



## Tutoring Tips and Guidelines

Tutoring is essentially an individual experience—the relationship of two individuals working closely together. In this relationship, there is no one method, no easy answer. Most successes will be found with methods which you develop yourself while working with the student. Any method that helps your student will be considered the best method.

### Purpose of Tutoring

- To improve the education achievement of the student
- To better the student's view of their self, to increase their life experiences
- To widen the horizons of the student through contact with a concerned, helpful, more experienced person.

### Commitment

Tutoring demands a definite commitment. Do not start unless you can be faithful throughout the entire program. Very few things will kill a student's faith in their tutor and the program quicker than having a tutor who fails to show at the scheduled tutoring session.

### Defining Your Role as a Tutor/Mentor

Why do we say “tutor/mentor” rather than just “tutor”? Because in addition to needing academic aid and instruction, young people need someone to help them, listen to them, motivate them, and give them advice and encouragement. That is the role of a mentor.

*Tutor: (n) a person charged with the instruction and guidance of another.*

*(v) 1. to have guardianship, tutelage, or care of*

*2. to teach or guide, usually in a specific subject or for a specific purpose.*

*Mentor: (n) a trusted counselor or guide; a tutor*

*How can I help?* This is the primary question that a tutor/mentor should ask over and over. Below is a list of areas where you can be a tutor/mentor to your student. Through these activities you build trust and confidence. Your example is a model to the young people of this program. The student may become motivated to access the other support systems available to help them succeed.

- Setting goals and staying focused
- Making informal decisions
- Developing and practicing good study habits
- Completing homework and school projects
- Improving class attendance
- Staying motivated
- Preparing for college or other training
- Finding a job
- Exploring career possibilities
- Providing new experiences and opportunities to learn
- Meeting successful people
- Solving personal problems

By talking and listening to your student each week, you will begin to share the secrets of your success and build an understanding of your student that will help you to become and remain a successful tutor/mentor.

*Tutoring tips presented below summarize suggestions which other tutors have found helpful. They are intended to serve as a guide to you in your work. They will be valuable to the extent that you use them.*

## **General Tips**

- 1) Relax and be yourself.
- 2) Personal concern for your student is your greatest asset as a tutor. Past experience has shown that effective tutoring is based more on rapport between tutor and student than upon experience in the subject area. Tutors should work to build a relationship of mutual confidence with their student.
- 3) Keep in mind that what you do is as much a language as what you say. Be aware of your non-verbal messages. By both actions and words, by physical contact and praise, the tutor must show the child that he/she is trusted, respected and expected to succeed.
- 4) It is important to utilize materials with which the student can identify racially, ethnically, and culturally. Use simple biographies, pictures of entertainment, sports, political and literature written by members of their race.
- 5) Provide as many opportunities as possible for the child to make choices or assume some planning of the tutoring session.
- 6) The use of standardized tests should be de-emphasized. Judge a student's progress by the growth in their use of books, the variety of their reading choices, their ability to use library resources and reference materials, and above all, their abilities in talking and writing about what they have read or their ability to apply math concepts to real life situations.
- 7) Stimulate language in every conceivable way of speaking, listening, reading, and writing: reactions to pictures, role-playing, writing and acting plays, discussions, games, riddles, story telling. Plan to read out loud to your student each week, no matter how old the student may be.
- 8) Recognize that children are not motivated by vague comments about progress or statements that their good work will result in something good in the future (grades, school awards, a better job). Children are present-time oriented. Not future-time oriented, like adults. Make your rewards consistent, immediately after the fact, and specific. A compliment, a smile, a pat on the back, or a hug are particularly effective. Make your praise specific. Point out changes that you have seen either through the course of one lesson or over the weeks of tutoring.
- 9) To build a rapport, talk with the student about mutual interest. And above all, listen! Be accepting!
- 10) Rome wasn't built in a day...so remember to be patient with the student!!

## **Profile of a Successful Tutor/Mentor**

- Makes and keeps personal commitment to be a tutor/mentor for extended period of time—six months to one year at minimum.
- Regularly attends scheduled meetings with student. Does not make promises or commitments to student that cannot be kept.
- Incorporates reading, writing and academic reinforcement into each meeting.
- Spends time between sessions developing activities for each meeting with student.
- Sets goals with the student and helps student achieve them.
- Builds success into the structure of every interaction and/or meeting with the student.
- Respects individuals, their abilities and their rights to make their own choices in life.
- Listens and accepts different points of view in a non-judgmental manner.
- Does not reject the student through personal remarks or nonverbal clues.
- Brings creativity and initiative to tutor/mentor activities.
- Sees solutions and opportunities as well as barriers.
- Is flexible and open in dealing with student, other volunteers and program leaders.
- Seeks to offer constructive criticism as well as solutions.
- Utilizes personal involvement in improving effectiveness of tutor/mentor activity.
- Does not become quickly discouraged. Some student behavior patterns have taken a long time to develop. Understands that some improvements may appear, but permanent change comes slowly.

## Top Twenty Tips for Tutors/Mentor

- 1) Put your student first. During the tutoring session concentrate on their needs and problems. Be flexible. If your student wants to review some previous material or talk about a problem, drop your plans for the session and focus on the immediate needs.
- 2) Be your student's friend, but not a buddy. A "friend" is a person who looks out for your best interest. Therefore, a friend never allows you to do less than your best. A friend does not allow you to shirk responsibilities.
- 3) Approach your student on a basis of mutual respect. Your student has experienced many things you have not and has knowledge you do not have. Show respect for these things and do not belittle them for things not known or skills not yet acquired.
- 4) Take time to get to know your student. Some young people are very open and others are not. Spend some time assessing your student's strengths and weaknesses. That way, you can build success into every session. Remember that self-esteem building is very important.
- 5) Set realistic goals and make reaching them fun. Establish a starting point for success. Accommodate your student's attention span into your lesson. Break your activities up into manageable chunks.
- 6) Set rules from the very beginning. Be firm and consistent in enforcing those rules. Don't be afraid to say no or correct inappropriate behavior. When young adults know you are serious, they will respect you and you can be much more productive.
- 7) Minimize distractions. Sit in an area away from other kids if necessary.
- 8) Give your relationship time to establish itself. You may get resistance at first but, with patience and persistence, he/she will eventually warm to you.
- 9) Set up a structure for your session. Young adults respond well to structure because they know what to expect. Mix work and fun.
- 10) Be dependable. Your student quickly learns to count on you and your absence is a big disappointment. If you make a promise, be prepared to keep it.
- 11) You may have to try several different ways of explaining a concept or solving a problem before the student will understand. Be patient and creative. Don't give up!
- 12) It is important to praise your student. At times it can be awkward but young people thrive on it.

- 13) Give reassurance when your student becomes frustrated or insecure about abilities. You can instill that "I can" mentality.
- 14) Foster independence. It is tempting to do the work for the student but that defeats the purpose. Demonstrate the procedure and then leave the student to work alone and use you as a resource in case of trouble.
- 15) Give your student the gift of time. Many young people always feel pressured or rushed. They are denied the time they need to really think through a problem to answer it correctly so they say the first thing that comes into mind. You can offer them that time that teachers often can't.
- 16) Be prepared for the session because often students won't bring homework.
- 17) Avoid sarcasm. Young adults will probably not understand it. They will sometime interpret it as a put down rather than a joke.
- 18) Never discuss the student in front of them, unless it is to give praise.