

PATHWAYS TO RESILIENCE

Elements of Successful Youth Mentoring

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FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL YOUTH MENTORING

RESPECT

- Mutual respect is essential to establish communication
- Young people respond favorably to being listened to
- Start with curiosity
- Get more curious

CONNECTION

- Curiosity leads to connection
- Find mutual interests or aspects of mutual interest
- Acknowledge the mentee's interests
- Get more curious

GROWTH

- Acknowledge the mentee's growth so far
- Encourage the mentee to share what they know/have experienced in their area of interest
- Engage mentee in implementing their interest in their program development/design
- Give and receive feedback on how the mentee is growing and how you are growing in the process; accentuate mutual growth

GRATITUDE/HONORING

- Acknowledge the mentee's intrinsic gifts
- Teach gratitude by example
- Honor the mentee's efforts and growth
- Honor the mentee's path

PRACTICE: YOUR SECRET FEAR

Find a place where you can sit or lay comfortably. If you are sitting, be sure that you are sitting upright, with your spine straight. When you find a comfortable position, you are going to gently close your eyes. As your eyes close pay attention to your breathing. First, notice the rise and fall of your chest as you breathe. Feel the cold air as it touches the tip of your nose when you inhale. Feel your chest expanding, followed by your belly. When you breathe out, feel your belly contracting inward, followed by your chest. With each exhalation pay attention to the warm air as it leaves your nose. Sit or lay in this manner for a few moments, allowing your mind and body to settle into the rhythm of your breath.

Once you've relaxed for a few breaths, close your eyes. As you breathe thoughts and images will begin to arise in your mind. Think about the last time you woke up in the middle of the night, worried about something in your life. You now the type of night. One of those 3AM nights when you are lying awake, gripped with anxiety about something that you're going through. Maybe you're having trouble in your relationship. Maybe you're worried about your kids. Maybe you're worried about making the rent next month. Whatever it is, there is one fear that

dominates all others in your life. One fear that keeps coming up for you over and over again. I want you to think of that fear.

Now, I want you to take that fear and imagine it turned up in intensity. Imagine that it grows in you by five, ten, twenty percent. As you do this you will feel your body start to respond. You may feel dampness in your hands, or you may feel your heart rate accelerate. You may even feel uneasiness in your stomach or tightness in your chest. Whatever the physical sensations are, pay close attention to them. These are indicators that your body is under stress.

Pay close attention to the physical sensations and the emotions that are flowing through you. After a few moments, use your breath to exhale the tension from your body. Imagine that tension releasing and flowing out of you with each breath.

Now, find a partner. Preferably someone you do not know very well. You are going to take turns sharing how you felt during this exercise. But here's the deal: Partner A gets to talk for 3 minutes while Partner B just listens. Partner B cannot comment, console, or counsel Partner A. Partner B can only listen, intently, while making eye contact. After 3 minutes, Partner A and Partner B switch.

The point of this exercise is not to tell your partner your deepest darkest fear. It is to share with your partner how your body feels when you are focusing on that fear. The description that one partner gives the other should just be about physical sensations and emotions. Neither partner should feel obligated to share what these physical and emotional reactions are related to.

What this exercise teaches us is that fear and anxiety are universal experiences. Regardless of the reason for the fear, we all experience fear in the same ways in our bodies and in our emotions. Nowadays, young people are faced with increasing levels of anxiety and fear. Much of their resistance to participating in community events and programs has to do with feeling misunderstood. This often happens because few adults have the tools to empathize with youth. This exercise can give you an idea of the types of anxiety that young people are living with every day. By understanding what it does to you, you can better empathize with them.

Take note of what comes up for you in this exercise.