

Mentoring Relationship Cycle

The rewards of mentoring relationships are immeasurable. Like all relationships, the bonds formed while mentoring youth are subject to change and growth. Most mentoring relationships go through predictable stages, according authors Gail Manza and Susan K. Patrick. In their book, *The Mentor's Field Guide*, Ms. Manza and Ms. Patrick spell out the six stages in the "life cycle" that you as a mentor could encounter when working with young people.

Introductory Stage. During this time, the primary objective is for you and your mentee to get to know each other and begin establishing a sense of trust. Two things are especially important during this time: be reliable in showing up for sessions and involve your mentee in deciding how you will spend time together.

Relationship-Building Stage. Your primary objective during this time is to solidify a sense of trust and closeness with your mentee. You can begin to expand your mentee's range of experiences, but continue to let your mentee make decisions about how you spend time together.

Growth Stage. Your objectives here are to encourage and support your mentee's social, emotional, and cognitive growth. You should be quite comfortable with each other by now. You may find that your mentee will share little problems that he or she is having, which gives you a wonderful opportunity to guide him or her in developing problem-solving skills. If sensitive topics come up, turn to your program coordinator for advice.

Maturation Stage. At this stage, you know your mentee quite well, but it's still important to let your mentee take the lead in what you talk about or do. Working on life goals can be very productive at this stage. Even elementary kids like to talk about what they want to be when they grow up.

Transition Stage. Transitions happen for many reasons. The mentee may be getting older, or his or her family may be moving. Allow your program coordinator to help manage this transition.

Termination. The final stage is when the relationship ends. Either you or your mentee may initiate the termination, or life circumstance may lead to it.