



Being a Mentor Partner

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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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.



Being a Mentor Partner

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

- **Qualities of a mentor partner**
- **Who and what to look for in a mentor**
- **How to ask for a mentor**
- **Issues you will need to consider**

We tend to focus much on being a mentor. Our goal is for each person to aspire to 'be somebody to someone' through mentoring. But there are two parts to every relationship, and a mentoring relationship is no different. Being a good partner is as important as being a good mentor.



What is Missing in Your Life?

- Who should have been there but wasn't?
- What should have happened but didn't?
- Who would have helped but couldn't?
- What might have been good?

Qualities You Need

"Does not wisdom call over?"
Proverbs 9:10

- Humility
- Consistency
- Appreciation
- Assertiveness
- Honesty
- Accountability

What Is Missing in Your Life?

ACTIVITY: Take some time to consider what aspects of your life have not been developed like they could have been. If there was an ideal childhood, teenage years and young adult life — what would that look like? What aspects of a life like that have you missed out on? Make some notes and share them with the group if you are able.

It is worth considering these questions when thinking about a mentor. We tend to want to 'move on' and cope with the things that are missing in our life. But a mentor can be a powerful influence in helping to balance some of those life areas. Of course, a mentor will never replace a missing father or best friend. But a mentor can be a positive voice of someone who believes in you, who encourages, challenges and sees the best in you.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that there are people who don't have something missing in their lives. We all need a network of support. Of course, some people have had harder lives than others but no person has had a perfect life. We all have something missing... and good mentors can help all of us find a better balance in life.

Qualities You Need

If we can realise that there is a need for mentors in our lives (and there is for each one of us), the next most important question is to consider the qualities needed as a mentor partner. To ask for a mentor is both an act of humility and a search for wisdom.

Obviously there are many valuable qualities useful for a mentor partner. Outlined next are a few that are necessary. Make note of them and evaluate your own life for each.

Humility:

Have a 'teachable spirit'. There is no point in asking for a mentor if you have nothing to learn or change in your life. To realise your own need and acknowledge that someone else could help you is fundamental to being a mentor partner.

Consistency

Don't say that you value your mentor's time and then not turn up for an appointment! This is an issue of respect. If you ask for a mentor, then be responsible for following up that contact and making appointments on time.

Appreciation

This is probably the greatest gift you will have to offer your mentor. You don't need to pay your mentor and rarely is there anything that you can offer in return. But to say thank you is something all mentors want to hear. It doesn't hurt to say it again and again. Say it or write it — or find some way of letting your mentors know you appreciate them. This is an important point to remember for those of us who have had mentors in the past that we haven't thanked or acknowledged publicly. If you can think of someone like that, make a note to thank them now.

Assertiveness

Say what you want from your mentor. Speak openly about how the relationship is going, both positive and negative. Don't pre-judge his/her response or expect your mentor to know what you're thinking. A mentor can't be expected to read your mind or your life — help them to help you.



Asking for a Mentor

Qualities You Need *(continued)*

Honesty

Beware of ‘covering yourself’ or ‘colouring’ a story or making yourself look that little bit better — if so, you are robbing both of you of the best benefits of a mentoring relationship. It is easy to deceive ourselves into thinking that there are others to blame or excuses to make for the situations that we find ourselves in. If a mentor is to be a helpful influence, it is important to be vulnerable. Take time to build up your trust in your mentor — when you are confident, be honest enough to expose who you really are, and experience the comfort of having someone see the worst in you and still love you.

Accountability

Allow yourself to be changed by the mentoring relationship. If you are not changing, then you are both wasting your time. Ask your mentor to challenge certain areas in your life that you want to see changed, and be thankful when the challenge comes. Make it your goal to be a better person because of the influence that this person (your mentor) has in your life.

ACTIVITY: *On a piece of paper as an individual, make some notes to yourself: If you had to choose one of these that you are the weakest in, which would it be? How will you develop it?*

If you had to choose which of these you are now the strongest in, which would it be? Write it down and challenge yourself to make that even stronger in your life.

Now fold or turn over your paper and ask your partner to say which they think you are weakest/strongest in. Understand — weakness is not sin! To say you think someone (or you yourself) needs more support in a certain area need not cause hurt feelings. But it will be interesting to compare your own opinion of yourself with another’s. How well this person knows you will add to the interest.

Asking for a Mentor

Now if you want a mentor in your life, you may need to ask for one. There are some guidelines in the next few slides.^a

Get some note paper ready and answer for yourself some of the questions that are raised here:



What

- Be honest with yourself and consider where you are lacking
- Consider areas in your life that are just not working and consider things (or people) in your life that have been missed

What

What Are You Asking For?

First consider why you want a mentor. Is there a specific area that you would like to improve? Is there something that is wrong or difficult in your life? Are you entering or going through a particular phase in your life that you need guidance or encouragement in? This refers back to the 'what is missing' slide earlier.

An Anonymous Mentor Story

I have never had the privilege of having a work/career mentor. I've been working as a professional for some time now and I've been reasonably successful, but I've never had someone whom I could consider a really 'work mentor'. Thinking about where I am in life just now and what I want to achieve in the future, this is something I would really value.

You rarely get to choose your employers or workmates so I realise that finding a mentor at work is a bit more difficult and a bit of 'luck-of-the-draw'. But I'm starting to realise how important it is to have a mentor. Perhaps I might have to take a more proactive approach. I expect that I might need to source someone I admire and respect and formally ask them to be a mentor.

For me, this is an interesting step because in childhood people tended to take interest in me simply (I thought) because I was young and guidance was something old people did. Now as an adult I think I try to make it look like I've got things together so it's not so obvious that I still need mentors. It feels like this will be a good step. I need to move on from expecting someone to be interested in me to asking for someone to be interested in me. It feels a bit weird and almost has an 'I'm desperate' feeling to it; but it's probably a healthy thing to humble myself to ask for help and guidance. Regardless of how it appears I'm doing professionally, I still strive to do better. I think I not only need a work mentor, I also want one.

DISCUSS: What do you think the writer wants from a mentoring relationship? Does the writer sound troubled or desperate? Explain the impression you got of the writer's struggle about formally asking for a mentor. Are there any clues to suggest that the writer wants a positive relationship as well as a work 'coach'?

ACTIVITY: Take some time now and write down what you need. You could also ask the question in a different way and say why you want a mentor.



Who

- What do you want in a person whom you are inviting to have direct input and influence in your life?

Who

Who do you want to be your mentor? At first, this can seem like a daunting question — how do you know who to ask?

First consider this question: What do you want in a person whom you are inviting to have direct input and influence in your life?

What *kind* of person do you want as a mentor? Consider what you need (previous slide) and then consider the kind of person who could meet that need. Leave identities out of it for now — just think about the skills, traits, characteristics and character of the person who you might invite to be a part of your life. Remember that you will be asking someone to influence you. How do you want to be influenced?

Dream Team

- You may identify a few people you admire in the area of business and finance
- And a completely different list for relationships and coping with stress
- You might have another list for spiritual issues

Dream Team

ACTIVITY: *Now spend some time thinking about the people who might be able to fill the ‘what’ and ‘who’ questions we just asked. If you could pick anyone... anyone at all in the whole world... to take a personal interest in your life, to guide you, teach you, challenge you, coach you... who would you put down as your international dream team? Write down that list and talk about it with people next to you.*

Next, it’s time to be a bit more realistic. Redefine your dream team to those people who you know personally and can be in contact with. Don’t worry just yet about logistics — where they are, how much time they have, etc... Just write down people you know that you would like to be in contact with.

The last step is to consider which of these people on your dream team you might ask to be a mentor. Be practical about how you will communicate and what kind of time the person may have, but try not to ‘pre-judge’ their willingness to find the time to be a mentor to you. Even if you don’t know the person very well, you may be surprised at their positive response to being a mentor. Most important is to allow them the chance to make the decision for themselves.

More on that in the next couple of slides.



What if they say 'no'?

- It's a compliment
- They won't get offended
- It will make a positive impression
- Respect them enough to allow them to decide
- Don't give up

How to Ask

- You can ask:
 - in writing, via a letter or e-mail
 - or over the phone
 - or in person
- Allow them to say No
- Ask permission from their spouse/significant other

What if They Say 'No'?

To be asked to be a mentor is a huge compliment to anyone. Realise that just by asking, you are sending a message to that person that you hold them in high esteem. Think what it might mean to you to be asked the same thing. Even if it is impossible for it to happen, just the asking itself is a good thing.

The kind of person you would choose to be a mentor is not the kind of person who will be offended at the suggestion of being a mentor. If they were, you wouldn't be asking them. Don't worry about offending them. The possible danger is in 'pressuring' a person to be your mentor. If you allow them the opportunity to refuse the offer gracefully, you will not offend.

If the person doesn't know you, then the fact that you are asking them to be a mentor will serve to change that perception, regardless of their response. There is a possibility that you won't know the person you are asking very well, but you have seen much that you admire and would like to have their input in your life. Even if they say no, you will be raising your own image in their mind. You are sending a message that you have noticed them and want their input in your life. If they are not able to say yes, they will most likely have a different and more positive view of you.

You are choosing a person whom you hold in high regard. Those people are busy and have probably set clear priorities in their life. Be respectful enough to allow the person you admire to make their own decision about your request. Allow them time to think and consider the commitment required, but don't decide for them by not even asking.

If your invitation is declined, don't give up! Resist the temptation to feel like you have settled for second or third on your list. That person made it to your list for a special reason and wouldn't be there at all if you didn't feel they would be a good mentor.

How to Ask

You can ask in writing, via a letter or e-mail, or over the phone — or in person. The important thing to remember is that you are asking for a time and interest commitment from someone you admire.

If you ask in writing, it will give them time to consider their answer. If you ask in person, give them some days to think about it.

It is important to allow them to say no if they are unable to commit or uncomfortable about taking it on. However, it is also important to let them know how interested you are in having them as a mentor!

A side issue here is that if there is a spouse or significant other involved, encourage your potential mentor to check with them to see if they are comfortable 'sharing' their partner with you. This is especially true in a cross gender mentoring situation (more about that in following slides), but worthwhile anytime.

ACTIVITY: *How would you ask someone to be a mentor? Have any of you asked someone before? Can you tell us how it worked? What other options would you (as a group) feel comfortable with?*

Note to leader: *Allow this next activity to take place all over the room.*

How would you ask someone to be a mentor? Take a few minutes right now to walk around the room and practice asking different people, in different ways, to be your mentor. You will also be responding to those who are asking you. After a few minutes, let a few people share what kinds of requests felt the most or least inviting to them. You could have a scribe make note of the options the group likes best. Then you may share real-life experiences. Have you asked for a mentor before? How did it work out?



Issues to Consider

"We are like chameleons, we take our hue and the color of our moral character from those who are around us."

John Locke

Gender

- In a cross gender situation you will need to be more sensitive to issues such as:
 - Appropriate places to meet
 - Times of contact
 - The permission of your mentor's spouse/ significant other (and/or your own)
 - And the restriction of certain topics of conversation (such as sexual or some relationship issues), etc...

Issues to Consider

To consider asking a person to be your mentor is a big decision. You are asking someone to influence your life and literally help mould your character.

The best thing about asking for a mentor is that you get to choose. You choose the kind of person and get to decide how you want that person to influence you. It is a great privilege for both you and your mentor.

Consider the following issues as you continue your journey in mentoring.

Gender

A 'cross gender' mentoring partnership is where a female chooses a male mentor or visa versa. While there are difficulties in these situations (and ideally mentors would be of the same gender), there are many instances where a 'cross gender' situation is desirable.

In our culture of broken families, people are often devoid of mother and father figures in their lives. A mentor will never replace a parent, but all of us need adults of the opposite gender who will provide positive input into our lives. There are some issues that are not appropriate to tackle with an opposite gender mentor, but there are other observations and lessons that a woman can offer a young man or a man to a young woman that may be missing from the family.

If there is cross gender mentoring, the pair should always meet in a supervised or public area, preferably in daylight or working hours to avoid any hint or suggestion of an inappropriate relationship. The mentor partner should ensure that the partner of the mentor is comfortable with the relationship and wherever possible should have a friendship with the partner.

Topics regarding sexual relationships, personal or intimate details about the mentor, or other topics that could potentially lead to inappropriate conversations should be avoided.

If you enter a cross gender mentoring relationship, value it for there is much to be learned from opposite gender mentors. Just respect your mentor enough to not allow any situation that could bring a question as to his or her character.



Where and When

- Be realistic
- Don't plan too far ahead
- Make the relationship meet your initial needs
- Set short term goals, then re-evaluate and set more
- Allow the future of the relationship to grow naturally

Finishing with Celebration

- Set short time periods and allow for either of you to comfortably move on
- Review and appreciate your relationship
- Speak openly about your desires for the future
- Make your 'finishing' a celebration

Where and When

Be realistic about how much time you both can commit. A common tendency in starting a mentor partnership is to be optimistic about how much time you will need or be able to spend together.

Initially you will probably want to have long time periods to learn about each other and develop a trust based friendship. But refrain from planning too far ahead — like saying that you will meet each week for the next three months.

The reality is likely to be different from the expectation. The danger is that one or both of you may feel guilty for not keeping up your end of the bargain, and that will bring some tension and awkwardness into the relationship.

Set some short term goals for what you want to accomplish initially. When that time period is over, review how the relationship is going and re-evaluate to set more goals for the next short term.

It is better to allow the relationship to meet your initial needs and then grow or decline naturally.

Finishing and Celebrating

Setting a short time period allows for either of you to comfortably move on from the short term relationship with a positive 'ending' or closure to the experience.

As you approach the end of a segment of your mentoring relationship, take some time to celebrate the relationship. Review what you have learned about each other and what you have each gained from the relationship.

Make it a point to show appreciation for what you've been given through having a mentor, and talk openly about how you would like to see the relationship progress in the future. If you only want occasional contact in the future, be clear about that. If you would like more time, or to focus on different areas, speak about that as well.

Make your 'finishing' times a celebration that you will both enjoy. Finishing and starting again is a healthy process. It allows you the freedom to openly review the value of what you've achieved together so far and plan your direction for the future.



Who Is Responsible

- In general, you are responsible to initiate contact
- You as the mentor partner are inviting a person to have influence in your life
- Your mentor should always have the right to say no and to shape the way that you interact

Who Is Responsible

In general, you are responsible to initiate contact.

You, as the mentor partner (you could call yourself a protégé, a mentoree, or a mentee, or something else, but we prefer the terms, 'mentor' and 'partner') are inviting a person to have influence in your life. It is your job to continue the process of invitation, and to withdraw if you choose.

It is NOT the job of the mentor to 'chase' or pressure you regarding the relationship. Your mentor must respect your right to withdraw from the relationship without a sense of guilt or pressure to continue.

Often it is the case that you as a mentor partner will appreciate a phone call or text message if your mentor hasn't heard from you in a long time (months). If you do want that kind of 'check-up', be clear to ask for it. Otherwise you should expect that if you don't keep in touch with your mentor, he/she will (rightfully and respectfully) take that as an indication that you are no longer in need of the relationship.

Your mentor should always have the right to say no to your invitation. Your mentor should also feel free to shape the way that you interact. But it is the job of the partner to ask and continue inviting the relationship to continue. There will often be a time when you no longer 'need' your mentor; or the nature of your relationship will change. You are the one who knows in your heart what your desires are; it is your responsibility to express them so that your mentor can focus on being the best possible support to you.

Topics?

- Spending time with the family
- Work issues
- Handling anger or resentment
- Exercise, dieting
- Friendships
- Time management
- Setting goals
- Professional development
- Management or money
- Sexual relationships
- Coping with stress
- Self control
- Resolving conflicts
- Relationship to partner
- Spiritual issues

Topics

Some people find the initial meetings between a mentor and partner quite daunting. What do you talk about? What are you there for? It may have seemed a good idea and you might feel a deep need, but then when you meet face to face it can get difficult to talk.

Here are some topics that may provide useful for planning goals or for exploring your life.

It may be helpful to consider on which of these areas you would like your mentor to challenge you and hold you accountable.

ACTIVITY: Divide into pairs and ask each other what topics you would like to talk to a mentor about — and why (if it isn't too personal). Decide between the two of you what are the four most important topics to you.

Ask each pair to share their 'top four' and write them down if possible. Is there a pattern? Are there some more important to this group than others, or is the need spread across the topics?



Be Encouraged

- Acknowledge those who have shaped your life
- Act on your own need for a mentor
- Enrich your own life and those of others by 'being somebody to someone'

Be Encouraged

If there is someone in your life who has been a 'shaper' to you, acknowledge and appreciate them. If you have a sense that you need or should have a mentor — ask someone.

Don't leave this session unchanged by what you have learned. Enrich your own life and those of others by 'being somebody to someone.'

