, Backgammon, Candyland. Nintendo. Riding, playing Uno. Uno is so popular. Scatterball, speed, and SEGA, Pokémon, Jacks, breakdancing, rapping, dodgeball, Scrabble, spades, jump ropes. Awesome. Four Square. Mankala. I just recently got back into Mankala, guys. It's awesome. Holding forts. Soccer and kickball, one of your five words in my writing. More Mankala. Which guys, I think my call is making a comeback. I think it's really fun as an adult. Playing with barbies and ponies. Sledding is a season, go Cards. Connect 4. All right, I'll let these left two folks get in and then Legos. Just being outside, playing soccer. All right, awesome. Thank you to everybody who wrote in. And then your screen should switch to now answering this question. And this is going to be a word, Claes. Let's enter one word. When you were playing your absolute favorite game as a kid, you're having the most fun time of your life because you're playing your favorite game.

[00:14:28.15] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

How did it make- How do you feel? So for those just coming in for answering our questions at slido. Com, the how to is on the screen. Free. Love to see that. So again, a word cloud, the biggest words are those with the most answers. Love to. That's so interesting. Happy, care free, loved. Euphoric, right? That euphoric of just being a kid playing outside. Just like so many memories of being in my backyard with my neighbor, friends, and like that. Awesome. Energized, Joyful. I would love to hear. I write this in the chat. When you say free or feel free to come off mute as well What is so special about that feeling, the feeling of being free? Especially now that we're doing this, we're looking back, right? What is so special about that feeling of feeling free? Free of worries. It feels like the opposite of being an adult, right? Kind of. Powerful, right? No expectations. All that room to play in, right? When you are free, there's even more room to play and find Find joy, and we're going to talk about finding joy a lot. How is it? Anything else but having fun and being in the moment.

[00:16:08.04] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Not having to get permission. Yes, we're going to talk a lot about that, right? Because let's think about young people's typical relationships with adults, free of stress, getting to do something you love, and escape from a tough reality, limitless. And I feel when we think about why it's hard for adults to reengage, it's because we come to understand and know more and more limits as we age, right? Great. Love. Thank you guys so much for participating. Great answers. That's really setting us up for what we're going to talk about. Again, when I send out the slides, I'll also export these so we can remember all of our great ideas. But yes, thank you so much. I really appreciate your thoughts there. I hope this is getting your mind moving about this topic, your memories and experiences of it, and then how we can bring that to our young people. Amber, free of judgments. Yeah, that is real. The author of this chapter and his mentor reviewed, can I mention that this is a research back document, right? This author and his mentor reviewed 30 years of youth mentoring research to determine what made mentoring most effective across different groups of youth and settings.

[00:17:34.02] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

They proposed this framework that included four core types of mentoring activities, those being, and in a particular order, playing, talking, learning, and doing. Their research suggested that the strongest mentoring relationships reflected a balance of these four types of interactions, the order being intentional, the most important at the top, playing, talking, learning, doing. Being playful, again, from the review of the research, determined to be a critical tool in a mentor's relationship building toolkit. Even if they were a part of a mentoring program that was more goal-directed or was very structured, play was determined to be the most critical tool. The capacity to be playful is tool number one. For most of us, for most adults, it is the talking, learning, and doing that reflects the usual, familiar, and comfortable roles that characterize how adults interact with young people most of the time. In very few of those common roles that adults play in youth lives, does fun, doing something just for the fun of it, factor as a central objective. That's why if this is infusion to a mentoring relationship, it makes that relationship unique and special to the young person. Can I have someone read this quote on the screen for us?

[00:19:04.02] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Just feel free to come off mute and read it. 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 terrible relief. Yes. Thank you so much for reading. Let that sit with you for a second. If you read this chapter, which you can do any time again on the website that I shared earlier, that you'll see a lot that they say, play is the work of children. A child's capacity to play is what makes a child a child. You may have interacted with children who do not have a lot of opportunity and access to play

because of whatever may have happened in the life or the circumstances of their life. Those children may be very serious or unchildlike. Children with old souls, the old soul trope, is often to describe a child who is not playful. What we're seeing here is that the ability and capacity for play is what makes children children, and that as adults, it is really important for us to be in touch with play with our inner child, or else we're really going to be missing out, to put it quite simply.

[00:20:17.11] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

When we say making them for Fun and Play, what do we really mean? Being a play for a mentor means expressing your joy when you meet with your There are a lot of ways to define play and describe the experience of having fun. But for this chapter, it'll be most helpful if we focus on two elements of this tool, which are you experiencing joy and then you expressing that joy to your mentee. Keep that in mind. Find joy in your mentee's engagement in activities. First, you can, again, so whether that activity reflects your mentee's playing, sharing, learning, or doing something, you finding joy just in your mentee's engagement of it is really important. That's that joy aspect. Then sharing something that brings you joy with your mentee. What you know brings you joy, sharing that with your mentee and building a connection there can be really important when we think about making room for fun Fun and play. And then sharing something personally meaningful and pleasurable in your life with your mentee. So it's an important concept that we will unpack a little bit later about how to do this, but whichever of these you may do, we think about making room for fun and play, the result should be the same, a genuine expression of joy in the context of the time spent with your mentee that generates a smile on your face and ideally your mentee's face too.

[00:21:58.00] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Playful mentoring can happen in big ways, such as choosing something fun to do during your time together or playful mentoring can occur in smaller, unplanned ways, like through spontaneous sharing of funny stories or playful digression from a goal-oriented task, which we'll talk more about. Play is an activity that can be both in the moment or planned, as well as youth-oriented or mentor-generated, which again, we'll talk more about. However, it has no specific tie in to adult values necessarily or future-oriented goals. That's what makes it Particularly specialty youth and uncommon in the standard repertoire of many adult-youth relationships. Adults are always setting and implementing expectations of young people, which is cutting out room for play. Again, that's not to say that we should not have expectations of young people or look to the future or be goal-oriented. But again, when we solve the four core types of mentoring, there has to be room for play if we want to have effective mentoring relationships. If you open up your

Slido again. I'm going to ask you to answer this poll, which is simply, do you have enough room for fun and play in your mentoring relationships? And I'll give time for folks to answer.

[00:23:21.20] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Do you feel you have enough room for fun and play in your mentoring relationships? We got over 100 of us on the call. Let's get at least half of us in the poll here because it seems we're becoming more split as more people answer. Or it's changing Andrew says to be fair, I feel like there can always be more, which I guess I could have put that as an answer. That's a good point. All right, we got about half of us in the poll. Feel free to keep answering if you haven't yet. I'll check in on our numbers before we move from this slide. But what we know, again, from the research is that almost universally, effective mentors do one essential thing. They communicate nearly every time they meet with their mentee, their experience of joy when they are in the presence of the mentee. So for the your mentor for the mentor who's an expert and who has been in the game a long time, expressing the joy happened during fun activities as well as in serious interactions. You'll know you're on your way to mastering the art of being a playful mentor and you will recognize the moments you will have successfully incorporated play, fun, and joyful interaction into your mentoring every time you become aware that your mentee sees a smile on your face.

[00:24:55.14] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

There is this awareness piece, right, of your own joy Because it's not just that we're keeping this joy for ourselves, it's that this building the bridge between your joy and your mentee through outwardly expressing it, either verbally or by a smile, of course, that you're doing that when you spend time with your mentee. So it looks like, and this poll should remain open until we move to the next one, which won't be till towards the end, that we're almost split. About half is saying yes, definitely, which I love to hear. If you answered yes, can you let us know what program you're at? I'd love to hear about programs that feel like they are doing it right and have a room in front of play. A little bit less than half, say there could be more, and then there's seven % that say definitely not, which, yeah, we definitely hope to go. If you get it, if you answered yes, let us know in the chat what program you're mentoring with or if you're not mentoring with the program so we can see who out there feels like they're getting in enough fun and play.

[00:26:07.20] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

But thank you for and we will also save the chat again with the slides and everything else. So, yes Thank you for sharing. Again, hopefully by the end of today, we'll have a better idea of how to make more room for fun and play. But like with all of the Becoming a Better Mentor chapters,

we have this question, why? Why is this important? Why it was so important making up for fun and play, that we need to spend time on it. So Lawrence Cohen wrote, For adults, play means leisure, but for children, play is more like their job. Play is also children's main way of communicating, of experimenting, and of learning. So play is important for the future and makes it essential for mentoring relationships. So let's get specific as to why. Play can serve to equalize the power imbalance between mentees and their mentors. Pulling mentors into more of this friend zone. Playing gives young people a chance to win, succeed, and Excel relative to their mentor, which, again, are uncommon in a youth's typical interactions with adults, which make it unique for the mentoring experience. There is always a power dynamic between adults and young people.

[00:27:22.01] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

It is just the nature of how our society is structured. If you're interested in a training on adultism, I would love to hear about that because this adultism What is a real thing. In general, our society values the input experiences of adults more than young people. So play can help serve as an equalizer in that way. Playful interactions can form bridges that transcend differences and mistrust. This can be particularly true when there are differences in the personal characteristics of mentors and their mentees, whether that's demographics, age, sex, race, or social. But play can serve as the ultimate leveler and allow commonality to be found in those playful interactions. Expressions of joy and pleasure and spending time with another person reveal that two people are not boundaried, are not necessarily separated by their differences. We can make that connection, and play can be that way to transcend those differences. It is what we're finding from the research, a really good way to do that. Then when there may be failures. Failures when trying to inject humor into a mentor match can provide opportunities to deepen the relationship and build trust. When a mentor's joke or effort to introduce a game into a match fails or falls flat, or worse, there could be an experience of harm, mentors have an opportunity to provide a reparative response.

[00:28:48.12] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

So carefully tuning in to whether attempts at humor or fun are working for your mentee, provide a unique way for you to learn about your mentee and respond empathically. It doesn't mean Again, nothing about being a mentor, I feel, is naturally necessarily easy, right? And there will be times where we fail. So in the context of Flay, when those things aren't working, it's an opportunity for you to put some more thought and effort into it because, again, from what we know, children are wired to play. It is their job. It is their work. So what's an opportunity for us to do some reflection and to respond empathically to help build, again, that bridge 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. A playful approach by the mentor can communicate the mentor's investment in the mentee and a willingness to be vulnerable and not so serious. It communicates a willingness for the mentor to join the mentee in the anxiety or fear that an activity may evoke, trying something new, and thereby help diffuse the mentee's fears, making the youth more open to taking risks and being vulnerable.

[00:30:03.20] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Again, there's a lot of modeling in a way as well, that if you're going to play something new or try something new, that the mentor is in it with the mentee. Losing oneself through complete engagement in an activity is a form of play. So this is what... It's a powerful experience to be lost in play, which I think we saw when we reflected on what that feeling of being lost in play was when we did that poll a few slides ago. This experience of flow or the feeling of being fully engrossed in an activity so that you may lose track of time or you're feeling your process are fully engaged, experiencing that flow is linked with many positive outcomes for youth. The most important of which is that it serves as a source of motivation and the desire to learn new skills and pursuit of new chances to experience that flow state. And likely you have felt this flow state, even as an adult doing some adult things. But for young people, when they get into that experience, which can happen through play, it is a bit motivating for them. Then when you or adults express joy in response to seeing the mentee in deep in play or lost in a state of purposeful flow, the mirroring back of the use playful joy can be healing and reparative.

[00:31:23.03] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Lastly, infusing play into structured, formal, and goal-directed mentoring pays dividends to both mentors and the youth they work with. Like many aspects of mentoring that you know already is that it is bi-directional, and the mentor is getting benefits from mentoring, and the same is with play. Some youth may need time having fun and developing trust in a mentoring relationship before any targeted or strategic supports will even be heard or received by the mentee. Research What it actually finds that even for very goal-directed programs, which are valid and great, the most powerful indicator of longer and stronger relationships is the extent to which the matches in those programs engage in play. Infusing done into mentoring efforts or programs that are instructionally focused or rely on information-rich mentoring activities can help the youth feel partnered with, valued and important. Why? Why is that? At a very basic level, it gives mentees it's the message that they are more important than the task at hand, which I think for us at mentoring programs, I don't want to say we're ever not centering the youth, but especially for program leaders, we are beholden to funders to people looking for outcomes and things like that, that we're focusing on that goal.

[00:32:50.08] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

When we infuse play, even in those programs that have, again, a structured curriculum, very specific goals they're working for, youth want to that you are there specifically for them. That the most important thing in your relationship with them is not that goal or whatever at the end of the program, but that you are there for them as a person, person to person, mentor to mentee. So thank you for everyone who shared your playful programs in the chat. I hope some of this information is starting to resonate with you, but now we are going to play a game. And so let's get into that. And I'm sure that you have played a game like this, right? How have you ever? So what we're going to do is we are going to break into breakout rooms. I'm going to give you guys... How many? I'm trying to do some I'm going to put between seven and nine people in each room. Okay, we'll do seven to 10 people in each room. I'll give you guys about four to five minutes just to introduce yourselves, name, pronouns, where you work, share a fun fact if you want. But I'll give you guys some front time on the front end to introduce yourself to the folks in the group.

[00:34:25.10] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

The essence of this game is that cameras need to be on. So I'm going to ask you to turn your your cameras on now as I transition into giving the rest of the instructions. I know some of you are on your phones, so you can't. That's fine. But turn on your cameras now as that will be essential to purpose of the game. But when you get into your breakout room, you introduce yourselves. Again, I'll give you a four to five minutes to do that. What I'm going to do next is I'm going to send a yes or no, have you ever questioned to your breakout room? And it should look like this. It'll say It'll pop up in the middle of your screen and then it'll say from me and then the question will be there. If you, again, it should look like this. If you're in the web version, it might not pop up. When you're doing your introductions, select one person from your group who's in the app to read the question to the group. Then if the answer is yes, raise your hand so the group can If the answer for you is no, then shake your head.

[00:35:34.01] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

We want to be very obvious to communicate. After each question is asked, your group will have a minute to react or discuss your answers, and then the next question will be asked and the cycle will repeat. Are these instructions clear? Okay, I'm going to pause recording. Recording.

[00:36:07.11] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Okay, so how did that go? I got some questions in the chat. I know we were trying out something new. How did it go? What did you notice about going through the Have You Ever

game with the folks in your breakout room? Let me know in the chat. Raise your hand, come off mute. I want to hear about how that went.

[00:36:29.23] - Attendee

I think you went well.

[00:36:34.13] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Yeah. Chris is like, "once everybody warmed up, we were able to be more open on our different experiences." Chris said, "Not easy with strangers. Take some information from that. Wanted to hear more about people's stories." Yeah. Paul, did you want to share?

[00:36:57.03] - Attendee

Yeah, I was just going to say, just answering the questions, and it was like I was reminding myself of, Oh, yeah, I did this. Then all of a sudden, the positive feelings associated with those experiences started coming back. Despite the fact that I was telling strangers, I felt happy. It felt good to be able to share.

[00:37:25.08] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Yeah. It's such a good point, Paul. Again, how this relates to mentoring and what we've been talking about is connecting with those positive feelings that in this situation, the questions generated and then communicating that to the other folks, which in this situation, you were forcibly doing that as was the nature of the game. But when those moments happen, can happen naturally in a conversation and a mentoring relationship, that we are communicating that positivity, that joy to our mentees, for instance.

[00:38:05.18] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

So again, when we come back to the essence of what we're focusing on is finding joy. So finding joy in the moment in the game et cetera. And then also communicating, Patricia, thank you for being here. Shout out to Patricia's group. Yeah. So again, keeping that in mind, connecting with your own positive feelings, enjoying communicating that out. Yes, thank you guys so much for participating. We are going to talk a little bit more about that how piece, how can we incorporate what are the ways to play in mentoring. So There are many ways, of course. Again, this isn't necessarily about defining all of the ways, and no way would this be an exhaustive list, but to give us ideas. Play as a backdrop for conversation. You may have The third of this idea of parallel play. What we found from research is getting mentors at least of all

ages. We can see the value of engaging in parallel play, where both the mentor and mentee are doing something creative, but independently. Then that is the backdrop to conversations about other things. Something like drawing, painting, building something together can provide a way to normalize conversations that might otherwise feel awkward or uncomfortable, or if done, without an accompanying community activity.

[00:39:31.20] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

The independent activities that you can do side by side become a backdrop for rapport-building conversations. Play as context to communicate appreciation of the mentee's focused engagement. Watching your mentee play. For example, they're showing you their skills on a video game or demonstrating some other skill they've learned can be valuable for your relationship. It can be a way for young people to communicate their competence. It can be very validating for them. A young person can be appreciated on their own terms. When an adult or older peer watches them play or perform successfully at something that is meaningful to them. Then again, we want to be mindful to be explicit in our communication of your pleasure in their engagement. Yeah, Erin, great example for the last one in the chat, crossing a ball and answering questions. When we think about toddlers who are like, we're like, mom, look at me. Look at This thing. Look at me to this thing, look at me, jump over this thing, right? It's that thing that we can make space for our mentees to do with us, to give them that acknowledgement and validation. And that's really meaningful for them. And again, we know that from the earliest of age, young people are asking about for adults.

[00:40:46.05] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

So can we make space to do that in our mentoring relationship? So play as a way to connect, bridge differences and share experiences that deepen the relationship. So Pardon me. So play can be a simple digression where you communicate to the youth, Hey, let me share something with you that you might find interesting. It can be something that, again, has no linear, logical, obvious role or purpose in sharing other than for you and your mentee to connect. So again, that connection being the most important part, that sharing of joy, and we already previously talked about, can be a bridge between misunderstanding Things, differences, and all kinds of things. It can be a digression. Again, not all play is planned. Sharing funny stories from your own life can make you appear more real, personal, and open in a way that helps encourage a connection. Stories that provide a lesson by ending in an unexpected way or show that you did something stupid, but that you can laugh at in hindsight, are usually well received. It help make you less unfamiliar and seem more like them. They make you seem more real, more vulnerable, more flawed. Again, much as most youth may view themselves on everyday, that might be their point of view.

[00:42:09.13] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Those funny stories can foster connection and mutual sharing of vulnerabilities and often trigger youth to either share their own stupidities or to ask adults real questions about the types of coping strategies they've used in the past. When I'm sure you've heard many times this idea of why it's important to be authentic, and I've said many times in trainings, like youth want to know that adults make mistakes because they do, too. When you're able to share those kinds of stories in a playful way or it maybe literally is a funny story, it could be really disarming in that way and make space with our youth to try to find connection, to feel comfortable enough to ask for help, to be askable, if you were at our last askable adult training. So that could be a way to, again, build that connection there. Bringing a playful stance to a planned metric activity that otherwise might seem boring. So we've talked, not that I'm going to say every planned activity is boring, but we talk about, again, in those really structured programs and things like that or times where it's your role to help your mentee do their homework.

[00:43:13.18] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

I'm never going to glamorize homework. Selling homework to young people can be hard. Maybe bringing in a competitive stance is enough to make something like, again, doing homework funds. If you can get six in a row correct without missing any, then we'll stop and do something that you want to do. Even in those interactions and negotiations they entail, you likely be smiling and you communicate to your mentee that their feelings have been heard and that their needs are being recognized as important. If you've ever communicated with the young person who's complaining about their homework, telling them about the value of homework is likely not going to be the way that you're going to sell it to a young person. How can we infuse playful breaks into a structured thing that they have to do that maybe they we don't want to do. We know, again, homework can be important or whatever that might be. Keeping those things in mind. Then we want to be in mind of the contextual considerations for how we're infusing play in our mentoring relationships. Thinking about things like age. Play with young children often builds on things of power, freedom, acceptance, and love.

[00:44:22.12] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Such play can communicate to you how they make sense of the world. You can learn about what a young person, a very young person, their point of view. For adolescents, play could be the undeniable bridge they live on between fantastic childhood and serious adulthood can lead adolescents to want to have a foot in both worlds. In that situation, rule-based and competitive games can offer that playful bridge. Then gender. It would be a mistake and do mentors a

disservice to affirm stereotypes about what types of play are better for girls versus boys. While there may be some research on play preferences for each gender, gender differences are not universal and we should act as such. For some mentees, the expectations and prohibitions that have been placed on them by adults in their lives may feel stagnating. You, as a mentor, if you are, again, open to all kinds of play despite gender, can provide a healing and reparative response for mentees with those experiences. I remember working with an adolescent man, an adolescent Black and here in Baltimore City. We were driving the car and I was trying to find music that he would be interested in.

[00:45:35.24] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

He said, you know what, Ms. Renee? I don't like hip hop. And I don't like to tell people because they assume that I do like it. And I was like, okay, well, what? I was like, I don't care. Because I really didn't mind. But obviously people had had expectations of him and it made him feel some type of way about it and that he couldn't engage in what he really wanted. And it was that he wanted to listen to pop music And so we did. And we made space for that. And then where you are in the mentoring life cycle, so is it a new relationship or a longer term or you're later on in a relationship? So there is considerable evidence Again, research of the need for a balance of play and work, so to speak, across the mentoring relationship life cycle. So early research on effective relationships in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters Community-based Mentoring Program, revealed that mentors to build the relationship through play and non-directed conversations, which allowed the mentor and mentee to learn about one each other, yielded stronger relationships and better outcomes. Once these relationships were established, again, further on the relationship, mentors could then more easily begin to focus on more target goals.

[00:46:48.03] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

So mentors who come in not rooted in play, who come in with a fixing approach, and from day one are focused on sharing their wisdom and how these could improve their lives, called a prescriptive style. You'd likely hear me talk about before, fared more poorly. Again, if we're in this early stage of a relationship, this could be the most important time to be focusing on infusion play. It's going to open the door to the more serious conversations, life development, life skill building, what we're going to do with our young people. Hold on, I want to check how much time we have. Okay, I will give you some time. I'm going to send you back in two groups to answer these questions. Again, we've been reminded of a lot of different feelings that we've had about play and such. I want us to think about who, again, back to our childhood again, who was an adult that played with you? How did it make you feel? What was the impact on that play? Actually, we'll just give it to the discussion. What was the impact of play on your relationship with that adult? Raise your hand, come off mute.

[00:48:09.16] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

This is triggering a story. Please share. We'd love to hear it. But who was an adult who played with you? How did it make you feel and what was the impact of play on your relationship? Go for you to raise your hand, come off mute.

[00:48:26.19] - Attendee

My neighbor, when I was about nine years old, I remember he used to run a or he delivered for a comic book store. And I would always want to try to talk to him, but he was always busy. And then after a certain amount of times asking him, he took some time and took me into a truck, showed me the comic books, actually let me pick one out. And I just actually realized through this question that that's one of the reasons why I still like Spider-Man as a character, because that was the first comic book he gave me. So it's a cool story.

[00:48:58.12] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Yeah Yeah, that's so special. And that idea that a young person is asking and ask a lot of questions and when we make the time, there's that opportunity. I just saw someone raise their hand. If you raise your hand, please go ahead and come off mute. I can't see everyone, but I saw a hand.

[00:49:18.08] - Attendee

So I played with an uncle. I'm sorry, he was an uncle by marriage. At first I was thinking there was no adult that played with us, but then I remembered him because is we played checkers. How did it make me feel? It made me feel great because I beat him all the time, but he was a sore loser, so he would mess up the board at the end. The impact made me feel, I guess, competitive. I like to play with others. I became more competitive, I think, as a result. Yeah.

[00:49:55.13] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Again, we talked about this a little bit earlier, the opportunity to feel validated in your skill as a young person, that you were able to do something, that you're able to be an adult at something, which, again, in every other area of a young person's life, they're typically told of their gaps between them and adults.

[00:50:11.16] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

But again, that game can really level the playing field and also maybe influence your values. So I made you a little bit more competitive and things like that because they did it well. Any other memories of an adult who played with you? How it played with you, how it made you feel? Who was it? How did they do it? What was the impact of play on your relationship? Mikaela says, "My grandma has the coolest imagination and allowed me to be a kid. Even when my mom would get upset because I was dirty or my clothes didn't match, my grandma wouldn't care. She would say she's just a kid and allowed me that freedom to be who I am." We talked about freedom and feeling free earlier when we were playing something that was important to us. Again, this idea that young people don't have a lot of power. They actually don't necessarily have tons of freedom, even though we see that now. But they're in school, however, eight hours a day feels like being told their every move. They're constantly getting directions from parents, adults, other authority figures. And while they are more free in a way than adults, they have different responsibilities than adults.

[00:51:34.24] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

The spaces need to be intentionally created for them to feel that freedom, to feel that freedom of play and joy. Again, joy being the focus of making room for fun and play. And that what we're finding is that adults have to intentionally do that and make that space. And that is through direct communication, making that space and honoring them and communicating that we appreciate the young person playing, being engaged, and being themselves. Well, he says, My dad would play soccer, and I felt happy and free. In fact, I had on me is that brought me closer to him, even though we're not talking more. Yeah, right. Again, that idea of the importance of play to continue to build a bridge in a relationship and that opportunity to get close over the course of playing a game and having fun. Awesome. Thank you. Okay, can I have someone read the first one here. We're getting towards wrapping up. We're going to have one more breakout for you guys to discuss, but can I have somebody read the first line?

[00:52:57.18] - Attendee

Being a playful mentor means expressing your joy when you meet your mentee

[00:53:02.09] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Thank you. Can somebody read the second line?

[00:53:06.19] - Attendee

Playful mentoring can happen in big ways, such as by choosing something fun to do during your time together, or playful mentoring can occur in smaller, unplanned ways, like through

spontaneous sharing or funny stories with each other, or playful momentary discretion from a more goal-oriented task.

[00:53:29.05] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Thank you. Then can someone read the last?

[00:53:34.23] - Attendee

Mentors empower young people, embolden them, encourage them, and respect them by being playful because youth knows that that's their zone, not yours.

[00:53:45.18] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Great, thank you. To wrap up, I wanted to give us time to reconnect with our group so you can have a little bit more conversation. But I want you to answer this question, which is, how will you incorporate fun and play into your relationship. We've heard some great stories. We're reflecting on adults who did it well. A lot of us do, about half of us, do feel like we do have enough room for fun and play. But how can we be either more intentional about it if we had that space for fun and play? But if not, how can we make space for it? And what will you do? I'm going to open those rooms right now for you all to discuss for about, I'm going to say seven minutes. And then we will come back together. It's not recording again.

[00:54:41.23] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Thank you so much, everybody. I would love to hear about, yeah, what did you talk about? How did you find out? How do you incorporate your fun and play into your mentoring relationships? Does anybody share any good ideas? And then this added question, how do you know that you were successful at doing that? So for you to come off of mute, raise your hand, drop a note in the chat. How will you incorporate fun and play into your mentoring relationships?

[00:55:12.11] - Attendee

The way I do it is I'll take an activity first, and I'll see, I think that probably is highly engaging for them on there. Then I'll see they engage without me needing to prompt them for certain things. Then right now, currently with the ball tossing activity, I initially had one girl who was hesitant about it, but it wasn't that she didn't want to do it. She was actually just nervous about it, thought that she couldn't catch the ball. So I switched spots with another mentee, talked to her about how to catch it. Then after that, she was perfectly fine. So just continue that and then always make sure they know that something doesn't work for them because the whole point of this is

you get in the habit of asking. It's not always going to be yes, but it'll always be no if you don't open your mouth.

[00:55:56.05] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Yeah, yeah. So many good points there. And thank you again for sharing. We talked about earlier this need to be mindful of when a mentee doesn't engage in what might be a failed attempt at an activity and being curious enough to find out about how they play and when they might feel nervous. Due to your relationship, she was able to say and you were able to modify to make sure that she was included. Again, not falling into a trap I'm like, suddenly something didn't work and then we never try it again, but that we can adapt and make it work and make sure that everyone's included. Then I'm sure over the course of playing the game, she got more confident and things like that, which is this other side is that play can be it can be super validating when a young person is able to engage in it successfully. Yeah, thank you. Anybody else? Any other thoughts about how you're going to do it or be more intentional about it if you're already doing it? What will be success for you when it comes to fun and play in your mentoring relationships?

[00:57:08.07] - Attendee

I think something that's always worked for me is using my own experience as a youth who has received mentoring services, like how when you asked us the questions earlier about if we've received play, what do we like to do when we were younger? It just brought back to me how those mentor relationships, how it created a lasting memory for me. And it was through play, like connecting. For me, just using that blueprint and remembering that everything doesn't have to be serious. It doesn't have to be perfect. Connecting with your youth through their likes or their interests or hobbies is one way for us to not only spark the light in them, but make them feel seen.

[00:58:04.12] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

Yeah, so true. I appreciate you sharing. This is an opportunity to do some more of that reflection. I'm glad that that worked for you guys to take some best practices and things like that. What I'll say is that if you do read this chapter, the writer ends talking about a story with his mentee, and they were in a very structured, goal-oriented, I believe academic-based program, so they had done plenty of academic-based activities. When the relationship was going through closure, he asked, what was your favorite part of being in the program? He said, when Then you made me laugh. He was like, all the activities we did, that is what was most memorable. It was like, yeah, that you were funny and that you made me laugh. Again, the opportunity for play

ended up being the vehicle of these other goals were accomplished. It wasn't that none of that was meaningful. At the meant, it wasn't like, I loved going to the science fair or whatever. But what's memorable and meaningful and helped build that bridge was something that was playful and fun. And again, this is why we say it's the most powerful tool in the mentor toolkit.

[00:59:20.18] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

So if you do read the chapter, there are additional reading resources in there, some great books that I've not read, but now I think I might. Again, some books focused on helping adults bring play into relationship with youth and then books and some more over here as well. So I encourage you. The goal of any of our trainings is to encourage you to learn more. Hope you may take that opportunity. And then, yes, thank you so much for being here. What we have here is our training evaluation, so please complete that. You'll receive it via email as well. But we appreciate you so much for being here, for celebrating National Mentoring Month, and hopefully now kicking off the year with a lot of fun and play in mind. So I'll stay on so you guys can access that link. Let me know if you have any issues. Again, you will get the recording and slides and anything related to badges by January 24th. So keep an eye on your email. Subscribe to our YouTube so you never miss one of our training and recordings. And we hope you will continue in touch with us. But thank you so much for being here.

[01:00:33.19] - Renee Angelo-Mauk

We really appreciate you guys being a part of our learning network.