



CONVERSATION STARTERS AND ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL MENTEES

Conversation Starters

1. “What do you want to be when you grow up?”
 - a. Actively listen to and question your mentee about their futures and their plans for after high school.
 - b. Talk to your mentee about potential career paths and the steps it takes to get there.
 - c. If you have access to a computer with internet, explore careers and colleges with your mentee.
2. Talk about where you went to college or attained your post-secondary education
 - a. If you attended college or some form of post-secondary education, or are familiar with a local institution in the community, make sure to talk about it.
3. Discuss college life
 - a. Review college newspapers, admission guides, brochures, etc. with your mentee and discuss college life, activities, and admission processes.
4. Extracurricular encouragement
 - a. Encourage your mentee to participate in extracurricular activities starting in middle school such as sports, band, drama, student government, community service, and other leadership opportunities. This will help him/her develop a strong pre-college portfolio.
5. College-Bound behaviors
 - a. Talk with your mentee about developing the good habits and self-discipline they will need to be successful in middle school, high school, and college. This could include improving grades, study and homework habits, school attendance, test-taking skills, and time management. Talk with your mentee about these college-bound behaviors.
6. Discuss educational paths
 - a. Help your mentee think about the various forms of post-secondary education (community college, vocational school, 4-year university, etc.).
7. Discuss advanced classes
 - a. Encourage your mentee to take advanced classes whenever possible. They will have more education options, be better prepared for college entrance exams, and college classes. Have your mentee talk to their parent(s)/guardian(s) and counselors about enrolling in such courses and the support needed.

Activity Ideas

1. Virtual Campus Tour
 - a. Take your mentee on a virtual tour of campuses by visiting the websites of different college and universities.
2. College Admission Application
 - a. Find out what colleges your mentee is interested in and print an admissions application for the school. Bring the application to one of the meetings and begin filling it out with your mentee. Discuss and set goals to fill in the gaps or to strengthen the application. This will create a strong awareness for the mentee with what to expect.
3. College Event Field Trip
 - a. Take your mentee to a college event (football game, basketball game, art fair, cultural festivity, etc.).
4. Read a book together

- a. Read books about individuals who have overcome obstacles and succeeded and/or non-fiction texts about potential career fields.
5. Career Scrapbook
 - a. Work with your mentee to create a career notebook/scrapbook. Have them think of 10 possible careers they might be interested in pursuing. Create informational sheets/colleges about each career with the pictures of individuals doing that job or pictures of something related to the job, along with a brief paragraph about the job responsibilities of a person in the field, information on the type of required career training and how long the training lasts, and the name of a few colleges or universities that provide the training.
6. Online Personality Test
 - a. Have your mentee take a free online personality test, explaining that such tests provide ways to think about future careers. There are no absolutes about what one can or must do. The quizzes are a fun way to get youth thinking about their futures.
 - i. www.kidzworld.com. Type “careers” in the search field. The site has two kid-friendly, rather short quizzes, with fun questions.
 - ii. www.missouri.edu. Search: Career Interests Game. Review this site with your mentee. It’s a little complex, but it provides interesting information about personality types and careers. It’s best suited for older middle school students.
7. College Fun Collage
 - a. Create a collage of the fun things you can do in college: study abroad, attend sports events, join a fraternity or sorority, participate in community service, live in the dorm, etc.
8. Role Model Study
 - a. Study the life of a famous individual or a role model with your mentee. Questions to think about could include: *What is the person’s occupation? What training did he/she need for that occupation? What characteristics made that individual a success? Ask your mentee why he/she chose that particular individual? How can they follow in the individual’s footsteps?*
9. Job Shadow
 - a. Talk with your mentee about the careers they are interested in and help them to find and ask individuals in that field if they would be willing to have you and your mentee shadow them at their jobs.
10. College Positive Rewards
 - a. Look for opportunities to encourage and reward your mentee when he/she does college positive behaviors such as good grades, completes a project, has a leadership moment, etc.). Do a special activity or bring them their favorite candy or snack. Set goals for specific projects and/or grades and reward those goals with encouraging cards, notes, etc.
11. Career Presentation
 - a. Do research with your mentee on a career he/she may be interested in and host an event for your mentee and their parents(s)/guardian(s), families, counselors, teachers, etc. in which the mentee can give a presentation about their research of a particular career path. Have them dress up as an individual in that career for the presentation event. The research could include information about why they chose that career, the schooling required, which college(s) they might attend and why, what they could accomplish in the field, or individuals who have done something significant in this area.
12. Read the same book together