

## Adopting a mentoring mindset

# Tips on how to be there for young people

Everyday interactions with young people have the potential to be impactful, more so than we often realize. Adopting a mentoring mindset can increase our chances of positively influencing the journey of a child, youth, young adult, and beyond. A mentoring mindset can turn everyday interactions into brief but impactful mentoring moments and support the development of more lasting mentoring relationships.

The overarching principle of a mentoring mindset consists of being intentional and approaching every interaction as an opportunity for growth and connection. Remember that we don't have to know it all, have all the answers or have it all figured out to impact a young person's journey.



## 1. Be intentional

Be aware of the potential impact of everyday interactions.

- Be present and approachable. Practice active listening and pay attention to a young person's verbal and non-verbal cues to make a person feel seen, heard, and understood.
- Take the initiative and adopt a person-centred approach. Think of interactions as opportunities to get to know a young person more deeply. Be curious and ask questions about who they are as an individual, their life journey, interests, needs, and goals.
- Be empathetic and attend to the whole person. Keep in mind that you are interacting with someone with complex and unique backgrounds, experiences, and needs. Consider all the dimensions that contribute to a person's well-being such as their physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, cultural, social, or professional goals and needs.
- Avoid a top-down, hierarchical approach. The most impactful interactions are characterized by reciprocity and collaboration. Think of this as walking alongside another person and being a part of their life journey.

## 2. Focus on growth

Remember that daily interactions are an opportunity for growth.

- Adopt and maintain a positive regard for young people. Accept, support, and encourage them without judgment. Respect their dignity, perspective, and their right to make their own choices and decisions.
- Nurture sparks and adopt a strength-based approach. Work with young people to identify and develop their strengths instead of focusing on potential deficits.
- Support goal orientation. Work with young people to empower them to set and achieve goals. Remember to be person-centred: young people should be in the driver's seat and ultimately responsible for setting their own priorities, ambitions, and goals.
- Avoid the "fix it train". Your role is not to fix a young person's problems or situation. Instead, ask questions that can help them come up with their own solutions. Explore possible opportunities and solutions together. If solicited, you can offer advice and refer to your own experience and story to help guide them. Resist the common urge to jump to action and try to make everything better on your own. Ultimately, young people will be better served if you work with them on developing their resourcefulness.

## 3. Promote connections

It takes a village. Everyone needs multiple supportive relationships to foster their growth and help them reach their full potential.

- Strengthen young people's networks and circles of support. Introduce them to people or opportunities that can foster their development and goals.
- Normalize asking for help and seeking support. When a person could benefit from support that is beyond your comfort zone or expertise, point them in the direction of an appropriate resource, or make an introduction. Remember that you don't have to know it all!

## 4. Be authentic and accountable

A mentor does not need to be perfect. What matters is accountability and authenticity.

- Be authentic and genuine in your interactions with young people.
- Be trustworthy and follow through on your commitments.
- Be willing to grow and learn. Make space to solicit and receive feedback.



## A final thought

The power of mentoring extends throughout a lifespan. We all have something to offer, and we all continuously learn and grow. No matter what stage we are at in our lives, we can be both mentors and mentees simultaneously and benefit from the experience.

## To go further

Find a mentoring opportunity that suits you:

- **Mentor Connector:** Search the first-ever database of mentoring programs in Canada, designed to help volunteers and youth alike connect to the right mentoring opportunity both virtually and in their communities.

Strengthen your skills and knowledge about being a mentor:

- **Online Orientation for Mentors:** Learn about the basics of mentoring: the importance of mentoring, the role of the mentor, and how to build a positive relationship. Learn about what kind of support you can expect from mentoring programs.
- **Becoming a Better Mentor:** This free resource, written by experts in the field, is full of real-world advice and provides mentors with tangible strategies to “be there” for young people in their various life journeys. It teaches them about the core skills, key principles, and critical practices of mentoring. (Created by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, USA)

---

### Following the mentoring movement

#### TWITTER

[@MentoringCanada](#)

#### FACEBOOK

[@mentoringcanada](#)

#### LINKEDIN

[@mentorcanada](#)

#### INSTAGRAM

[@mentorcanada](#)

#### WEBSITE

[mentoringcanada.ca](#)