

CLOSURE

Some mentor–mentee pairs do not need to worry about this stage until far down the road. However, at some point all relationships will come to an end, whether it is because the program is over or the mentor is moving or for some other reason. It is critical that this stage not be overlooked. Young people today have many adults come and go in their lives. Very rarely are they provided the opportunity to say goodbye properly.

1. Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial, and resentment.

Help your mentee to express his or her emotions by modeling the behavior. For example, if your relationship is coming to a close and you and your mentee enjoyed your time together, you might say something like “I am going to really miss you. I have enjoyed our time together.” However, you must be honest. If your relationship is coming to a close and your time together was all right but not great, then don’t lie and say that you are going to be sad that this is over. Also, do not expect the young person to reciprocate. Even though you shared your emotions as a means of modeling how to, your mentee still might not feel comfortable sharing his or her emotions.

2. Provide options for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful, and affirming way.

Don’t wait until the last meeting to say goodbye. Make sure you start addressing this issue as soon as you know the relationship will be coming to a close.

3. Address appropriate situations for staying in touch with your mentee.

Check with your program coordinator to see what the policy is for staying in touch with your mentee. Quite often, programs will tell you that it is alright for you to stay in touch with your mentee but not under the umbrella of the program, primarily for liability purposes. It is then up to you and your mentee as to whether you will stay in touch and how you will do that. Don’t assume that just because you want to stay in contact that your mentee will want to as well. It must be mutual.