

The Blog



AUGUST 10, 2011

3 Ways Mentoring Inspires Meaningful Relationships

By [Reena De Asis](#)

"So you're not getting paid? You don't have to be here? My social worker or the court didn't send you?" Cecilia said.

"Nope. I'm here spending time with you because I want to," I happily said.

At 19, I wanted to make a difference in the every day life challenges of a foster child and became a volunteer mentor for the YMCA ARK Program, Services for Abused Children. For over 10 years, my mentee and I have maintained our relationship. I'm happy to say, Cecilia is not just another statistic that aged out of the foster care system. She's an empowered woman who rose above the ashes.

Not everyone is blessed to have his or her basic needs met. Yet, once basic needs are met, we have the choice to create meaningful relationships that make a lasting impact.

Below are three reasons why mentoring is inspiring for both the mentor/mentee:

1) We all have a need to feel love and belong

By choosing to mentor an at-risk youth, I was able to fulfill my desire to be of service and truly be hands-on with my giving. According to a [Child Trends](#) research brief, mentoring makes a big difference: When kids enjoy a regular, positive activity with an adult over the course of a year, those kids are 46% less likely to begin using drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, and 50% less likely to skip school.

Likewise, Cecilia was able to rely on me as a confidant during tumultuous times. Her childhood consisted of growing up in a broken home, saturated in a drug and gang infested neighborhood where she got a "break" by bouncing from foster home to juvenile hall. She had my support, regardless of where she laid her head down at night. Our close connection even earned me an introduction as her "sister" to friends!

2) Honing good communication skills

We were strangers with two different cultural backgrounds, upbringings and an age gap of seven years. However, because we understood the value of our relationship, with practice we improved our listening skills, nonverbal and reciprocal communication. Moreover, one of the [key communication skills](#) I learned as a mentor was to mediate between Cecilia, her foster parents and the nonprofit I volunteered for.

In addition, Cecilia learned to slowly open up and share her feelings. She embraced Anaïs Nin's words, "And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom." I eventually gained her trust and most importantly, she learned to trust herself.

3) A positive ripple effect

Having experienced the wonders of a mentor/mentee relationship, I actively sought out mentors that have played a pivotal role in my life. My mentors support me with sound advice and compassionate guidance. It meant the world to me to have role models by my side, especially during my college years and as a young professional.

Similarly, Cecilia is a mother of two and is admired by her boys as their mentor. A high school graduate and certified as a dental assistant, Cecilia will soon pursue a career in nursing while supporting her two boys. She is also the sole provider of her immediate family and attends all her boys soccer games, as well as school functions. She does her best to be the person she longed for in her childhood, someone her children can rely on.

To learn more about youth mentoring opportunities, try [MENTOR](#), [The Mentor Network](#) and [Big Brothers Big Sisters](#). For tips and exercises on how to be a mentor, download a [mentor kit](#) online.

"Mentor: someone whose hindsight can become your foresight." ~Ancient Chinese Proverb.

How has your life been affected by a mentor/mentee?

[Reena De Asis](#) is service driven. She is the Marketing and Nonprofit Relations Director for [Causecast](#). Enthusiastic and resource savvy, Reena is responsible for driving numerous cause-based initiatives for non-profits and companies.

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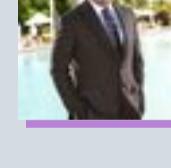
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