



## Mentoring 101: Getting Started & Building Trust

We'd like to extend a big thank you for joining the SSP community - your dedication truly makes a difference in our students' lives. To get your mentorship off on the right foot, we have a few tips for how to establish a meaningful connection with your mentee.

### **Be authentic and open:**

Your mentee will likely be nervous to meet you. For most students, this is their first introduction to mentorship, and some may not have interacted closely with adults outside of their family or school life. Help your mentee open up by being candid and vulnerable. Tell them about your experience growing up. Highlight times when you've failed and situations when life didn't go as planned. Sharing what you've learned from each mistake or set back will help your mentee confide in you when they inevitably face difficulties throughout high school. A big goal of this program is for mentees to develop strong decision-making skills, navigate challenges and build resiliency. Lead by example by candidly sharing how your life experiences have helped you become who you are today.

### **Start with the easy stuff:**

For your first meetings, pick low-pressure, fun activities that allow the two of you to get to know one another. The main objective in your first year of mentoring is to establish trust and develop a rhythm of communication. This way, once the pressures of high school start ramping up, you're firmly in their corner as a reliable source of support. A few fun ways to connect could be touring a museum, attending a class to learn a new skill together or planning something active such as bowling or indoor climbing.

### **Find commonalities & share your interests:**

Don't be discouraged if you don't immediately have much in common. This could be an opportunity to introduce one another to hobbies and interests you've never explored. Start with creating a list of your hobbies to see what you have in common. If your interests don't align, select an activity from your mentee's list to try and have your mentee do the same. Our hope is that each of you expand your horizons throughout your time working together, so don't be afraid to try something new!

### **Keep them on the calendar:**

Try to end each activity by scheduling your next meeting. Synchronizing availability can be one of the biggest challenges of mentoring, so we recommend always having your next meeting on your calendar and protecting that time. This should help keep you on schedule to meet at least 6 times per year. Remember that consistency and reliability are incredibly important to gaining your mentee's trust. Cancelling or rescheduling plans frequently can severely damage your relationship, so only commit to plans you're confident you can make and prioritize your plans with your mentee.

*Take a moment to review your [Mentor Handbook](#) and [sign up for our monthly newsletter](#) for continual mentoring guidance from SSP. Always feel free to reach out to the Mentoring Team at any time with updates, questions or concerns. Thank you again for all that you do!*