READY TO GO: MENTOR TRAINING TOOLKIT

Communication
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Communication

Effective communication is important in all interpersonal interactions, but it’s especially vital within a mentoring relationship. Thoughtful, appropriate communication enables us to connect with others and convey our thoughts, opinions and needs. In a mentoring atmosphere, effective communication is essential to building trust and a strong relationship between the mentor and the mentee.

Research has demonstrated that young people who are involved in positive relationships with adults often develop strong communication skills, enhancing their leadership skills, increasing their self-esteem and decreasing risky behavior (Russell, Polen, & Tepper, 2009). The mentor should actively grow and foster those skills in the mentee while the mentor also grows in these same areas. Both young people and adults need to master many important skills and competencies for a mentoring relationship to be successful. Three of the most essential include teamwork, coaching and, most importantly, communication (Camino, 2000a). These areas are not only important to the success of the mentoring relationship but also useful for both young people and adults in other areas of their lives including school, jobs and social situations. Young people benefit from relationships with adults when the adults involved see them as individuals who are competent communicators able to contribute to important decisions (Camino, 2000b). Research also shows that youth involvement in positive social relationships and activities with adults is associated with stronger communication skills, decreased at-risk behaviors, leadership experience, increased status and stature in the community, and improved competencies and self-esteem (Kirby & Coyle, 1997). In addition to positive effects for youth, these relationships can have the same benefits for adults as well (Russell, Polen, & Tepper, 2009).

A key component to effective communication is good listening. You must master four steps to achieve effective listening. First, hear and listen to the message. There is a difference between hearing and actually listening. Hearing is nonselective and an involuntary action, whereas listening is selective and voluntary. Second, interpret the message. In addition to spoken words, many components make up the message including the speaker’s tone of voice, nonverbal cues and filters. Third, evaluate the message. You may not need to evaluate all the time. Evaluation is most likely to be an important step when the speaker is trying to persuade the listener. Evaluation requires practice. Listeners often need to question the reason for a message and to analyze what a speaker could be trying to accomplish with a message as well as to analyze the factual basis for the message. Finally, respond to the message. Good listeners provide feedback to the message either verbally or through nonverbal cues. This feedback confirms for the speaker that the listener received the message, understood the message or needed further clarification, and evaluated the message. Refer to the “Four Steps to Good Listening” handout included after the “Communication” background section. You may want to copy and use this handout for discussion with groups in your mentoring training.

Ineffective interpersonal communication can cause someone to feel insulted and misunderstood, and can negatively affect personal growth. Wood (2010) explains that communication is important to achieving Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. In his hierarchy, Maslow suggests that people are motivated first by basic physiological needs. After basic needs are met, people move on to more advanced stages, such as safety, love and belonging, and self-esteem, finally progressing to self-actualization. When poor or negative communication exists, fulfilling those needs is difficult. We need effective communication skills to convey our safety and belonging needs. We also need good communication to generate strong self-esteem. Self-esteem is largely based on how others communicate their perceptions about an individual’s life.
Fundamental to obtaining personal growth and to achieving self-actualization, communication has the power to enhance or harm personal, social and professional relationships (Wood, 2010). When effective, communication has the power to enrich relationships between people.

The activities in this section will allow the participants to gain a better understanding of the role effective communication has in mentoring relationships. The activities will demonstrate the importance of good verbal communication skills, reflective listening skills and nonverbal cues. Refer to the “Types of Communication” handout after this “Communication” background section for more information on verbal and nonverbal communication. Potential mentors will increase their communication skills as well as their problem-solving skills as they negotiate situations where communication has broken down.

In the “Tower of Questions” activity, participants practice communicating with one another through a simple block-stacking game, asking questions that prompt conversation. They’ll expand upon basic skills in the “Untangled” activity, where group members work together to problem solve while learning the value of communicating with clarity. They’ll expand upon this same skill of communicating clearly in “Draw Me for Your Leader,” “Unseen Artists” and “Let Your Fingers Do the Talking.” “Let Your Fingers Do the Talking” also briefly allows participants to consider the effect of nonverbal communication, a subject touched on in more depth in “Face Time,” an activity in which participants use scenarios to help them understand what nonverbal cues to look for in a conversation.

“The Right Stuff” activity and the “Are You Listening?” activity serve to expand participants’ listening skills. “The Right Stuff” challenges individuals to listen closely to a text for cue words that signal what action they need to take. “Are You Listening?” goes more deeply into what it means to be a good listener by teaching reflective listening – the ability to ask clarifying and prompting questions to get to the heart of the message being communicated in a conversation. In “I FeelWhenBecause,” participants learn how to give constructive feedback in the form of an “I” statement, thus taking ownership of their emotions and reactions. Participants further explore this idea of feedback in “Take Your Best Shot.” This activity allows participants to experience the three different types of feedback and to think about the effect the types of feedback they give could have on their mentees.

“Tree Problem Solver” teaches a method of problem solving based on asking a series of questions about the decision and reflecting on the answers. Through this communication exchange, mentees are able to talk through problems with their mentors in a way that allows them to practice both their communication skills and their problem-solving skills. Participants further explore consequences of communication in “Digital Interactions 101,” which deals with online communication between mentors, mentees and parents, and explores how to avoid conflicts that might arise due to certain types of online interactions, specifically in social-networking situations.

Having the proper tools to effectively communicate will help mentors navigate difficult situations that may occur in a mentoring relationship. These communication and problem-solving skills can also aide the mentor as he or she models and discusses communication skills for a mentee when that mentee is having a difficult time working through situations in his or her daily life.

REFERENCES:


COMMUNICATION HANDOUT:

Types of Communication

Verbal Communication:

Verbal communication involves language and words that are not necessarily oral or vocal. The three types of verbal communication include spoken, written and signed. Spoken and written communication are the most common of the three. Note that those who use sign languages are using verbal communication, speaking through their hands. They are not using ambiguous gesture or body language to convey meaning as they would be if they were using nonverbal communication.

Examples: Spoken word communication, instant messaging, letters or email, American Sign Language

“I” Statements:

An “I” Statement is one method by which a speaker clearly states what he is feeling because of a specific behavior, action or event and what action he would like taken to change the situation. The use of an “I” Statement allows the speaker to take ownership of his feelings without placing the blame for his emotions on the person he is communicating with. “I” Statements are set up with the following formula:

I feel ___ when you ____ because ____. What I need/want/would like is____.

Example: “I feel worried when you miss a match meeting because I care about you and I wonder if you are all right when you don’t show up. What I would like is for you to let me know ahead of time if you will miss a meeting so we can reschedule and so I don’t worry about what has happened to you if you aren’t where you said you would be.”

Nonverbal Communication:

Nonverbal communication can illuminate other layers of meaning to words in a conversation or can give a speaker insight into the emotional reactions of someone he or she is speaking to. Along with feedback and questions through verbal communication, nonverbal communication can indicate how well people are listening or how they are processing what is being communicated to them. Nonverbal communication also can intensify the meaning of words through gestures, such as hitting a table during an impassioned speech or hugging a friend while comforting them. An individual’s dress in a certain setting also communicates his or her attitude and is another
form of nonverbal communication. The setting of a conversation can also be a part of nonverbal communication. For example, what is communicated by the business person who calls someone into his or her office and remains seated behind a desk while the person summoned stays standing? The people involved more thoroughly understand communication exchanges when nonverbal communication combines with verbal communication to give a more concrete meaning to words that may have multiple interpretations based on the backgrounds of those involved in the exchange.

**Examples:** Facial expression and body language, gesture, eye movements, touch, clothing or other expressions of personality and style, communication setting

**Active Listening:**

In active listening skills, the listener uses questions to clarify that he or she understands the speaker correctly. The listener uses paraphrasing to summarize the speaker’s message. He or she asks if the summarization reflects a clear understanding of what the speaker is attempting to communicate. Active listeners seek to take in both the verbal and nonverbal messages the speaker is sending to better comprehend the full message at hand. By using active listening skills, a listener communicates to the speaker that the message is important enough to listen carefully to and to make every attempt to clearly understand.

**Examples:** Asking clarifying questions, restating and summarizing what the speaker has said and asking the speaker if you are interpreting the message correctly

**Reflective Listening:**

Reflective listening is one approach to active listening. With reflective listening, the listener still summarizes the feelings or statements made by the speaker to affirm that she is paying close attention. The listener may use the speaker’s own words to summarize the conversation to make sure she heard properly before responding to what was said. The reflective listener is more concerned with the feelings being shared than they are the facts or information that is being conveyed. Reflective listening is empathetic.

**Examples:**

“You seem frustrated about what happened today.”

“You look really unhappy today. Did something happen?”

“It’s nice to know that your friend appreciated what you did for her.”

“I feel happy when you want to try something new because I enjoy learning with you and it encourages me to learn, too. What I want is to try to plan to do something new for both of us at least every month.”
COMMUNICATION HANDOUT:

*Four Steps to Good Listening*

1. **Hear and listen to the message.**
   
   Hearing is only part of the listening process. It happens naturally. It is nonselective and involuntary. You must choose to actually listen. Listening is voluntary and selective.

   We hear sounds constantly without really listening to them. Usually, we only listen to and remember what is important, interesting or unusual. Good listeners have learned to pay attention and select the most important thing on which to focus.

   Try this exercise: Sit quietly in a crowded place such as a mall or restaurant. Make a conscious effort to listen to everything going on around you. You will be surprised at how much you do not ordinarily absorb. You can also try this exercise with your mentee.

2. **Interpret the message.**

   Truly listening allows a person to form an understanding of the speaker’s meaning through words, tone of voice, and nonverbal cues and filters that attach personal meaning to information that the speaker presents.

   Words and tone of voice give important clues. A listener will interpret a simple statement such as “I like your new outfit” in various ways depending on the speaker’s tone and on which word she emphasizes. What the speaker does not say can also be significant. For example, think about how you would interpret the statement, “Oh, I see you bought new clothes.” What might you add to clarify the meaning of this statement?

   Nonverbal cues include gestures, expressions, eye movements or posture. Parents often say, “I can tell when my kids are lying to me,” because they can read the nonverbal cues their children are projecting when they lie. Nonverbal cues can also tell us when someone is not paying attention to what we are saying, is uncomfortable with our comments or disagrees with us.

   Filters can be very personal and vary for each individual. They include memories, perceptions, biases, attitudes, expectations, emotions and feelings, experiences, values, knowledge and intelligence, language and age. Our filters shape all that we see and hear, which can change our interpretation of the information from the speaker’s original intent.

3. **Evaluate the message.**

   Although not always necessary, evaluation proves especially helpful when the speaker is trying to persuade. Form your own opinion based on all available information. You may need to ask questions and analyze the evidence the speaker presents. Avoid jumping to conclusions and always consider the reliability of the source. Is the speaker telling you something she read in a tabloid? Did the information come from a scientific study or is the story anecdotal and came from a friend of a friend?

4. **Respond to the message.**

   Constructive responses are critical to clear communication. Providing either verbal or nonverbal feedback about what you heard and how you interpreted it is important. Good listeners accept the responsibility of providing feedback to the speaker to complete the communication process. Feedback tells the speaker that the listener heard, understood and evaluated the message.
ACTIVITY:

Tower of Questions

DESCRIPTION:
During this activity, participants use a block tower game with questions printed on the blocks to get to know one another.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
▷ Learn about others and the similarities and differences they may have with others.
▷ Build relationships with strangers by sharing information in a friendly, fun atmosphere.

MATERIALS:
- One block tower game (such as Jenga) per group of 2-4 participants
- One table per group or comparable set-up
- Fine-point permanent marker
- “Tower of Questions” handout

TIME:
15–60 minutes, depending on facilitator

AUDIENCE:
Adult or peer mentors

SETTING:
A room with chairs and sturdy tables where people can converse easily and move from table to table

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions.
2. Gather the materials you will need for the activity.
3. Set up the room so you have one table per tower with enough chairs for the number of participants in each of your groups.
4. If participants must pre-register, facilitators may want to assign groups ahead of time and place participants in groups with people they do not know well.
5. With the fine-point marker, prepare the blocks by writing a general information question on each block. Use questions from the “Tower of Questions” handout. If you choose to write your own questions, make sure they are not too personal or potentially embarrassing.

During the activity:
1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   Welcome to today’s training. Before we begin, we’re going to play an icebreaker game to get to know one another a bit. You probably noticed there’s a stack of blocks on each table. Each block in the stack has a question on it. To play, draw a block out of the stack (but not off the top) and read the question aloud to one person in the group. Once the person answers your question, place the block on the top of the tower and let the next person take his or her turn. Does this make sense to everyone? Any questions?

2. Pause to answer any questions participants may have. Then group the participants around the tables. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   If any of the questions you draw are ones you are uncomfortable answering, simply say “pass” and the asker should direct the question to another member of the group. If no one in the group is comfortable answering the question, place it on the top of the pile and draw another question. If the tower falls, follow these rules: First, when one tower falls, every one of
you must immediately stop what you’re doing. Don’t finish answering questions or drawing blocks. After that, every group moves to a different table and picks up where the previous group left off. The group that comes to the collapsed tower should turn the blocks over so the questions are face down and rebuild the tower to continue playing. Does this make sense to everyone? All right, you have 15 minutes to play.

Facilitator’s note: The time may vary according to the needs of the training, but a 15-minute minimum gives all players time to answer and ask at least one question.

3. After all groups are done playing, have the players put the blocks back in their containers.

PROCESSING:

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

Discussion questions:

▶ Did anyone learn anything unexpected about a member of the group?
▶ Did you feel comfortable sharing your answers?
▶ What made the questions comfortable or uncomfortable to answer?
▶ Was it hard not to share information when it wasn’t your turn?

Key points:

▶ Relationships are tricky. You need to handle the getting-to-know-you phase delicately. One wrong move and the relationship can become shaky.
▶ Creating a trusting and pressure-free environment allows rebuilding when something in the relationship goes wrong.
Tower of Questions Handout:

Tower of Questions

1. What is your favorite vacation spot? Why?
2. How many siblings do you have?
3. What is or was your favorite subject in school? Why?
4. Do you say "pop" or "soda"?
5. What is your favorite childhood memory?
6. What animal would you be for a day, and why?
7. What is your favorite food, and why?
8. If you were a color, what one would you be?
9. What is your favorite sport or game?
10. What is your favorite book, and what is it about?
11. What living or dead celebrity would you like to meet? Why?
12. What is your favorite piece of furniture?
13. Do you have any pets? If not, do you want any?
14. Which is better, pens or pencils? Why?
15. Do you prefer to type or handwrite letters or papers?
16. Who is your favorite television or movie character? Why?
17. What is your favorite band?
18. Do you sing in the shower?
19. Have you ever been to a farm?
20. Have you ever been to a big city?
21. Have you ever been on an airplane?
22. What is your favorite movie?
23. Name a movie you would never see a second time.
24. Do you have a favorite candy?
25. What is your favorite plant?
26. What was your favorite album in high school?
27. What is your favorite board or card game?
28. What is your favorite soft drink?
29. What is your favorite holiday?
30. Do you have a hero? Who is it? Why?
31. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
32. Have you ever driven or rode on a tractor?
33. What is your favorite season? Why?
34. Do you have a favorite sport team? What is their mascot?
35. If you could have any profession in the world, what would it be?
36. Where is one place that you have always wanted to visit?
37. Can you speak a language other than English? If not, which would you choose to speak?
38. If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be?
39. What is your favorite color, and if that color had an odor, what would it smell like to you?
40. If someone gave you $1,000, how would you spend it?
41. If you could have an endless supply of any food, what would it be?
42. What is one goal you would like to accomplish in your lifetime?
43. If a movie was made about your life, what actor would you want to play you?
44. If you were an ice cream flavor, what would you be, and why?
45. What’s the weirdest thing you have ever eaten?
46. If you could be anyone else in the world, who would you be?
47. What is your favorite cartoon character, and why?
48. Share a quirky or interesting habit of yours.
49. Name one of your favorite things about someone in your family.
50. Use three words to describe yourself.
51. What is your favorite bumper sticker slogan?
52. Who do you think is the worst actor in Hollywood?
53. What is your most hated chore?
54. Name two things you consider yourself to be really bad at.
55. Share something that not many people know about you.
ACTIVITY:

Untangled

DESCRIPTION:
In this activity, participants will work as a team to unknot a large rope without letting go of the rope, fostering teamwork and communication skills.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Demonstrate creative problem solving skills.
- Learn about teamwork.
- Practice listening skills.

MATERIALS:
- 15-foot to 30-foot marine rope with knots 1 to 2 feet apart, one knot per participant (spacing can be adjusted for larger or smaller groups)
- Stopwatch (optional, for use with variations)

TIME:
15–30 minutes

SETTING:
An open space to move bodies around without the threat of injury

AUDIENCE:
Adult or peer mentors. This activity works well with groups of mentors or potential mentors familiar with one another, and specifically peer mentors.

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions.
2. Gather the materials you will need for the activity.
3. Prepare the rope by tying knots in it every 1 to 2 feet, one knot per participant.
4. Clear the activity space of obstacles and tripping hazards.

During the activity:
1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   We’re going to do a team-building icebreaker together. The idea is simple; unknot this long rope. There is a catch, however. Each person has to grab the rope close to a knot but not the knot itself. While trying to untie the knots in the rope, no one can let go of the rope. You have to work as a team in order to untie the knot. How you go about this is entirely up to you.

   Okay, begin!

   While you are working together to untie the rope, remember to respect one another. Respect each other’s bodies and ideas. If someone can’t move in a way you think he or she should, find another way to accomplish the same goal. That’s part of respecting each other. Now, remember that you can’t let go of the rope. Are you ready? Any questions?

   Pause to answer any questions participants may have.

   Okay, begin!

2. Have each participant find a space on either side of the rope and take hold of it. Remind them not to start until you have finished giving directions. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   While you are working together to untie the rope, remember to respect one another. Respect each other’s bodies and ideas. If someone can’t move in a way you think he or she should, find another way to accomplish the same goal. That’s part of respecting each other. Now, remember that you can’t let go of the rope. Are you ready? Any questions?

   Pause to answer any questions participants may have.

   Okay, begin!

3. Allow participants to work together without coaching or making suggestions. For reference during the discussion, take notes on how the team works together, what they try, and what does and doesn’t work.

4. Once the knots are all untied, facilitate a discussion.
PROCESSING:

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

Discussion questions:
- Was this activity difficult? Why or why not?
- What did you try that worked well?
- What did you try that did not work well?
- How did you feel when everyone was shouting out directions?
- Did you have any conflicting ideas with another group member?
- How did you resolve these issues?
- Did anyone assume the role of the leader?
- What qualities does a good leader have?
- Do you think you could have done this activity without talking to your teammates?
- How did you feel when you got your knot untied?

Key points:
- To communicate effectively, one must practice patience.
- Talking through difficult problems together can be an effective way to discover new ideas.
- Sometimes conflicting ideas can inspire new solutions.
- Compromise is a skill that takes time and patience to cultivate. Sometimes people have to let go of their own ideas or adapt them to do what helps the team best achieve its goals.
- To be a positive and effective mentor, you need to be a good listener able to accept the opinions of your mentee.

VARIATIONS:

Note: You can best use these variations after you initially try out the activity in its original form.
- Use a stopwatch to time how fast the group can untie themselves. Have them re-knot the rope and try the activity again to see if they can beat their own time. This could also become a challenge for subsequent activities or trainings with the same group. Find out if the team members can beat their own record.
- Set a time limit for untying the knot.
- Set up a few ropes and have a race to see which group can untie the rope the fastest.

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- Set a time limit for untying the knot.
- Set up a few ropes and have a race to see which group can untie the rope the fastest.
ACTIVITY:

**Draw Me for Your Leader**

**DESCRIPTION:**
This exercise fosters awareness of personal perceptions and the potential influence of life experiences and language use and misuse on effective communication.

**OBJECTIVES:**
The participants will:
- Identify barriers to effective communication based on personal perceptions.

**MATERIALS:**
- Paper for each participant
- Pencil or pen for each participant

**TIME:**
10-15 minutes

**SETTING:**
Accommodations for each participant to sit with a surface for writing

**AUDIENCE:**
Adult and peer mentors

**PROCEDURE:**

**Before the activity:**
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions.
2. Gather paper and writing utensils (one for each per participant).
3. On a flip chart, draw a larger version of the alien shown on the last page of this activity.
4. Place the larger version of the alien drawing in the room visible to each participant and cover or flip the drawing over. Until the exercise is completed, the alien drawing should remain unseen by participants.

**During the activity:**
1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   *During this activity, we’ll begin a conversation about perception or our point of view. We each have our own way of experiencing life. That experience shapes the way we see the world. Often, we interpret experiences and relationships based upon our own perceptions. Effective communication with your mentee largely depends on how well you move beyond your perceptions to acknowledge and respect your mentee’s perceptions. Consider an experience you had when you felt undervalued, frustrated or unheard because someone refused to move beyond his or her own perceptions. Now, try to envision an experience when you felt someone in your life really “got you.” They respected you and understood what you were going through. We can move beyond our personal perceptions to complete understanding by fostering active and effective communication skills.*

2. Pass out the paper and writing instruments to each participant.
3. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   *Now I am going to describe a drawing of an alien that I have on a piece of paper in front of me. Without seeing the drawing, draw the alien I describe. You may not ask questions or talk to each other.*
   - The alien has a round head.
• The alien has two triangular shaped, stacked ears sticking out on each side of its head.
• The alien has two shaded oval eyes near the top of its head.
• There is a large triangular nose in between the eyes pointing downward.
• The alien has a half-oval shaped mouth.
• The alien had two curly antennae on top of its head.
• The alien has a rectangular body.
• The alien has three arms on each side of its body. The middle arms are longer than the top and bottom arms.
• Each arm has a circular wrist on the end of it.
• Each arm has two feelers extending from the wrist.
• There is a small square object being held between each pair of feelers.
• There is one oval-shaped foot on each side of the alien’s body. The left foot has three toes shaped like circles and the right foot has four toes shaped like circles.

4. After all participants are finished, instruct everyone to display their aliens to the other participants. Note any similarities or differences.

5. Share the larger version of the alien created by the facilitator.

PROCESSING:

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

Discussion questions:

▷ Why do some of the aliens look different?
▷ Interpretation: Everyone has his or her own view on life and things based on their life experiences.
▷ What could we have done differently so that your drawings and mine would have looked more alike?
▷ What would have been the advantages of allowing questions to be asked?
▷ How might this activity be similar to your efforts to communicate with your mentee?
Key points:

› Being understanding, respectful and tolerant of the perceptions of others is important.

› Two-way communication helps to ensure both parties understand. When we don’t allow time for questions and checking in, misunderstandings are common.

› Personal perceptions can influence who we respond to, what we respond to and how we respond.

› A word can have a different meaning to two different people. When I said that the feelers were holding a small square object, I was describing my perception of the object. Some of you have a different perception of what small is. Similarly, your mentee will perceive things differently. Strong communication requires checking in for clarification.

› Many disagreements are rooted in miscommunication or misunderstandings. This is particularly true when communication occurs across generations. When working with your mentee, be sure to check in to see that things truly are as you interpret them.

› Previous life experiences and the use of nonverbal and verbal language greatly affect successful communication.

VARIATIONS:

Use this activity with mentors and mentees together in a group training or team-building session. Give one member of each match the alien picture or another picture and have him or her describe it for the other person.

Adapted with permission from Building Dynamic Groups by The Ohio State University, 2009.
ACTIVITY:

Unseen Artists

DESCRIPTION:
In this fun and interactive activity, participants sit back to back with a partner. One partner uses a variety of craft supplies to create an object and then provides directions for his partner with the goal of having the partner create an identical object. Participants explore a variety of communication skills.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Be able to define and explain the importance of active listening.
- Identify the importance of giving clear directions.
- Understand the importance of feedback and nonverbal communication.
- Further develop their communication skills.

MATERIALS:
- Small container of play dough for each participant
- Pipe cleaners, Popsicle sticks, paper clips or other items that could be used to build an item (Each participant needs the same amount of each of these building supplies. The amount will vary depending on the item.)

TIME:
30–45 minutes, including discussion

SETTING:
Room with seating that can be turned back to back

AUDIENCE:
Adult and peer mentors

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the “Communication” module and review the “Types of Communication” handout. Pay close attention to the sections on listening, active listening, feedback and nonverbal communication.
2. Review the activity directions.
3. Gather the materials you will need for the activity.
4. Set up the room so that pairs can sit back to back.
5. Have building materials grouped together for each participant.

During the activity:
1. Read or paraphrase the following:

   In this activity, we’re going to spend time exploring some important parts of communication. After we re-arrange our chairs, I’ll hand you each a set of building supplies. Don’t build anything until I give you the next set of instructions.

2. Have the participants sit in back-to-back pairs so they cannot see each other. Give each person a container of play dough and the other building supplies. Each pair needs to have the same amount of identical building supplies. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   You each have building materials. Using the building materials, one partner in each group is going to build an object and not show it to his or her partner. After about 5 minutes of construction time, the builders will describe their objects to their partners. Their partners will attempt to replicate the buildings. The listening partner is not allowed to turn around to see the object being described and not allowed to ask questions to clarify directions. The partner giving directions is not allowed to turn around to see how the listening partner is doing. Does anyone have any questions?

   Pause to answer any questions participants may have. Then give the building partners 5 minutes to create their objects. Facilitators may want to have riddles, brainteasers, trivia or short games
on hand so that the listening group is not sitting in silence for the 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, or earlier if all the builders have finished their objects, tell the builders to begin describing their objects to the listeners. The listeners will begin building the objects based on instructions from the builders. The person receiving directions is not allowed to ask questions, and the person giving directions needs to keep his or her back turned.

3. When listeners complete the objects they created according to the builders’ instructions, have partners show one another their objects. Let participants compare and contrast the differences of each object. Ask if anyone in the group would like to show the other participants what they began with and what the listening partner created.

4. Have the participants switch roles. The person who was listening will now build and instruct while the person who was building and instructing first must now listen. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

_Those of you who were listening before will now get to build your own objects that you will get to describe to your partners. We’re going to change the directions a little bit, though. Builders and listeners still have to sit back to back, but the listener can ask questions this time around. Does anyone have any questions?_

5. Answer any questions that may come up.

6. Give the former listeners who are now builders approximately 5 minutes to build a different object.

7. Once the builders complete the objects, they will give directions to their listening partners. Listening partners may ask clarifying questions this time. However, the partners still need to keep their backs turned.

8. Once the listeners complete what the builders instruct them to make, partners should compare and contrast the two objects. Once all groups have finished, ask if any pairs would like to share their objects.

**PROCESSING:**

Guide the whole group through a discussion, using the questions and key points listed in the following section as a guide.

**Discussion questions:**

- What do you think is the purpose of this activity?
- What were some things that made this task difficult?
- What could have made it easier?
- What did you feel while doing this task? Why?
How similar were your sculptures during your first try? Was there a difference between the first time and the second time? What changed between the two trials?

Was it easier with or without questions being asked? Why?

Was it easier for you to give directions or receive directions?

Did you wonder if your partner was listening? How could you have known if they were listening?

When your partner was able to give feedback about the clarity of your questions, did you change how you gave directions? Why or why not?

Do you usually follow directions given to you? Why or why not?

Do people listen to you when you give directions?

Why is it important to be able to listen to others and to know how to follow directions given to you?

What is the difference between hearing something or someone and listening to something or someone?

Was it difficult to interpret directions without being able to see your partner? Why?

What is nonverbal communication? How is it important to communication?

How does this activity make you listen?

How does this activity help you understand listening skills?

**Key points:**

- Active listening is an important part of communication. Questions allow for a person to gain further insight when someone is confused or frustrated in a conversation.
- Nonverbal communication can illuminate other layers of meaning to words in a conversation or can give a speaker insight into the emotional reactions of someone he or she is speaking to.
- Questions, feedback on the clarity of directions and nonverbal communication allow someone to gauge how well you are listening when they are talking.
- Communicate clearly and verify the interpretation of your words so that mentees and their parents or guardians know what to expect during the mentoring relationship, from setting boundaries to arranging outings with your mentee.
- Because of differences in experiences, people interpret words differently. The speaker’s meaning may not match the listener’s interpretation. By speaking as clearly as possible and clarifying intent when needed, we move from personal meaning to shared meaning, exposing people to more accurate information so they can make better decisions.
- When we are respectful and thoughtful in how we speak and listen, we open up a way for everyone to add to the discussion at hand.
- Both the mentor and the mentee should work together to make sure they understand one another when communicating.

**VARIATIONS:**

- Have participants give directions using predrawn pictures or having participants draw their own pictures.
- Modify the activity to teach mentees about the importance of communicating clearly with their mentors.
- Use the following ideas to make the activity more challenging for participants:
  - Participants describe the object using shapes, not representations of the actual item. (For example, the participant will say, “build a circle with sticks” instead of “make a human stick figure.”)
  - Participants cannot describe the object using shapes. (For example, the participant will say, “connect one end of a pipe cleaner to its opposite end” instead of “make a circle with the pipe cleaner.”)
ACTIVITY:

Let Your Fingers Do the Talking

DESCRIPTION:
This activity will provide participants an opportunity to creatively communicate what a picture looks like without talking. Participants will consider how we all interpret things differently and how we rely on verbal communication and the use of questions for clarification.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Learn the importance of nonverbal communication.
- Develop communication skills and teamwork.
- Understand the importance of nonverbal cues their mentees give and the importance of nonverbal cues they give to their mentees.
- Learn how differences in how people interpret signals can change the meaning of the message sent.

MATERIALS:
- Flip chart paper
- Tape
- Markers (one per each team of participants)
- “Let Your Fingers Do the Talking” handout
- Small prizes such as candy, gum, stickers or pens (optional)

TIME:
30–40 minutes

SETTING:
Room large enough for participants to form lines perpendicular to the wall with space to hang flip chart sheets

AUDIENCE:
Adult and peer mentors

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions.
2. Post sheets of flip chart paper on the wall, one per team of 5 to 7 people. Ideally, each sheet of paper should be on a different wall. Ensure you have enough room for each team to form a single-file line, lining up in front of each flip chart sheet, perpendicular to the wall.
3. Cut out pictures from the “Let Your Fingers Do the Talking” handout.
4. If possible, inform participants in advance that this activity involves physical contact in case someone finds being touched uncomfortable.

During the activity:
1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   For this activity, we’ll use a game to introduce the importance of developing strong communication skills. You must listen carefully to the instructions and focus on the message your teammates will be sending you during the game. Please do not talk until the end of this activity.

2. Divide participants into teams of 5 to 7 people. Have each team form a single-file line, lining up in front of each flip chart sheet, perpendicular to the wall. If the group is small, you may have only one line. However, the longer the line, the more challenging the activity will be. Having teams will allow for competition.
3. Provide the person in the line closest to the flip chart sheet with a marker.
4. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   I will show the person farthest from the flip chart in each line a picture. Once that person has looked at the picture, he will return to the line and draw the picture with his finger on the back of the next person in line. The game works like telephone, with each person passing the message to the next by drawing on the back of the next person. Once the person closest to the flip
chart in line has had the picture drawn on her back, she will then draw what she believes the picture to be on the paper. Are there any questions?

5. Pause to answer any questions participants may have. Then continue to read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   **Would the last person from each line come over to me and see the first picture?**

6. Show the picture to the last person in each line. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   **Now you may begin drawing. Remember, do not talk.**

7. The last person in each line will begin drawing with his finger on the back of the next person and so on until the first person in line draws on the flip chart sheet what the person before her has drawn on her back. After all of the participants who were first in line have completed the drawings, the facilitator will show everyone the original pictures and pick the team that has drawn the picture closest to what they were originally shown as the winner. If desired, hand out prizes.

8. Wrap up by reading aloud or paraphrasing the following:

   **When we communicate, we interpret more than the literal meaning of the words. We interpret the message sent to us through our own personal lens. That lens consists of our experiences and the culture we grew up in. Different experiences give people different interpretations of words and actions. Different cultures may also use words in different ways. Just think of all the different ways someone can interpret a simple word such as “brother.” If you’re unfamiliar with just one of these interpretations, you could misunderstand what someone tells you. Just as in our game, when the person drawing can’t erase something he’s drawn, a person speaking can’t take back what he’s said. This illustrates the importance of communicating as clearly as possible.**

**PROCESSING:**

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

**Discussion questions:**

- Why was the picture the last person in line drew different from the one I showed the first person in line?
Why do you think it’s important to be aware and interpret nonverbal cues?

How does this activity help you understand communication as a whole?

What are nonverbal cues useful for?

Was this exercise easy or hard?

What rules got in the way of your success?

What key components of healthy communication are we missing from this activity?

Some of you may have felt frustrated when your drawing was not perceived correctly. Does this ever happen in conversations, where two people perceive the conversations differently?

Key points:

Mentor and mentee may find communication difficult when both individuals neglect to check in and reflect to make sure the other person is on the same page. The mentee and mentor should work together to make sure they understand one another.

Everyone interprets things differently. We should ask questions for clarification.

Nonverbal cues tell us the story behind the story. Body language, tone of voice, gestures and other clues can give the listener a better idea of how he or she needs to interpret what the speaker is saying.

Communication between a mentor and mentee can be difficult; however, understanding verbal and nonverbal cues makes it easier for both to understand the other’s feelings.

Every culture, generation and profession has its own jargon that can be misinterpreted by others. Your mentees may use a word that has multiple meanings. When in doubt, ask. In many cases, you should ask, even if you think you understand.

Differences in culture and environment can cause barriers to verbal communication. The ability to interpret someone’s nonverbal cues improves your understanding of the speaker’s words.

VARIATIONS:

The game may also be played multiple times with teams getting points for the drawings that most closely resemble the original images they were shown. Teams play until one of them earns a set number of points.

Teams may also race to see who can communicate the message most clearly and most quickly.

If space or time is an issue, you can do a similar activity by playing the game of telephone. Read or whisper a phrase to the last participant. Have the story travel from person to person until the first person gets it and can share it aloud.
Let Your Fingers Do the Talking

- Ice cream
- Fish
- House
- Stop sign
- Pumpkin
- Flower
ACTIVITY:

Face Time

DESCRIPTION:
This activity will allow participants to explore the impact of nonverbal cues through a series of role-play scenarios. It demonstrates how cues can agree with or contradict a speaker’s words and the impact that has on the communication exchange.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Identify a variety of nonverbal cues.
- Understand the importance of the cues they are getting from their mentees.
- Understand the importance of the cues they are sending to their mentees.

MATERIALS:
- “Nonverbal Communication Menu” handout (one per participant)
- “Interpretation Chart” handout (one per participant)
- “Face Time Scenario Cards” handout
- Writing utensils (one per participant)

TIME:
40–60 minutes

SETTING:
Area with seating that contains a surface for writing and with room enough for participants to work in pairs and move around while acting out scenarios

AUDIENCE:
Adult and peer mentors

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review these activity directions and the background information at the beginning of the Communication module, paying close attention to the sections on nonverbal communication.
2. Arrange the training room in such a way that participants can work in pairs without being so close as to distract one another.
3. Print one copy of the “Interpretation Chart” handout and one copy of the “Nonverbal Communication Menu” handout for each participant.
4. Place writing utensils on the tables.
5. Print out one “Face Time Scenario Cards” handout and cut out each individual scenario card.

During the activity:
6. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   Nonverbal cues are an excellent way to bring clarity to what someone is saying. Whether you realize it or not, we use them naturally and often when we talk to others every day. They are the physical expressions we use when we communicate, from raising an eyebrow in disbelief to high-fiving a friend when she tells us of an accomplishment. Differences in culture or environment can cause barriers to verbal communication. The ability to interpret someone’s nonverbal cues is helpful when trying to understand another’s words. Not all cultures use the same nonverbal cues. We need to keep an open mind to different ideas to make sure we correctly interpret someone else’s words. In the first part of this activity, we are going to discuss the different types of nonverbal cues.

7. Give each participant one copy of the “Nonverbal Communication Menu” handout and continue by reading aloud or paraphrasing the following:

   This handout lists seven different types of nonverbal communication. I’m going to read the definition of each type and I would like you to raise your hand
if you can give an example of that type of nonverbal communication. Does anyone have any questions?

8. Pause to answer any questions participants may have. Then, using the handout as a guide, define each type of nonverbal communication and have a volunteer give an example of each of the types, possibly demonstrating his or her example if time allows. Then, continue with the activity by reading aloud or paraphrasing the following:

Now that we have a good idea of the different types of nonverbal communication, we are going to move on to an activity that will allow you to practice interpreting nonverbal communication. For this activity, you will need a partner. As you pair up, I will give each of you a scenario card and the Interpretation Chart. Do not show your card to your partner. Once you are in pairs and everyone has a scenario card, I will give you more detailed instructions.

9. If there are an odd number of participants in the training, one group may have three members. Once everyone is partnered, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The first partner will read her scenario card silently and then act it out for her partner. Follow the instructions on the card for actions and words as closely as possible. The partner who is not acting should use the Interpretation Chart to record what he observes. Once you have finished with that scenario, the other partner should act out the scenario on his card while the previous actor should record her observations. After you have both finished, use your extra time to discuss what you observed. You will have 15 minutes to complete both scenarios.

PROCESSING:
Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

Discussion questions:
- Why do you think we did this activity?
- Why is it important to be aware of and interpret nonverbal cues?
- How does this activity help you understand communication as a whole?
- What are nonverbal cues useful for?
- What emotions can you see in facial expressions?
- What were some things that made this activity difficult?
- What are some things that people do with their hands?
How do people show nonverbal cues with their body?
What nonverbal skills contribute to understanding between the speaker and listener?
What nonverbal behaviors do you currently use that may prevent understanding?
How could you interpret a scenario differently if one of the nonverbal cues were different?

Key points:
- One UCLA study indicates that up to 93 percent of communication is determined by nonverbal cues. The study found that only 7 percent of the message we convey comes from the actual words we speak, while we communicate 38 percent by tone of voice and the remaining 55 percent by body language.
- Being aware of nonverbal communication can help improve understanding during conversations. Become aware of nonverbal communication by observing others in a variety of settings to discover how they interact with other people based on the situation.
- Although you need to pay attention to nonverbal cues, remember not to take any single action, word, expression or gesture in isolation.
- Nonverbal communication can illuminate multiple layers of meaning to words in a conversation. Through nonverbal communication, a speaker receives insight into the emotional reactions of the listener. In addition, questions, feedback and nonverbal communication allow you to gauge how well other people in the conversation are listening when they are talking.
- Communicating clearly is important. Be aware of how mentees and their parents or guardians interpret your nonverbal cues so that you know what you are communicating and know what to expect during the mentoring relationship, from setting boundaries to arranging outings with your mentees.
- Nonverbal cues tell us the story behind the story. Learning to recognize nonverbal cues from others helps us to find clarity in our discussions.
- Becoming aware of nonverbal cues that you may do unconsciously will help you to relate better with your mentee and others as well.
- Nonverbal cues allow others to clarify what they mean, especially when differences in culture or background exist. They can help to bridge the language barrier gap.
- When communication is limited to verbal communication or limited nonverbal communication such as texting, Facebook messages or emails, interpreting the message becomes more difficult, increasing the chance of a misunderstanding. Remember, the more important the message, the more important the way you communicate that message becomes.
- Many times what we say may not have as much effect on someone’s interpretation of our meaning as the way we say it. Our nonverbal cues, many of which we may not be aware of, demonstrate what we’re expressing to others.
Communication between a mentor and mentee can be difficult; however, recognizing nonverbal cues can make understanding between mentoring partners easier.

**VARIATIONS:**

Act out scenarios in groups instead of pairs if you have a small group or are short on time.

Mentors and mentees could go through this activity together as pairs.

If you have additional time and participants are interested in continuing the activity, you can add the following steps:

After both participants have had an opportunity to perform their scenarios and discuss their observations, hand out a blank sheet of paper to each participant. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

*Now that you have had an opportunity to perform and analyze the completed scenario cards, take your blank sheet of paper and the Nonverbal Communication Menu and use them to create a new scenario together to perform for the group. Each of you can make up his or her own scenario. At the top of the blank sheet of paper, write a verbal message or write “no verbal message.” List the headings from the Nonverbal Communication Menu (facial expression, gesture, paralinguistics, body language and posture, proxemics, eyes and physical touch. Fill in the headings taken from the Nonverbal Communication Menu that relate to your scenario. Your scenario can be any combination from the menu. Be creative but appropriate. Have fun exploring nonverbal cues. I will give you 5 to 10 minutes to write your scenario.*

After the members of each pair has written a scenario and acted it out, ask volunteers to perform their scenarios to the group. Have the audience use the “Interpretation Chart” handout for each group to discuss the nonverbal cues to determine what the scenario is expressing. Encourage participants to look for subtle variances in communication. Although some of the completed scenarios are obvious, most differences are not.
Nonverbal Communication Menu

Nonverbal details reveal what we are thinking and affect how we relate to others. Many times, we use multiple nonverbal cues to react to what we are experiencing. Seven types of nonverbal communication appear below:

**FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:**
Facial expressions account for the majority of nonverbal cues. Cultures throughout the world use similar facial expressions to communicate emotions, so this type of nonverbal cue can be very helpful in any setting where a language difference impedes verbal communication. The facial expressions of a speaker often reveal emotions such as joy, sadness, fear and anger. We often interpret a speaker’s meaning based on his facial expressions.

**GESTURES:**
We make gestures with the hands, often unconsciously. Gestures bring clarity to communication by giving additional information to the listener about the speaker’s intended meaning. While some gestures seem to be universal, such as pointing to an object or counting with fingers, other gestures are influenced by a speaker’s culture. Awareness of different cultural norms proves helpful in interpreting gestures.

**PARALINGUISTICS:**
Paralinguistics is the study of paralanguage. Paralanguage involves the qualities in a speaker’s voice that express meaning. This includes the tone of voice, volume, inflection and pitch. A speaker could say the same words using two different tones resulting in a different underlying meaning each time. For example, the simple phrase “nice jacket” can be sincere or sarcastic based on the paralinguistic characteristics of the speaker’s voice. Emotions, culture, situations, settings and physical conditions related to the speaker all influence how paralanguage affects communication.

**BODY LANGUAGE AND POSTURE:**
Most people think of body language as someone tapping their foot impatiently or crossing their arms over their chest in a defensive posture. Body language can be more subtle, however, and even these supposedly easy-to-interpret signs hold multiple layers of meaning. When interpreting body language, a listener needs to look beyond the obvious to interpret other nonverbal cues that the speaker communicates. For example, crossing the arms and tapping the foot may mean a person is cold, anxious or upset. Other nonverbal cues the speaker uses can help a listener more accurately interpret a speaker’s feeling.

**PROXEMICS:**
Proxemics is the study of the spatial boundaries people have when relating to each other. Such a spatial boundary is commonly called a “personal space bubble.” The physical distance people keep from each other reveals the boundaries they have with each other. Personal distance can be influenced by cultural norms pertaining to personal space, the communication situation taking place and the level of familiarity the people communicating have with one another. Observing the proximity of speakers and listeners to one another can be useful in determining how comfortable someone is in a given situation. Knowing how someone else feels about his personal space can help you know how to communicate comfortably with him.

**EYES:**
Eyes are an important communication tool. While activities such as blinking and staring may be part of the body’s normal function, they act as important nonverbal cues, revealing the interest the listener or speaker has in a conversation. Interpreting a person’s gaze can give clues as to how he is feeling about a conversation, revealing excitement, happiness, disinterest or hostility.

**PHYSICAL TOUCH:**
Touching the top of the hand or shoulder while listening conveys empathy and familiarity to the speaker. Hugging is another form of physical touch. The acceptability of touch varies widely by culture. While mentors should consider all nonverbal communication in the mentoring relationship, they need to be very careful about the use of touch in their interactions with their mentees.
Using the Nonverbal Communication Menu, make notes about the nonverbal cues you observe your partner using during your scenario.

**Card number: _____**

1. Facial expressions
2. Gestures
3. Paralinguistics
4. Body language and posture
5. Proxemics
6. Eyes
7. Physical Touch

Describe your interpretation of the scenario.

What was the person feeling?

Were you able to tell if your partner’s nonverbal message matched his or her verbal message?

Using the Nonverbal Communication Menu, make notes about the nonverbal cues you observe your partner using during your scenario.

**Card number: _____**

1. Facial expressions
2. Gestures
3. Paralinguistics
4. Body language and posture
5. Proxemics
6. Eyes
7. Physical Touch

Describe your interpretation of the scenario.

What was the person feeling?

Were you able to tell if your partner’s nonverbal message matched his or her verbal message?
## Face Time Scenario Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CARD #1</th>
<th>CARD #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I got a prize in class today.”</td>
<td>No verbal message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial Expression: Blank</td>
<td>Facial Expression: Smiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesture: None</td>
<td>Gesture: Thumbs up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistics: Monotone</td>
<td>Paralinguistics: Whistling or humming happily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body language and Posture: Arms crossed, stiff</td>
<td>Body Language and Posture: Standing tall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxemics: Several feet away</td>
<td>Proxemics: About an arm’s length away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes: Blank stare</td>
<td>Eyes: Friendly brief eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Touch: None</td>
<td>Physical Touch: None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CARD #3</th>
<th>CARD #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Mom, Can we have pizza for dinner tonight?”</td>
<td>“Dad, my car has a flat tire, and I’m gonna be late for school!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial Expression: Hopeful, smiling</td>
<td>Facial Expression: Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesture: Hands clasped in front of you</td>
<td>Gesture: Fidgeting with shirt hem or pants pockets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistics: Cheerful, happy tone</td>
<td>Paralinguistics: Loud, words are rushed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Language and Posture: Leaning forward slightly with good posture</td>
<td>Body Language and Posture: Tense and stiff, shifting weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxemics: Very close</td>
<td>Proxemics: Several feet away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes: Direct eye contact</td>
<td>Eyes: Looking around without really focusing on any one thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Touch: Touch Mom’s shoulder gently</td>
<td>Physical Touch: None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CARD #5

*No verbal message*

- **Facial Expression:** Sad
- **Gesture:** Hands hanging limp to the sides
- **Paralinguistics:** None
- **Body Language and Posture:** Shoulders slumped
- **Proxemics:** Distant but does not adjust to someone approaching
- **Eyes:** Staring at the ground or some unseen object in the distance
- **Physical Touch:** None

### CARD #6

*No verbal message*

- **Facial Expression:** Satisfied expression
- **Gesture:** Natural
- **Paralinguistics:** Humming or whistling a pleasant tune
- **Body Language and Posture:** Relaxed
- **Proxemics:** Moderately close, could change
- **Eyes:** Looking around, engaging in comfortable eye contact
- **Physical Touch:** None

### CARD #7

*“I’m going to prom this year.”*

- **Facial Expression:** Excited
- **Gesture:** Hands raised
- **Paralinguistics:** Fast rate of speech, tone is higher pitch than normal
- **Body Language and Posture:** Good posture
- **Proxemics:** Could vary
- **Eyes:** Direct, comfortable eye contact
- **Physical Touch:** None

### CARD #8

*“I’m good.”*

- **Facial Expression:** Blank
- **Gesture:** None
- **Paralinguistics:** Flat tone, varying volume
- **Body Language and Posture:** Arms crossed
- **Proxemics:** Some distance away
- **Eyes:** Avoiding eye contact
- **Physical Touch:** None, and avoids attempts by other to be touched

### CARD #9

*“But it’s not my turn to do the dishes.”*

- **Facial Expression:** Frustrated
- **Gesture:** Pointing at listener
- **Paralinguistics:** High pitch, loud
- **Body Language and Posture:** Defensive stance, stiff
- **Proxemics:** Could vary
- **Eyes:** Glaring and staring at listener
- **Physical Touch:** None
ACTIVITY:

The Right Stuff

DESCRIPTION:
Participants are to listen carefully to the story and follow the directions to the best of their abilities. This activity will illustrate how listening while being distracted affects the listener and his or her ability to remember important information.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Develop active listening skills as they listen to a story.
- Learn to follow directions according to the storyline.
- Learn about the proper ways to communicate.
- Learn how distractions affect the memory.

MATERIALS:
- Small tokens for the participants to pass around (Paperclips or small dollar-store trinkets work well. If facilitators want to be able to know if the tokens made it to their correct destinations, facilitators will want the objects to differ. You’ll need a different type of token per each participant.)

TIME:
15–20 minutes

AUDIENCE:
Adult and peer mentors

SETTING:
Meeting center where there is enough room to sit in a circle and pass items around (Participants can be seated on the floor, around a table, in a ring of chairs or in any arrangement that works best for the facilitator and the participants.)

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Gather the tokens (one per participant)
2. Arrange the room so there is space for everyone in the circle. Be sure the room is quiet enough so participants can clearly hear the stories.
3. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions. Read through and rehearse reading the stories. Facilitators may want to calculate where objects should end up relative to where they start to see if participants are listening closely to the story.

During the activity:
1. Have participants gather in the circle.
2. Distribute one token to each participant.
3. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The exercise we’re going to do today will challenge your listening skills. I’ll read you a story about the importance of mentoring. As I read this story, every time you hear the word “right,” pass your object to your right. If I happen to say “left,” pass your object to the left. Listen carefully to the story and if your neighbors don’t pass something the same direction you do, try not to let it throw you off. Let’s see how well you can listen. We’ll do a short practice run.

Do not repeat sentences in the story. Keep moving forward. The words right and left are underlined for the facilitator’s benefit only and the facilitator should not stress these words over others in the story.

Right away, when I think about mentoring, I think about the child who may have been left to fend for himself. I’m just trying to find the right person who can pick up right where it’s needed and help the child others have left behind.

The object should end up one person to the right of where it started.
So how did you do? Did you catch all the rights and lefts? Your token should have ended up one person to your right.

Pause for any feedback, comments or questions.

Don’t worry if you didn’t hear all the rights and lefts. We’re going to try again, this time with a longer story. Listen carefully, This one is a bit trickier!

4. Read aloud the following story at a normal pace:

This story is called “The Importance of Mentoring.”

“Right away, when I think about mentoring, I think about the child who may have been left to fend for himself. I’m trying to find the right person who can pick up right where it’s needed and help the child others have left behind. Mentoring isn’t about seeing the right way to make a difference, but to be another person in a child’s life to lead him down the right path so he doesn’t end up left to fend for himself.

For each of you, mentoring may be about different things. In the past, mentors have left me with many great stories on why mentoring was the right decision for them. They may have left each week from their match meetings with the right amount of warm fuzzies. Perhaps right away, they felt they left lasting impressions on children’s lives. It even could have been that mentoring provided the right amount of experience for what they want to do with their careers. It could also be that their mentees did the right things to bring out the kid-at-heart that may have been left behind in their mentors’ lives. Mentoring has left a different impression on each of your lives, and I know it has made the right impact when mentors share with me how their experiences have left lasting impressions on their lives.

Mentoring isn’t just about the feeling it has left with you, but it’s also about how it has helped you and your mentee grow together. You both are left with the opportunity to gain responsibility and problem-solving and teamwork skills, and to experience cooperating. But most importantly, you work to gain the right skills that will make you a good listener. Listening takes just the right amount of concentration so you can be left with the right meaning behind what someone is saying.
Thank you for letting me help you practice the ways to not be left behind when trying to listen to what your mentee is saying to you. I know each of you is on the right track to gain the right skills to make you a listener that won’t be left behind, but instead will be on the right track.

5. Give the participants a moment to breathe before moving on.

That’s the end of our story. Keep your token, but take a moment to stretch if you need it.

Give the participants a few seconds of break, if needed.

The token you started with should be in the hands of the third person to your right. Hang on to your token while we discuss what just happened.

PROCESSING:

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

Discussion questions:
- What was the story about?
- What are some things mentors gain from mentoring?
- What does listening take just the right amount of?
- How could you prepare yourself if you were to do this activity again?
- What did you learn about yourself from this activity?
- Have you ever tried to talk to somebody who was too busy to stop what she was doing to listen to you? How did that make you feel? What can you change in that situation?
- How did it make you feel when you were busy with something and someone wanted to talk to you that very minute?
- In what situations might you not be able to give your full attention to your mentee? What can you do in these situations to communicate to your mentee that you are listening the best you can? What boundaries might you need to set for conversations you have while driving to an event or activity?

Key points:
- It’s hard to concentrate on what another person is saying when you are distracted by other tasks. When you do not give your full attention to someone, you might miss key information you need to understand what she’s telling you.
- In some situations, your full attention cannot go to the speaker. If you’re driving to an event, your mentee may want to talk to you, but you can’t pull the car over every time your mentee wants to talk. Mentors may need to set in-the-car boundaries
for conversations so mentees understand that mentors cannot give them their undivided attention while driving. This may be especially true for mentees who do not drive and may not understand the concentration that driving takes.

- Both the listener and the speaker might become frustrated when they aren’t patient with one another. While it may be best to give a person your full, undivided attention during a conversation, at times, you may be unable to do so. Since people deal with complex situations in their lives, assuming everyone can turn off mental noise might not always be a realistic expectation.

VARIATIONS:

Allow participants to keep their tokens as prizes for their attempts at close listening and for being patient with one another during the story.

Adapted with permission from “Right and Left” by F. McAleer, January 26, 2010, Learner’s Link. Retrieved from http://www.learnerslink.com/right_and_left.htm
ACTIVITY:

Are You Listening?

DESCRIPTION:
This activity is designed to show participants how important reflective listening is and how it can be used to draw out further details of the situation being discussed.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Learn the importance of reflective listening.
- Practice using reflective listening using a scenario provided by the facilitator.

MATERIALS:
- “Are You Listening? Cards” handout
- “Adult Mentor Feedback Cards” handout or “Peer Mentor Feedback Cards” handout

TIME:
15–30 minutes

SETTING:
Room for participants to act out scenarios

AUDIENCE:
Adult and peer mentors

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions.
2. Print and cut out the cards from the “Are You Listening? Cards” handout, one per pair
3. Print and cut out the cards from the “Mentor Feedback Cards” handout, one per pair.

During the activity:
1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   Listening is one of the most important things we can do as mentors. It’s essential that we not only listen to our mentees, but that we listen well and respond in the best way possible. Reflective listening is a great tool to use when having conversations with our mentees.

   Reflective listening involves rephrasing what someone has said in order to verify our understanding of what that person is trying to communicate. When mentors use reflective listening, they seek to confirm or put into words the emotions their mentees are expressing. This helps to show the person speaking that the listener not only hears what is said but understands it as well. For example, after a conversation with your mentee, your response might be:

   “From what you just told me, it seems like you’re disappointed about what happened today. Do you want to talk about it?”

   Or:

   “It’s nice to hear that your mom appreciated it when you did the dishes without being asked.”

   The first step in reflective listening is to listen carefully to what your mentee is telling you. This sounds simple enough, but you may find that it’s harder than you think to focus on what your mentee is saying and not on things in your life that could distract you, such as what you want for dinner or what is going on around
you. Try to listen not only to what your mentee is saying but also to how he’s saying it. In addition, pay attention to his body language. Listening to both words and actions of a speaker takes some practice.

We’re going to try some reflective listening with a partner. Please pair up. I will hand out an Are You Listening? Card to one person in each pair and a Mentor Feedback Card to the other. Don’t show either card to your partner.”

2. Allow the participants to pair up.

3. Hand out the Are You Listening? Cards, one to each pair.

4. Continue to read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The person who has the Are You Listening? Card will be the first person to speak. If you have an Are You Listening? Card, I want you to tell a story to your partner that fits the scenario on the card. For example, if the card says that you had a bad day at school, your mentor is picking you up as soon as you get off the bus at home and you are still angry, tell the story of your bad day to your mentor. Your partner will react to your story using the type of feedback on the Mentor Feedback Card. Mentors might be supportive, indifferent, angry or sentimental, but will not use reflective listening. Does anyone have any questions?

5. Pause to answer any questions participants may have.

You have 5 minutes to act through your scenario.

6. After 5 minutes, bring the group back together and read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Before we discuss what this felt like, we are going to run the same scenario a second time. This time, those of you with Mentor Feedback Cards get to instead use reflective listening to draw your mentees into conversations about the situations they found themselves in without using the specific feelings listed on the cards. Does this make sense to everyone? You have 5 minutes to act through your scenario using reflective listening.

7. When all groups have run through the scenario a second time, bring the group back back together.
PROCESSING:

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

Discussion questions:

- For those of you who were mentees, what was it like to tell about your situation and to have your mentor reacting without using reflective listening? Was it frustrating? Did you ever have a dead end in your conversation?
- What difference did it make when your mentor changed to using reflective listening phrases? Did it change the quality or length of your conversation?
- Mentors, how did you feel when you went through your scenario reacting in the way that your Mentor Feedback Card indicated?
- How did your reaction to the scenario present change when you engaged in reflective listening?
- Do you think a mentee would be more likely to open up to a mentor who used reflective listening during their match meetings? Why or why not?

Key points:

- Telling a story to an unreceptive or unresponsive audience is difficult. When we communicate with other people, we need to pay attention to verbal and nonverbal cues to get the full picture of what they’re trying to communicate to us. By paying attention to those cues, we are better able to adjust how we react to others, to show our understanding of their points or to ask for clarification if we do not understand.
- Listen to the full message when your mentee speaks so you’re able to confirm through your verbal and nonverbal responses that you’re paying attention to what is being said, and trying to understand what happened to her or what she’s experiencing. This also allows you to give feedback in an appropriate way, even if you don’t entirely know what she’s going through due to different life choices and experiences.
- Most young people are expressive when they communicate, even though they don’t always express themselves verbally. Mentors should be receptive to their mentees’ nonverbal cues when they are speaking, listening or both to confirm that the messages were received through reflective listening responses.
- Setting ourselves aside to best serve our mentees is sometimes difficult. We have to remember that even if we’ve gone through something similar, or if we’ve had a bad day, we still need to be able to listen to the feelings and expressions of our mentees. Listening well will help them navigate through their unique circumstances.

VARIATIONS:

For a longer activity, let each pair run through their scenarios without and with reflective listening in front of the larger group so all participants are able to see how the scenarios change using reflective listening.

If there are more than 12 participants in the training group, facilitators may wish to number or letter the cards in order to more easily keep track of which cards were paired together and which were repeated. Rather than repeating the same pair of Mentor Feedback Cards and Are You Listening? Cards, create new sets so no participant groups are repeating identical situations.
Are You Listening?
You have just stepped off the bus and your mentor is waiting for you in the driveway. You just can’t wait to tell your mentor about the awesome day you had at school. You solved a problem on the board in math class, you avoided a fight at lunch and you stood up for your best friend without yelling at the person bothering her (even though you really wanted to).

Are You Listening?
Today was not so great. You practically flee the school bus and nearly trip on the curb, stumbling towards your mentor’s car. All you can think about is what went wrong – the boy who was picking on you before school, the teacher yelling at you in class for not paying attention and your best friend ignoring you because he has been spending all of his time with a new friend.

Are You Listening?
Your best friend just announced a new relationship on Facebook. She’s (or he’s) been dating the guy (or girl) you thought was your boyfriend (or girlfriend). You don’t have time to respond to the situation, because your mentor just knocked on your front door to pick you up. You walk out the door upset.

Are You Listening?
The most awesome thing just happened. The person you want to go out with just wrote on your Facebook wall that it would be awesome if you two could hang out on Friday night. Your mom is cool with it as long as you go someplace public. You type off a quick, “Great! See you Friday!” message just before you step out the door to meet your mentor.
### Are You Listening?

**Your friend’s mom just called to say that you and he aren’t going to be going to the park tonight because she caught him smoking out behind the garage. You’re upset with her, but you are more upset that your friend would do something that he knew would keep him from hanging out with you. You’ve had an hour or so to think about the situation before you meet with your mentor.**

### Are You Listening?

**Your parents have been fighting a lot. Last night, you thought you heard your dad say something about a divorce and your mom didn’t seem to disagree with him. Today, they are both quiet. You know what’s coming, and you know it might be best for both of them, but it’s still confusing. You don’t know how to ask either of them about it, but you’ve had some time to think it over.**

### Are You Listening?

**When your dad picked you up after school, he told you that you were going to have a new sibling. He says that it’s going to take a lot of work to get ready for the baby. He expects you to be grown-up about it and not to get upset if you can’t do all the things you want to now or after the baby is born. He says he thinks you’ll be an awesome big brother (or sister), but it’s going to be tough starting off even though it’s also very exciting. It’s been a few hours and you’ve been thinking a lot about it when the time comes for your match meeting.**
### Adult Mentor Feedback

It’s been a long day. Your kids have been fighting since they got home from school, and you’re very distracted. The only thing you can manage to say while driving is short, verbal confirmations that you are trying to pay attention, such as “mm hmm,” “yep,” “bummer” and other short reactions.

### Adult Mentor Feedback

You’ve been looking forward to this match meeting all week. While you also look forward to seeing your mentee, the activity you have been planning is one that is exciting to you. You think it will be exciting for your mentee as well. You may be so excited that you interrupt your mentee when being told about how the day went because you just want to talk about this awesome thing you are going to do together.

### Adult Mentor Feedback

The rock-climbing activity you’re doing today was entirely your mentee’s idea and you aren’t really sure you’re ready to try it yet. You’re hesitant, but you try to be supportive of your mentee’s adventurous side when he expresses it safely. You aren’t so eager for this meeting, and you aren’t talkative or responsive.

### Adult Mentor Feedback

You and your spouse have been arguing today and you are generally short-tempered and grumpy when you get to your match meeting. You would rather quietly think than try to focus on what your mentee is telling you. It’s been a long, intense day and you would rather sit in silence while you drive.
Adult Mentor Feedback
You found out your best friend is going to have a baby and she wants you to be the baby's godparent. You are thrilled and want to share this with your mentee. Your enthusiasm causes you to not pay attention to the cues your mentee is sending you about how his or her day was.

Adult Mentor Feedback
You went through exactly what your mentee is describing (only just a little differently) and you want to share exactly what you did to fix the situation. Instead of confirming how your mentee is feeling, you project your own emotions onto your mentee's situation and try to give advice based on what you did when it happened to you (even though it wasn't quite the same and it was a few years ago).
### Peer Mentor Feedback

You’ve had a horrible week. Your math teacher gave you not only one, but two pop quizzes, your locker partner left food in your locker over the weekend and now everything in your locker smells like rotten tuna fish. Classmates have been teasing you all week about the smell, and to top it all off, you’re having the worst bout of acne ever. When you meet your mentee at your site, it’s all you can do to absently respond as he tells you about his week.

### Peer Mentor Feedback

You’re so excited to go to your mentoring site this week. You are looking forward to seeing your friend who recently started mentoring at your site. Sure, you are happy to spend time with your mentee, and you think your friend will be a good role model for your mentee, too. You wonder if you could get together with your friend and her mentee and have your own mentoring group – the more the merrier, right?

### Peer Mentor Feedback

Last week, the lead mentor at your site told you that you would be visiting the local retirement home this week as part of your community service project. Your mentee is excited to go and you know you should have a better attitude, but you believe those places are boring and they smell funny. When you arrive, you are kind of quiet and not really interested. You just go through the motions.

### Peer Mentor Feedback

You’ve had the best day ever! You found out you made the honor roll and are now exempt from one exam this term. Then when you got into your car to come to mentoring today, you found a card with a $50-bill inside from your dad, saying how proud he and your mom are of you. You excitedly tell your mentee all about it, not really noticing the nonverbal cues your mentee is sending you as she listens politely to your good news.
Peer Mentor Feedback
The coolest thing happened to you today! You found out your favorite aunt is going to have a baby and she wants you to help her pick out the baby’s name. You’re thrilled and want to share this with your mentee. Your enthusiasm causes you to not pay attention to the cues your mentee is sending you about how is or her day was.

Peer Mentor Feedback
Your mentee is telling you about a situation that you recently experienced yourself. The experience was similar but not exactly the same. You’re enthusiastic. Now you can tell your mentee how you dealt with your situation. She’ll be able to take your advice and make it through so much easier than you did. You don’t think about asking your mentee about how she’s feeling about the situation or what she plans to do about it because you are so caught up in telling your own story and teaching her how to avoid the mistakes you made.
ACTIVITY:

I Feel When Because

DESCRIPTION:
This activity explores one method of communications mentors and mentees can use with one another to express their feelings about an event or potential conflict without using blaming or other potentially negative language.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Learn a new method to express their feelings in a constructive manner.
- Gain familiarity with using “I” statements in potential mentoring scenarios.

MATERIALS:
- “I” Statements handouts (one for each participant)
- “I Feel When Because Scenario Cards” handout (one card cut out for each participant)
- Writing utensils

TIME: 15–20 minutes

SETTING:
Participants should be seated and have a surface to write on

AUDIENCE:
Adult or peer mentors

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions.
2. Gather the writing utensils.
3. Print one copy of the “I’ Statements” handout for each participant.
4. Print one copy of the “I Feel When Because Scenario Cards” handout and cut the cards out. Each participant will need one scenario card, so plan accordingly. In larger groups, multiple copies of the “I Feel When Because Scenario Cards” handout may be necessary.
5. Prepare review questions specific to the group’s needs.

During the activity:
1. Ensure that each participant has his or her own copy of the “I’ Statements” handout and a writing utensil.
2. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   We’re going to explore a way to respond to problem situations that might arise in our mentoring relationships. The method is called using “I” statements. Using “I” statements is one way mentors can calmly respond to situations in which they could potentially become angry or blaming. “I” statements help mentors to clearly communicate their emotions to their mentees. The scenarios we’ll cover include the messages mentees send with their body language while they are talking to mentors as well as things mentees may do or say during the mentoring relationship. Responding clearly to a verbal or nonverbal message is critical to successful communication. You should provide either verbal or nonverbal feedback about what you heard your mentee saying or how he said it and how you interpreted what he communicated. If you don’t respond to a situation, your mentee won’t know if you have heard him or if you understood the meaning he was trying to get across. We can react to potentially emotional or stressful situations using “I” statements. I’ll give you an
example of various responses mentors can have when their mentees don’t show up for match meetings. Then we’ll compare these responses to a response that uses an “I” statement.

If your mentee didn’t show up, you could say, “You are really irresponsible for not being here when you said you would be.”

If you said that, how do you think that would make your mentee feel?

Allow time for participants to respond.

How does the situation and your mentee’s reaction change when you instead say, “It makes me frustrated when you’re not here for a scheduled visit”?

Allow participants to respond.

While this statement doesn’t directly critique the mentee like the first one does, it still isn’t an “I” statement. It does a better job than the previous response, but let’s try this one more time. How is the following reaction different?

“I feel frustrated when you aren’t here for a scheduled visit because I really look forward to our time together each week. What I would like is if you would let me know if you can’t make it so we can reschedule and still have our time together during the week.”

What changes between the two reactions?

Pause for responses. The major differences to point out, if participants do not, is that the “I” statement allows the speaker to take ownership of her feelings. Nothing is making her feel any way, she simply feels it. The “I” statement allows the speaker to clearly express her emotions in a way that lets her demonstrate good problem solving with her mentee.

When you respond to a message with an “I” statement, express how the situation makes you feel and explain why it makes you feel that way. For example, you could say, “I feel that you don’t value my opinions when you interrupt me while I am talking to you because it makes me feel like you don’t care about what I have to say. What I would like is for you to let me finish what I have to say before you respond or begin speaking about something else.”
We’re going to practice writing “I” statements in this format: “I feel [blank] when you do [blank] because of [blank]. What I want/need/would like is [blank].” This format is on your “I’ Statements” handout. You will each receive a scenario card that has a problem situation that mentors might find themselves in. You’ll be asked to use the information on the scenario card to help you fill out the “I’ Statements” handout you received. First, you’ll read the scenario card, then choose a feeling you would have based on the scenario. Next, you’ll write a description of the behavior causing the problem situation. Then write an “I” statement in response to the scenario you are given that you could say to your mentee in this situation. Use the “I’ Statements” handout to help you write the “I” statement. Are there any questions?

3. Pause to answer any questions participants may have.

4. Hand out one scenario card per participant and allow participants time to complete the “I’ Statements” handout.

5. When the group has finished the “I’ Statements” handout, have participants share their scenario and “I” statement. Give feedback for each “I” statement, and allow other participants to respond to the scenario with an alternate “I” statement if they have suggestions.

6. After everyone has shared their “I” statements, process the activity using the information in the section below.

**PROCESSING:**

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

**Discussion questions:**

- How would you feel if someone used an “I” statement when talking with you about a situation or behavior?
- Could you apply this method when talking with the mentee’s parent or guardian? What about in other areas of the mentoring relationship?
- What are some other situations in which using an “I” statement may be useful?
- What are some situations in which using an “I” statement wouldn’t be useful? Why do you think an “I” statement might not work in your chosen situation?
**Key points:**

- “I” statements are a nonjudgmental way of communicating your feelings to another person.
- “I” statements focus on behaviors or expressed feelings instead of a person’s character.
- “I” statements allow the speaker to take ownership of his feelings by not saying someone else made them feel some way. While a behavior or situation can anger us, we’re not made to feel angry. No one forces us to respond that way. Our behaviors are our own.
- “I” statements allow the speaker to request a change in behavior or in the situation based on how she reacted to the situation without blaming the listener directly for the behavior or situation.
- “I” statements provide the listener with an opportunity to respond without being defensive because he feels judged or criticized.
- The messages “I” statements contain are based on respect, idea sharing and mutual understanding, and not on giving advice or orders.

**VARIATIONS:**

- Instead of using the scenario cards, let participants choose scenarios from their own lives or that they have heard about to use while writing their “I” statements. Remind people to be discreet about their choices of scenarios.
- If you have a large number of participants, split them into smaller groups and have the small group work together to write multiple “I” statements for their given scenarios.
- Instead of using the scenario cards, let participants choose scenarios from their own lives or that they have heard about to use while writing their “I” statements. Remind people to be discreet about their choices of scenarios.
- If you have a large number of participants, split them into smaller groups and have the small group work together to write multiple “I” statements for their given scenarios.
I FEELWHENBECAUSE HANDOUT:

“l” Statements

Review the situation card that you received. Write an “I” statement to use with the appropriate person that will help you to solve the problem.

Remember the formula:
1. Choose a feeling you would have in this scenario.
2. Describe the behavior that is causing the problem situation.
3. In the first part of your “I” statement, state how you feel when you encounter that behavior.
4. In the second part of your “I” statement, state what your mentee is doing to make you feel that way.
5. In the third part of the “I” statement, state why you feel the way you do.
6. In the final part of your “I” statement, describe the behavior you want or need to have changed in order to change how you feel.

Example:
I feel that you don’t value what I have to say when you interrupt me when I try to talk to you because it seems as though you don’t care about what I have to say. What I want/need/would like is for you to let me finish what I have to say before you begin speaking about something else.

Description of the behavior causing the problem situation:

I feel

when

because

What I need/want/would like is
**I Feel When Because Scenario Cards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your mentee has not returned your phone calls for 3 weeks.</th>
<th>Your mentee has been late to meet with you 5 times.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee is acting sullen and quiet and won’t tell you what is wrong.</td>
<td>Your mentee has called you at midnight with a nonemergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You find out your mentee has been skipping school.</td>
<td>Your mentee rolls her eyes at you while you are talking to her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee spent time with you studying for an exam for which he then tells you he received an “C.”</td>
<td>Your mentee’s parent or guardian is not allowing you and your mentee to spend time together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee tells you she has been drinking alcohol with friends.</td>
<td>You have paid for an outing with your mentee for the fifth time and you are short on funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have been communicating to your mentee through email and find out that his parent or guardian has been reading the emails.</td>
<td>Your mentee has started inviting friends when you get together with her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee refuses to do homework.</td>
<td>Your mentee’s parent or guardian contacts you and starts asking questions about the mentee’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee is spending all his (her) time with his girlfriend (her boyfriend) and no longer wants to spend time with you.</td>
<td>Your mentee wants to meet multiple times in one week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY:
Take Your Best Shot

DESCRIPTION:
 Volunteers from the group attempt to complete a task that requires assistance from group members. Group members are instructed to respond differently to each volunteer. The activity highlights the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of different kinds of feedback. Please note that while this activity can be done with one facilitator, it works best when there are two facilitators, one in the room and another with the volunteers outside the room.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
- Learn about three different types of feedback.
- Learn the effectiveness of communication in a positive and directive manner.

MATERIALS:
- Blindfold
- Balls (3–5)
- Bucket (1)
- Flip chart paper or whiteboard
- Tape (if flip chart paper is used)
- Markers

TIME:
15–25 minutes

SETTING:
A room with a door where a facilitator can escort participants out and give them directions privately (Participants should not be able to hear what is being said inside the room. Clear an area inside the room for the activity.)

AUDIENCE:
Adult or peer mentors (You can use this activity with a variety of audiences but it requires a group of at least six people. Young people seem to enjoy this activity, but take care if using the activity with individuals who may be particularly sensitive to criticism.)

PROCEDURE:
Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the “Communication” module and these activity directions.
2. Set up an area for the activity that will be free of obstructions.
3. Write the definitions for the three types of feedback (found below) on flip chart paper or a whiteboard.
   - Negative and nondirective feedback: Provides no direction and can be hurtful or mean
   - Positive and nondirective feedback: Provides no direction, but is encouraging and uplifting
   - Positive and directive feedback: Is encouraging and provides direction that is beneficial
4. On a flipchart or whiteboard, draw the following chart. Make sure it is large enough for participants to see.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Feedback and Name of Volunteer</th>
<th># of Balls</th>
<th>Volunteers’ Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative and Nondirective Volunteer:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and Nondirective Volunteer:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and Directive Volunteer:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the activity:
1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   Every day we get feedback from other people. Sometimes we get praise and encouragement, sometimes we get constructive feedback, and at other times, we face insults. Do you think your performance or attitude changes depending on the type of feedback that is given?

2. Pause for responses.
3. Continue with the following:

   *Our next activity will give us a chance to have some fun and explore the topic of feedback. I need three volunteers for this activity. I need people who will not take this activity personally and remember that this is a game meant to teach.*

4. Select three volunteers. As you make your selections, be sure to consider which volunteers will respond best to the activity.

   *Thank you for volunteering! I want you all to remember that this activity is just for fun. Please don’t take the feedback that you will be receiving personally. People do not really mean the negative comments they make to you. This is all part of our activity and should not in any way be considered a part of real life.*

5. Ask the volunteers to follow you to the area outside of the room. If there are two or more facilitators, one facilitator should stay with the volunteers. If there is only one facilitator, instruct the volunteers to stay in the waiting area and await further instruction. When working with youth you may want to bring headphones and music during this time period to keep them occupied.

6. Read aloud or paraphrase the following to the remainder of the group:

   *We’re going to conduct an experiment called Take Your Best Shot to explore three types of feedback. You will be asked to give each of our volunteers feedback during the experiment. Each volunteer will come back into the room one at a time wearing a blindfold. They will be asked to throw these balls into the bucket.*

   Show participants the balls and the bucket.

   *Each volunteer will receive a different type of feedback from you. The first volunteer will receive negative and nondirective feedback from you. Negative and nondirective feedback can be mean and provides no direction for improvement. For our experiment, you might say things such as, “You’re terrible at this!” “You stink!” and ”You’ll never get this right.” Remember we don’t really mean these things. This is just part of our activity. Next, you’ll give our second volunteer positive and nondirective feedback. This type of feedback is encouraging, but it gives no directions. Some examples of this would be “Nice job,” ”Great work” or “You’re getting better!” For our third volunteer, you will give positive and directive feedback. Positive and*
Directive feedback is both encouraging and beneficial to the recipient. You might coach our volunteer by saying things such as, “Nice try. Next time, throw it a tad to the left,” or “Keep trying, you can do it! Just throw it a little more softly!” I’ll go get our first volunteer. Remember, for this volunteer, you should give only negative feedback. Don’t give them any help getting the ball into the bucket.

7. Blindfold the first volunteer and bring him back into the room. If you have a second facilitator, she should blindfold one of the volunteers while you are describing the different types of feedback. Tell the volunteer that there is a bucket somewhere in the room and hand him the balls. Then tell the volunteer that the goal is to get at least one ball into the bucket. Let the volunteer take one shot on his own before providing feedback. The facilitator should model negative feedback if participants don’t provide negative feedback on their own. When the volunteer is finished throwing the balls, have him remove the blindfold and ask him to provide you with three words to describe how he felt while performing the task. On the chart you prepared earlier, note how many balls went into the basket and the three words the volunteer provided. Be careful not to process the activity more while the other volunteers are still in the hallway. Move on to the next step.

8. After the first volunteer sits down, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Remember, our next volunteer will receive positive and nondirective feedback from you. You will encourage our volunteer but not provide directions on where to throw the ball.

9. Escort the second volunteer back into the room and provide instructions to throw the balls into the bucket. The group should readily provide positive and nondirective feedback. Repeat the process as before. After attempting to throw the balls into the bucket while receiving only positive and nondirective feedback, the volunteer removes the blindfold and the facilitator should ask the volunteer for three words to describe the experience. On the chart, write down the number of balls the volunteer got in the basket as well as the three words. Move on to the next step without allowing time for more processing.

10. After the second volunteer sits down, read or paraphrase the following:

Our final volunteer will receive positive and directive feedback. Remember that positive and directive feedback is feedback that is encouraging and beneficial to the participant. It provides direction. You will coach
11. Bring the last blindfolded volunteer back into the room. Let the volunteer take one shot and then provide the volunteer with directions for the task. The group should provide positive and directive feedback. When finished throwing the balls, have the volunteer remove her blindfold and sit down with the group after giving her three words to describe her feelings about the process. On the chart, write down the number of balls the volunteer got in the basket as well as the three words.

12. Facilitate a conversation using the information provided in the section on processing.

**PROCESSING:**

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions. Begin by recapping the activity for the volunteers who were in the hall and missed the first examples. When feedback from the volunteers applies to the chart you created before the activity, be sure to fill it in.

**Discussion questions:**

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- Volunteers, please expand on how receiving the feedback made you feel.
- Members of the group who gave the feedback, how did giving negative and nondirective feedback make you feel? How did giving positive and nondirective feedback make you feel? How did giving positive and directive feedback make you feel?
- Can you think of a situation when negative feedback is useful? How about positive nondirective feedback? Positive directive feedback?
- How does this activity relate to your role as a mentor?
- When might you need to give feedback to your mentee?

**Key points:**

- Feedback is important and we all need it.
- Mentors rarely give negative feedback, but it can be easy to fall into the habit of providing positive, nondirective feedback. This activity reminds us of the importance of providing direction when appropriate.
- Examine how you communicate. Recognize we may be giving nondirective feedback without realizing it. Try to make a special effort to notice and change these habits.
- When there are too many voices coming at a person at one time, it can be difficult to hear what is said and focus. Note: If
the third volunteer does not get any balls into the bucket, it is likely that the directives were missed because there were so many voices. Some young people in our programs have many adults in their lives trying to help – social workers, teachers, counselors, probation officers, foster parents, parents – and these adults may be providing a great deal of positive directive feedback. If this is the case for your mentee, you may want to experiment with some basic positive nondirective feedback such as encouragement and praise to balance all of the voices. This is a very important point and facilitators should be sure to point this out if none of the participants mentions it.

- Mentors often teach mentees new skills and positive directive feedback can help mentees strengthen skills.
- You may easily lose sight of the positive part of the feedback and use only directive feedback. Work to keep your directive feedback positive.
- This positive approach is not only useful in feedback, but also in your overall approach to the mentoring relationship. Find strengths and reinforce them with positive feedback. This will help develop the mentee’s feelings of self-worth.
- Realize there are many cultures and standards of living that differ from your own. Your mentor may misinterpret your feedback based on his background. Be sensitive to differences.
- There is a difference between positive directive feedback and telling a person what to do. Positive directive feedback is encouraging while pointing out where there is room for growth. Some mentoring examples include “Thank you for calling me back today. I really appreciate your effort! Next time, can you please call before 10 p.m.?” “You were a great leader during that activity! Now we should let someone else have a turn.”
- Avoid the word but as in, “You were great, but...” The word but negates the positive.

**VARIATIONS:**
- Instead of trying to throw balls into a bucket, have participants play Pin the Tail on the Donkey.
- Draw a bull’s-eye on a piece of paper or white board and have the participants try to hit the bull’s-eye with their finger.
ACTIVITY:

Tree Problem Solver

DESCRIPTION:
Using a drawing of a tree, participants will work together in groups to identify a problem and determine a final solution after identifying various possible solutions and their consequences.

OBJECTIVES:
The participants will:
› Practice problem-solving skills.
› Demonstrate critical thinking.
› Exercise creative problem-solving skills.
› Represent problem-solving skills graphically.
› Demonstrate an understanding that a variety of solutions can stem from one problem.
› Learn how different solutions lead to different consequences.

MATERIAL:
☐ One “Tree Problem Solver” handout per person plus an extra handout for each group (It may be helpful to make the group handouts a different color from the other handouts.)
☐ Flip chart paper
☐ Tape
☐ Writing utensils

TIME:
30-45 minutes

SETTING:
Large tables for groups to spread out on or space on the floor

AUDIENCE:
Adult and peer mentors

PROCEDURE:

Before the activity:
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the Communication module and these activity directions.
2. Gather the materials you will need for the activity.
3. Print one copy of the “Tree Problem Solver” handout for each participant. Print one extra copy preferably on colored paper for each group.
4. On a piece of flip chart paper, write the following:
   • What was your problem?
   • What were your possible solutions?
   • What did your group choose?
   • Why?
5. Save this flip chart for use later in the activity.

During the activity:
1. Pass out one “Tree Problem Solver” handout per person. Give one extra “Tree Problem Solver” handout to each group.
2. Give each participant a writing utensil.
3. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   In this exercise, we are going to use a problem-solving tool to explore different ways to solve a problem and the consequences that result from different solutions. This easy-to-use tool will be helpful when working with your mentees since many young people lack strong problem-solving skills. I hope this activity is one you’ll feel comfortable doing with your mentee in the future. You each have a handout with a tree on it. You can use your individual handouts to brainstorm, take notes or save for future use. You need to use only one handout per table for this activity. Please use the extra handout I gave to each group. As you look at your handout, imagine the tree as a map of a problem, possible solutions and outcomes. The trunk of the tree will represent a problem. In your small groups, decide on a problem that you may encounter as mentors. Once you determine a problem, choose a volunteer in the group to write it on the trunk of the tree on the extra handout.
4. Allow time for discussion and for the group to come to a consensus about which problem to tackle and to have the volunteer write the problem on the trunk.

5. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   Now that you have identified the problems, work in your groups to generate five possible ways to solve that problem. Have your volunteer write each solution you come up with on one of the five branches. Be creative. Are there any questions?

6. Pause for questions. If there are none or once all questions are answered, continue with the following:

   Once you have a solution branch on the tree, think about and discuss what consequences might come from using that solution. Work together to pick one of them, and have your volunteer write it on a leaf. Continue to discuss and put more consequences on the leaves. Do this for each of your solution branches and consequence leaves. Everyone’s ideas are important and even if you don’t include an idea on the tree, take the time to acknowledge and discuss it briefly in your group. Please note that some solutions and outcomes are not ideal or even recommended. Part of problem solving is considering all ideas and then narrowing down the options. For this reason, do not disregard an option that may seem like a poor choice. Is everyone still clear on how this works?

7. Pause to answer any questions participants may have.

8. Give groups 15 to 20 minutes to come up with their solutions and consequences. Circulate while the groups work and assist them as needed.

9. At the end of the given time, bring the larger group back together to discuss the solutions and consequences that each group came up with. Continue to read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   Your final task is to analyze the possible solutions and consequences, and then determine a plan of action. Which branch (solution) seems strongest? You need to determine what you think the best solution is to your problem and why you think it’s the best.

10. Post the prepared flip chart, and read aloud or paraphrase the following:

    After you figure out what you think the best solution is to the problem, be ready to report on your discussion by determining the answers to the questions I have posted 1) What was your problem? 2) What were your possible solutions? 3) What did your group choose? and 4) Why?
11. Discuss this for a few minutes in your group. Then identify a group member who will give an overview of your group’s process to the larger group.

12. Allow time for the groups to complete the task. Then ask group members to report out and share their trees.

   Now we would like to hear from each group. When you report out, please answer the questions I have posted. Who would like to go first?

13. Facilitate the sharing process. After the final group shares, continue on using the information in the section on processing.

**PROCESSING:**

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

**Discussion questions:**

- Were you surprised by any of the solutions that other groups came up with for our problems?
- What did you learn from listening to other groups’ ideas?
- Were any of the consequences that you heard from other groups things that you did not anticipate happening as a result of a solution? Why or why not?
- Were you satisfied with the solutions your group decided on writing on your branches? What about the consequences on your leaves?
- How do you think most young people handle problems?
- How else could you use the problem-solving technique we’ve used today?

**Key points:**

- Mentors can use this process to help teach mentees problem-solving skills. Due to their stage of development, many young people make emotional decisions instead of thinking through a variety of solutions and consequences. Mentors can model a healthy decision-making process with the help of the “Tree Problem Solver” handout.

- Problems have a variety of solutions and consequences. We may find it difficult to determine solutions from different angles on our own.

- Not all solutions will lead to wanted consequences. Some good ideas can lead to undesired results.

- Problem solving doesn’t have to be a solo job. Mentors can work with other mentors and with program staff members to brainstorm solutions and possible consequences to problems encountered in their mentoring relationships.

**VARIATIONS:**

- Create a large tree with removable pieces that can hang on a wall. Laminate the tree and use Velcro or other fastening tape and dry erase markers to build the decision tree.

- Have participants write down problems they would like to have discussed ahead of the workshop and draw them out of a container to decide on which to discuss.

- Shorten the amount of time spent on the trees and cover multiple problems, solutions and consequences in one session.

- Use this activity with peer mentors or in mentee training to teach good decision-making skills.
Tree Problem Solver
**ACTIVITY:**

**Digital Interactions 101**

**DESCRIPTION:**
This activity uses scenarios to discuss situations that may arise within the mentoring relationship involving digital communication and social networking, such as Facebook or Twitter.

**OBJECTIVES:**
The participants will:
- Learn potential ways to avoid communication issues with mentees and parents or guardians in an online setting.
- Discuss given scenarios and brainstorm appropriate solutions.

**MATERIALS:**
- “Digital Interactions 101 Scenario Cards” handout
- Writing utensils

**TIME:**
15–20 minutes

**SETTING:**
A room with seating for participants with a surface for them to write on

**AUDIENCE:**
Adult and peer mentors (Mentors should have some experience with digital communication prior to this activity.)

**PROCEDURE:**

**Before the activity:**
1. Review the background information at the beginning of the “Communication” module and these activity directions.
2. Print one copy of the “Digital Interactions 101 Scenario Cards” handout and cut out each card. Each participant or group will need one scenario card, so plan accordingly. In larger groups, it may be necessary to print out multiple copies of the “Digital Interactions 101 Scenario Cards” handout.
3. Gather the writing utensils.
4. Prepare review questions specific to the group’s needs.

**During the activity:**
1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

   *We’re going to explore ways to respond to situations that might arise in the mentoring relationship when communicating online. Social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter are examples of additional ways that you can keep in touch with your mentee, his or her parent or guardian, and even the mentoring program staff. How do you currently use social networking websites? How do you use them to interact with family? Friends? Co-workers? Other volunteer organizations?*

   Allow time for participants to respond.

   *Most people use social networking websites with friends and family members to keep in touch, sharing stories, comments and photos. However, as we just discussed, some people also choose to interact with co-workers and others in their lives as well. Take a moment to think about how you interact with each group of people in person. Chances are high you’ll use certain words or topics with friends or family you would not use around co-workers. The topics that you discuss with friends or family are not necessarily bad, but they just may not be appropriate in a work setting. These distinctions can be blurred when communicating online in social media. You may be used to
operating in an environment where your personal and professional lives are separate, but social networking has the ability to bring those formerly separate worlds into one place. Even though social networking can blur the lines between relationships, it doesn’t change the actual context in which people know one another. For example, if a mentor becomes a “friend” on a site with a staff person, their relationship doesn’t become one of actual friends.

Because of the differences between interactions in an online environment and interactions in person, mentors may encounter unique issues that arise within the mentoring relationship when communicating via social networks. We’ll go over some scenarios that depict common situations that can arise when interacting online with a mentee, parent or guardian, or program staff member. Your group will each receive a scenario card containing a situation that mentors might find themselves in. I will give you a few minutes to discuss possible solutions to the scenario you are given. Are there any questions?

2. Divide participants into groups and hand out one scenario card per group. Allow participants time to discuss the scenarios and potential solutions. Walk around and answer any questions that arise.

3. When the groups are done discussing their solutions, have a member from each group read the group’s scenario and the solution that they discussed. Give feedback for each solution using the key points as a guide, and allow other participants to also respond to the scenario with an alternate solution if they have suggestions.

4. After everyone has shared their solutions, follow the directions in the section on processing below.

**PROCESSING:**

Guide participants through a discussion, using some or all of the questions and key points that follow. Be sure to give participants time to think about and respond to the questions.

**Discussion questions:**

- What are some ways that you could use social media to strengthen your relationship with your mentee?
- How do you plan to interact with your mentee online? The mentee’s parent or guardian? Program staff members?
What are some common solutions that you can use to help problem solve any issues that arise when communicating online?

What communication advantages do digital communication or social media tools have? Disadvantages?

**Key points:**

- Social media is another tool that mentors can use to interact with their mentees. You can use social media sites to continue discussions that were started face-to-face, share ideas about activities, set meeting times, give reminders and more.

- Mentors can also interact with the program staff members and other mentors via social networking, including sharing positive stories and new activity ideas, supporting other mentors and learning about program updates.

- People may use social networking for a variety of reasons, including personal use to connect with friends and family, professional use to interact with colleagues and co-workers, and a mixture of the two. If the mentor tries to “friend” or add someone to his or her site and the other person does not accept, it may be simply that he or she is using that social network to communicate with a different group of people. It may be worthwhile for the mentor to find an alternate way to connect. For example, if the mentor friends a program staff member and the staff member does not accept, the mentor may instead see if there is a social media page for the program they’re involved in together.

- The widespread availability of digital communication tools provides opportunities for new ways for people to communicate.

**VARIATIONS:**

Instead of using the scenario cards, let participants choose scenarios from their own experiences or experiences their peers have had communicating online.
### Digital Communications Scenario Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1</th>
<th>Scenario 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee “friends” you on a social networking site.</td>
<td>Your mentee is being bullied by peers online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee posts about underage drinking at a party last weekend.</td>
<td>Your mentee’s parent or guardian sends you detailed messages about your mentee including what they have been doing, trouble they have gotten into, suspicions they have and topics to talk about when meeting with the mentee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When browsing online, you find inappropriate photos of your mentee that were taken before you met.</td>
<td>Your mentee finds photos of you drinking at a bar with friends and asks you about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You try to “friend” program staff members on a social networking site, but they do not accept the request.</td>
<td>Your mentee only uses “chat speak” when communicating online. Examples include shorthand (BRB, LOL), misspelled words, and alternating capitalized and lower case letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee’s friends post on your mentee’s wall about an upcoming party. It is unclear from the posts if there will or will not be drugs or alcohol at the party.</td>
<td>Your mentee’s parent or guardian posts inappropriate pictures of themselves on a social networking site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee finds questionable pictures of you from 5 years ago on your profile.</td>
<td>Your mentee is bullying peers online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee’s parent or guardian sends you an event invitation on a social networking site to a family party.</td>
<td>One of your mentee’s friends sends you a friend request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee is spending all of his or her time with you on the phone texting other people.</td>
<td>Your mentee is sending friend requests to your family members and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee forwards you a text message that is spreading a rumor.</td>
<td>Your mentee wants to have your cell phone number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mentee’s parent or guardian “friends” you on a social networking site.</td>
<td>Your mentee’s parent or guardian is constantly writing on your wall or sending you messages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>