

PROJECT FRIENDSHIP
C.A.R.E.S. HANDBOOK

*Promoting Compassion, Awareness, **R**espect,
Empowerment, and **S**upport for Project Friendship
Participants*

(September 2021)

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— PART 1 —

History of Project Friendship

Agency and Program History

A group of Northfield women came together in 1965 with the idea of matching students from Carleton and St. Olaf College with elementary school students to serve as role models and friends.



During the early years of the program, co-directors recruited volunteers in the spring at volunteer fairs on the college campuses. Teachers in the public schools referred students to the co-directors (usually from 2nd Grade through Junior High) who could benefit from additional academic/social support. The co-directors sought to match students with college mentors of the same gender who had similar interests. Volunteers attended a program in September where expectations were discussed. The school year began with a picnic in the fall for the volunteers along with the students and their families.

The school year concluded with a field trip to a zoo, roller skating rink, or some other group activity. Weekly meetings between the students and volunteers took place either in the student's home or on the college campuses, and the volunteers were issued car permits by the colleges. In addition, \$10 was provided for each student for supplies. The total annual budget was \$2,000.

Project Friendship Timeline

- 1969-1971: Pat Lampe and Jan Shoger served as co-chairs. Tom Enger (1970) and Bill Kelly (1971) served as treasurer. Northfield Area United Way allocated \$1,800.
- 1972-1974: Joan Reitz and Peg Tilsen served as co-directors. Ann Nicholson served as treasurer.
- 1974-1976: Patti Haskins and Barbara Crouter served as co-directors. Arlene Sivanich began her term as treasurer and served until 2002.
- 1976-1978: Marion Finholt and Jeanette Nelson served as co-directors.
- 1979-1980: Merrell Thornton and Diane Enebak served as co-directors. Project Friendship recruited 10- 15 "Project Mothers," each of whom managed 10 youth/college student matched pairs.
- 1980-1981: Sharon McManus and Sharon Day served as co-directors.
- 1981-1982: Sharon Day and Laura Hvistendahl served as co-directors.

- 1983-1986: Project Friendship, Inc. was incorporated in the State of Minnesota with the following board members:

Barbara Crouter, President	Laura Hvistendahl, Secretary
Arlene Sivanich, Treasurer	Jean Boardman
Douglas Peterson	Mary Lou Street
*Sharon Day, hired by the board as the first paid program director	
- 1986-1993: Laurie Cowles was hired as the program director and expanded the program to serve over 100 students.
- 1993-1996: Carolyn Svenson was hired as the program director.
- 1986-2014: Kathy Lansing was hired as the program director. Joan Lizaola was contracted to serve as a liaison with Latino participants. The program served an average of 80 students per year.
- 2014-2015: The board of directors developed a strategic plan in 2014. Sarah Van Sickle was hired as the part-time executive director to lead both program and fundraising initiatives. Joan Lizaola continued to provide consulting support through 2015. Zaret Calderon replaced Joan as our new Cultural Liaison consultant. A new Project Friendship logo was designed in anticipation of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the program:



- 2016: PF received a grant from the MN historical society to conduct oral history interviews with past participants. Ellie Fuelling was hired as our Project Manager. Kirstin Simon was hired in January 2016 as the part-time Program Assistant to support Sarah with relationship management and program marketing. Maria Quispe was hired as a part-time employee in September 2016 as the Cultural Liaison, to connect and engage the Latino community and provide relationship support to our Spanish-speaking participants.
- 2018-2019: Holly Schoenbauer was hired to fill the role of Match Coordinator to work alongside Sarah VanSickle as the full-time Executive Director.
- 2019: Holly Schoenbauer took over as full-time Executive Director of Project Friendship.
- 2020 - 2021: Project Friendship, along with the rest of the world, was forced to face the COVID-19 Pandemic. In March of 2020, mentors were forced back to their homes and Project Friendship pivoted to include virtual mentoring. For the first time in Project Friendship's history, mentors and mentees were able to meet from their homes via Zoom. Mentors were meeting with their mentees from all over the world. In the spring of 2021, Project Friendship had 200 mentoring pairs matched. Partnerships with the Northfield School district, Growing up Healthy, Carleton College, St. Olaf College, and

the Northfield Community Resource Center were stronger than ever. The Project Friendship Board of Directors included three committees – the Development Committee, the Community Engagement Committee, and the CARES Committee (promoting Compassion, Awareness, Respect, Empowerment, and Support). In partnership with the Northfield Arts Guild, mentors and mentees participated in a community-wide Arts project so that they could do something tangible while they could not be physically together.

- 2021: Kari Scheurer joined Project Friendship as the Assistant Program Director to work alongside Holly as the pivot back to in-person mentoring began after a year apart.

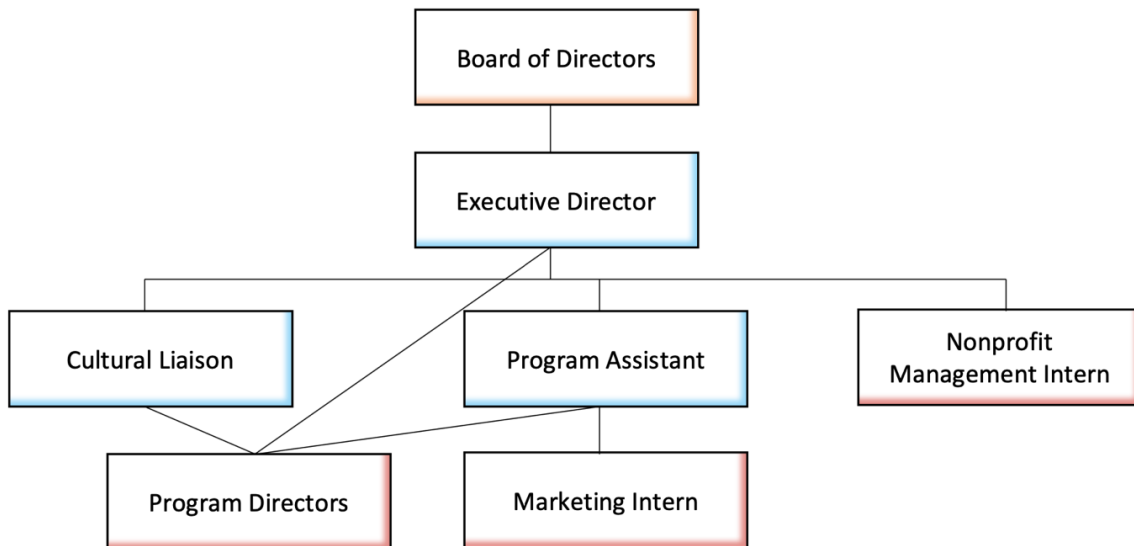
Mission Statement

Project Friendship supports mentoring relationships between Northfield youth and college students that provide intentional activities to create opportunities for social and emotional learning, with the goal of improving confidence, enriching connections, and developing character.

Vision Statement

Project Friendship envisions a community in which every youth experiences nurturing one-to-one relationships and community support, which allows each of them to develop into their full potential, capable of making informed, responsible decisions as involved members of our community.

Organizational Structure



Current Program Leadership

Officers (volunteer)

Mari Aylin, President	Term Expires June 2022
Brady Burton, Treasurer	Term Expires June 2023
Bo Aylin, Secretary	Term Expires June 2022

Board Members (volunteer)

Jane Bartho	Term Expires 2023
Jenny Ortiz	Term Expires 2023
Christi Bostwick	Term Expires 2024
Steve Hill	Term Expires 2024
Brian McGonigel	Term Expires 2024
Jean Noack	Term Expires 2024
Ariel Alexander – Carleton Student Member	Term Expires 2022
Ben Westrum – St. Olaf Student Member	Term Expires 2021

Staff

Holly Schoenbauer, Executive Director
Kari Scheurer, Asst Program Director

Interns (Volunteer)

Gretta Prokosch, Spanish Cultural Liaison Intern

Program Directors (Volunteer)

Natalia Crimmel, Carleton
Sophie Boileau, Carleton
Osip Surdutovich, Carleton
Ty Coutermash, St. Olaf
Maria Chase, St. Olaf
Lily Hanlon, St. Olaf

What is a Mentor?

Mentoring is a trusted relationship, a meaningful commitment, and assurance that a young person has someone who cares about them and makes them feel worthy.

A mentor is a person who guides a less experienced person by building trust and modeling positive behaviors. An effective mentor understands that their role is to be dependable, engaged, authentic, and tuned in to the needs of the mentee.

Today, most youth development organizations recognize the importance of a child having a caring and responsible adult in their lives. For children who come from less-than-ideal circumstances, mentoring can be a critical ingredient towards positive outcomes. Developmental psychologist and co-founder of Head Start, Urie Bronfenbrenner, said it best; “development, it turns out, occurs through this process of progressively more complex exchange between a child and somebody else—especially somebody who's crazy about that child.”

Children without the typical risk factors also benefit greatly from having a mentor. All kids deserve a mentor and the benefits of a mentor, regardless of risk factors.

Youth who have a mentor...

- retain their confidence when faced with challenges
- are more open to taking risks and going beyond their abilities
- are more resilient when they make a mistake or suffer a setback
- emphasize learning and their development more than “showing off”
- cheat less, as they are more interested in improving than the final result
- feel fewer social pressures
- have less aggression and stress
- are less likely to label their peers with fixed identities (E.g. “bully” or “loser”)
- handle negative experiences, such as bullying, more effectively
- work harder to improve their relationships with others
- handle conflict more easily as they recognize their “adversary” as being able to change (<https://www.mindsetkit.org/growth-mindset-mentors/what-is-gms-mentors/growth-mindset-beyond-classroom>)

Quality mentoring relationships enhance a young person’s life on multiple levels including personal, academic, and professional.

Youth who have a mentor are...

- 55% more likely to enroll in college
- 78% more likely to volunteer regularly
- 90% more likely to become a mentor themselves
- 130% more likely to hold leadership positions (<https://www.mentoring.org/mentoring-impact/>)

Individual attention and unconditional acceptance are the cornerstones of Project Friendship’s program.

Most Project Friendship relationships last over 2 years while the mentor is on campus, and many last for a lifetime.

Build Confidence with Goals

EVERY mentor is expected to come up with a goal for their mentee and work towards accomplishing that goal. Each mentor will have a different goal, but they all strive to make the mentee feel more confident, encouraged, and accepted.

Be SMART when developing a goal for your mentee:

S – Specific

M – Measurable

A – Attainable

R – Realistic

T – Timely

How to Sign Up

Steps to becoming a mentor

- A. Application
- B. Interview
- C. Background check
- D. New Mentor Training

A. If you or someone you know would like to sign up to be a Project Friendship mentor, they can fill out the mentor **application** at www.projectfriendshipmentoring.org.

- A prospective mentor must be currently enrolled as a student at St. Olaf College, Carleton College, or the Northfield Community College Collaborative.
- A prospective mentor must have at least 1 hour a week to dedicate to their mentee.
- A prospective mentor must be at least 18 years of age.
- A prospective mentor must be able to pass a background check.

B. Once a mentor application is submitted, each new mentor will need to complete a one-on-one **interview** with Project Friendship staff. The purpose of the interview is to get to know the mentor better so they can be matched with a child they will have something in common with. We want this experience to be positive — not just for the youth but for the mentor as well!

C. After submitting the application and taking part in the 15-minute new mentor interview, a **background check** from Sterling Volunteers will be emailed directly to the new mentor. The mentor is required to complete and submit the background check. If the background check is passed, the mentor will move onto the New Mentor Training.

D. New Mentor Training is required prior to being matched with a mentee. New Mentor Training is a roughly two-hour training that is held monthly at either Carleton College or St. Olaf College. The training will go over topics such as: How to be an Effective Mentor, Logistics of Mentoring, Logging your Mentor Hours, Difficult Situations, etc.

Once all of the steps to becoming a mentor are completed, the prospective mentor will move onto the waiting list.

The Waiting List

The waiting list is a list of approved mentors that are waiting to be matched with a mentee. It is necessary to have a waiting list of mentors so that every child that applies for a mentor is matched. We never want to tell a child that we don't have a friend for them.

Prospective mentors may be on the waiting list for 2 days or up to 2 years. If a mentor is on the waiting list for a longer period of time, it does NOT mean that they would not be a good mentor or that they aren't going to be matched. It simply means that we currently do not have a child to match with them.

We match based on likes and dislikes, commonalities, and personality – NOT on first come, first served.

As soon as there is a child looking for a mentor that Project Friendship staff feel would be a good match with you, we will send you an email or call you to tell you a bit about the child and see if you are interested in being their mentor. If you are interested, we will set up a New Match Meet-Up with the child's family. If you do not feel this would be a good match for you, we simply move onto a different mentor and you remain on the waitlist until another match comes along.

The New Match Meet-Up Explained

Once both the mentee's parents and mentor agree to the match, a New Match Meet-Up is scheduled. The purpose of the New Match Meet-Up is to:

- Go over rules for parents
- Exchange contact information
- Talk about when to meet next
- Spend some time getting to know each other.

Typically, New Match Meet-Ups happen in groups but not always. It depends on how many youths we have to match and who is available to match that day.

The rules that are gone over for parents:

(It is important that you are aware of these rules for parents in case they have any questions that they don't ask at the New Match Meet-Up time).

Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

With your child:

- Encourage your child to keep all meetings with the mentor, and have your child contact the mentor if they cannot make the appointment.
- Be positive about the relationship, and let your child see you are happy that they have a mentor in their life.
- Remind your child to thank their mentor and show appreciation for the time they spend together.
- Ask open-ended questions about how things are going. For example, "What was the best thing you did with your mentor today?"
- Listen to your child and be supportive of their feelings. Be patient and encouraging.
- Tell your child when you notice a positive change as a result of having a mentor. Your praise means a lot!
- Assist your child in communicating with their big buddy to set up a weekly time to meet.

With your child's mentor:

- Remember that the mentor is there for your child, not for you or other children in your family. Don't ask the mentor to take other siblings along on outings or to become your friend or counselor.
- Let the mentor know about any important rules, food limitations, or times that your child is usually unavailable. If possible, give the mentor a calendar of your child's other activities.
- Don't withhold meetings with the mentor as a punishment. Remember that you and the mentor are a team. If your child is being "grounded," work out a plan to ensure that the mentor can continue to see your child.
- Let the mentor know when you have a change of address, phone, or other contact information, or if there is a significant change in your lives that may affect the relationship, such as moving away from the area or a loss in your family.
- Show the mentor your appreciation! Write a thank-you note now and then, or share improvements you've noticed in your child's behavior.
- If you have a concern you want to share with the mentor, do it when your child is not present to avoid the child being embarrassed or uncomfortable.

While staff goes over the rules for parents, mentors and mentees will go for a walk together and spend about 15 min getting to know each other. A "get to know you" worksheet will be provided if the mentor runs out of things to talk about but it is not required to use the worksheet.

After spending some time getting to know your mentee, you will join their parents to get to know the parents a bit as well as exchange contact information and decide on a date/time for the first meet-up.

New Match Meet-ups will always have a Project Friendship staff member present. Once the initial match meeting is completed, staff no longer have to be involved with mentor meetings unless you specifically ask for it. You are free to meet when and where you and the mentee's parents choose.

It is best to set a regular date/time that you will be meeting with your mentee weekly. Setting a consistent date/time helps not only you organize your calendar, but also gives the youth something each week to look forward to and gives the parent a consistent time as well. Often parents have other children to organize/schedule as well, so having consistency helps the parent immensely.

Activity Planning

Once you are matched, you are free to do pretty much anything with your mentee. You do NOT need to stay on campus. There are a few specific rules:

- You can NOT drive your mentee ANYWHERE
- You must remain in public areas
- No overnights
- You are expected to provide parents with a general idea of what you are doing together or at least where.

Whatever you decide to do with your mentee, there are a few things mentors should keep in mind:

1. What are your mentee's strengths? Weaknesses? Interests?
2. What would you like to change, build on, or improve? What is your match goal? (SMART Goal)
3. What is a reward/how will you celebrate reaching the mentee goal?
4. When will you celebrate?
5. Routines matter. What does your routine look like? How will you establish it?
6. Brainstorm ideas on how to reach the goal. What can you do to practice what you want to change, build on, or improve?
7. There are FUN ways to accomplish any goal. BE CREATIVE!

Partnerships

We have partnerships with various organizations in and around Northfield. These provide fun and free activities *You may not drive your mentee to these activities – parents need to do the driving*

1. Northfield YMCA – You may go to the local Y for free if you are with your mentee – just check in as Project Friendship
2. Dundas Dome – You may go to the Dundas Dome during Open Dome time for free – just check in as Project Friendship
3. Northfield Arts Guild – You may attend Open Art at the Northfield Arts Guild for free.
4. Tickets for Kids – Occasionally there are free tickets to museums, plays, sporting events, etc – These tickets need to be requested by the mentor, and parents must drive to these events.
5. The Goat - Downtown Northfield - At the Goat mentors and mentees can pick out a free poster to color together. Just tell them you are with Project Friendship.
6. CakeWalk - when you are with your mentee, head over to CakeWalk for 20% off of your purchase.
7. Stir Confections in Northfield (located across from KwikTrip) is giving mentors and mentees 30% off when they are together.
8. James Gang Coffee (across from Community Resource Bank) will give mentors and mentees - when together - 30% off.
9. The Blast Northfield - located by the Contented Cow across from Cakewalk - when with their mentee buy one item on the menu and get a free kids cone or slushie.

Free activities to do around campus

Project Friendship: Carleton College Resources — Supplies

CCCE office (next to the SAO in Sayles): borrow supplies any time during normal office hours, just tell the student worker at the welcoming desk that you're with Project Friendship (open 9-5 M-F)

- Games in the closet by the entrance
- Art supplies in the cabinets above the student worker computers (chalk, paint, etc.)

Info Desk (across from the Sayles Café)

- Games to check out with your OneCard

Libe

- Games by the blue coaches at the entrance
- Children's books in the Rookery

Dacie Moses House

- Games, piano
- Baking supplies and ingredients available 24/7 (and a great opportunity to practice sharing because you leave the things you bake there if you use their ingredients)

Rec Center

- Check out ice skates, snowshoes, cross country skis

Attractions on Campus**Olin**

- Balcony is great for throwing paper airplanes/parachutes/etc.

Weitz

- visit the art exhibits

Central Park (by the Weitz)

- also walking/biking distance from the park downtown by Wells Fargo and to Sibley Elementary's playground

Sayles

- play pool
- snacks

Ground Evans

- pool
- foosball

*Project Friendship: St. Olaf Activity Resources —***Quad/Outside on Campus**

- Play catch with football, baseball, frisbee (sporting equipment can be checked out from Skoglund Front Desk)
- Disc Golf (course in Natural Lands)
- Campus golf
- Draw on sidewalks with chalk (chalk in SGA office by Post Office)
- Sledding on: Old Main Hill, Thorson Hill, Hoyme Hill
- Tennis (outside and inside courts at Skoglund)

Skoglund Gym

- All equipment can be checked out for free from front desk
- Basketball, volleyball, soccer, badminton, frisbee, etc
- Racquetball/handball/wall-ball in racquetball court (next to athletic trainer in basement of Skoglund)

- Obstacle courses with things in field house
- Pool (Open Swim: Mon-Thurs 8pm-10pm & Sat/Sun 2-4:30pm)
- STORP (Open M-F 2-4pm) Outdoor Recreation- Rent out cross country skis, snow shoes, camping equipment, etc

Buntrock

- Arts and Crafts in Fireside/The undercroft/The Cage
- The Cage for snacks/water (note: you are never obligated to buy your mentee anything)
- S'mores in Fireside
- Pool in the Pause
- Large TV in Pause
- Computers
- Viking Theatre (is available to reserve in advance for movies/showings)
- KSTO Radio Station (open for viewing if show is not in session)
- Dance Party in Pause

Rolvaag Library

- Games/puzzles on third floor
- Read/find books
- DISCO (4th floor off of the lobby) for green screen, 3D printing machine, high powered computer, video cameras.
- Semi-annual Mini-Golf tournaments

Regents-Math (open until midnight M-Sun)

- Tons of board games on top floor
- Chalk/whiteboards
- Computers
- Computer Science lounge

Regents- Natural Science (open until midnight M-Sun)

- Awesome view on fourth floor
- Greenhouse/balcony (open until 8pm M-F)
- Winding staircase with balconies- good for paper airplanes
- Chalk/white boards
- Can reserve any room in advance and use computer/projectors- good for movies!
- Fish/Turtle Tanks
- Laboratories for showing (all stockrooms open until M-Sat 9:30pm, Sun- 2pm-9pm)

Theater Building

- Cool to walk around/ask a student for a tour
- Play on stage (if not in use)

Dittman (Open M-Sun until 9pm)

- Look at art exhibits/museums
- Play with clay in ceramics studio
- Dance studios

Christenson Hall of Music

- Practice rooms: play piano/sing/your instrument

Any dorm (remember mentees are not allowed in your room alone with you)

- Kitchens: cookies, baking, etc
- Pianos
- Lounges

Required Mentor Training

New Mentor Training is required prior to being matched with a mentee.

Once you are matched with a mentee, you are required to choose three additional trainings per year. Trainings are held monthly from October – April and are offered on EITHER St. Olaf or Carleton campus. A training schedule will be sent out at the beginning of each academic year.

Trainings include topics such as: How to Mentor the Tween, Dealing with Mentee Parents, Goal Setting, Activity Planning, How to Mentor an Older Child, How to Mentor a Younger Child, Diversity Training, etc. Topics will be set by Project Friendship staff as well as qualified guest instructors who will facilitate the mentor training.

Mentors must attend 3 out of the 6 trainings offered each year while serving as a mentor for Project Friendship.

If mentors need help in getting transportation to or from the opposite campus for training, they are expected to contact their college Program Directors for help. Transportation should never be a burden for attendance to a training.

Saying Goodbye – How to Close the Relationship

Why do we care about endings?

- The way it ends matters – positive feelings are important for young people.
- If it is negative it can cause harm to the young person.
- Closure is an opportunity to role model a healthy goodbye and support the development of emotional competence and caring skills.
- Though goodbyes are a part of time, they are hard.

Research suggests that if relationships end without proper closure, we can do harm – they can be worse off than when they started. Kids who are left sad or confused are less likely to connect with another adult.

<https://theconversation.com/the-psychology-of-closure-and-why-some-need-it-more-than-others-104159>

Mentoring Closure

- Let them know in advance that you will be saying goodbye.
- Be clear and honest about why the relationship is ending.
- Be positive and CELEBRATE – reflect and share strengths, what you learned from them, accomplishments together.
- Develop realistic plans for continued communication – *don't make promises you can't keep.*

Consider closure with others too –

- Parents
- Siblings
- Program Staff

Ideas for Closure Activities

Below are creative ways to...

- Process Emotions – talk about your emotions and how you are feeling – excited for graduation but also scared for what's next, anxious about the unknowns, sad to be leaving friends and routine – including them!
- Reflect on the experience – what changes have you noticed in them since you first met? What have you learned from them?
- Give a positive sending – smiles, hugs, handshake, etc.

Ideas that mentors have thought of:

- Print an emoji chart – circle what you are feeling
- Memory list
- Photo of the two of you in a frame
- Party at the family's house
- Special treat or activity (bike ride around town – doing something active while talking)
- Write a letter and exchange at the last meeting – to be opened later
- Keepsake for them to have to remember you by
- Magazine collage
- Make a wordle
- Take their interest and give them something related to that
- Make a highlights timeline
- Write a song about your relationship
- Write down their strengths and growth for them to keep
- Be honest – you mean a lot to me and I wish you well, explain to them what your next year looks like and how you won't be able to stay in contact with them
- Favorite quote for them to wish them well
- Write down 1 thing you hope for the other person, 2 things you wish were different, and 3 highlights from your time together
- Journey Map – all the things they remember doing, emotions and highlights, things overcame
- Small trinket or token from a favorite activity (frisbee signed by you, baseball, rock from the arb, fishing lure, design a football card with their picture on it, friendship bracelet, cupcake pan, envelopes/postcards with your new address on it... something that reminds you of your favorite activity with them)

NOW WHAT?... What are your intentions for closure with your mentee? What is your plan? How will you implement it? What will you do? What will you say?

Suggestions for Closing the Relationship

- **Develop realistic plans and continued communication - Don't make promises you can't keep.** Be clear and honest with your intentions – if you think you'll be able to keep in contact be honest, but if you think you can't don't promise anything

- **Give them your feelings, your emotions, what they mean to you.** Model what you are looking for from them
 - Be honest with your feelings – it’s okay to tell them that you’re really sad that this is over, that you’ll miss talking to them.
- **Celebrate your time together and what you’ve accomplished.** Talk about good times together, your favorite memory of them, etc. Ask them what their favorite activity was – make a list of everything you did. Point out their strengths, positive changes, how they have grown.
- **Take charge of the last meeting, plan it.** Do something special for your last time together – dinner out, put together a photo album of pictures you’ve taken over the years – DO SOMETHING to signal it’s a change or the end.
 - Be honest that it is the last meet-up - Tell them “this is our last meet-up”
 - Set clear guidelines about communication going forward– setting parameters around texting or setting clear expectations about how and when you’re going to communicate. Talk about future plans honestly – where will you be, what you will be doing, what THEY are doing next year.
- **Talk to the parents.** Let them know when the last meeting time will be so they are ready to help the child deal with the change, if any emotions or if you have any concerns about the mentee and their attitude about you graduating/leaving, etc.

—— PART 2 ——

How to Check in on Your Mentee

*Remember: 1) use verbal and non-verbal cues to demonstrate that you’re listening non-judgmentally, and 2) don’t make promises you can’t keep. Don’t promise that you won’t tell anyone what they share because you might have to if they are a danger to themselves or others (see section on **mandated reporting** on page 19).*

1. Ask them directly how they are doing
 - a. Example: “You haven’t seemed like yourself lately. Is everything okay?”
2. Ask them a specific question
 - a. Example: “What are you looking forward to this week?”
3. Offer support without questions
 - a. Example: “Hey, I know ____ has been really tough. I’m here if you ever want to talk about it.”
4. Engage them in a fun reflective activity
 - a. Example: “Let’s each pick a song that represents how we feel right now.”
5. Reach out to their parent/caregiver, as appropriate
 - a. Example: “I noticed that [mentee’s name] hasn’t been acting like themselves lately, and I wanted to check in and see if there’s anything I could do.”

*Note: knowing when you need to check in on your mentee requires getting to know them and paying attention to any changes in their behavior, emotions, or appearance. However, we can't always observe signs of distress, so it is best to check in on your mentee **consistently and proactively** through casual conversation ("How was your week?") or reflective activities like the one described above.*

How to Encourage Positive Self-Image in Your Mentee

1. Highlight their talents and achievements
 - a. Example: "Woah, you are so good at math! I could not do that when I was your age."
2. Encourage your mentee to pursue opportunities of interest and reinforce their capability
 - a. Example: "I think you would be amazing at acting. You could consider trying out for the school play!"
3. Help them identify and appreciate their own strengths
 - a. Example: "Let's get to know each other a little better! We can each write down three of our strengths and three wishes we have."

How to Honor Your Mentee's Identities

Project Friendship staff tries to match mentors with mentees based on shared identities/experiences/interests, but there are always going to be identities that are *not* shared between mentor and mentee.

As opposed to "identity-blind" mentoring, in which mentors actively try to leave personal identity outside of the mentoring relationship, Project Friendship embraces **equity-minded mentoring**. Equity-minded mentoring means being mindful about each other's identities. Dr. Kimberly Griffin suggests: "Instead of ignoring identity, invite it into the room. It may not always want to enter — individuals may not always want to talk about it — but really **communicate that identity is always welcome**. Be curious about who you both are in the relationship and what identities matter to you and why."

(Source: <http://business360.fortefoundation.org/honoring-identity-in-mentoring-relationships/>)

That being said, it is important to remember that **children often do not understand or relate to the term "identity,"** nor do they think in terms that college students do. Often, children just *are* - and that is okay - we need to let children grow and explore at their own pace that is developmentally appropriate to them. It is okay to just take a child for face value and let them come to you when they are ready to explore who they are on their own time. In the meantime,

you can support your mentee and their identities **proactively** by communicating to your mentee that they are in charge of who they are and that you will support them regardless of who they become.

Some mentee identities to consider (non-exhaustive list):

- Age
- Personality traits
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Socioeconomic status
- Immigration status
- Religion/spirituality
- Gender/sexuality - age appropriate
- (Dis)ability
- Mental health conditions
- Family structure/their place in the family
- Languages spoken
- Passions/interests/hobbies/talents
- Intersectional identities

How to ask about who your mentee is

Your mentee is at a stage where they are still developing their sense of self and personal identities. They may not know who they are yet in some of the above-listed aspects. That is okay. **It is not your goal to have them leave the conversation/mentoring relationship with fixed labels but to communicate that they are welcome to be who they are and to create a safe space for them to explore and express themselves.**

Questions you might ask to learn more about who your mentee is (make sure to communicate that it's okay if they don't know how to answer and that you're still figuring out some of these things as well):

- What are three things that are central to who you are?
- What makes you unique?
- Where do you feel like you belong?
- Who are you closest to?
- What holidays do you celebrate?
- Do you speak any other languages?
- Do you have any siblings?
- What are your responsibilities at home?
- What pronouns do you use?
- What are you passionate about?
- What's your favorite music/food/etc.?
- Have you always lived in Minnesota?

How to educate yourself about your mentee

- Ask your mentee directly for more information or resources, as appropriate
- Ask their parents/caregivers, as appropriate
- Use reputable sources on the internet

How to make space for who your mentee is

- Plan activities that incorporate your mentee's beliefs and traditions (e.g., celebrate a holiday with them by cooking their favorite dish together)
- Do activities in which you can both explore each other (e.g., BuzzFeed quizzes, "How Well Do You Know Me" questions)

How to Identify Signs of Distress

Behavioral signs

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Erratic behavior
- Risky/destructive behavior
- Low energy
- Aggression
- Frequent stomach aches or headaches with no known medical cause
- Sleep too much or too little
- Diet or exercise excessively

Change in appearance

- New cuts or bruises that can't be explained
- Suddenly appearing disheveled
- Drastic or sudden weight change

Change in emotions

- Intense sadness/worry/anger/irritability
- Hopelessness or despair
- No longer enjoying activities or hobbies they used to enjoy

Change in thinking

- Distorted body image
- Increasing self-blame or self-criticism

Examples of crisis situations:

- Nonsuicidal self-injury
- Suicidal thoughts and behaviors

- Panic attacks
- Psychotic state
- Dissociation
- Traumatic event
- Substance use

How to Address Concerns about Your Mentee's Well-Being

For crisis situations:

If your mentee demonstrates suicidal ideation, ask them directly: “Are you thinking about hurting yourself?” or “Are you thinking that you want to die?”

(Note: research has shown that asking about suicide directly does NOT increase risk of suicide.)

****If your mentee's safety is at risk, get help IMMEDIATELY****

- In the case of a life-threatening emergency, call [911](#)
- Otherwise, reach out to Holly for guidance and inform mentee's parents/caregivers, as appropriate

Mandated Reporting:

Because of your position in Project Friendship as a child's mentor, you are a Mandated Reporter.

A mandated reporter is a person who, because of their position, is **legally required** to report any suspicion of **child abuse** or **neglect** to the relevant authorities. These laws are in place to prevent children from being abused and to end any abuse or neglect at the earliest possible stage.

Mandated Reporting is **REQUIRED** if you think:

- The child is being harmed
- The child is harming themselves
- The child is going to harm others

In these situations, you must break confidentiality. Listen to what your mentee is saying, and affirm that you will do what you can to help them. **Be supportive and present.** Take notes if you can or jot them down immediately after.

If you think you need to file a report, contact Holly immediately - anytime - on her cell phone - 952-393-9558. Together, you will contact authorities, and you will have the support you need to help your mentee. We also have two trained child psychologists on our team that will help with

reporting and the follow-through. It can be scary - but even more scary if the child does not get the help they need.

*****It is important that you don't promise the child you won't tell anyone.***** It's okay to explain that you have to tell someone. Trust is essential in this situation. The best way to maintain this trust is to be honest, supportive, and present.

In some cases, it might be unclear whether or not something your mentee says/does warrants a report. In cases such as these, it never hurts to discuss the situation with Holly (cell: 952-393-9558) who will offer suggestions regarding next steps.

For non-crisis situations:

- Ask your mentee what coping strategies work for them. Encourage them to utilize them.
 - E.g., listening to music, playing a game, talking to a friend/family member, deep breathing, watching a TV show/movie, etc.
- Ask your mentee how you can best support them
 - Ask them if they want to talk about it, want help finding resources, or want some distraction from whatever's bothering them
 - If they don't want to talk about it, let them know that you're always available if they decide they do want to talk.
- Reach out to parent/caregiver as appropriate to learn more about the situation and how their child likes to be supported

How to Help Your Mentee Cope with Challenging Situations

Identify/create mantras

- Example: "I have done this before. I can do this again."
- Example: "I can do this."
- Example: "I am not alone."

Create a self-care plan together proactively

- Brainstorm people and activities within the following self-care domains: intellectual, emotional, environmental, physical, spiritual, and community

Share healthy coping strategies you've used effectively in your own experiences

- Example: "I remember my Dad would yell at me for not doing my chores and I felt like I was going to explode at him so I went into my room and listened to heavy metal instead."

Children's mental health resources

- A coloring and activity book about stress, anxiety, and coping strategies for ages 8-12 from the National Institute of Mental Health ([Link](#))
- Guided meditations for children ([Link](#))
- Understanding child trauma ([Link](#))
- App: mindful powers (mindfulness activities for ages 7-10)
- Self-care plan ([Link](#) to example)

How to Address Bullying

If your mentee has been the victim of bullying

- Develop an action plan for what they will do the next time they are bullied
 - *E.g., walk into school with a friend, tell teacher when it happens*
- Discuss ways to avoid situations in which they might be bullied
 - *E.g., if they're bullied after school, maybe they can chat with a teacher after school for a bit before they leave*
- Make sure their parent/caregiver and the school is aware
 - *Reach out to Holly for guidance here*

If your mentee has been a bystander of bullying

- Encourage them to tell a trusted adult about it. Reinforce that this is an act of courage and promotes safety.
- Encourage them to intervene if it is safe and they are comfortable doing so.
 - *E.g., they might say "Stop, that's not cool."*
- Encourage your mentee to support the victim of bullying and include them in activities.

If your mentee has bullied others

- Gently explain the implications of their actions
 - *Emphasize that your mentee is not a bad person but that they made some not-great choices*
- Discuss with your mentee ways they will make amends
 - *E.g., return a stolen item or apologize to the victim*