

Becoming a Better Mentor

Strategies to Be There for Young People

Chapter 1: Providing Emotional Support & Empathy

March 6th, 2025 | 6-7:30pm

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Master Trainer of Mentoring Practices



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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](#))

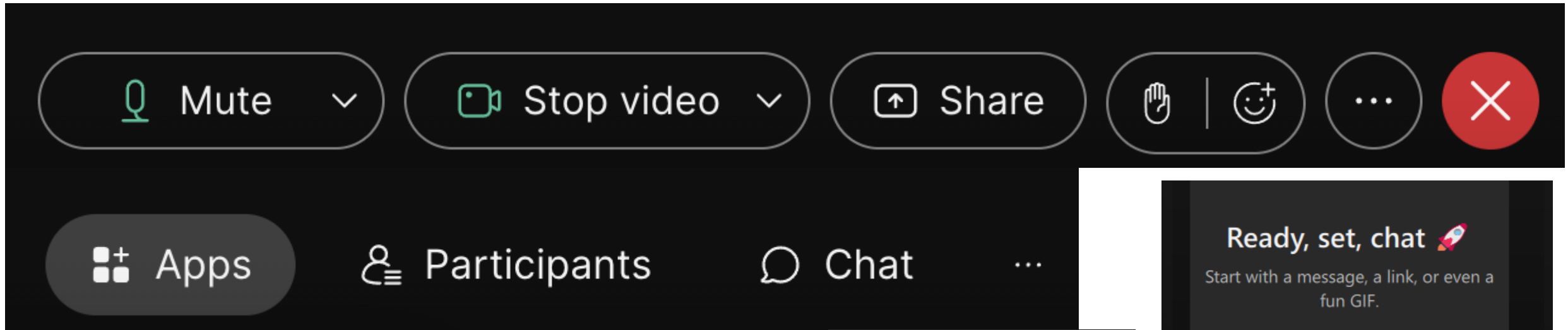
Connection to funding opportunities – www.grants.maryland.gov

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

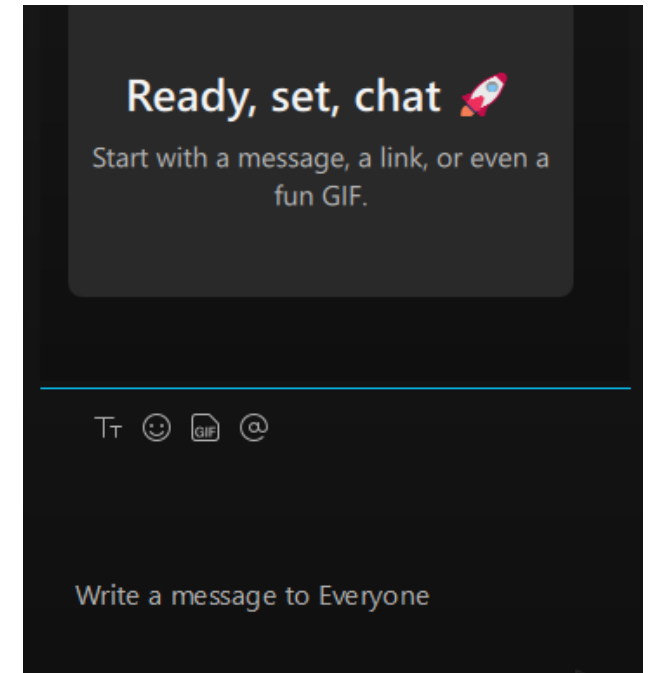


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Virtual Logistics

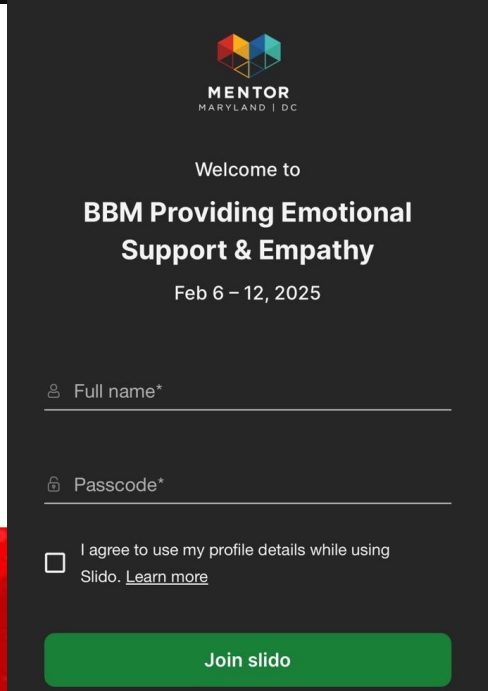


A dark-themed Zoom meeting control bar. From left to right, it contains: a 'Mute' button with a microphone icon and a dropdown arrow; a 'Stop video' button with a video camera icon and a dropdown arrow; a 'Share' button with a screen icon; a hand icon; a smiley face icon; a three-dot menu icon; and a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

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.

BECOMING A BETTER *Mentor*

Strategies to Be There
for Young People



Chapter 1: Providing Emotional Support & Empathy

Renee Spencer, Boston University



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Chapter Snapshot

Working to understand your mentee's experiences from their point of view can improve their reception of your support and greater your impact.



In your own words, how would you define 'empathy?'

A Adesuwa Obaizamomwan

Ability to understand and consider another person's feelings

J Julianna Smith

Being able to relate and understand on a deeper level

K Katherine T., CASA Volunteer

Understanding a different point of view.

A Arkita Hammond

Understanding someone and their feelings

S Sandy Harley

To understand and be compassionate about others feelings and life

R Rodney

Ability to remove all bias and ego and understand someone else's perspective.

M Megan King

Understanding the feelings another person

A Anthony Avolio, CASA

The ability to understand what someone else is feeling. Putting yourself in another's shoes.

What is Empathy, and Why do it?

- Empathy is being open to imagining another person's experiences from their point of view and striving to find points of connection
 - Empathy Loop: perceiving what others are feeling, processing the information, and being responsive to the other person's experiences
- There are many benefits to empathy in mentoring relationships- emotional support, feeling heard, understanding, respect
- The capacity of empathy is a skill that can grow through learning and practice



Practice: Perspective Taking

- The ability to step outside of your own experiences and take your mentee's (or even your mentee's family's) POV
- **ABC Model: Acknowledge, Breathe, and be Curious**

*When was the last time
you did (or should have)
used the ABC model?*



Practice: ABC Scenario

- **Scenario:** *You are a mentor to a 15-year-old mentee named Alex, who has been feeling overwhelmed with schoolwork and family responsibilities. Alex has just shared with you that they are struggling to keep up with their assignments and feel like they are letting everyone down.*
- **Acknowledge:** "Alex, I hear you saying that you're feeling overwhelmed with everything on your plate right now. It sounds like you're under a lot of pressure both at school and at home."
- **Breathe:** (Takes a deep breath to stay calm and centered)
"Let's take a moment to breathe together. It's important to pause and give ourselves a moment to collect our thoughts."
- **Be Curious:** "Can you tell me more about what's been going on? What specific challenges are you facing with your schoolwork and family responsibilities?"



RSA



Shorts

Practice: Adaptability

- To be empathic, you must communicate or show your mentee this by being responsive to their experiences
- Adjust your approach – attitude and/or behavior
- For new mentors, letting go of initial expectations they may be bringing to the relationship

Can you describe a time you were adaptable in a relationship?



The Developmental Relationships Framework

Express CARE

Show that you like me and want the best for me.

- Be Present—Pay attention when you are with me.
- Be Warm—Let me know that you like being with me and express positive feelings toward me.
- Invest—Commit time and energy to doing things for and with me.
- Show Interest—Make it a priority to understand who I am and what I care about.
- Be Dependable—Be someone I can count on and trust.

CHALLENGE Growth

Insist that I try to continuously improve.

- Inspire—Help me see future possibilities for myself.
- Expect—Make it clear that you want me to live up to my potential.
- Stretch—Recognize my thoughts and abilities while also pushing me to strengthen them.
- Limit—Hold me accountable for appropriate boundaries and rules.

Provide SUPPORT

Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

- Encourage—Praise my efforts and achievements.
- Guide—Provide practical assistance and feedback to help me learn.
- Model—Be an example I can learn from and admire.
- Advocate—Stand up for me when I need it.

Share POWER

Hear my voice and let me share in making decisions.

- Respect—Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
- Give Voice—Ask for and listen to my opinions and consider them when you make decisions.
- Respond—Understand and adjust to my needs, interests, and abilities.
- Collaborate—Work with me to accomplish goals and solve problems.

Expand POSSIBILITIES

Expand my horizons and connect me to opportunities.

- Explore—Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
- Connect—Introduce me to people who can help me grow.
- Navigate—Help me work through barriers that could stop me from achieving my goals.

What about Emotional Support?

Express Care

Show me that you like me and want the best for me.

- **Be Present-** Pay attention when you are with me.
- **Be Warm-** Let me know that you like being with me and express positive feelings toward me.
- **Invest-** Commit time and energy to doing things for and with me.
- **Show Interest-** Make it a priority to understand who I am and what I care about.
- **Be Dependable-** Be someone I can count on and trust.

Provide Support

Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

- **Encourage-** Praise my efforts and achievements.
- **Guide-** Provide practical assistance and feedback to help me learn.
- **Model-** Be an example I can learn from and admire.
- **Advocate-** Stand up for me when I need it.

When you think "express care" and "provide support"- who did this for you growing up? How did they do it?

A Andrew Hays

My research mentor in high school. I wasn't the strongest at wet lab techniques and found myself being very nervous in the setting and at times I felt like an imposter. They affirmed that I belong in that space and highlighted my ability to be inquisitive in the space, which trumps the physical skills I needed. They allowed me to practice the skills I needed to improve upon and let me have more time to practice and learn the skills I needed support with before moving on. They also continued their relationship with me to this day.

S Sandy Harley

My best friend. We used to go for walks and talk about what's on our minds

R Rodney

My God Father, Uncle, and Grandfather. By spending time and giving me experiences I would not normally have

K Karleen hagan

Grandmother "Nannie"

Always let me rattle on and on

Would hold my hand when we watched tv. And I was an adult

A Arkita Hammond

My grandmother. She always seemed interested in everything I told her. She came to every event I invited her to.

REMEMBER WHERE YOU ARE ON THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP JOURNEY

STAGE

1

**Stage 1: Beginning & Building
(The Honeymoon Phase)**

Characteristics:

- Getting to know one another, finding common interests
- First impressions
- Trying to see the positive in the relationship
- Bonding, building trust

Stage 2: Testing and Challenging

Characteristics:

- Child/youth tests the relationship and your commitment
- Difficult feelings or emotions may surface
- Rethinking first impressions

2

STAGE

STAGE

3

Stage 3: "Real" Mentoring

Characteristics:

- The relationship begins to feel right again- more connected
- Trust is established
- Growth in the child/youth can be observed
- A "deeper" bond and connection has been formed

**Stage 4: Transition/
Closure/Going the
Distance**

Characteristics:

- Preparing for closure
- Relationship may become deeper or child/youth may start pulling away
- Reflection

4

STAGE

		Beginning and Building	Testing and Challenging	"Real" Mentoring	Transition/Closure/Going Deeper
Express Care	Be dependable				
	Listen				
	Believe in me				
	Be warm				
	Encourage				
Share Power	Respect me				
	Include me				
	Collaborate				
	Let me lead				
Provide Support	Navigate				
	Empower				
	Advocate				
	Set boundaries				
Expand Possibilities	Inspire				
	Broaden Horizons				
	Connect				
Challenge Growth	Expect my best				
	Stretch				
	Hold me accountable				
	Reflect on failures				

Avoid These Pitfalls

- Assuming that similar means same
- Thinking you “know best”
- Blaming the parent[s]/guardian/family
- Drowning in emotions
- Expecting to be “perfectly” empathic



UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD



Scenario: Practicing Empathy

Alex had always been a responsible student, but one day, he decided to skip his afternoon classes to hang out with friends at a nearby arcade. It was a harmless decision, but it was against school rules. Alex thought he could get away with it, but his absence was noticed by his math teacher, Mrs. Thompson, who informed you, the mentor.

With everything we've discussed today, how would you apply those learnings to help Alex?



Has your understanding or perspective of empathy changed? How?

How is empathy important to our mentoring relationships?



Chapter 1: Key Points

- Empathy is being open to imagining another person's experiences from their point of view and striving to find points of connection.
- When someone is empathic with us, it allows us to feel comfortable and even safe enough to be open to accepting help from them.
- The capacity for empathy is a skill that can grow through learning and practice.



Recommended Reading

BREAKING NIGHT



A MEMOIR OF FORGIVENESS, SURVIVAL,
AND MY JOURNEY
FROM HOMELESS TO HARVARD

"Nothing short of inspiring. Read this book."
—Jennifer Lauck, author of *Blackbird* and *Show Me the Way*

LIZ MURRAY

**Breaking Night: A Memoir of
Forgiveness, Survival, and My
Journey from Homeless to Harvard**
By Liz Murray (2011)

Relevant BBM Chapters



CHAPTER 2

PRACTICING CULTURAL HUMILITY

Author: Bernadette Sanchez, University of Illinois – Chicago

As a mentor, it is essential to engage in continuous self-reflection and to actively seek opportunities to learn about your mentee's identity and cultural experiences.

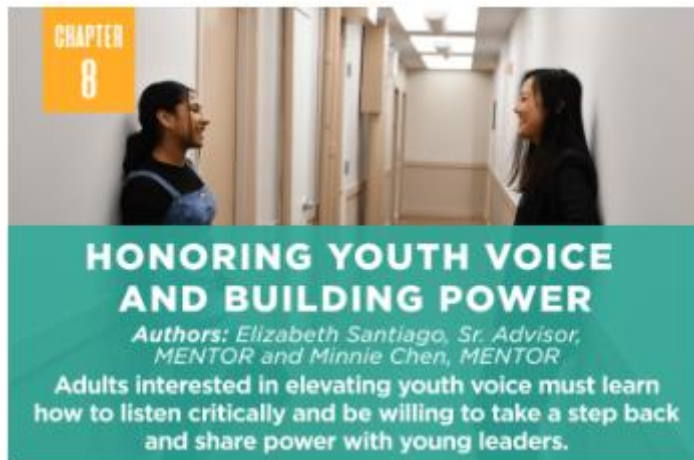


CHAPTER 4

ATTUNEMENT IN MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Authors: Julia Pryce, Loyola University Chicago; Kelsey Deane, University of Auckland; and Linda Gilkerson, Erikson Institute

Developing a strong self-awareness about your own emotional and physical state can make you better equipped to read the cues of your mentee and respond to their preferences and needs.



CHAPTER 8

HONORING YOUTH VOICE AND BUILDING POWER

Authors: Elizabeth Santiago, Sr. Advisor, MENTOR and Minnie Chen, 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.



CHAPTER 11

EFFECTIVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Author: Samuel D. McQuillan, University of South Carolina

Some of the most effective ways to encourage positive behavioral changes in a mentee are to ask questions, engage in active listening, and express empathy and understanding.



Thank You



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[Bit.ly/HealingArtsCohort](https://bit.ly/HealingArtsCohort)

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS AT THE Y PRESENTS Healing-Centered Arts for Mentors

Implementing Healing-centered Engagement Through Arts Education

JOIN FREE HEALING -CENTERED ARTS SESSIONS

Target Audience:All caring adults whose work impacts children

Focus:Healing-centered engagement through arts education

Learning Outcomes:

- Implement strategies that promote self awareness, social awareness and relationship skills
- Foster awareness and self management using a healing centered approach
- Use the transformative power of art for personal growth and responsible decision making

Overall Objective:Empower young people to thrive by creating a supportive, creative, and healing environment.



