



The Need for
Being Connected

The **Bsomebody2someone** Mentor Training Series was originally developed in connection with ‘Getting Connected,’ a project of ADRA Australia. It has been adopted and reshaped by the General Conference Youth Ministries Department to be implemented globally.

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Published by the General Conference Youth Ministries Department

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First edition: ADRA Australia, 2007.
Second edition: ADRA Australia, 2007.
Third edition: General Conference Youth Ministries Department, 2015.

Printed in the United States of America.

Themes in This Series:

Book 1: Incorporating Mentoring in Your Youth Ministry

Introduction to the purpose and philosophy of this resource along with a guide for implementing an intentional mentoring program in your school, church, club, workplace or other organisation.

Book 2: The Need for Being Connected

An exploration of current statistics regarding the behaviour crisis facing today’s youth and the answers presented to us through empirical evidence.

Book 3: Definitions and Types of Mentoring

An introduction to the history and use of the term “mentoring” and an examination of mentoring applications in today’s culture.

Book 4: Benefits of Mentoring

An overview of compelling reasons for being involved in mentoring.

Book 5: Being a Mentor

Basic principles and practical tips for being a mentor. This is considered fundamental information for those involved in any mentoring situation.

Book 6: Being a Mentor Partner

A preparation presentation for those who want to find a mentor for themselves or for those who will be entering a mentoring relationship.

Book 7: Passing On Values

Guidelines and practical tips for assisting the mentor in passing on positive values to a mentor partner.

Book 8: Listening Skills

An interactive tutorial on developing crucial fundamental listening skills for all relationships with information on dealing with crisis situations and mandatory reporting.

Bsomebody2someone

Mentoring Training Series

A Note from the Director

The significance of mentoring in the context of intergenerational youth ministry has been one of the main topics of discussions in credible youth forums and literature recently. Youth professionals have long concluded that what has been characterized as the ‘One ear mickey mouse’ approach to ministry, where young people are isolated from the rest of the congregation and placed in an environment that is ‘supposedly’ conducive to their spiritual development, is a fallacy, in spite of all good intents and purposes.

While it is recognized that the ‘isolationist’ approach was a pragmatic reaction to the many challenges that youth leaders were encountering in an age of unprecedented change, its long-term effects have not proved to be beneficial for the body of Christ. There is a current call to a return to more family and intergenerational-based approach to youth ministry. It calls for the collaboration of youth professionals, volunteers, parents, pastors and the church at large. This might be the longer, more arduous road to travel, but it is the one prescribed in the Scriptures, the one that will prove to pay eternal dividends.

Bsomebody2someone is a valuable tool in your hands to assist in this paradigm shift in youth ministry.

Bsomebody2someone is a series of training presentations designed to enable individuals and groups to intentionally engage in mentoring, both to find a mentor for themselves and to be a mentor for others.

This resource package consists of seven presentations for use in groups to educate, inspire and equip mentors and mentor partners. Each presentation is a discreet topic on its own and is produced as a set of PowerPoint slides with notes for the presenter. Our intention is that anyone interested in mentoring can use this package. No previous training or special knowledge is required to present this material or lead a group in its exploration of mentoring. There are some activities written into the notes. These activities are optional, but they are given with the intention of applying the concepts presented and engaging the group in the learning process.

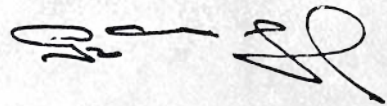
The Need for Being Connected

A Note from the Director (*continued*)

The topics in the series are listed in order of suggested presentation for a complete training package. However, not all topics will be required for all mentoring applications. Examine each presentation and use those that will be most useful to you.

The time required to move a group through each presentation will vary according to the group and the leader. If a presenter uses the activities provided and adds time for discussion and other activities, each program could stretch to one or more hours. Of course, the presentation could be as short as the time it takes to click through the slides. Remember, the more the group processes, discusses and absorbs the information on each slide, the more effective the material will be.

Sincerely,



Gilbert R. Cangy, Director
General Conference Youth Ministries Department

Note for leaders: *There is no required supplementary material. All that is required is the projection of the PowerPoint show, note taking paper and a pen.*

Topics

- **The Value of Connectedness**
- **Youth in Crisis**
- **Resilience**
- **Impacters and Shapers**

This presentation highlights the need for people to ‘belong’. We know that people are more emotionally healthy when they feel ‘connected’ to the world around them. We all need to feel like we are wanted, valued, and have a role to play in our environment.



Youth/Adult Separation

"In relation to the larger society, the post-modern home is no longer a haven, a place for nurturance and protection. Rather it is more like a railway station, with parents and children pulling in and out as they go about their busy lives."

David Elkind

Youth/Adult Separation

It is no secret that the world is changing rapidly. A major influence on the change in western society is the change in the dynamics of families. The lifestyle of the family has greatly changed as we have moved from the nuclear family to the post-modern family.

An interesting description of this family change gives the imagery of a railway station and shows how influences outside the home have consumed the time that is available to other 'important' priorities instead of being devoted to each member of the home. The statement says this:

"In relation to the larger society, the post-modern home is no longer a haven, a place for nurturance and protection. Rather it is more like a railway station, with parents and children pulling in and out as they go about their busy lives." David Elkind, *Ties that Stress: The New Family Imbalance*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994)

Through the family change, children have lost their "safe environment" and often, because both parents work, are on their own and are forced to become more independent. These children are often referred to as the "latch-key" kids who leave and arrive home without adult supervision.

In modern western society, youth are often separated from adults. Even in school they are segregated into their age categories to be taught by one adult per 30 students. Many adolescents live their lives entertained by electronica but unsupervised by adult family. To further complicate this, many have little contact with their grandparents or other members of their extended family. This lack of intergenerational contact for young people creates a great need to have adults who will take the time to build a relationship with them.

"Teenagers are increasingly isolated from the adult world. And even when young people are "with" adults, it is usually in a large setting in which the teenagers are being entertained, informed or directed by those adults, leaving little opportunity for the dialogue and collaboration required for youth to learn adult values."

[Mark DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 36, 37.]



Study finds depression linked to student 'belonging'

<http://abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200611/s1787712.htm>
November 2006

- New research from the Queensland University of Technology, has found a link between how well a teenager feels connected to their school, and adolescent mental health.
- Professor Ian Shochet says the study found a teenager's sense of belonging to their school has the strongest link to depression, after prior mental illness.
- "Interventions aimed at schools to promote school 'connectedness' is an absolutely vital part of what we need to do if we're going to provide healthy teenage development," he said.
- "So certainly taking a whole of school approach where you can have a school climate that is focused on connectedness."
- Prof Shochet says the issue has more bearing on a student's mental health than their home environment. "In fact, our research has shown that school connectedness is an even stronger predictor than attachment to parents," he said.

Study Links Depression to Student 'Belonging'

This interesting research highlights the link between depression and a teenager's sense of belonging in high school.

Professor Shochet says that school connectedness "has more bearing on a student's mental health than their home environment".

Why is school so important? Perhaps because when a student is in high school, that school represents the student's primary life community. For a student; work, play and social functioning all revolve around school. School is the primary living environment for most students.

So to have a sense of belonging and to feel connected to the school community is vital for emotional health.



What’s in a Name?

- Acknowledge they exist
- Allow them into your personal memory
- Make them significant
- Reach out to make contact

What’s in a Name?

The first step to becoming connected with a person is to learn their name. When you use a person’s name, it acknowledges to them that you have taken the time to find out, or already know, who they are. This provides significance as you have ‘remembered’ them, making it easier for them to approach you to make the initial steps towards a relationship. When someone uses your name, it automatically opens the door to a more positive and secure interaction.

ACTIVITY: Divide into groups of 4 – 8 and ask everyone to introduce themselves just once with their first name and then be silent as a group. Tell them that the goal is to remember the name of every person in the group after just the one introduction. Ask how many were able to remember each name in the group. Discuss with the group why it is sometimes quite difficult to remember people’s names, even when you want to.

Next, ask the groups to go around one by one, saying their name again — but this time also saying the name of a common household item that might symbolise themselves. (i.e., my name is Joe and I’ll be a can opener because I like getting into things that seem impossible from the outside). After they have completed this task, ask again if individuals can remember the names of everyone in their group. Hopefully more (or all) will be able to do it. What made the difference? Being interested and knowing something personal about the person.



Youth in Crisis

Youth in Crisis

Emotional health isn’t confined to a simple concept like ‘feeling good’. The implications of connectedness extend beyond feelings to behaviour. Australian young people are in a crisis revolving around risk taking behaviour.

ACTIVITY: In the same groups as before make a group list of the things they see as dangerous behaviours in Australian youth. Which of those does the group think are the most dangerous? Keep the list handy and see how it compares with the following statistics.



Tobacco Use Among Youth: Children aged 13 – 15 years

- A study of students aged 13–15 years in 43 countries and the Gaza Strip/West Bank region found that:
- 33% had had at least one or two puffs of a cigarette
 - 18.7% currently use any tobacco product
 - 13.9% currently smoked cigarettes
 - 8.8% currently used other tobacco products
 - 23.9% of those who had ever smoked **had taken their first cigarette before the age of ten!**
 - 9.4% of those currently smoking smoked more than six cigarettes per day

<http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/11/3/252/T2.expansion.html>

Tobacco Use Among Youth

One of the things this study asked was why kids smoked. A shocking number of them, a median 28%, with the highest percentages in the Indian and Asian regions, (up to 60.7%; see below) said that “kids who smoke have more friends”! If you can encourage an effective mentoring program in your area, and if that mentoring program also encourages healthy friendships among the youth themselves, you may be able to help reverse this trend. An important note is that this study is from 1999-2000. It’s likely that the statistics have come down at least a little. We can help them come down further.

(<http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/11/3/252.full>)

Perceptions and attitudes: Students who smoke have more friends

The students were asked a series of questions regarding their perception and attitudes toward smoking (table 3). The overall median percent of students who responded “boys who smoke have more friends” was 28.0%, with Sikkim, India (60.7%) reporting the highest rate, and Colonia, Uruguay (8.7%) the lowest. More than 30% of the students responded “boys who smoke had more friends” in 29 of the 71 sites, whereas this figure was less than 10% in three of the 71 sites (Buenos Aires, Argentina; Colonia, Uruguay; and Guangdong, China). When asked if students thought “girls who smoke have more friends” the overall median was 16.8%, the highest rate was in Sikkim, India (50.2%), and the lowest in Jakarta, Indonesia (3.9%). More than 30% of the students responded “girls who smoke had more friends” in six sites (Ghana; South Africa; three states in India and Fiji), whereas this figure was less than 10% in 10 of the 71 sites, including all four sites in China.

Binge Drinking



<http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=binge-drinking>

Binge Drinking

The shocking thing is that, as this same study reports, “Binge drinking is the most common form of alcohol consumption among youth”! Despite the reductions you see here, for which we can be grateful, the percentages are still too high. A mentoring program with adults and youth who respect their bodies and their complete health can help.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Binge drinking among high schoolers declined during the 2000s and is now at record low levels; however, as of 2013, nearly one in four [22 percent] 12th-graders reported this behavior.

Binge drinking is the most common form of alcohol consumption among adolescents.[1] Alcohol use among youth is associated with a wide variety of other risky behaviors and poor outcomes, including unprotected sexual intercourse, vulnerability to coerced sexual activity, the use of marijuana, and poor academic performance.[2],[3] Binge drinking in particular is associated with poor school performance as well as involvement in other health risk behaviors, such as riding with a driver who has been drinking, cigarette smoking, sexual activity, being a victim of dating violence, attempting suicide, and using illicit drugs.[4] Consuming larger quantities of alcohol is also associated, among young women, with benign breast disease, a risk factor for cancer.[5] In 2010, nearly a third of all traffic deaths among young drivers ages 15 to 20 were alcohol related.[6]

See more at: <http://bit.ly/1Gv1qHa>



Sexual Activity at High School

- The United Nations Population Fund and the October 2006 Lancet Journal report the following sobering facts:
- Most youth become sexually active during their teen years.
 - 14,000,000 girls from 15-19 give birth each year, a leading cause of death for young girls.
 - This does not include those who had abortions or miscarried due to lack of prenatal care.
 - Roughly 5,000 youth are infected with HIV daily. Half of all new HIV infections are between 15 and 24, and most of those are women.
 - Earlier age of puberty and a trend toward later marriage has led to an increase in the prevalence of premarital sex.
 - Over 80 million girls now between ages 10 and 17 will marry before their 18th birthday, disrupting their education and limiting their opportunities.

The National Survey of Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2002

Sexual Activity at High School

These statistics are heartbreaking. No matter what country you live in, your youth are in desperate need of the guidance of caring adults.

The following figures, reported by the United Nations Population Fund and in the October 2006 Lancet Journal series, provide just some evidence of the tremendous needs that exist worldwide:

- Most youth become sexually active during their teenage years.
- Fourteen million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth each year. Pregnancy is a leading cause of death for young women in the developing world; in fact, young women are four times more likely to die during childbirth than (sic) those just a few years older.
- Young women are less likely to receive antenatal care and more likely to undergo unsafe abortion.
- Roughly 5,000 youth become infected with HIV each day. One half of all new HIV infections occur in young people between ages 15 and 24. The majority of these are young women.
- Earlier age of puberty and a trend toward later marriage has led to an increase in the prevalence of premarital sex.
- Over 80 million girls now between ages 10 and 17 will marry before their 18th birthday, disrupting their education and limiting their opportunities.

Informative websites:

1. Advocates for Youth <http://bit.ly/1GUwM8l>
2. The Summit Foundation <http://bit.ly/1xsjdND>

Sex, Alcohol and STDs

- 25.9% of all sexually active students report that they have had unwanted sex at some time
- The most common reasons cited were being too drunk (15.9%) and pressure from a sexual partner (12.6%)
- In relation to the most recent sexual encounter, 22.7% indicated that they were drunk or high at the time
- Fewer than 10% of students believed that they were likely to become infected with Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, an STD or HIV

The National Survey of Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2002

Sex, Alcohol and STDs

This set of statistics is alarming because of the last point listed. Notice that 1 in 4 high school students who have been sexually active have had unwanted sex because they were pressured and/or drunk. Also notice that 1 in 5 students said that the last time they had sex they were drunk or influenced by drugs. This indicates how dangerous the Australian ‘culture’ of alcohol (remember the first slide on alcohol use?) and binge drinking has become.

Now here is a puzzling statistic: With up to 50% of students engaged in sexual activity, and understanding that a significant percentage of that activity is associated with the influence of alcohol — fewer than 10% believed they could get a sexually transmitted disease! How can that be? We have a strong public awareness and school based education culture as to the dangers of sexual activity in this country, and yet our young people think that the consequences of promiscuity won’t apply to them.

Are our young people stupid? No. Is our education flawed? Probably not.

The problem is that education alone is not enough.

WebMD News Archive:

1. Jan 11, 2008 — England has the highest percentage of sexually experienced 15-year-olds in Europe and Canada, a 24-nation survey shows.
2. Emmanuelle Godeau, MD, PhD, of the University of Toulouse, France, and colleagues asked some 34,000 15-year-olds about their sexual activities as part of a youth health survey. They collected the data in 2002 from students in 23 European countries and Canada.
3. Generally speaking, 15-year-olds from Western Europe were more likely to report sexual intercourse than those in Eastern Europe. When they did, they also were more likely to report use of effective birth control — either oral contraceptives or condoms.



Television, Computers

- Among 11 to 14 year-olds, three-quarters have a television in their bedroom
- Two-thirds have their own DVD player or video recorder
- One-quarter have a computer in their bedroom
- Two-thirds play computer games in their rooms
- Boys spent up to 18–22 hours a week in front of a screen, which was 3–5 hours more than girls

Sex, Alcohol and STDs (*continued*)

Other findings:

- Rates of sexual experience ranged from 38% in England to 14% in Croatia.
- Overall, 82% of sexually experienced teens used condoms and/or birth control pills.
- Condom use ranged from 53% of sexually active teens in Sweden to 89% in Greece.
- Birth control pill use ranged from 3% in Croatia to 48% in the Netherlands and in Flemish-speaking Belgium.
- Surprisingly, a large proportion of girls and boys — 16% overall — used both condoms and birth control pills when they last had sexual intercourse.
- In the seven nations that asked about emergency contraception, 10% of teens who did not use condoms or birth control pills used the morning-after pill after their most recent sexual episode.
- Withdrawal — a difficult method of birth control with a 25% failure rate among teens — was the birth control method used by a fifth of students not using other forms of birth control.
- In an editorial accompanying the study, John Santelli, MD, MPH, of New York's Columbia University notes that surveys of U.S. teens show they are less likely than Western European teens to use effective methods of birth control.
- Santelli and colleagues suggest that normalization of teen sexual behavior — coupled with an emphasis on personal responsibility — is linked to more use of birth control and lower pregnancy rates in teens.
- The Godeau study and the Santelli editorial appear in the January issue of *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*.

Visit <http://bit.ly/1J8MksW>

This slide shows the Australian stats for Sex, Alcohol, and STDs. Here is info for the US:

- <http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/adolescent-drinking-sexually-transmitted-disease-0511121/>
- <http://www.muirwoodteen.com/teen-substance-abuse/stds/>

Television, Computers

This slide is something we all know is happening. Our young people are spending more and more time in front of a screen. Notice that children in this age group are spending almost as much time in front of a screen as they are at school. This has implications for socialisation and isolation (the increasing pressure for people to be isolated as individuals rather than interacting face to face with people). It also has implications for the general health of our young people and child obesity (more information later on that).



Internet Use

Of the top 20 countries with the highest number of internet users, Australia has the highest rate of use: 14,663,522 users for a population of 20,750,052 as of Nov 27, 2006

Rate of internet penetration: 70.7%
Followed by:

USA	69.9%
Canada	67.9%
Japan	67.2%
South Korea	67.0%

InternetWorldStats.com from data published by Nielsen/NetRatings, ITU and other research sources

Internet Use

These recent statistics list Australia as the number one internet use country (by percentage of population) in the world. This supports the previous slide regarding time we are all spending in front of a screen.

More dangerous is the associated use of the internet (along with mobile phones using sms messages) for relationship interaction and pornography. It is suspected (we don't have reliable statistics) that Australia is among (if not the highest) the top consumers of pornography in the world. (Consider the dangers of this with the number of hours teenage boys are spending in front of a screen each week.) Our young people are also using much of their 'online' time in relationship interaction with others (girls more than boys).

The potential danger is that our young people are losing face to face contact with real people and communities in place of isolated interaction with people via electronic media.

Obesity

- Based on self-reported height and weight, 8% of males and 11% of females aged 15–17 were classified as overweight or obese in 2001
- Of those aged 18–24, 16% of males and 25% of females were classified as overweight or obese
- The proportion of obese girls aged 7–15 has increased by 358%, from 1980 to 1995. Boys have increased by 235%
- Australians have gained the unenviable title of being the second 'fattest nation' in the world, behind the United States of America

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004

Obesity

Obesity has been listed by some (statistics not available) as the second leading cause of death in the USA, and Australia is following that obesity trend. Notice that in the 15 years leading up to 1995, the proportion of obese girls in Australia increased by 358%!

This presents an extreme health risk that we seem to ignore in comparison to problems with drugs or pornography.

Note to leader: use statistics from your local areas/regions.



In Summary: Youth...

- Are getting fatter every year
- Spend as much time in front of a screen as they do at school
- Are using more drugs and developing more mental health problems
- Are increasing unprotected sexual activity, often with unwanted partners and have limited awareness of sexually transmitted diseases
- Are being abused and committing suicide at an alarming rate

In Summary...

ACTIVITY: Go back to your groups and compare your guess as to the dangerous behaviours of young people globally with the statistics presented here. What other dangerous behaviours are not represented in these stats?

Ask the whole group to discuss: Which of these stats is the most alarming to you personally? Why? Which of these stats was the most surprising?

What is the Answer?

- As a "stand alone" strategy in preventing harmful and risk taking behaviour, information is generally ineffective
Gary Hopkins
- One study in the Caribbean found that education alone accounted for approximately 2% of effective HIV risk prevention

What Is the Answer?

Remember the statistic about sexually active students? They have had plenty of education, yet still believed they would not be at risk of contracting an STD. This illustrates an important point:

Education alone as a strategy for preventing harmful behaviour is generally ineffective. In a study done on young people in the Caribbean, it was determined that young women could achieve high scores on knowledge and prevention of HIV AIDS. Yet, their behaviour (multiple sex partners) remained unchanged. From this study it was found that education regarding the dangers of the activity accounted for about 2% of effective prevention.

Consider this concept in our own day to day lives. How many smokers don't know that smoking is dangerous? How many of us know that fatty foods are not good for us, yet we continue to eat them? If we know that going over the speed limit risks lives, why do we do it?

It is clear in day to day life that 'knowing' something is bad for you doesn't necessarily change our behaviour. Yet we persist in limiting most of our prevention strategy to education alone.

It doesn't work.



Resilience

- Recently, a new and powerful concept has arisen that has inspired hope among researchers including educators; this is the concept of resilience
- Resilience is the capacity to maintain competent functioning in spite of adversity or life stressors

Gary Hopkins, *It Takes a Church*

Resilience

Enter the concept of resilience — the ability to ‘bounce back’ from difficult circumstances and avoid harmful risk taking behaviour. This is the term used to describe young people who DON’T fall into the harmful statistics we have been looking at.

Resilience is not a product of ‘book learning’. It cannot be ‘taught’, but rather seems to be ‘imparted’ to a young person as a result of multiple factors. The most significant of these factors is the sense of ‘connectedness’ or ‘belonging’ within their world.

“We don’t teach a kid how to become resilient. We surround them with social support or a loving and caring environment, we learn their names and greet them personally taking a few moments to talk one on one, and we develop enduring relationships with them” Gary Hopkins, *It Takes a Church*, page 4.

- Relationships with individuals who provide care, warmth, and unconditional love appear to provide young people with a sense that the odds faced in life can be overcome. These relationships appear to provide youngsters with self-esteem and a sense of self worth that makes successful coping more likely
- In one particular study it was found that “... resilient youngsters all had at least one person in their lives that accepted them unconditionally, regardless of temperamental idiosyncrasies, physical attractiveness, or intelligence”

Brooks, R. (1994). Children at risk: fostering resilience and hope

Relationships That Matter

These quotations illustrate the necessity for a young person to be immersed in a community where they are known and valued. We began this presentation with an exercise in learning names. Building a sense of connectedness in a person must begin with knowing who they are.

ILLUSTRATION: This story found in Gary Hopkin’s work, “It Takes A Church” illustrates the powerful influence of a connected community:

We have heard a story, not a scientific study using strict rules of research, of a very small town in the North West where alcohol and teen pregnancy surfaced as a problem. The city fathers were concerned about their kids and would often hold town meetings to discuss what to do.

They started with the logical steps. Experts in teen pregnancy were consulted and thousands of dollars were spent on the purchase of a very fancy teen pregnancy reduction program. It looked great. The packets that came with the purchase of the program came with very colorful texts along with professionally produced and edited videos which had been produced by some of Hollywood’s best. The actors portrayed in the videos were famous and recognizable; the same ones that the kids had seen in the most popular movies. This was great. How could it miss? The kids loved it and often talked about how neat it was and told their parents how much they enjoyed it. The school board, who was reluctant to spend thousands of dollars on the purchase of this highly acclaimed program, had been initially hesitant to purchase it due to the very high cost, but after they saw the reaction of the kids there was both relief and satisfaction that something effective had been found. They really worried about their kids and wanted to be able to help them. Finally they had found something that looked like it would work!

After a full year of teen pregnancy prevention education, the students remained enthusiastic. Interest had not diminished even a little bit. The kids really liked this program. One of the items that they liked the most was that the program came with fancy dolls. These dolls were life-like, weighed about the same as an infant, and had clothing along with hair that was realistic. The dolls had little computers



Relationships That Matter *(continued)*

installed in them to make them cry and even wet their diapers at timed intervals. The teacher would program the doll and give one to each of the students to carry to class and take home for two full weeks.

The students were required to carry their babies (dolls) to class and take them home every day. Part of the assignment was that when the students went out, even after school hours, they had to take the dolls with them. Along with the doll they had to take a bag with dry diapers, liquid that looked like baby formula in a real baby bottle, and a bag with towels and other items necessary for a parent with a real infant.

The computer in the dolls would make the babies cry at timed intervals. In order to stop this loud shriek, the student had to have a key handy which after inserting into the proper place would stop the crying. The students would wake up two or three times every night to change diapers, feed their babies, or stop the crying. This was very real.

The school liked this program so much that they purchased it for a second year and again the students seemed to really enjoy it. They especially looked forward to the part of the class when they were assigned their own babies to feed and care for.

After two years, the school board met and a very alert teacher asked a critical question. "I know how much the kids like the teen pregnancy prevention program but I wonder if it has really worked. I wonder if fewer teen pregnancies have occurred since we started this program?" The registrar was asked to review the records of how many young girls had dropped out of school for the past five years. She would also do some investigative work to see if she could find out how many of the dropouts were due to pregnancy.

At the next school board meeting the registrar gave her report. The rates of teen pregnancy over the past five years seemed to be stable. The number of girls in that school who had quit due to pregnancy

hadn't changed when a comparison of dropouts before and after the program had been initiated. The board members just sort of stared at each other for a few minutes. They were really surprised. The kids had enjoyed the program. What had happened?

After a pause, an older rancher, wearing cowboy boots with his feet propped up on a chair said, "I don't know what to do. It seems like when I was a kid, everyone in town knew us, called us by name, and sort of hooked into our lives. People were real back then and these problems weren't very common. Maybe we should get to know these kids." Board members reminisced about their earlier days and then someone came up with an idea. "Let's hold a town meeting. That wouldn't be hard. There are only about twelve hundred people living here. Let's ask every adult in town to learn the names of every kid. Let's greet them every time we see them and get to know them. Maybe that will have some effect." The board members weren't overwhelmed with the idea but decided to give it a try. A town meeting was held and the idea was presented. The towns people seemed willing to make a go of it. What did they have to lose? It wouldn't cost anything.

So, this plan was put into place. When old Abe saw a kid at the store he would stop for a second and ask their name. "Hey, I've seen you around but don't know what to call you. What's your name?" "My name is Mike." "Nice to know you Mike," Abe responded. "Call me Abe."

After that it seemed simple, "Hi, Mike." "Hi Abe." Nothing to it. One afternoon Abe came out of the hardware store and there stood Mike with a beer can in his hand. Abe said, "Hi, Mike." Mike quickly put the beer can behind his back. He didn't know why but he felt nervous holding a beer with Abe looking at him. Mike was uncomfortable and Abe could tell. Something had happened. Just by learning Mike's name a relationship had started. With that relationship came a little bit of commitment. Mike didn't want to disappoint Abe; he seemed so nice. Abe didn't scold Mike, he actually didn't say a thing. He simply smiled, as always, and went on with his business.



Impacters and Shapers

"Impacters" are those who come into our lives for a short time period and have a lasting effect.

"Shapers" are those people who have had a long term influence that has developed character in our lives.

Relationships That Matter *(continued)*

Several months after the town started on their effort to learn the names of the local kids another town meeting was held. There was an enthusiastic buzz in the room. People couldn't wait to tell their stories and every person in the room seemed to have one. People told of the relationships that they had developed with youngsters in town that started by just learning their names.

At a school board meeting a couple of years later the registrar mentioned something interesting. "It looks like the number of school dropouts has decreased for some reason. I did some digging of my own and it actually looks like the number of girls who quit school due to pregnancy has decreased." There were still a few pregnancies among the students but improvement was obvious. "Do you think that this has something to do with the town people learning the names of the kids?"

What happened in that little town was that the benefit of social support, relationships that developed by just learning the names of the kids, was starting to show up in the numbers of high school aged girls who were getting pregnant. The chief of police mentioned that the number of arrests for drug use among young people had also decreased in the previous two years.

Social support, relationships with others, a network of people who care, or love is very powerful. And, it doesn't take much effort or cost any money.

Impacters and Shapers

We each have people who have influenced who we are. The Impacters in our lives are those who come to us for a short period of time and change us.

Impacters can be negative or positive. A person who has been sexually assaulted by a stranger, for instance — could consider the abuser as a negative impacter. A positive impacter might be a camp counsellor, a motivational speaker, a visiting preacher, a movie, an experience — anything that happened and triggered a life change.

Shapers are also both negative and positive. An abusive parent, a condescending teacher or a school bully could all be considered negative shapers. Positive shapers are those people who have loved and believed in us over a long term in our lives. They could be parents, friends, relatives, coaches, teachers, etc.

It is the shapers who often have the greatest influence in who we are. Those positive shapers in our lives are the mentors who deserve recognition and appreciation. They are often the ones we neglect to acknowledge.



Who has shaped your life?

- List those people who have made a difference in your life:
 - In your family
 - In your church or club
 - In your sport
 - In your school
 - In your work

Who Has Shaped Your Life?

A mentor story: Mr. Day was one of those ‘old’ teachers. He must have been in his 60s when he taught me history in high school, and he wasn’t just old, he was just a little bit eccentric. He definitely wasn’t one of the teachers who all the kids thought was really ‘cool’. He was just a teacher and certainly not one who I would have considered (at the time) to be a mentor. He was just... a teacher.

He used to be known for telling stories and he never seemed to run out of them. He could tell about outlaws of the Wild West, famous soldiers or mountain men all day long. I took pride in being able to distract him from the classroom lesson by getting him to tell us another story.

Besides telling stories, Mr. Day was also known for his passion for ‘temperance’. He hated tobacco and alcohol and was always trying to get students to join the ‘temperance club’ and go to local primary schools to do a skit, a puppet show and talk to the kids about a healthy lifestyle. I didn’t think much of the temperance club until I realised you could get out of some classes if you joined.

As soon as I left that school I worked at a summer camp where they needed a story teller for the kid’s campfire program. I put my hand up for that. It was easy, I just remembered what I could from Mr. Day’s stories and made up the rest. I may have got the facts jumbled up but they seemed to work and I became known for telling stories. Later I became a teacher and in my local church I was a youth leader. Maybe it was just a coincidence that I never smoked or got drunk.

I eventually became a high school chaplain and together with my students we came up with the idea of going to communities to serve, with no strings attached. A big part of what we did in every town was to talk with kids using puppets and telling stories. I thought we were being quite creative at the time.

Then, years later I heard that Mr. Day was still alive, but that he was getting old and not doing too well. I thought of my career, the things I had accomplished that I was the most grateful for — and it dawned on me that I had spent much of my life imitating Mr. Day. He had a huge influence on my life

and I had never realised it; never given it even a second thought until then. I was appalled at myself for how blind and ungrateful I was, and I sat down and wrote him a letter to say thanks. I sent it to his granddaughter to take to him and see if he still remembered who I was.

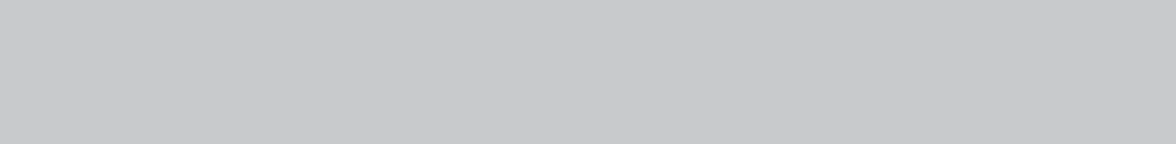
Sometime later I received a letter back from her. Here are some parts of it:

“My grandma had died the year before, bringing a temporary close to a love story that had begun nearly 65 years ago. After her death, Grandpa began to drift, spending long hours sitting in a chair, or not even bothering to get out of bed at all... my grandpa had begun to doubt his usefulness, that at the end of a long life, he had begun to question what had really done that was worth while... Shortly after I began to pray that God would work in my grandpa’s heart and heal whatever sorrow it held, we received an email from (you). My grandpa carried that letter with him for days; he showed it to everyone. He continually talked about his former student, reminiscing about the fun they had had, and the lives they had touched. He told us how he had begun to feel worthless for doing little in his life to honor his Lord, and how this letter meant so much to him.”

I got tears in my eyes when I read the difference that one note of gratitude made. They were as much tears of shame as they were of thankfulness that I hadn’t waited any longer. Mr. Day isn’t around anymore but his influence is just as alive as I am. In fact, I may have even passed his legacy on to someone else myself.

DISCUSS: *What did Mr. Day do that made him such an effective mentor? Although the writer didn’t state it, what kind of encouragement or support might Mr. Day have given to his former student? How much of a coincidence do you think it was that the writer became a teacher with a passion for story telling and service adventure? Is it possible that the writer’s natural gifts and interests were in that area and that he would have developed those skills anyway? The writer expressed personal disappointment in not acknowledging Mr. Day earlier. What difference might it have made to both men had he done so?*





Who Has Shaped Your Life? (continued)

ACTIVITY: Take some time now to make a list of those people who have shaped you in these areas of your life. Note whether you have recognised these people as significant in your life. Do you need to say or write something to them? Make a note to do it.

Action

- Write a letter
- Phone call
- Gift
- Visit
- Speak to a family member
- Make a memorial
- ... what do you need to do?



Action

As you consider the shapers and the impacters in your life, realise that these people played a large part in making you who you are now. Here are some ideas for how to show your appreciation or to acknowledge their positive input in your life. Unfortunately for some of us, those shapers may have passed on from us before we've had a chance to acknowledge their value or say thank you. In that case, you may choose to acknowledge their input to the family, or in some other way. You may even choose to make or write something as a memorial for them.

Whatever you do, realise that by recognising and remembering the positive input of the people who have shaped your life you are enhancing their influence in your life.



California Mentor Foundation Research

57,000 mentored youth surveyed:

- 98.4% stayed in school
- 85.25% did not use drugs
- 97.9% did not become a teen parent
- 98.2% did not join a gang

California Mentor Foundation Research

In this study done in the USA, the positive effect of a young person having someone as a mentor who believed in them and supported them was significant.

Our self image is primarily based
on what we think
those who we value
think of us.

Significant People

The people whom we value (shapers or impacters) determine how we view ourselves. If the significant people in our lives criticise, ignore or abuse us — if they tell us through words and actions that we are of little value — then we are likely to believe that. However if those people believe in us, see the best in us, love and value us, then we will tend to view ourselves in the same way. Significant people in our lives shape our perception of who we are and what we can become.

We do not always ‘choose’ the significant people in our lives. Our parents and family members are significant, regardless of whether we want them to be or not. We can choose some people, friends, and mentors who will have a positive influence and can help us develop self respect and confidence.



Therefore, how we view ourselves is a gift.

Self Image

It is a myth that we can change our self image by ourselves. Regardless of how much we try to look in the mirror and tell ourselves that we are OK, smart, capable and beautiful — it will never work to change our core belief about ourselves. How we view ourselves is a gift, and the way to change it is to first consider the people who are active and important in our lives.

Implications for Mentoring

- “The people we value might not be the people who value us”
- “The people we value might not know we value them”
- “The people who value us might not be important to us”

Implications for Mentoring

Because our self image is based on those people around us whom we value, there are some interesting implications for mentoring.

“The people we value might not be the people who value us”

If you want to be a mentor to someone, you will value them. However, they might not see you as someone important in their life. As a mentor partner, you might desire someone to be a mentor to you — you value them. However they may not choose to take an interest in you. This is natural and good. We cannot ‘force’ a connection with people — we can only invite it.

“The people we value might not know we value them”

The next aspect to this equation is that as an adult who might be willing to be a mentor, you don’t know for sure which young person considers you as important to them. In fact, the young person themselves doesn’t always know until later who made a strong impression on his/her life. As a young person, this means that it’s important to let people know when they mean something to you. As a potential mentor it means that you just don’t know who might really benefit from that kind word, recognition or positive attention that you could give.

“The people who value us might not be important to us”

This is the reality that mentors need to be aware of. Just because a mentor is interested in a young person, is willing to spend time with him/her and be a positive influence in their life, doesn’t mean that the young person will accept or value them as a mentor. Mentoring is something that cannot be forced, planned or engineered.

The lesson here is that there is incredible power in offering to ‘be somebody to someone’ as a mentor or significant person in their life. To recognise a person, learn their name, get to know them and believe in them can be life changing.

But it doesn’t happen automatically. We can’t just assign someone to ‘be somebody’ to another. It is rather an attitude that needs to be adopted by a community. If a group of people: a family, a church, a school or a community, decided to apply even these basic principles of developing connectedness, the potential for real change is great.



"The least movement is of importance to all nature.

The entire ocean is affected by a pebble."

Blaise Pascal

Influencing Change

We all have the ability to influence and our collective influence is what changes lives.

