



Tips for Communicating Effectively

Be a sounding board.

Your role is to positively engage and support your mentee. When your mentee confronts you with a problem in his/her life, help to think of creative solutions. Building trust and rapport in this way is critical to the mentor/mentee friendship.

Lighten up.

Our lives, and the lives of our mentees, can be stressful. Try to think of activities that will relieve stress for both of you. The mentor/mentee relationship is supposed to be fun! Check out our list of free and fun activities to relax and have a few laughs.

Listen Actively.

Kids are more likely to respond when an adult is paying full attention to them. Make eye contact, ask questions, repeat back their statements, and put away your cell phone! Active listening is the key to making your mentee feel valued.

Respect your mentee.

There's nothing worse than feeling like the adults around you don't respect your place in the world. You want your mentee to respect you and you should respect them too. Show them their beliefs and ideas are valuable.

Their feelings are real.

Acknowledge that sometimes being a kid can hurt. Just because we know they'll bounce back from a problem doesn't mean they do. Everyone has bad days – let your mentee know you are there to listen and to help work through any situation.

Compromise.

This relationship should be about making progress together and learning new things. As the mentor, you have a lot of experiences to share, but spend time learning together and give your mentee opportunities to be the expert.

Apologize.

Adults are not always right. Your mentee will respect you more if you acknowledge your mistakes and make them learning moments.

Focus on strengths.

Amachi mentees are incredibly resilient. Everyone experiences challenges in life - don't forget to focus on the strengths of your mentee, and to reinforce your belief in him/her.

Communicating Across the Stages of Development

Babies and Toddlers

This age group frequently expresses emotion by crying. Each child develops unique cries for different needs. Toddlers do begin to use action words without knowing how to string them together in full sentences (ex: Mommy, go). Physical actions are as important as verbal messaging. Toddlers also begin to use short sentences and are attempting to assert some independence from their parents.

Preschool

Kids in the preschool group tend to learn best by imitating other people. They learn words, body language, and basic behavior from their caregivers and mentors. Kids of preschool age also tend to ask many questions and provide their own imaginary explanations for activities. **Give your mentee the opportunity to participate in making decisions, and be very aware of your body language.**

School Age

Kids in the 6-12 age groups begin to develop their own sense of self. They begin to make decisions based on what is socially acceptable, and start to question and doubt information. They may be more reclusive than they were before. **As a mentor, be sure to continue to talk to your mentee.** The reclusiveness and potential rebelliousness is normal for this age group, as they are trying to create a more independent life.

Teenagers

Teenagers are in a critical negotiating stage in their lives. They are transcending from childhood into adulthood, and are learning to become independent. Being understanding of teenagers is one of the best ways to make progress – you don't have to agree, but you can acknowledge their thoughts. Ask the right questions, not loaded questions, to establish trust. **Give your teenage mentee the opportunity to set their own goals, and reinforce their sense of self and individuality.**

