

"There is no such thing as other people's children"—Hillary Clinton

"Every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story"—Josh Shipp

STRATEGIES FOR TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

This packet contains information about how to deal with tough conversations with your student. Please use these tools as you see fit.

STRATEGIES FOR TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

1. **Ask more questions:** For instance, if a student wants to know if you have used drugs, you could ask: *Why are you asking? Is there something going on that makes you curious or uncomfortable?*
2. **Explain the consequences:** For example, if a student asks to do an activity that you feel is inappropriate, you may explain that the activity is against the rules of the program and you do not want to do anything that would jeopardize your ability to work with them. Offer alternatives.
3. **Simply and directly state your disapproval of the behavior:** Suppose a student starts talking to you as if you are their best friend or says something you feel is inappropriate, you could say, *I am glad you feel close enough to me to share what you are thinking. As your mentor, my role is to tell you what I think and challenge you to see things from another angle.*
4. **Redirect:** For less severe issues you may consider trying to connect back to a life lesson. For instance, if a student discloses alcohol use over the weekend and you have been discussing goal setting and attainment, ask them if alcohol use gets them any closer to their goals and engage them in a conversation.
5. **Contact your:** site coordinator, other mentor, and OSMI staff for assistance.

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STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE REDIRECTION

- Respond appropriately to the level of the disclosure. For less severe issues, you may consider trying to connect back to a life lesson.
- Genuinely thank the student for trusting you enough to share.
- Allow the student to verbalize their feelings.
- Check your assumptions and avoid judgement by trying to see things from the student's angle.
- Offer perspective - you will always have more than they do.
- Identify and discuss the consequences of the student's actions.
- Agree on next steps and follow-up.

REACH OUT FOR HELP

There may come a point in your mentorship experience when you will need to reach out for additional school and/or community resources. **Do not hesitate** to reach out to your point person should you encounter information or issues that you do not feel comfortable handling on your own. If there are issues that indicate your mentee is in harm's way and you cannot reach your point person, please contact a member of the OSMI Team.

Keep in mind, each and every building has the following resources available to you:

- **Guidance Counselor:** social and/or emotional issues.
- **I Know I Can Advisor:** college application, FAFSA, ACT, SAT registration and/or information.
- **Internship Coordinator:** question regarding internship hours and opportunities.
- **School Nurse:** medical issues or concerns.
- **Site Coordinator:** The building person in charge of administering the SSM program at your student's school location.
- **Social Worker:** family / community resources.
- **VCAP Coordinator:** questions regarding your mentee's progress or performance.