



**SummerWorks**

*Washtenaw County Summer Youth Employment Program*

# Mentoring Guide



Acknowledgments

SummerWorks is a community focused, public-private-university partnership serving youth in Washtenaw County, Michigan. This work would not be possible without the leadership and contributions from all of our partnering agencies and organizations: Michigan Works! Southeast, the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development, Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan, the Ginsberg Center at U-M, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and Amy Cell Talent. We would also like to thank the A2Y Regional Chamber of Commerce, Washtenaw Intermediate School District, and the Michigan College Access Network for their technical support and guidance.

We thank our funders for their contributions to support our work. SummerWorks is made possible by generous funding from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, Ann Arbor SPARK, the Rotary Club of Ann Arbor North, and the University of Michigan.

Finally, thank you to all of the young people, local businesses, professionals, and leaders in our community who have participated in the program, worked, provided jobs, served as mentors, offered job shadows, and shared their professional expertise to inform and improve SummerWorks.

This guide was written and compiled by:

Zoë Erb  
Jordan Greene  
Andrew Monroe



Table of Contents

<b>Overview of SummerWorks.....</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Potential Mentorship Meeting Topics .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Program Structure .....	4	Meeting Topic: Introductions .....	27
SummerWorks Mentorship Goals and		Meeting Topic: Career Pathways and	
Expectations .....	5	Professionalism .....	29
<b>Benefits of Mentorship.....</b>	<b>6</b>	Meeting Topic: Health and Wellness .....	30
Benefits to Mentors .....	6	Meeting Topic: Civic and Community	
Benefits to Organizations .....	6	Engagement .....	32
Benefits to Mentees.....	7	Meeting Topic: Networking and Building a	
<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities .....</b>	<b>8</b>	Professional Online Presence .....	34
The Role of a Mentor .....	8	Meeting Topic: After High School	
The Role of a Mentee.....	9	and Beyond .....	35
<b>Stages of the Mentoring Relationship.....</b>	<b>11</b>	Meeting Topic: Workforce Advice .....	37
STAGE 1 Establishing Rapport .....	11	Meeting Topic: Reflecting on the Mentoring	
STAGE 2 Achieving Goals.....	12	Relationship .....	38
STAGE 3 Transitioning or Closing the		<b>Additional Activities and Discussion Topics... 39</b>	
Relationship .....	12	Personality Assessments.....	39
<b>Best Practices for Mentorship.....</b>	<b>13</b>	Goal Setting.....	40
Establish a Set Meeting Time and Meeting		Check-Ins .....	40
Agenda .....	13	Help Your Mentee Set up an Informational	
Co-Create Ground Rules Expectations for		Interview.....	40
Communication .....	13	Interview Practice & Strategies .....	41
Set Goals and Revisit Them .....	14	Teleconferencing Etiquette.....	41
Ask Questions .....	15	Resume Review.....	42
Be Open and Practice Vulnerability.....	15	Cover Letters.....	42
Exercise Patience.....	16	Explore and Discuss Core Values.....	44
<b>Practicing Cultural Humility .....</b>	<b>16</b>	Crafting a Vision Statement.....	45
<b>Principles of Positive Youth Development .....</b>	<b>21</b>	Writing a Personal Statement .....	45
What is Positive Youth		References and Letters of	
Development? .....	21	Recommendation.....	46
The Five Cs of Positive Youth Development.....	22	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Conversation Tips &amp; Tricks.....</b>	<b>24</b>		
What do I do when the conversation and			
connections don't come easily? .....	24		
Easy Icebreakers for Weekly Meetings .....	25		
Friendly Conversation Prompts .....	26		
Career Exploration Starter Questions .....	26		



# Introduction

SummerWorks is a 10-week summer employment and mentorship program located in Washtenaw County, Michigan. We connect young adults aged 16 to 24 in our community to resources for building professional networks, exploring career opportunities, and developing essential job and leadership skills.

Mentorship, support to youth and employers, and meaningful relationships have always been integral to our programming. It is our mission to create opportunities for young adults that will help them in their personal and professional growth. We believe youth employment promotes positive social relationships between youth, local employers, and the community, and it prepares young people for high-demand jobs. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SummerWorks developed safe, alternative methods for community members, employers, and local professionals to share their expertise with young adults in Washtenaw County virtually. In 2020, we piloted a successful eight-week virtual mentoring program, engaging over 80 mentors from a variety of career paths and industries.

In doing so, our team discovered a need for comprehensive resources for best practices, conversation topics, and effective mentoring strategies. To better prepare and support our mentors, we developed this guide as a tool to help support mentors and provide structure for mentoring conversations and relationships. It is our hope that by sharing broadly, other organizations and programs may find these resources beneficial to their own work.

This document outlines suggestions for mentor training and support, best practices for mentorship, and tips for structuring mentoring relationships in the form of potential meeting agendas, activities, and discussion questions. As a part of SummerWorks, youth participants also attend weekly professional development workshops. The potential mentorship meeting topics outlined in this guide were designed to build on and mirror the SummerWorks Professional Development curriculum.

If you have any questions about SummerWorks or this mentoring guide, or if you are interested in viewing the Professional Development curriculum for youth, please do not hesitate to email us at [syesupport@umich.edu](mailto:syesupport@umich.edu). We greatly appreciate your support and dedication to mentoring young people in your communities!





# Overview of SummerWorks

## Program Structure

SummerWorks, the Washtenaw County Summer Youth Employment Program, launched in 2016 as a partnership between [MichiganWorks! Southeast](#) and the [Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development](#). In 2017, the University of Michigan joined the partnership to provide employment opportunities across campus. Our community-focused, public-private-university partnership continues to expand to include [Michigan Rehabilitation Services \(MRS\)](#), the [Washtenaw Intermediate School District \(WISD\)](#), the [A2Y Regional Chamber of Commerce](#), and more.

SummerWorks is a 10-week summer employment and mentorship program that pairs local employers with young adults. It connects youth to resources for building professional networks, exploring career opportunities, and developing essential job and leadership skills.

SummerWorks provides Washtenaw County youth aged 16-24 with paid, professional summer internship experiences. Program participants attend weekly professional development workshops from May through August. Each workshop covers a different topic ranging from financial planning to social identities in the workplace. Through Professional Development activities, every participant completes a mock interview, resume, LinkedIn profile, and the Kuder Journey, an evidence-based career planning and exploration tool. Program participants also receive access to a Career Advisor or Success Coach, who acts as a near-peer mentor and provides one-on-one support throughout the summer.



## SummerWorks Mentorship Goals and Expectations

SummerWorks provides a formal, one-on-one mentoring structure to foster a culture of development, exploration, and learning for young professionals and mentors in our community. Through mentorship, our mission is to:

- Promote opportunities for young professionals to expand their networks, explore career opportunities, and develop their leadership skills.
- Connect young professionals with a trusted confidant who can help them think through opportunities in the context of their career path and long-term goals.
- Emphasize a strengths-based approach to mentorship and building supportive, inclusive relationships between youth and adults.
- Enhance mentor growth through connection and sharing knowledge with young adults.

As a part of the SummerWorks mentoring program, mentors were expected to meet with mentees once per week for 30 minutes, at minimum. Ideally, these meetings should take place in person or using a videoconferencing platform to help foster the relationship. Mentors were required to attend a 90-minute training session and complete intake forms to assist SummerWorks staff with the mentor/mentee matching process. Throughout the summer, SummerWorks hosted virtual “roundtable” events to allow space for mentors to connect with one another and share best practices, troubleshoot challenges, and build community while drawing on each other’s expertise in mentoring. SummerWorks staff also sent check-in forms for mentors to share any concerns they had throughout the summer; staff members were always available to meet one-on-one with mentors to troubleshoot and provide support.



# Benefits of Mentorship

## Benefits to Mentors

### Develop Leadership, Communication Skills, and More

Becoming a mentor demonstrates your commitment to both professional and personal development. Interacting with a young adult may cause you to utilize a different skill set when it comes to communication. Additionally, you may find that your mentee is in a different age group or has different social identities and lived experiences from you; this can challenge your perspectives, present you with an opportunity to grow, and encourage thoughtful examination of the status quo.

### Engage in Volunteering and Contribute to Your Community

You may feel personally fulfilled through supporting and contributing to the development of others. Mentoring gives back on a number of levels, as it not only helps a young adult on the personal level, but also helps the entire community. When your mentee moves through the world with additional resources and guidance, the ripple effect occurs as they positively impact their own relationships and social circles, and by extension, society.

### Reinforce Your Own Knowledge and Confidence

Coaching a young person is a wonderful way to remind yourself of your own expertise and experiences. You can develop key leadership competencies and reflect on your own role within an organization. You may experience the “protégé effect,” increasing your own self-efficacy through engaging with your mentee. Read more about the [protégé effect](#).

## Benefits to Organizations

### Facilitate the Growth of Leaders

Creating opportunities for staff to engage in mentorship demonstrates a commitment to the personal and professional development of team members and continuous learning. Mentoring often facilitates growth in leadership and communication skills, preparing your staff to take on leadership and supervisory roles in the future.

### Create an Inclusive and Collaborative Work Environment

Inclusive work environments can yield better results; employees who feel included and valued are often more engaged and perform at a higher level. By engaging in mentorship, either within your organization or with external programs, employees are often presented with opportunities to learn from someone with different social identities and develop cultural humility. A commitment to cultural humility can foster more inclusive workplaces.

## Benefits to Mentees

### Gaining Knowledge, Information, and Connections

Getting a mentor is one of the most valuable actions a young person can take to increase their potential of future success. Through increasing their own awareness of potential career paths, networking opportunities, and professional behaviors, mentees benefit greatly from learning about the experiences of an accomplished individual such as yourself. They may also be more likely to explore their personal interests and passions, following their mentor’s example.

### Develop Skills and Strategies for Solving Problems

Not only is your mentee learning valuable skills, but they are getting the chance to practice them in a safe space with someone who wants to help them succeed. Just as mentors use different types of communication, mentees will learn the values of being able to use a wide variety of skills in different settings. Another effect of this practice is increased confidence.

### Positive Outcomes

Young adults typically receive several tangible and intangible benefits from having a mentor. These include positive outcomes in education, everyday life, and in their future careers. Mentoring helps develop the workforce talent pipeline and is associated with higher enrollment in postsecondary education programs.



# Roles & Responsibilities

## The Role of a Mentor

A mentor may be described as a coach, confidant, trusted listener, advisor, advocate, or friend; you can provide any and all of the following activities:

- **Educational support**  
Connect your mentee to educational resources. Help them evaluate educational choices and find a path that's the right fit for them; a four-year degree doesn't work for everyone.
- **Role modeling**  
By sharing your personal experiences and stories, you can encourage youth to explore and strive for new possibilities and success.
- **Career exploration**  
Introduce your mentee to new and different career paths. Engage in activities that help your mentee think about their passions and interests and help them connect the dots to a variety of careers. Encourage your mentee to explore different options; you may find it useful to connect your mentee to opportunities to job shadow or conduct an informational interview.

### MENTORS SHOULD...

- Encourage mentees to set goals and exercise agency in the relationship.
- Be committed to showing up genuinely and consistently.
- Understand that, while your mentee should put effort into the relationship, the relationship may feel one-sided at times. Mentors won't find a perfect connection with every mentee, but the support they provide is important nonetheless.
- Allow their mentee to make mistakes.  
Try to find a balance of giving advice and empowering your mentee to problem solve and identify solutions.
- Respect your mentee's point of view and lived experiences, while viewing the mentoring relationship as something you can learn from, too.
- Value your mentee's goals and leave your personal agenda behind.
- Utilize a strengths-based approach and don't focus on negative aspects of your mentee's life.
- Seek additional resources when needed or utilize the help from program staff if applicable.

- **Listening and consistency**  
By showing up, being genuine and acting as a consistent presence for your mentee, mentors can encourage young people to share openly about their aspirations and concerns. Listening without judgment while also sharing your own personal experiences and values is key.

As a mentor, you should commit to spending a set amount of time with your mentee one-on-one. The most important aspect of mentorship is creating a positive relationship; ask your mentee questions, provide support, and share your stories of things you wish you had known when you were their age. Do not feel limited by the activities outlined in this guide. Be creative and feel free to use these ideas as a springboard for your own ideas. The more "real world" exposure a mentor can provide, the better. As a mentor, you can help your mentee develop new perspectives on the professional world, educational paths, and their own potential.

For more information on strategies to support a young mentee, visit [Appreciative Advising](#).

## The Role of a Mentee

A mentee seeks constructive feedback in their pursuit of personal and professional growth. In appreciation of the effort a mentor puts into the relationship, a mentee is prepared, takes initiative to prepare questions, seeks learning opportunities, listens to feedback, and establishes goals for mentorship.

### Potential Questions to Ask a Mentor

A responsible mentee can show appreciation for a mentor's time and commitment through properly preparing for meetings and exercising agency over the relationship. Mentors may want to encourage their mentees to develop questions and discussion prompts in advance, as this is an important networking and career exploration skill. Sample questions for mentees to ask their mentor are listed below. To help get mentees started in writing their own questions, they can think about:

- What about their mentor's skills, background, or experiences interest them?
- What information or support are they looking for?
  - Skill development?
  - Exploring career paths and professions?
  - Insider industry knowledge?

### MENTEES SHOULD...

- Approach mentorship with a desire to learn and grow.
- Be willing to assess their strengths and growth areas to inform the types of support they want.
- Reflect on their personal goals and responsibilities for the mentoring relationship.
- Take initiative in professional and skill development.
- Actively participate in the mentoring relationship.
- Show gratitude for the time and effort of their mentors.

### Career Preparation Questions

- What type of education or training did you complete to prepare you for your career?
- What was your first job and what did you learn from it?
- Did you have another career path in mind before landing on this one?
- What are common entry-level jobs in this field?
- If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself?
- What helped you to decide this was the right career path for you?
- What was a barrier you encountered while finding a job in your career field/starting your own business? How did you overcome it?

### Networking and Professionalism Questions

- How do you use social media to promote your business?
- How do you maintain your personal wellness?
- How do you manage work/life balance?
- What is LinkedIn and why is it important? How do you, personally, use it?
- Have you ever worked at a job/experienced an incident at work that went against your personal values? How did you handle it?
- Do you participate in networking events, professional organizations, continuing education, etc.?

### Job and Career Field Questions

- What is your favorite part of your job? What is your least favorite part of your job?
- What recent trends have you seen in this field?
- How does your job impact your general lifestyle?

## Stages of the Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring relationships progress through stages. The length of these stages and your overall experience will vary based on who your mentee is, their developmental stage, the fit or match between you and your mentee, and the length of the relationship. SummerWorks provides a more formal 10-week mentoring program. Given the relatively short timeframe, it is important for mentors to understand the different stages that the mentoring relationship might progress through and adjust their expectations accordingly.

Keep in mind that, as a mentor, it is important to take care of yourself and be realistic about the time, energy, and resources you are able to provide. Mentoring requires a degree of emotional labor, particularly for members of marginalized communities in leadership positions. To learn more, read [“The Unseen Labor of Mentoring”](#) by Manya Whitaker.

### STAGE 1 Establishing Rapport

During this phase, you and your mentee are getting to know each other, build trust, and beginning to establish a relationship. It is important to recognize that building trust takes time. During a 10-week program such as SummerWorks, you may spend most of your time getting to know each other; that is OK. During the early stages of the mentoring relationship, the most important thing a mentor can do is emphasize their commitment and consistently show up for their mentee. You may want to co-write expectations and agreements with your mentee. This guide provides a sample mentorship agreement in a later section.

As a mentor working with young people, you might expect some missed appointments or difficulty maintaining contact with your mentee. This was particularly salient for SummerWorks, as many program participants are 16 to 18 years old, navigating their first job, and attempting to find balance among all of the activities with which they are involved. If you feel stuck, don't stress. Refer to some of the easy conversation starters in this guide or to program staff as needed. Mentors should take time to help their mentee explore and identify goals for the relationship and what they hope to learn or accomplish. It is OK if these are short-term goals or your mentee is not sure what they're hoping to learn. Help them brainstorm if needed.

Discuss confidentiality early in the relationship; reassure mentees that feelings and information they disclose will not be shared with others. There are exceptions to this that must be explicitly communicated. If there is a threat of physical harm to the mentee or others, a mentor must break confidentiality and notify the appropriate parties (program staff, in particular). If there is another reason that the mentor feels it is important to involve another adult, it should be discussed with the mentee first.



## STAGE 2

### Achieving Goals

Once you and your mentee have established rapport and trust, this is usually a time for closeness during which mentees view their mentors as an important presence in their lives. You may still find it difficult to connect or communicate with your mentee on occasion; this is normal. During this stage of the relationship, you and your mentee should focus on solidifying and working toward short-term goals. It is important the mentor has access to the necessary resources in order to bridge what the mentee hopes to learn with what the mentor can share. For example, you should avoid making promises about resources you can provide or connections you can help your mentee make if you are not realistically able to do so.

## STAGE 3

### Transitioning or Closing the Relationship

This stage involves open and honest communication about transitioning or ending the mentoring relationship. It is a natural part of the mentoring lifecycle and should be handled with the same care as the initiation of the relationship. Research on youth mentoring suggests that failing to provide some sort of resolution or closure process at the end of a relationship can be harmful to mentees. Appropriate closure provides mentees with an opportunity to reflect on the relationship. Be clear and honest about how you, as a mentor, desire or have the ability to move forward. Keep it positive and use this as a space to recall your mentee's growth, strengths, and future directions. Mutually agree upon realistic plans for continued communication and follow through.



## Best Practices for Mentorship

### Establish a Set Meeting Time and Meeting Agenda

Consistency is key. It is ideal to meet with your mentee at the same time and day (either weekly, monthly, etc.) in person or via teleconferencing or phone. You and your mentee can decide on the appropriate length for these meetings, but we suggest a minimum of 30 minutes. SummerWorks participants typically meet with their mentor once per week throughout the summer.

- Encourage your mentee to practice time management by creating calendar invites.
- Discuss the process for rescheduling a meeting. Although it should not be a common occurrence, what is the best way to do that?
- Have a general idea of what will be discussed in each meeting so both you and your mentee can prepare. With a limited amount of time, meetings might be more efficient if both parties are coming in with an idea of what will be discussed.
- Try using a shared Google Doc as an informal agenda and encouraging your mentee to add items they would like to discuss with you.
- Having some unstructured time for questions is OK — in fact, it's encouraged. That way, your mentee will have the opportunity to drive the conversation themselves.

## Co-Create Ground Rules Expectations for Communication

Relationships thrive when firm ground rules are discussed and agreed upon. Taking time to discuss ground rules, boundaries, and expectations with your mentee will help to avoid any misunderstandings and frustrations throughout the mentoring relationship.

- For example, you may wish to consider the following:
  - How frequently will you meet? Set times and dates as noted above.
  - How long will the mentoring relationship last?
  - What are the boundaries you would like to set for your conversations?
  - How will you ensure confidentiality?
  - How will you know if the mentoring relationship is working?
  - What will you do if one or more parties feel there is room for improvement?
- What support can you provide? As a mentor, you are not expected to have all the answers. It can often be helpful for mentees to find answers themselves. Be upfront about the support you are able and willing to offer.



- To set you and your mentee up for success, you may want to establish what your communication preferences and expectations are. Some suggestions are below:
  - How would you like to communicate in between meetings? (email, text, etc.)
  - Outside of meetings, how frequently would you like to communicate? What hours are you available for questions?
- The SummerWorks [Mentoring Relationship Agreement](#) can be used as a template for setting expectations. Please feel free to make a copy of this document or use something more informal.

## Set Goals and Revisit Them

Setting goals is an important aspect of mentorship and professional development, as it allows participants to identify, vocalize, and make a concrete plan to achieve their aspirations. In addition, this will help you and your mentee determine the criteria for success in your mentoring relationship. We have created a [Mentoring Relationship Agreement](#) as an optional resource for you to use.

- You are important in this process as someone who can hold your mentee accountable for completing every step toward their goal(s) and provide support if they face challenges.
- Setting goals for the relationship can help provide structure for your meetings.
- Consider how you will monitor the progress made toward achieving your goals for the mentoring relationship. How will you create space for feedback and reflection?

## Ask Questions

- Mentees might not always be forthcoming with how they want support but as a mentor. Asking questions about your mentee may be a positive way to engage.
- Establish how each of you prefers to receive support and constructive feedback and be sure to regularly ask your mentee what support or resources they could use. Encourage them to be proactive about asking for guidance.
- Consider asking questions that encourage mentees to reflect on what they're learning in different spaces. For example, SummerWorks conducts weekly Professional Development sessions with program participants. Asking participants to reflect on what they learn creates space for them to ask you follow-up questions and identify ways in which what they're learning might apply to their personal and professional lives.

## Be Open and Practice Vulnerability

Part of establishing an effective mentoring relationship is taking a holistic approach. By practicing vulnerability, mentoring the “whole person,” and discussing both career and life goals, you may foster a stronger connection.

- It may be easier to discuss life goals if each party discusses aspects of their personal lives. This is not mandatory, as it can be uncomfortable to discuss our personal lives in a professional setting, but it might make your mentoring relationship more dynamic.
- Sharing your stories and experiences may help your mentee feel more comfortable sharing their own experiences. If you're comfortable, share some of the more difficult chapters of your life; this can signal that personal topics are “on the table.”





- Help your mentee unpack their personal toolkit. Explore your mentee's passions, skills, talents, and personality characteristics. Especially for younger people, it is difficult to establish self-awareness about things that energize us versus what leaves us feeling drained.

## Exercise Patience

- It might take time to establish a connection with your mentee. This naturally occurs in the process of getting to know someone.
- You may find yourself mentoring across different identities. For example, you may not share the same gender, age, or racial identities with your mentee. This is OK, but it may take extra time to foster a trusting, open relationship of sharing.
- Do not be discouraged if your mentoring interactions are not what you thought they would be, and do not be afraid to ask for help.
- If you find that discussion and connecting with your mentee do not come easy, try referencing the section of this guide titled "Conversation Tips and Tricks."

## Practicing Cultural Humility

The SummerWorks program is committed to building a more equitable community in Washtenaw County, Michigan, where all young adults can access resources, connect to supportive opportunities, and thrive personally and professionally. We believe inclusive, authentic, culturally sensitive mentoring will help SummerWorks, and similar programs, achieve these goals. This is particularly important because we may often find ourselves in mentoring relationships based on shared interests and not necessarily on shared social or personal identities.

### TIPS FOR BUILDING INCLUSIVE AND TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

- Create spaces for dialogue.
- Commit to brave spaces.
- Embrace Lifelong Learning.
- Be Aware of Biases.
- Acknowledge Differences.
- Suspend Judgment.

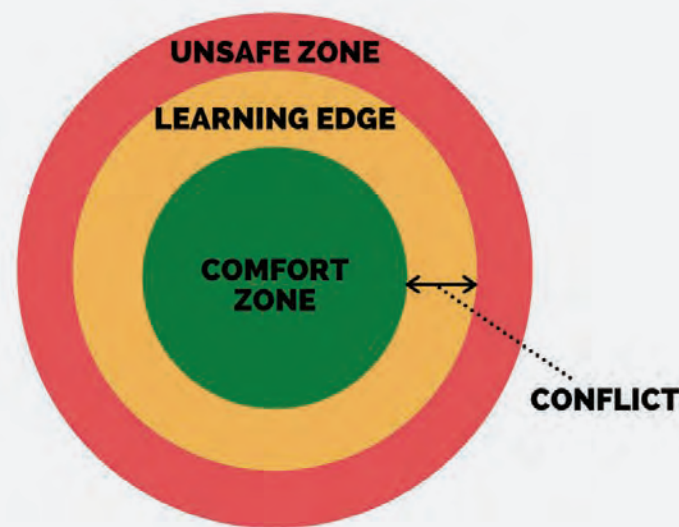
Particularly at institutions of higher education, women, as well as members of the LGBTQ+ and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities are underrepresented in leadership positions. The private sector follows a similar pattern. For both the higher education and corporate worlds, this lack of diversity is especially prevalent as we look at positions higher up the organizational structure. Due to this lack of representation in professional leadership, young adults may find themselves being mentored across differences. In addition to gender, racial, or ethnic identities, you may find yourself connecting with someone from a younger generation. Taking this into account, it's important to ask ourselves: how do we value and affirm the identities and lived experiences of our mentees as we help them grow?

While it may feel challenging to make genuine and authentic connections with someone across differences, it is possible (and beneficial!) to develop a successful mentoring relationship. Mentoring relationships provide opportunities for learning and growth among the adults and young people involved. Research shows successful mentoring relationships were characterized by reciprocity, mutual respect, clear expectations, personal connection, and shared values (Straus et al., 2013). Building respectful, trusting relationships across difference requires mentors to reflect deeply on their lived experiences, identities, and misinformation they may have learned about others through bias and stereotypes. It requires a commitment to cultural humility, anti-racism, and continuous learning and unlearning. Approaching mentorship in ways that build respect, openness, and affirmation can set the foundation for authentic mentorship across difference. It is most important to embrace the learning opportunities that mentoring across difference can provide.

Tips for building inclusive and trusting relationships, reflecting on social identities, interrogating oppressive systems, and practicing cultural humility include:

- **Create Spaces for Dialogue**  
The issues you discuss with your mentee will be complex at times. Creating open and confidential spaces for you and your mentee to express emotions, share real life challenges, and work through obstacles is important to a successful, trusting relationship.
- **Commit to Brave Spaces**  
To learn, we need an environment that encourages us to challenge ourselves. When we find ourselves mentoring across difference, we may not directly understand how different identities impact the lived experiences of our mentees. By creating brave spaces, we emphasize the need for courage and dialogue that may feel uncomfortable in order to grow, learn about our mentee's experiences, and establish a meaningful mentoring relationship.
- **Embrace Lifelong Learning**  
Explore your own social identities, examine power and privilege, and locate your learning edges. Be committed to learning about issues related to differences on your own and in community with people different from yourself. This is an ongoing process for all of us; we all carry biases as a result of our socialization — that's OK! Working to educate yourself and expand your comfort zone is an important action step in developing supportive, inclusive, and successful mentoring relationships. Here are some tools for exploring identities, privilege, and oppression:





**Comfort Zone:** We all have zones of comfort when it comes to our understanding of different experiences and topics. Engaging in dialogue invites us to stretch beyond our comfort zone and open ourselves to new knowledge and awareness. Embracing conflict requires bravery, and we learn things as a result. If we move too far beyond our comfort zone, we begin to resist new information and withdraw from dialogue.

*Adapted from the Program on Intergroup Relations at the University of Michigan*

**Conflict:** Conflict of opinion, viewpoint, and understanding is normal and an important part of the dialogue process. We are most likely to approach conflict when we enter spaces bravely and are committed to learning from the dialogue and experiences of others. Conflict pushes our comfort zones; it is our responsibility to turn discomfort into learning and growth.

**Learning Edge:** The edge of our comfort zone. Being on the learning edge may come with feelings of discomfort, anger, anxiety, confusion, or defensiveness. These reactions are a natural part of expanding our awareness. Recognizing these reactions can signal to us that we are on the learning edge, ready to expand our knowledge and awareness.

**Unsafe Zone:** As mentioned above, confusion and defensiveness are natural feelings associated with the learning edge and expanding our comfort zones. When we are not able to recognize these feelings during dialogue, we may enter the unsafe zone. In this space, we are not open to new information or ideas; our own biases and stereotypes prevent learning.

**Why it Matters:** Locating our learning edges is important to effective mentoring because it allows us to sit with discomfort and see what we can learn. If your mentee talks to you about social issues, their identities, or ways they've experienced oppression, it is most important to listen. If you find yourself creeping toward the unsafe zone during a conversation, do not discount your mentee's identities, beliefs, or lived experiences. This can help promote trusting relationships and meaningful dialogue with your mentee, particularly if you're mentoring someone who holds different identities from your own.

- [Social Identity Wheel](#).
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#).
- [The 4 I's of Oppression](#).
- [The Matrix of Oppression](#).

#### • **Be Aware of Biases**

When we enter into mentoring relationships across difference, we unconsciously bring information and misinformation about differences that are often grounded in stereotypes and assumptions that we've been socialized with over time.

- Interrogate implicit biases. Explore your implicit and explicit assumptions about race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, age, and other social identities.
- Remember that we all carry biases. Examining biases is a process of reflecting, unlearning, and discussing identity-based assumptions.
- Utilize tools for learning about and beginning to unpack implicit bias:
  - [What is Unconscious Bias?](#) (3:20 video).
  - The New York Times — [Check Our Bias to Wreck Our Bias](#) (3:00 video).
  - TEDx Talk: [Are you Biased? I am](#) (8:48 video).
  - Take an [implicit-association test](#).
  - [So You Flunked a Racism Test. Now What?](#) (NPR).
  - Kirwan Institute [Implicit Bias Module Series](#).
  - [Board Games to Fight Bias](#) (NPR, 4-minute listen).
  - Continue reflecting on this topic and research microaggressions.

#### • **Acknowledge Differences**

Undoubtedly, differences in identity between you and your mentee may impact your relationship and your ability to understand one another. While it is important to acknowledge differences, it should be done on your mentee's terms. Asking your mentee personal questions about their identities before they introduce the topic may "other" them. For example, asking a person of color where they're from during one of your first meetings is inappropriate — because your mentee could interpret that to mean you assume they're not American because they're not white. If your mentee discusses identities, privilege, or oppression with you, you should openly acknowledge and respect differences. A colorblind approach contributes to racism and often leaves BIPOC communities feeling drained and unseen. In summary, be mindful of the questions you ask or differences in identities you point out. It's best to allow your mentee to bring up these conversations on their own terms. You can read more about this topic [here](#).

#### • **Suspend Judgment**

Be willing to suspend judgment and disbelief when someone with different social identities shares stories about their reality and lived experiences that may be very different from your own. Oppression, biases, and stigma based on our social identities affect our day-to-day experiences and how we move through the world. Give up the



need to be “right” and avoid dismissing experiences that your mentee shares with you. Instead, use these conversations as opportunities to expand your comfort zone and awareness level. Try affirming your mentee’s feelings and experiences while expressing gratitude that they felt comfortable sharing with you.

### Additional Resources

- [A Guide to Unlearn Your Racism and Be Actively Anti-Racist](#) (Resources for White Allies).
- [Anti-Racism Resources](#).
- [Black Lives Matter \(BLM\) Resource Guide](#) (Compiled by Asia Island in collaboration with students at the University of Michigan).
- [RACE Dialogues](#).



## Principles of Positive Youth Development

When working with young people, incorporating principles from the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework can help inform an effective, strengths-based approach to mentorship. PYD views young people as having a lot to offer and contribute. As a mentor, you can help young people identify and build upon their strengths. By viewing adolescence as a period for opportunity and growth, you can help your mentee develop core skills and make a positive difference in their life.

### What is Positive Youth Development?

The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs defines PYD as “an intentional, prosocial approach that:

- engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive;
- recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths; and
- promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.”

Through the lens of PYD, young people are viewed as having the ability to succeed when given the opportunity to engage in positive relationships with adults and learn by actively participating in their communities. Components of PYD and strategies to put each one into practice are outlined below; you can learn more about PYD [here](#).



# The Five Cs of Positive Youth Development

## 1. Competence

Having a foundational understanding of our competencies helps us navigate the world successfully and pursue new opportunities. In addition, many young people feel they are not taken seriously. Demonstrating their competence is one way they can earn the respect of the adults in their lives, and mentors can show them how to do this effectively.

### Putting competence into practice

Inspire and support your mentee's capacity for growth. Help your mentee recognize the strengths and abilities they already possess. Spend time identifying and reminding your mentee of their skills. Incorporating activities such as StrengthsFinder or short reflection activities that encourage both of you to share your past experiences and the skills you developed from them can foster competence. In doing so, be sure to create space for your mentee to teach you something new as well.

## 2. Confidence

Having confidence in one's abilities is integral to realizing one's potential. As a mentor, you can remind a young person that they have meaningful skills and experiences to contribute.

### Putting confidence into practice

Help your mentee start brainstorming their future aspirations while emphasizing that it's OK to not have everything figured out. Encourage your mentee to set goals for themselves and make connections between their skills and potential opportunities to explore. Reinforce their skills by providing positive feedback. As you get to know your mentee's skills and interests, think about strategies to encourage them to think beyond the immediate moment. For example, if your mentee excels at drawing, help them explore opportunities to utilize that skill. What careers are out there? Are there community programs or scholarships they could pursue?

## 3. Connection

Creating positive bonds with community members, peers, and institutions is important for development. As a mentor, you have the ability to provide your mentee with extremely beneficial resources and information. These connections create a sense of belonging that increases self-confidence, encourages community engagement, and offers support.

### Putting connection into practice

Create a mentoring relationship where both you and your mentee can contribute and grow. Work to achieve a balance between youth agency and support. Providing constructive feedback to support your mentee's growth is integral to an effective mentoring relationship. However, it is important to achieve the proper balance. Encourage your mentee to take ownership over the direction of the relationship by establishing goals and determining what support they want and need; this relationship should be a two-way street. In addition, you can help connect your mentee to other people and resources in your network and community.

## 4. Character

Young people develop character through their connections with people and groups that provide examples for them. As we develop, we make sense of which messages regarding personal values, integrity, and social and cultural expectations have meaning for us. Mentorship is a great way to help your mentee discover their own values and develop their moral compass.

### Putting character into practice

Have a conversation about personal values and beliefs that guide our actions. Practicing vulnerability, sharing about your background and experiences, and listening to your mentee's viewpoints can help guide these conversations. You can provide space for your mentee to explore their own values and what is important to them. To start this conversation, try walking through the "Values Activity" in the "Additional Activities and Discussion Topics" section of this guide with your mentee.

## 5. Caring/Compassion

The world can always use more people who are caring, talented, and committed to making it a better place for everyone. Through professional development, our young people are primed to further develop those skills with your help. Having empathy and compassion for others leads to a desire to contribute, support others, and give back to our communities.

### Putting caring/compassion into practice

Learn together about social issues and your own communities. Young people are often extremely engaged in the community; talk about what civic and community engagement means and how each of you put that into practice. Ask and listen to issues about which your mentee cares. Share about volunteer experiences. Be open to having difficult conversations about personal experiences or injustices and practice active listening, especially if you don't share your mentee's lived experiences.

The following tips may be helpful if your mentee brings up serious issues, feelings, or topics. In addition, you can check out [this additional resource](#) on supporting young people.

- Acknowledge that they are experiencing a tough situation.
- Try to remain calm, actively listen, and seek to understand their perspective.
- Utilize open-ended questions to allow your mentee to continue sharing, but don't push for more information than they are comfortable sharing.
- Avoid judgment statements ("How could you...?" or "Why did you...?").
- Thank your mentee for sharing; tell them you're glad that they trusted you.
- If the issue requires it, reach out to the mentoring program staff or other resources for more guidance.
- If the mentee shared experiences that you didn't relate to, encourage yourself to continue learning more about the issues.



# Conversation Tips & Tricks

## What do I do when the conversation and connections don't come easily?

When mentoring someone, you may find that conversations and forming connections aren't coming along effortlessly — that's OK! Every mentoring relationship cycles through phases. It can often feel difficult to begin the relationship or like things have stalled. Whatever the experience is like for you, don't sweat it.

Some of the most important things you can provide for a young person are availability, consistency, reliability, and a willingness to listen. Every mentee is at a unique stage of personal and professional growth. For some, certain discussion topics in this guide may be too advanced, and that is OK.

It can be very difficult for us to identify our career aspirations, educational goals, and professional interests. It is important to consider your mentee's development stage when deciding on discussion topics. Use your best judgment to determine what topics are most appropriate for your mentee. To help ease the pressure, and hopefully your minds, here are some tips and conversation starters to help you build the relationship when it feels difficult.

### TIPS AND REMINDERS

- You're doing your best. **Showing up authentically, being consistent, and having a genuine interest in your mentee are more than enough.**
- Don't feel pressured to force high-level conversations about careers or long-term goals if your mentee isn't quite there yet. In addition to someone who provides academic support and opportunities for career exploration, a mentor can be:
  - A trusted listener.
  - A role model.
  - A resource and resource provider.
  - A person who celebrates their mentee's wins (including the "small" ones).

## Easy Icebreakers for Weekly Meetings

You and your mentee's responses to the suggested prompts below can serve as jumping off points for a larger conversation when things feel slow.

### Rose, Bud, Thorn.

- Reflect on and share each of the following since your last meeting:
  - Rose: A highlight, success, small win, or something positive.
  - Bud: Something new, you're looking forward to, or is on the horizon.
  - Thorn: A challenge, low, or something you need support with.

### How's Your Weather?

- Quickly describe what's been going on in your lives since your last meeting in terms of weather. Was it stormy? Partly cloudy? Sunny?

### Three Words.

- Use three words to answer the question: "How are you doing today?" Try to be creative with your answer!
  - A short news headline: *Need a nap* or *Accomplished my goal*.
  - Three descriptive, separate words: *Hopeful, Excited, Stressed*.
  - A word picture: *Calm, smooth sailing* or *Riding a rollercoaster*.

### Lyrical Life.

- What's one lyric from a song that describes how this week is going?
- Take turns sharing your lyrics and why you chose them.

### Top of Mind.

- What are two things that are at the top of your mind today? They can be from any area of your life (as long as you are comfortable sharing).

### Finish the Sentence.

- Choose a sentence starter that you would like to complete:
  - *I'm looking forward to...*
  - *This morning I...*
  - *I really need/want to...*
  - *What if...*
  - *My day would be going much better if...*
  - *Someone I've really appreciated lately is... because...*
  - *I can't stop thinking about...*
  - *I can't believe...*

# Friendly Conversation Prompts

- If you had one hour today to talk to anyone in the world, who would it be?
- What do you like to do to disconnect after a long day?
- What superpower would you like to have?
- What's one book every human should read? Why?
- What's your favorite quote?
- What's the most important quality you look for in other people?
- If you didn't have to sleep, how would you spend the extra eight(ish) hours?
- What is one subject that isn't taught in school but absolutely should be?
- If you could choose one new thing or skill to learn, what would it be?
- If you could have any job in the world regardless of salary, what would it be?

# Career Exploration Starter Questions

- What does success look like to you? What is important to you?
- Do you know what kind of jobs you might like? Who has influenced your ideas about your career options?
- What are some of your talents and skills?
- What topics spark your interest or curiosity?
- What extracurricular activities do you enjoy? How do you like to spend your time?
- What makes you feel happy or energized?
- Who do you look up to? What about them inspires you?
- What about yourself are you most proud of?
- Have you ever worked before? What did you like about that job? Not like?
- What would you like to learn more about? What can I help you with?
- What are your favorite classes? Why?
- What do you “geek” over? What could you spend hours talking about?

# Potential Mentorship Meeting Topics

The following topics were used to create a suggested weekly timeline for mentors involved with the SummerWorks program specifically. The topics listed below are modeled after, and meant to build upon, workshops from the SummerWorks Professional Development curriculum. However, we hope other individuals and programs might find these meeting topics to be a useful starting point. You are welcome to pick and choose topics as you see fit. Again, it is important to allow and encourage your mentee to drive your meeting agendas and discussion topics.

# Meeting Topic: Introductions

## Pre-Meeting Checklist

As noted throughout this guide, your mentee should feel comfortable taking ownership of the mentoring relationship. It's important to achieve balance between providing support as a mentor and allowing your mentee to have agency. That being said, it may be beneficial for you to model these behaviors and set expectations in preparing for your first meeting. A short checklist is included below:

- ☐ Send your mentee an introductory email.
- ☐ Set up an initial meeting and determine the communication method (in-person, phone, video call)
- ☐ Ask your mentee for a short bio about themselves.
- ☐ Consider how you want to set goals, ground rules, and expectations (will you use a formal process such as a mentoring agreement?).
- ☐ If you want to use a mentoring agreement, consider sharing it with your mentee.
- ☐ Think about what you bring to the table as a mentor.
- ☐ Think about what you want to get out of the relationship. This is a two-way street.
- ☐ Encourage your mentee to prepare for and drive the meeting. The “Potential Questions to Ask Your Mentor” outlined earlier in this guide might help your mentee prepare.



## Icebreaker

Tell me about yourself in a 30-second “commercial.”

### Potential Discussion Topics

Use this session to make your introductions and cover the housekeeping items. It may feel impersonal, but discussing goals, expectations, and what your mentee hopes to learn or gain from the relationship is important.

- Set the parameters for your mentoring relationship early.
  - How often will you connect and how will you communicate?
  - Establish mutually-agreed upon ground rules for the relationship.
  - Identify goals and strategies to assess your progress.
    - Consider drafting your goals during the first meeting and revisiting at the next meeting to finalize them. To help guide this process, you may use the SummerWorks [Mentoring Relationship Agreement](#).
    - When asking your mentee to consider their goals and what they hope to learn, it may be helpful to discuss the S.M.A.R.T. framework as a best practice for goal-setting. See the general discussion topics [below](#) for more detail on S.M.A.R.T. goals.
- Introduce yourself. It is a best practice to share your name and [personal pronouns](#) (he/him, she/hers, they/them) if you feel comfortable doing so.
  - You could share about your personal interests, your educational and career paths, and your journey to your current position/occupation. Give the highlights of your career and relevant experience.
  - Using the icebreaker, you can build on the conversation by sharing where you are from and extracurricular activities in which you have participated. Hopefully, your mentee will do the same, so you both set a foundation for building your mentorship relationship.
  - Thank your mentee for sharing their bio and 30-second commercial.
- Why are you here? Tell your mentee why you’re investing your time in this opportunity. Normalize the idea of mentorship by sharing how mentors have helped you along the way.
- Ask for clarification and reiterate the goals. Make sure you leave the initial meeting with a better idea of what your mentee is looking for in this relationship. This way, you can start planning how you can best assist them in achieving their goals.

### Discussion Prompts

- My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (position at the place you work).
- I am from...
- I went to (high school) and (college, if applicable) and majored in \_\_\_\_\_.
- I participated in \_\_\_\_\_ (sport or other extracurricular you participated in).
- After college, I started out...
- Let’s talk about communication guidelines and expectations. I prefer...

## Meeting Topic: Career Pathways and Professionalism

### Icebreaker

What did you want to be when you were a child and/or young adult? How did that aspiration play out for you?

### Potential Discussion Topics

If applicable, revisit and confirm the goals you and your mentee set for the mentoring relationship during your first meeting.

You may want to use this meeting to explore the details of your career path. Please note that depending on where your mentee is developmentally, you may want to utilize some of the easy conversation starters or career exploration questions outlined previously.

- How did you get to where you are as a professional? What advice do you have for someone who is still exploring their interests or starting their professional journey?
- Encourage your mentee to reflect on where they currently are, as well as where they might want to go professionally.
- This is a great time to share about what you did post-high school.
  - What was this experience like for you?
  - What are some important considerations when preparing for or thinking about different postsecondary education programs?
  - Consider sharing best practices and advice on how to approach postsecondary education. If you entered the workforce after high school, how did you manage that transition?
  - What advice were you given about post-secondary education? What are some of your reflections or lessons learned?
- Discuss what it means to you and your mentee to be a professional. Emphasize that young people have valuable skills and experiences to bring to the table.
- Discover what your mentee is interested in and what some of their aspirations are.
- Emphasize that it is OK if plans change and/or they do not know what they want to do. Everyone experiences uncertainty!

### Discussion Prompts

- My first job was...
  - I learned \_\_\_\_\_ from that experience.
- Something that helped me move up in this field was...
- I made the best out of this situation by...
- The best way to approach a job search is to...



- What do you want to do professionally?
  - If they are unsure: “what are you interested in?”
- I handled the workload during my postsecondary education program by...
- I managed my time by...
- My experience in college taught me...
- My various career experiences have taught me...

## Meeting Topic: Health and Wellness

Based on survey results from the SummerWorks program, young adults appreciate and desire space to speak and reflect openly on mental health and holistic wellness. This is particularly salient because young people are balancing a full plate of responsibilities (academics, family life, sports, jobs, clubs, etc.) and experiencing nervousness and uncertainty around making the transition to adulthood. Because SummerWorks is a summer employment program, we also discuss work-life balance and the notion that you bring your whole self to work with you.

Intentionally creating opportunities for you and your mentee to discuss wellness is important; normalizing conversations about wellness and mental health not only combats stigma, but it also provides an opportunity to practice vulnerability and build a trusting, open relationship.

### Icebreaker

When/where are you the most relaxed? If you have trouble coming up with something, what is something you do that makes you happy?

### Potential Discussion Topics

When discussing wellness with your mentee, it is important to emphasize that wellness is holistic. Reference the [Wellness Wheel](#) from MHealthy at the University of Michigan and note the eight dimensions of well-being. In addition, wellness is authored and defined by you.

- Talk to your mentee about the importance of wellness and what it means to both of you.
- Consider discussing the difference between wellness and health. Specifically, it is possible to be well without being healthy; it is important to have an inclusive definition of wellness that does not exclude individuals with chronic health issues.
  - The World Health Organization (WHO) defines wellness as “an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life. Wellness is more than being free from illness. It is a dynamic process of change and growth.”
- Discuss the role of stress in our ability to maintain wellness.
  - Talk about work-life balance; the workplace is often a major source of stress.
  - Reflect on the role of [“Hustle Culture”](#) in our lives.

- This is also called “the busy brag” or the “the culture of busyness.”
  - It can often lead to burnout, [impostor syndrome](#), and general feelings of inadequacy or guilt about being unproductive.
  - Have you ever experienced any of these feelings? What was the situation?
- Managing health and wellness is personal and varies widely between individuals. You know best how information regarding wellness relates to your own personal and professional lives.
  - If you feel comfortable, share your personal experiences and strategies for managing your own health and wellness.
  - You may also consider talking to your mentee about mindfulness practices as strategies to manage stress and promote mental health.
- Walk through the Wellness Wheel below with your mentee. What do you think of this model? How would you define each of the eight dimensions for yourself? How do each of them show up in your life?



Model of Personal Wellbeing, MHealthy — University of Michigan



## Discussion Prompts

- When I think of health and wellness, I think about...
- How do you define well-being for yourself?
- Thinking about health and wellness is important because...
- What are some of the current challenges you're facing?
- What has felt like a "failure" lately?
- How do you typically respond to stress?
- I do \_\_\_\_\_ when work/life begins to get overwhelming.
- If you're comfortable sharing, how do you typically cope with stress?
- I make sure to do \_\_\_\_\_ in order to maintain wellness.

## Meeting Topic: Civic and Community Engagement

Many young adults care deeply about being involved in their community, as well as engaging in activism and advocacy efforts. In addition, civic engagement is tied to principles of Positive Youth Development. Civic and community engagement help young people build essential skills, create connections, and develop as leaders. Research also links pro-civic opportunities for youth to positive educational and economic outcomes; civic experience and skills easily translate to jobs.

### Icebreaker

You may want to start this meeting with an icebreaker that invites some reflection on one's own personal identity. A community can be defined as a place or a shared identity or interest. How one participates in civic engagement or defines their communities is heavily tied to our personal values, experiences, and identities. Grounding a conversation about civic engagement in personal identities is important. Two icebreaker examples to accomplish this are highlighted below:

- Share the origin story of your name. Share stories about your name or nicknames. What do they mean? How were you given them? How do you relate to them?
- Write and share an "I Am" Poem:
  - Each line begins with "I am..." followed by a prompt that encourages you to describe who you are in your own words and what's important to your identity.
    - I am... (your favorite food, foods you grew up with).
    - I am... (objects or surroundings from your childhood).
    - I am... (sights from your neighborhood or school).

- I am... (list people — names are OK — from your past, relationships, or heritage).
- I am... (a family saying you heard growing up).
- I am... (values you learned from your family).

## Potential Discussion Topics

- Talk about what [civic engagement](#) means to you. Share ways you've been involved in your community and ask your mentee to do the same.
- Discuss civic engagement as a [spectrum of activities](#) with varying degrees of impact.
  - There are different forms of civic engagement: voting, service, charitable giving, etc.
  - What different forms of civic engagement can you think of?
  - What is the role of each in creating change in our communities? How likely are each of these examples to make change?
- Why is civic engagement important (to you, to your community, etc.)?
  - Talk to your mentee about voting:
    - What are their thoughts about voting? Why is it important?
    - How did your family talk about voting?
  - Discuss the importance of voting in *all* elections (local, state, and federal).
  - If your mentee is eligible to vote, provide information on how to register. [Rock the Vote](#) is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to building the political power of young people; this website will help direct your mentee to voter resources for their state.
  - [TurboVote](#) is another great resource for voter registration and election updates.
- Talk to your mentee about the importance of staying up-to-date on current events, fact checking, and being a responsible consumer of information and media.
  - [Factitious](#) is an online game to help practice identifying credible news/media.
  - [FactCheck.Org](#), [Politifact.com](#), and [Snopes.com](#) are all great fact-checking resources.

## Discussion Prompts

- What are some communities that you are a part of?
- What are some issues in your own communities that you feel passionate about? Which issues affect your lives directly?
- Have you ever "gotten involved" in an issue that is important to you?
- How can you fit civic engagement into your life as an adult or as you become busier?
- Discuss some historical political movements that accomplished significant or transformative change.
- Would you ever consider running for office one day? Why or why not?

# Meeting Topic: Networking and Building a Professional Online Presence

## Icebreaker

Networking doesn't always have to take place at formal, stuffy events. You may want to start this conversation out with a light-hearted icebreaker to convey this idea. Ask: what would the title of your autobiography be, and which actor would you cast to play you?

## Potential Discussion Topics

Talk with your mentee about the importance and utility of networking and building a professional online presence. Social media, and LinkedIn in particular, can be a powerful tool for growing your professional network. You may also encourage your mentee to engage in networking by connecting them with a colleague or someone in your own network with whom they could set up an informational interview.

- Why is networking important? How do you use it? How has it helped you?
- What are some examples of networking you have encountered or engaged in?
- Discuss the hesitations or stress associated with networking and strategies to overcome them.
- Discuss elevator pitches and practice yours:
  - Developing a quick way to introduce yourself to someone is important. An "elevator pitch" is like a 30-second commercial of who you are and includes:
    - Who you are.
    - What you're interested in.
    - What your skills/experiences are.
  - Discuss tips for crafting an elevator pitch.
    - Discuss your experiences in chronological order.
    - Be authentic! Think about what you're proud of.
    - Use your elevator pitch when reaching out for an informational interview.
- Talk about the social media platforms you use and ask your mentee which mediums they prefer.
  - What are the differences between a "professional" profile and a "personal" one?
  - What are the benefits of having a presence on LinkedIn versus other social media sites?
- How do you (or could you) use social media to create a positive, professional online presence?
- What do employers look for when hiring someone?
  - This is a great opportunity to talk about how some potential employers look at candidates' social media profiles to determine if they are a good fit for the job.

- Not everything that you delete from social media actually disappears.
- Discuss ways to maintain professionalism online.
  - Creating a LinkedIn profile.
  - Responding to blog posts.
  - Reviewing "tags" on social media.
- Provide the best practice of Googling yourself in incognito mode every few months to see what results come up. Making sure your name is not connected to anything unsavory is key in keeping your online persona professional.

## Discussion Prompts

- I look for \_\_\_\_\_ when viewing someone's professional profile.
- This is how you get on LinkedIn. I include \_\_\_\_\_ on my LinkedIn profile.
- I would expect to find \_\_\_\_\_ in a professional profile.
- I use my online presence to...

# Meeting Topic: After High School and Beyond

## Icebreaker

What was your favorite song the year you graduated from high school and/or college? What is your mentee's favorite song right now? Tailor this question based on the age of your mentee.

## Potential Discussion Topics

Post-high school plans look different for everyone. This session is the time to talk about different options for youth after they graduate, or, for those who have graduated already, a time to reflect on their desired next steps and professional path thus far.

- If you feel comfortable, share what it was like for you while you were trying to determine what to do after high school and/or college.
  - What decisions did you make? What factors influenced or shaped those decisions?
  - How did your actions get you to where you are now?
- Discuss the various factors that are important to consider when deciding on a postsecondary education program or plan.
  - You might discuss the college choice process or what it's like engaging the workforce after high school. What factors did you consider when deciding what to do or where to go after high school (cost, degrees, campus diversity, etc.)?
- Ask your mentee what their plans are once they graduate, if they are comfortable sharing. If your mentee has already graduated from high school, have a reflective conversation with them about the path they've taken and where they want to go.



- For older youth, talk about how to conduct market research and why it is important to track industry trends and changes in job stability. The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) provides these data.
- Discuss the process of finding jobs based on your education. Help them identify job titles and tasks that may appeal to them.
  - What resources are available to your mentee to help them find a job?
  - Which transferable skills can they use across an array of industries?
  - How does one identify the professional growth opportunities they want to pursue, and how do they make sure that is part of the job they take?
  - Emphasize that it is always possible to change your career.

## Discussion Prompts

(tailor based on the age of your mentee)

- After I graduated high school, I...
- What do you know about college?
- Have you received any help or resources regarding making a college choice?
- What questions do you have about the college choice process?
- I went about finding a job after high school by...
- These are some things to keep in mind if you are looking for a job out of high school and/or college: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Have you thought about plans after high school? If so, can you say more? If not, what do you already know?
- I wish I knew \_\_\_\_\_ after I graduated from high school.
- My post-high school decisions did \_\_\_\_\_ for me.

## TIP

If your mentee is unsure about their future direction or what they're interested in professionally, discuss their possibilities in terms of [parallel plans](#). This will help them consider all possibilities and determine what path is the best fit without assigning inherent value judgments to their options.

# Meeting Topic: Workforce Advice

## Icebreaker

What is your dream job and why?

## Potential Discussion Topics

- Share your expertise on how to thrive in the workplace and explore workplace values.
- Provide tips, stories, or lessons learned from your experience in searching for jobs, accepting a position, and succeeding at your organization.
  - You may choose to discuss topics such as: networking, managing your manager, receiving and providing criticism/feedback, and more.
    - More advanced topics might include salary and benefits negotiation, asking for a promotion, changing careers, etc.
  - Highlight the importance of transferable skills. Many youth (and adults) struggle with articulating transferable skills that can apply to different positions and industries. Practice translating the tasks your mentee is doing (or has done) at work or school into transferable skills to highlight on their resume.
- You may want to discuss workplace values and how they may change over time. What may be important to someone in their 20s is likely going to be different from someone in their 30s, 40s, or 50s.
  - [The Work Values Inventory](#) is one tool to help guide your reflection on things you value in a workplace, company, or career.
- Provide additional career development resources:
  - [The Balance Careers](#)
  - [The Muse](#)
  - Forbes has an [extensive list](#) of career development websites

## Discussion Prompts

- I maintain my network by...
- The best way to manage your manager is to...
- I look for \_\_\_\_\_ in my employees.
- I provide feedback by...
- I provide criticism by...
- Have you thought about how you best receive criticism/feedback? How has it changed over time?
- Have you thought about your communication style? What are your strengths and growth areas?

## Meeting Topic: Reflecting on the Mentoring Relationship

### Icebreaker

What have you found most valuable about the mentoring relationship?

### Potential Discussion Topics

Ideally, you should assess the progress of your mentoring relationship and revisit any goals set by you and your mentee throughout the relationship. You may want to use one of your final “formal” meetings with your mentee to celebrate your accomplishments, reflect on the experience, and discuss any lessons learned. If you worked with your mentee through a more formal mentoring program with a specified end date, have an explicit discussion about whether (and how) the relationship might continue.

- Provide an opportunity to reflect on the relationship and revisit your goals.
  - Did you achieve your goals?
  - What have you gotten from meeting with one another?
  - In hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently?
- Tie up any loose ends and make sure your mentee has their current questions answered.
- Discuss next steps. It is up to your and your mentee’s discretion, but this is a good session to make plans on if/how to keep in touch after the program ends.

### Discussion Prompts

- What has been your favorite part of the program?
- What have you learned that has stuck with you the most?
- How can you implement that into your future plans?
- What do you wish you could have done while in the program?
- Are there any other resources I can provide you with?
- What are your plans for the next year?

## Additional Activities and Discussion Topics

### Personality Assessments

When taking or administering any personality assessment, it’s important to acknowledge these assessments are not the end-all and be-all of who we are. There are limitations to these assessments and the results are not meant to be a concrete determination of who we are, what our skills are, or what we might be interested in. That being said, these tests can help serve as a starting point for exploring ourselves; they can be a great way for us to get to know ourselves and move forward in the world with the knowledge of what we want and need personally and professionally. Reflecting on our interests, strengths, growth areas, and personal values can help us identify potential education and career paths.

- SummerWorks participants are required to take the Kuder Journey Career Exploration Assessment, which includes: the Kuder Career Interests Assessment, Kuder Skills Confidence Assessment, and Super’s Work Values Inventory.
  - Please note that this assessment requires access codes and is not free.
- Encourage your mentee to take a personality assessment. You may also wish to take the assessment together and compare your results.
  - We recommend using [16 Personalities](#), a free assessment modeled after Myers-Briggs that includes five personality type scales.
  - If you have access to other personality assessments (such as Clifton Strengths), feel free to share them with your mentee. Share your own results and how they resonate with you.
- If you incorporate a personality assessment, be sure to debrief results.  
**Sample debrief questions include:**
  - How do you feel about your results? Do they resonate with you? Why or why not?
  - How do you think your results might relate to some of your personal or professional interests?
  - What do you think your ideal work environment is like? How do your results relate to this?
  - Encourage your mentee to explore potential careers and/or educational programs related to their results. 16 Personalities provides a starting point; [here](#) is an additional resource. Which career fields might they be interested or excel in?



## Goal Setting

- Talk about best practices for goal setting and why it is important.
- Review the [S.M.A.R.T. goals](#) acronym with your mentee. Do you set S.M.A.R.T. goals?
  - **S**pecific (simple, sensible, significant).
  - **M**easurable (meaningful, motivating).
  - **A**chievable (agreed, attainable).
  - **R**elevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based).
  - **T**ime bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).
- A key part of reaching goals is assessing progress. Discuss best practices and methods you use for determining whether you are on track to meet your goals.
- Emphasize that goals can change as we grow. It is okay to let go of a goal if you decide it is no longer relevant for you or something you wish to accomplish.

## Check-Ins

- If you are mentoring a young person through a specific program, check in about how the program is going for your mentee. Inquire about what they are learning and encourage them to think about how they can apply what they have learned to their professional or personal lives.
- Set aside time during your meetings to check in on how your mentee is feeling on a personal level. Showing that you're invested in your mentee can help foster a trusting relationship.

## Help Your Mentee Set up an Informational Interview

- Informational interviews are a great way to build your professional network, explore a new career, get the insider scoop on a career you're interested in, and practice communication skills.
- Discuss informational interviews with your mentee:
  - What is it? What's the point?
  - How do you connect with someone to interview?
  - How do you prepare for and conduct an informational interview?
- Do you have someone in your network who would be willing to do an informational interview with your mentee? Connect them via email!
- The ability to set up and lead an informational interview is an invaluable skill; reiterating and reinforcing the components of an informational interview can only help.

## Interview Practice & Strategies

- Interviewing can be intimidating, so provide your mentee with some strategies that they could utilize in order to make the best first impression possible during an interview.
- Talk about some of your best and worst interviews, how did they go?
- Offer to conduct a mock interview with your mentee. Practice makes perfect!
- Share best practices and tips for virtual and phone interviews as well.

## Teleconferencing Etiquette

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SummerWorks offered all programming virtually in 2020. This raised many questions regarding teleconferencing etiquette, virtual interviewing, etc. However, even outside of the context of COVID-19, the use of teleconferencing is becoming a more common practice. It may be beneficial to talk to your mentee about teleconferencing platforms, best practices for using them, how to conduct business/meetings remotely, and when they might encounter teleconferencing.
- Review some basic techniques and strategies for remote meetings or interviews (lighting, finding a quiet space, etc.).
- Please keep in mind that as events and work transitioned to online formats, accessibility is often an afterthought. If you are working with a mentee who has a disability, be patient as they navigate the virtual environment. Others may have access needs that are different from our own. Make accessibility an ongoing, open conversation with your mentee.
- Additionally, if you are engaging with your mentee virtually, keep in mind that the shift to online learning and engagement can create feelings of anxiety for some youth. Using the webcam can create uncomfortable situations where young people are forced to showcase their home life and personal space. Exercise patience and vulnerability; this can be a difficult transition.





## Resume Review

- Ask your mentee if they have a resume. No matter what stage their resume is in, it would be beneficial to offer your help with it. Your mentee will likely appreciate extra support and another set of eyes to review it.
- What does an employer look for in a resume? What makes a resume strong?
- Considering the professional and developmental stage of your mentee, share resume best practices and example resumes that could get them on the right track.
- The [Balance Careers](#) has some great resume resources. More than likely, your mentee should have a chronological or combination resume.
  - For high school students, try consulting [this resource](#).
  - For formatting, we recommend a document that looks similar to [this](#) from the University of Michigan's Career Center. The content may look a bit intimidating because it is from a college student, but the resume looks polished, neat, and easy to read.

## Cover Letters

- Talk about the purpose of a cover letter with your mentee and explain how to write one if they've never done so. If your mentee has written cover letters, you may consider workshopping one of their old ones with them to provide tips for improving them in the future.
- Explain some best practices for writing cover letters.
  - Use proper cover letter formatting:
    - Include your name and contact information.
    - Include the date you're applying.
    - Include the name and contact information for the person reviewing the letter.
    - Choose a simple, readable font.
    - A cover letter should not be longer than one page (three to four paragraphs).
    - Utilize margins and create white space between paragraphs.
    - If submitting electronically, add a scanned image of your signature to add a personal touch.
  - Tailor every cover letter you write to the position that you are applying for.
    - First, carefully review the job posting so that you understand the qualifications and skills a potential employer is looking for.
    - Select two to three relevant skills to highlight in your cover letter.
    - In your letter, describe concrete of times when you demonstrated those skills.
    - Your cover letter should not be a regurgitation of your resume. It should be a bridge that connects your resume to why you are the best candidate for the position.

- Take the time to showcase your personality; why are you the best fit for this company?
- Don't point out skills or experiences you think you might be missing.
  - Do use your cover letter as an opportunity to explain any recent employment gaps on your resume.
- Try to find a contact person. You should try to address your cover letter to the specific person who will be reviewing it. You can check the posting or the company's website for this information. If you still aren't sure, you can call the company.
  - If you know someone who currently works at the company who would be willing to put in a good word for you, include their name in the opening paragraph.
- Proofread your letter and always follow the instructions listed in the job posting.
- If you are applying for a job in an area you do not currently reside in, make it clear that you plan to relocate.
- Additional tips and sample cover letters can be found [here](#).





## Explore and Discuss Core Values

- Having awareness of one's core values is a necessity in both the professional and personal realms. Identifying our values may help guide future career and life decisions. If you'd like to explore personal values with your mentee, feel free to use the suggested activity outlined below.
- **Personal Values Activity Instructions:**
  - You and your mentee should begin this activity by reviewing this [list of personal values](#). Circle or write down any values that resonate with you.
  - After your initial review of the list, go back through and choose the top 10 values that are most important to you.
  - Once you have identified your top 10, narrow that list to your top three values.
- **Debrief Questions:**
  - What was it like to identify your top values? Was it easy or difficult? Why?
  - How did you go about narrowing your list to 10, and then three?
  - Why are these values important to you? How do they fit into or relate to your career interests and future aspirations?
  - Do you think your values have always been the same, or do you think they have changed over time?
  - How do you currently live by your values? How are you going to make sure you implement your values moving forward?

## Crafting a Vision Statement

- Show your mentee how to turn their personal values into a vision statement. This is an excellent practice to help your mentee prepare for interviewing, writing admissions essays, etc.
- Have them think about where they want to be five to 10 years from now. What do they envision themselves doing? What is their purpose? Who do they see themselves as?
- Explain how to use a vision statement on a consistent basis to guide professional and personal development and revisit goals.
- Here are two resources that may be helpful:
  - [Overview of crafting a vision statement](#).
  - [In-depth article about vision statements](#).

## Writing a Personal Statement

- Writing a personal statement for a job or school application can be daunting. Share tips and tricks with your mentee about how to start.
  - Recommend they do the following:
    - Highlight relevant skills.
    - Demonstrate their values.
    - Describe their current goals and, ideally, include a plan to achieve them.





- If they have ever written a cover letter, they can borrow material from that.
- The Purdue Online Writing Lab (Owl) offers some [helpful pointers](#).
- Emphasize that a personal statement is, in fact, a very personal document. No one can write it for your mentee; encourage them to tell their own story.

## References and Letters of Recommendation

- Everyone has a list of people who are willing to vouch for them in a professional setting. Talk to your mentee about the importance and utility of maintaining relationships with individuals who would be willing to write letters of recommendation or serve as a professional reference.
- Explain what references and letters of recommendation are. When are they used?
- Review best practices for asking for a reference or letter of recommendation with your mentee (feel free to add any of your own):
  - If possible, ask in person. A professional, courteous email is the next best thing.
    - When asking for a letter of recommendation, it's always good to request a meeting with the recommender to discuss what you're applying for.
  - Make sure the reference feels comfortable writing and/or speaking on your behalf. Note that sometimes it is nothing personal, but people may refuse to write a reference if they are busy. In addition, make sure the person you ask can provide a strong recommendation or reference for you; a lukewarm recommendation is worse than no recommendation.
  - Give references plenty of time to provide a letter of recommendation (at least one month is standard).
  - Provide information that will help your reference such as your resume, cover letter, job description, program summary, etc. This will help your recommender tailor their responses to highlight relevant skills that make you an ideal candidate.
  - Write a thank-you note. Handwritten is best, but digital is acceptable.
  - Keep a list of your references with all of their contact information in your records. Reach out to them occasionally to check in, not just when you need something from them.

## Conclusion

Our hope in writing this document is to provide resources and suggestions to support other individuals and programs in their mentorship endeavors. It is in no way meant to be prescriptive. Always remember that your time, presence, and support are the most important ways to show up for a young person. It is OK not to have every answer your mentee seeks, and there is nothing wrong in asking for help. Thank you for what you are doing for your mentees and your community; we wish you all the best in your mentoring relationships.

If you have questions about the contents of this guide, the SummerWorks program, or the SummerWorks Professional Development Curriculum, please contact us at [syesupport@umich.edu](mailto:syesupport@umich.edu).



*All photos in this guide are from the  
University of Michigan and Washtenaw County's Office of Community and Economic Development.*



