

To: BCYMP Mentors
From: Jo Woodard, Program Director
Re: Terminating the Mentoring Relationship

The following article is adapted from website material on how to end the mentoring relationship in a way that is minimally difficult for the mentee. In many cases, modeling a healthy transition with your mentee actually gives them another “asset” -- another picture of the way healthy relationships can change, yet still be a source of affirmation and good memories. Please take the following suggestions into consideration as you consider transitioning out of your mentoring role.

Mentoring relationships may change over time and may end for any number of reasons. Some of these reasons include:

- ➔ Either the mentor or the mentee drops out of the program.
- ➔ Life circumstances may make it difficult or impossible to continue the relationship (a mentor is transferred to another city or changes in family responsibilities or living situations occurs for either mentor or mentee).
- ➔ You have completed the six month time commitment of the BCYMP program, and have determined that you are unable to extend your commitment
- ➔ A mentor and mentee pair may not get along; the relationship just is not a good “fit.”

Your mentee may have been disappointed and negatively impacted by earlier experiences – as a result, he/she may be unwilling to take risks necessary for developing a relationship. Some mentor/mentee pairs remain “stuck” in the testing stage. In these instances, you may feel burdened by the relationship and frustrated by your mentee’s behavior. Always consult your BCYMP Program Coordinator for further advice on how to proceed. If it is decided that it is most beneficial for the relationship to end, your Program Coordinator will work with both you and your mentee to make sure this process is done smoothly and with sensitivity for both you and your mentee.

When the time comes to end your mentoring relationship, for whatever reason, it must be done *carefully and thoughtfully*. The way the relationship ends can shape what your mentee thinks about and learns from the experience. Terminating the mentor/mentee relationship may recall the ending of other important relationships in participants’ lives. It sometimes includes a period of

grieving, depending on the relationship. *Nonetheless, this transition can be a time for growth for both you and your mentee.* You can think of the situation as a “graduation” rather than a loss.

The end of a relationship can be difficult for both the mentor and mentee. Here are some strategies you may wish to use when it is time to terminate the relationship:

Steps for Terminating the Relationship

- ➔ Have it take place gradually. Give your mentee ample warning of the closure of the match.

- ➔ Be clear about the date of your last meeting and be sure to inform your mentee of this ahead of time. Don’t wait until the last meeting to say goodbye. Make sure you start addressing this issue as soon as you know the relationship will be coming to a close.

- ➔ Plan a fun activity together prior to the termination date. Do something extra special for your last meeting.

- ➔ Be honest, candid, and supportive, regardless of the reason for the termination.

- ➔ Encourage your mentee to express his or her feelings about this transition. Help your mentee to express his or her emotions by modeling the behavior. For example, if your relationship is coming to a close and you and your mentee enjoyed your time together, you might say something like “I am going to really miss you. I have enjoyed our time together.” However, you must be honest. If your relationship is coming to a close and your time together was all right but not great, then don’t lie and say that you are going to be sad that this is over. Also, do not expect the young person to reciprocate. Even though you shared your emotions as a mentor, your mentee still might not feel comfortable sharing his or her emotions.

- ➔ Be prepared for your mentee’s anger or denial (often in the form of missed appointments);

- ➔ Help him/her anticipate these feelings. Be aware of and monitor your own feelings of guilt, sadness, relief, etc.

The Mentor/Mentee Relationship

- ➔ Use the termination process as a means to recall your mentee's strengths and progress.
- ➔ Reassure your mentee about your confidence in him/her.
- ➔ Mentors who are terminating because of time limitations or other reasons not related to the mentee *need to make particularly clear to the mentee that he/she did not do anything to make the mentor leave*. The mentor should share with the mentee the things about the mentee that he/she liked.
- ➔ Mutually agree on how and when/if you will stay in touch. Follow through on that commitment.

Note that you are encouraged to stay in touch with your mentee but not under the umbrella of the BCYMP program, primarily for liability purposes. It is up to you and your mentee as to whether you will stay in touch and how you will do that. Don't assume that just because you want to stay in contact that your mentee will want to as well. It must be mutual.

- ➔ Don't make promises that you cannot keep.

And REMEMBER!

Just as your mentee receives support from you during the mentoring relationship, it is also important that you share your experiences with and receive support from program staff and other mentors. Never hesitate to contact BCYMP program staff for assistance in any matter regarding your mentoring relationship.