
Discussing Delicate Issues

Guidelines for Mentors



PUT THE MENTEE AT EASE.

- Stay calm.
- Use body language to communicate attentiveness (ex. Maintain eye contact, sit at the same level).
- Avoid judgmental statements such as “Why would you do something like that?” or “I thought you knew better.”
- Be honest if you are getting emotional or upset.
- Let the mentee know that you are glad he or she came to you.
- Reassure the mentee that his or her confidentiality will be honored.
- Use tact, but be honest.
- Allow the mentee to talk at his or her own pace- don’t force an issue.
- Do not pry - allow the mentee to bring up topics he or she is comfortable with.
- Do not collaborate with the mentee’s family to provide discipline.

HONOR THE MENTEE’S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

- Focus on the mentee’s feelings and needs rather than jumping to problem solving.
- When the issue has been discussed, ask, “What do you think you would like to do about this situation?” and “How would you like me to help?”
- If you are not comfortable with what the mentee wants to do, ask yourself “why” before you decide whether to say so.
- If what the mentee wants to do is not possible, explain so gently and apologize.
- Ask what alternative solutions would make the mentee comfortable.
- Encourage critical thinking through questions and reflections.
- Use the words, “I don’t know - what do you think?”