

Why is Coaching So Essential to Safe and Effective Mentoring?

Mentoring is not always easy. You are bringing together an adult and a child who do not know each other and asking them to develop a friendship. They often have to overcome age, culture, and personality barriers. There are a few natural mentors out there who can connect with almost anyone, but most people need some help. The first few months of mentoring can be particularly challenging. It is not uncommon for a mentoring relationship to start off slow. The child can be unresponsive, causing the mentor to have trouble connecting with them. There may be scheduling issues, and sometimes the parent can subvert the building of the relationship. Matches need a coach in order to work through these challenges and to follow through with their mentoring commitment. Research shows that mentors who fail to follow through on their mentoring commitment actually cause harm to the child. Some mentors want to quit before their commitment is up, but it is the supervisor who helps encourage and challenge them to press on and complete the commitment.

Cynthia Sipe, an expert in the mentoring field, writes,

"...one of the strongest conclusions that can be drawn from the research on mentoring is the importance of providing mentors with support in their efforts to build trust and develop a positive relationship with youth. Volunteers and youth cannot be simply matched and left to their own devices; programs need to provide an infrastructure that fosters the development of effective relationships."²

“More specifically, research has found that:

- Programs in which professional staff provides regular support to mentors are more likely to have matches that meet regularly and participants who are satisfied with their relationships.
- Programs in which mentors are not contacted regularly by staff have the greatest percentage of failed matches – those that don't meet consistently and thus never develop into relationships.