



Mentor UPDATE

Feature



Karen Stever has been a volunteer all her life. The many hats she's worn over the years include Emergency Room candy-striper, court-appointed child advocate, elementary school tutor, and, finally, Take Stock in Children mentor. While each experience was rewarding in its own right, it is her role as mentor to Christine, a

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Steinbrenner High School sophomore, which stands out. "This has, without a doubt, been one of the best experiences of my life, volunteering or otherwise," Karen states.

Karen's relationship with Christine, however, was not always smooth sailing. They began meeting in February of 2008, when Christine was in 7th grade. Their initial meetings were very quiet, and mentor and mentee would often simply sit together in silence. A child may be afraid to give trust, and it takes time for a mentor to demonstrate that she is committed. In addition, there were occasions when Christine would not show up for her weekly meeting. Karen had to travel far for these appointments, and was understandably frustrated.

But Karen refused to let Christine down. "I didn't push her, and tried to think of activities that would be fun besides just talking," Karen says. Card games and long walks around campus helped break the ice and earn Christine's trust. The pair also decided on a new meeting schedule that was more flexible, given that they each had many other commitments. "I remembered to look at the bigger picture," she explains, "and tried to teach her about being responsible" and respectful of a friend's time.

Karen's perseverance paid off. "Gradually," she says, "as Christine saw that I was showing up every week and genuinely seemed to care about what was going on in her life, she really started opening up." Soon enough, Christine was introducing Karen to her friends with pride, and giving her tours of her classrooms, cafeteria and locker. When Christine entered high school, Karen stuck with her through the transition. "Last year," Karen says with pride, "Christine did not miss one single meeting without letting me know first."

These days, when Karen and Christine meet, they spend the hour simply talking. They have developed a very close bond, and often share photos and scrapbooks of family members and friends. Occasionally, Karen surprises Christine with homemade goodies she baked or a treat she picked up while traveling. "The session ends too quickly," she complains, "with so much more yet to talk about."

Karen is especially grateful for her mentoring experience because of the many things Christine has taught her. Like most people, Karen approached Take Stock with the idea that her mentee would be the "student." Christine showed her that that mentoring is a two-way street: "I have learned so much about middle school and high school...that will help me guide my own son, who is five years younger than Christine."

Karen says she feels lucky to know such a hard-working and inspiring young woman. "I don't know where she finds the time to do all of the things she does to be so successful in her life," Karen says. Christine is not only a very dedicated student, but a standout softball player.

Mentors Needed

Have friends or colleagues who would make an amazing mentor? Send their information to [Jonathan Maresco](#) and he will contact them!

Contacts

[Jonathan Maresco](#)

(813) 574-0264

Let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Whether you have been a mentor for many years or just joined the program, we are excited to have you as part of our mentoring team.

The Foundation and your students are more than grateful for your dedication and the honor you bring to the title "MENTOR."

She is fiercely committed to her teammates, friends and family-and her dog, Sparky. "She's the best," Karen says, "and I love her like a daughter."

Hot Topic

Teen Dating Violence

February 2nd to the 6th is the fourth annual Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week.

Abusive relationships can affect relationships throughout a teenager's lifetime. Many teens do not have experience or knowledge of a healthy relationship. Teen dating violence is influenced by how teenagers view themselves and others. For example, young men may believe they have the right to control their female partners and masculinity is physical aggressiveness. Young women may believe they are responsible for solving problems in their relationships and try to change their partner. Many teenagers believe abuse is normal because their friends are also being abused.

Statistics show that one in three teenagers have experienced violence in a dating relationship. Forty percent of girls ages 14 to 17 have reported that they know someone their age who has been hit by a boyfriend.

Types of abuse:

Physical abuse - any intentional use of physical force meant to cause fear or injury (hitting, kicking, shoving, biting, or using a weapon).

Emotional abuse - non-physical behavior that is psychologically harmful such as insults, humiliation, intimidation, threats, isolation, or stalking.

Sexual abuse - any action that forces undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another.

Dating abuse is not always isolated to one type of abuse. Typically, when a partner is physically abusive he/she is also emotionally abusive. If your mentee is experiencing any of the warning signs below, please encourage him/her to seek help.

Warning Signs:

- Pressure to make the relationship very serious or have sex before one is ready
- Jealousy and/or possessive
- Trying to control the other person
- Text or IM you constantly
- Isolates a partner from close friends or family
- Drinks too much or uses drugs and then blames the alcohol or drugs for his/her behavior
- Throws or breaks things when angry
- Threatens with physical force
- Accuses the other of cheating or being romantically

interested in another

- Insults
- No respect for privacy (reads emails/texts, goes through personal things)

For More Information:

Loveisrespect.org

Stayteen.org

Seeking Help:

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline

1-866-331-9474

KnowHow2Go Corner:

Step 2 - Push Yourself!

What if you could go back in time and set yourself up for success? What if you could tell your younger self: "Study hard for the SAT! It matters. Apply to that internship! It will help you find a job. Take the AP classes! Colleges will notice." It might be too late for us, but not for our mentees.

Encourage your mentee to work hard now and reap the rewards when applying to colleges. Activities such as planning a challenging class schedule together, or reviewing basic computer skills, can go a long way toward helping your student meet the demands of college and eventually the workforce. Below are some tips to pass along to your mentee. Remember to reinforce these ideas consistently during your weekly meetings. As always, repetition helps!

- *Take the right classes.* To get into college, start by taking the [right classes](#) in high school. Find out what classes you need to meet entrance requirements and sign up for them now. Lock in requirements. You may not need them to finish high school, but most colleges require three to four years of math, English, science and social studies. Plus, most want at least two years of the same foreign language.
- *Meet the challenge.* Sure, grades are important, but the tougher the courses you take, the more likely it is that a college will decide to take you. In general, most colleges prefer students who challenge themselves with [harder courses](#), even if they earn only average grades, than those who take easier courses just to get higher grades.
- *Achieve honors.* Honors and Advanced Placement courses are the gold standard for colleges and carry much more weight than other courses in working out your grade point average.
- *Tap into computing.* Courses in computer science (or even classes that require you to use computers in researching or completing projects) will give you the skills you need to make the grade at college.

Tough Questions

My mentee says he wants to be an astronaut when he grows up. I think it's great that he is confident in his intelligence and has lofty aspirations, but I just don't think this is a realistic plan for the future. I don't want to set him up for failure. What do I do?

- Down to Earth in Dover

Great question, Down to Earth!

First things first: don't judge! It looks like you're already on top of this one, so we won't belabor the point. However, it's a good opportunity to remind ourselves that our mentees often have different values than we do. A good mentor refuses the temptation to apply his own value-system to his mentee's goals, choices and aspirations. In your case, you are concerned your mentee might be setting the bar too high, rather than too low, but the same rule still applies.

Also, your mentee is still a young person. Do you remember how many times you changed your mind about what you wanted to be when you grow up? Your mentee has plenty of time to decide on a profession. Adults change their career paths all the time, college students flip-flop on their majors every day, and middle school students change their mind every second! Your job is always to be a trusted friend and help instill self-esteem. Young people already have plenty of reasons *not* to believe in themselves.

Lastly, don't forget that it takes literally thousands of people to get those 6 or 7 crew members into a space shuttle. After studying Physics, your mentee may decide he'd rather be an Aerospace Engineer, or he might really enjoy his Accounting class and decide to be a Budget Analyst for NASA. He might even decide to fly 747s instead of spaceships. Take the pragmatic approach and work with your mentee to decide what fields he should study, and then create a list of classes to take which will help prepare him for a job as an astronaut. Also, make him aware that there are many careers to be had in the space exploration and aeronautics fields. Along the way, anything can happen!

Let's wrap this one up, D-to-E. First, don't judge. Second, instill self-esteem. Third, be practical. You never know, your mentee might just be the next Neil Armstrong!

The Newsroom

President Obama declares January National Mentoring Month

On December 21st, President Barack Obama issued a [proclamation](#) designating January 2011 as National Mentoring Month. He states, "During National Mentoring Month, we honor these important individuals who unlock the potential and nurture the talent of our country, and we encourage more Americans to reach out and mentor young people in their community".

MENTOR, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Harvard School of Public Health hosted a National Mentoring Summit on January 25th at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The Summit, titled *Achieving Academic and Social Success: Supporting Youth through Mentoring*, brought together mentoring organizations, federal and state government, and civic leaders to develop strategies through mentoring to increase graduation rates among the youth and position them for success.

At the summit, First lady Michelle Obama delivered the [keynotes address](#) and announced the Corporate Mentoring Challenge, an initiative led by the CNCS to encourage U.S. companies to establish a mentoring program, allow employees to mentor during work days, expand existing employee mentoring programs, and/or provide resources to support mentoring programs. She urges Americans to mentor the youth, "If the president and the first lady can mentor, shoot, everybody has got a little time".

Know The Dates

National African American History Month

Early Release Day

February 9th

Lincoln's Birthday

February 12th

Valentine's Day

February 14th

President's Day

February 16th

Early Release Day

February 23rd

Helpful Resources

Complete and submit the FAFSA online
[Help completing the FAFSA](#)
[High School Timeline for College Planning](#)

Sincerely,
The Mentoring Support Team
Hillsborough Education Foundation

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