Motivating & Mentoring High School Age Students to Explore Workforce & Higher Education Options
A Career Development Model

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Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our

deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,

talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to

be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't

serve the world. We were born to make manifest the

glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of

us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine,

we unconsciously give other people permission to do

the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our

presence automatically liberates others (Williamson,

1992).

This quote is very inspiring. It makes me realize that sometimes in life

people need an extra push, helping hand or even a role model to help them get

over, "the hump," in life. We are all capable of pursuing our dreams in life. It is

within us to do great things. Often it is easy for a person to get lost and mixed up in

things within their life, they forget their purpose, lose their focus, and cannot get

back on the right track. For these reasons stated above, it is important to have

someone who can motivate you or a person who can help to motivate or empower

others. Motivation is very important in life and cannot be taken for granted. Young

adults need someone to take specific interest within their lives in order to find guidance to reach career and employment goals.

Motivating the unmotivated on a road to success whether that is college or entering the working world is a topic that sometimes can be taken for granted. I witnessed the issue in my own life. Although motivation was not a problem that I dealt with personally, I viewed the lack of motivation in students from a mentoring program (which I will discuss later) I have worked for in the past, and I have witnessed the lack of empowerment within individuals in my immediate and extended family. Last year, one of my fiancés siblings graduated from high school. The family had a huge celebration dinner for this accomplishment. During the dinner, I discovered that my fiancés sibling did not have any set goals, future plans, and had not even filled out college applications, taken SAT's or even applied for a job. What was he waiting for? What did he plan to do without any preparation? Why was there no mentor or figure in his life guiding him?

There were many questions that came to my mind. Because I had so many questions coming to my mind so rapidly, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to learn more about this issue within our society and to do further research. I wanted to learn how to motivate individuals, find out what effective mentoring was, educate myself on what organizations have been established that I could refer people to, and think about what roles I could take. Defining effective mentoring is important because it can help people understand what needs to be done to motivate individuals to take an interest in themselves and their own lives, to possibly become better people and also to be successful. Assisting students

with their transition to college or work is important and is beneficial because it is a process that will enrich and empower young adults to possibly change the world.

Because mentoring is important, many programs have already been put in place to keep young adults as well as children on track. The programs that start with early childhood are working to instill values in children before reaching the young adult age. Below I will discuss a few programs that are being implemented that I feel stand out and excel with mentoring and empowerment. This report begins by reviewing existing programs, moves on to summarize the psychological aspects of mentoring, touches on the messages of popular films that involve mentors, and defines what mentoring means through a model that I have designed.

<u>EXISTING PR0GRAMS</u>

The first program that I researched is, Upward Bound. I chose this program to do research on first because of my experience with the program in high school. This particular program helped to keep me on track during high school, and also prepared me for things to come after graduation. The general idea of Upward Bound is to provide fundamental support to students and prepare them for college (Upward Bound, 2008). The program provides opportunities for participants to succeed in pre-college performance activities such as the PSAT, SAT and numerous standardized tests. The goal of Upward Bound is to increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education (Upward Bound, 2008). The program was very helpful to me by providing workshops on, how to build an effective resume,

SAT prep and weekend leadership retreats. I believe that this is one of the best programs that can be looked at to define what mentoring truly is. Until this day, I have a great relationship with the program director Robert Burley. He is a lifelong friend, mentor and life coach.

A similar program to Upward Bound is Gear Up. Although this program is similar it differs from, but complements, existing federal programs in several significant ways (Gear Up Boston, 2000). The Gear Up partnership program starts no later than the 7th grade to ensure that students in high school have taken algebra and other courses needed for college. The program also prepares students for college by providing key services which include mentoring, tutoring, counseling and strengthening the school curriculum (Gear Up Boston, 2000). Gear Up provides professional development for teachers and staff and use creative ways to involve parents. One unique aspect about Gear Up is that they do not limit their program to a traditional school year calendar. The activities continue on into the summer with summer academic and enrichment programs, and college visits. The program also provides college scholarships, options for financial aid and Century Scholar Certificates; which is an early notification of their eligibility for financial aid (Gear Up Boston, 2000).

According to the website, Gear Up is based on proven models of success, both large and small (Gear Up, 2000). Existing programs, such as I Have a Dream and Project GRAD, demonstrate the success of incorporating the concepts of partnerships, school reform and scholarships into early intervention (Gear Up

Boston, 2000). These programs have helped significantly improve low-income student test scores, high school graduation and college enrollment rates.

Mentoring not only consists of opportunities for students to excel in academics, but there are also organizations in place that encourage students to help each other, their community, and prepares them for the working world by exposing them to diversity and hard work (City Year Boston, 2008). City Year unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service, giving them skills and opportunities to change the world. Students and participants in the program serve for a term of 10 months out of a year doing many different programs geared towards service, youth leadership, community transformation and professional development (City Year Boston 2008). The purpose of the program is for members to focus and to persevere by being tutors, mentors, role models as well as leaders of after school programs and vacation camps (City Year Boston, 2008). The ultimate goal of City Year is to help both children and young adults succeed, build stronger communities, break down social barriers, develop young leaders and foster active citizenship (City Year Boston, 2008).

The last mentoring program out of many that I have researched is, The Posse Foundation. I found this program to be the most interesting by the way it is set up. The Posse Foundation identifies, recruits, and trains students to become incredible youth leaders from urban public high schools (The Posse Foundation, 2008). After recruiting the students, they are named or referred to as a Posse. These posse teams stick together throughout the duration of the program and are taken through an intensive eight month pre-collegiate training program. The

program is to help the posse with enrollment at top tier universities nationwide to pursue their academics and to help promote cross-cultural communication on campus (The Posse Foundation, 2008).

Learning about this program was enjoyable because it seems to be a very unique way of mentoring. Not only do students receive mentoring from peers and staff, but they have the continued support of their posse group that they are with from the beginning of the program. Because the program is set up this way, students are possibly building friendships or colleagues that will last a life time. Having this close nit relationship is very beneficial, especially during the transition to college or entering the workforce. As students leave the staff that has empowered and mentored them, they still have their friends in their posse that will be at the same University to help them reach their academic and career goals as well as continue to instill the values that have been taught to them during their high school years in The Posse Foundation.

<u>PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MENTORING</u>

Finding information about the psychology of mentoring was only a start to my research process. During the process, I found many successful organizations including the ones listed above that are working hard using mentoring to ensure that learning, community involvement, preparing for college or the workforce and goal setting remains in the student's mindset throughout critical years in their lives when change is intimidating. The next step of my research consisted of going through the psychology aspect of mentoring. I have learned that there are specific ways that these organizations continue to have successful programs as well as

ways to make programs better (Hidi and Harackiewicz, 2000) Interests and motivational variables are examples of specific strategies to successful mentoring programs (Deci, 1992). What research says about effective mentoring is listed given below:

- Interests and goals are motivational variables that impact academic performances by motivating students through what intrigues them (Deci, 1992). A program like MYCW (A program that motivates students through basketball) is an example of this because basketball is an interest in many of today's youth, and if they want to participate in the program they must have tutoring and get good grades.

- Interest triggered by external factors leads to continued and persistent activity that becomes self initiated (Deci, 1992). This means that once a person is interested in something, they will continue to pursue it and it will become a natural routine in their lives. Having or taking an interest is the first step.

- Establishing Relationships to enforce standards and goals is very important (Barron and Harackiewicz, 1999). By establishing a relationship with the mentee, you develop a close connection to instill values, a hard work ethic and you are someone they can identify with when they need a helping hand (ex: Coach Carter).

- Some students are motivated to do well because they want to earn an "A" in the course; demonstrating to themselves, their peers, professors, and even parents that they are smart (Barron and Harackiewicz, 1999).

This scenario is known as a type of performance approach goal. Some

students may strive to avoid exposing to others their inability to do

something (Barron and Harackiewicz, 1999). . When students avoid

exposing their inability to do something, this is called performance-

avoidance goals (Barron and Harackiewicz, 1999). . This type of goals

are the opposite of performance approach goals.

Each one of these bullet points are aspects that I found in the research that

stand out to me about how goals, motivation and interests variables are all

connected. By taking something and learning from each of these points, a person

can learn to be effective in the mentoring programs they start or can help to

ensure that the programs that are already in place use information within

research to be successful.

MENTORING AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

This particular part of my research consisted of comparing my own

personal experience to what I have learned from reading through scholarly texts.

When I was a mentor at Duquesne University, I focused only on making sure the

three incoming freshman that I was responsible for got their work done, were

acclimated with the campus and participated in student organizations. When

thinking back to this experience, I wish I had more formal training on how to be an

effective mentor. I understand now after doing research that I would have had a

greater impact on them if I established a friendship first and then became a type of

disciplinarian second (Dwek, 1992). Also, the mentoring relationship would have

been stronger if I would have put in more personal time with my mentee's to

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understand what their life goals were instead of just helping them reach the immediate; getting an, "A." The idea is to help students to avoid putting on a demonstration of lack of ability (Middleton, 1997). By doing so, a mentor can help avoid them changing their mindset and becoming lazy early on. A mentor is actually becoming a coach of persistence and hard work.

<div align="center">MENTORING IN POPULAR CULTURE</div>

Popular culture sometimes plays off of situations that stem from reality. I have analyzed a few motivational movies to understand what strategies are used and to find out what I was missing in learning about effective mentoring. I watched many different movies about an array of topics such as Coach Carter, Sister Act, Dangerous minds, Akeelah and the Bee, and Freedom Writers. I took something from each of the movies I analyzed, but the movies that I felt inspired me because of the techniques used were Akeelah and the Bee as well as Coach Carter. Akeelah and the Bee is a unique movie. The motivational piece came in when the main character Akeelah had to be motivated to do well in other subjects in school by means of one of her interests which were spelling bees (Akeelah and the Bee, 2006). This aspect of the movie relates to interest and motivational variables that impact academic performance (Deci, 1992).

Coach Carter is a very inspirational movie that combines interest variables and motivational variables of mentoring in order to empower his basketball to team to work hard not only in basketball, but in academics in order to go on to college on entering the workforce. The storyline of the movie is interesting because Coach Carter's approach to empowerment encompasses an aspect of

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tough love that is controversial (Coach Carter, 2005). Tough love combined with mentoring was very important within the movie because Coach Carter found himself in the center of controversy when he locked out his entire Varsity basketball team (including his own son) in order to motivate and push them to improve their grades.   Although Coach Carter's original approach is not the norm, he demonstrated every part of effective mentoring which I will describe in the mentoring model below.

AN ACRONYM FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORING
Designed by-Ashley Smith, 2008

M- Making Connections
E- Empowerment
N- New Directions
T- Taking Responsibility
O- Organization & Obstacles
R- Reach a goal! (Progress)

After reviewing the research, the main points of effective mentoring can be explained through this mentoring acronym that I have created not only for myself, but for others to have further understanding of what effective mentoring really is. The first letter, "M," in the acronym stands for making connections. Making connections is developing a relationship with your mentee which is very important and is the first step in mentoring (Hidi and Harackiewicz, 2000). You cannot be an effective mentor without knowing something about the person you are trying to help. By establishing relationships you also learn about the person's goals and aspirations; this way you can help guide them more effectively. If a person wants to go to college, you would help them take the necessary steps in

applying to schools or even taking their SAT's. This can work for a student who feels school is not for them as well. A mentor would help prepare that student to enter into the workforce but also present what opportunities he/she would receive from going to college verses not having a degree.

The second letter of the acronym is, "E," which stands for Empowerment. Empowerment is a very significant point in the mentoring process because it's moving the student or mentee to a point in which they can be proactive (Deci, 1992). If the mentee or student is empowered, then they are at a point where they will be motivated to make their own personal progress towards their goals.

"N," or new directions is an important step after empowerment because after the student is at a point in which they are motivated on a road to success, the mentor can provide alternatives or options that the student can consider or may have not thought of. This step is making sure the student has considered every option he/she may have in life before continuing along the mapped out plan for success.

The, "T," meaning taking responsibility can go both ways. This particular letter is not only something that the mentee or student has to follow, but the mentor should abide by this as well. The mentor has to take responsibility in the relationship with the mentee to make sure effective mentoring is taking place and that the mentee is making successful progress towards his/her goal. The mentee has to take responsibility by making sure they are following the guidance and help the mentor is displaying. Each party has to be actively participating in the mentoring relationship for it to be effective.

Letter, "O," is very interesting because it can work for two definitions within the acronym. The first word it stands for is organization. The mentee and mentor must be organized and keep track of the progress that is being made. Because it is a process to reach a goal or to transition from high school to college or and the workforce, organization will keep a low stress level. The other word for the letter, "O," is obstacles. Along with organization will come obstacles, but the better organized an individual is, the easier it will be to overcome the obstacles.

"R," is the most important letter within the whole acronym because it provides encouragement and represents reaching whatever goal that is defined at the beginning when a mentor and mentee are first introduced. The letter "R" represents making progress.

The mentoring model as a whole represents a positive learning relationship between two people. I designed this model from taking pieces from readings I have done. A mentor should aim to empower people by providing support, advice and encouragement in a consistent manner. How does a mentor do this; How do they become an effective motivator? A Mentor becomes an effective motivator by, achieving mutual respect, balancing professionalism or friendship, is action oriented, has excellent interpersonal skills, communicates clearly, empathises, encourages, motivates, and can give negative feedback constructively (Hidi and Harackiewicz, 2000). Mentors should have a vision about helping the student to develop. All these different approaches combined create an effective mentor.

As long as a person has the ability to use these types of skils and will apply them, the student or mentee should benefit from their help. There are possible

opportunities for a person who has these skills and would like to put them into action such as being a life coach, cousneling, volunteer work, workshops as well as mentoring programs. Each of these types of mentoring combined with having the knowledge of what effective mentoring is can motivate the unmotivated on a road to success whether that is college or entering the working world.

<u>REFLECTION AND FUTURE STEPS</u>

Although, I have gathered an abundance of information and there are many opportunities in which I can apply what I know, I still feel that there is further exploration to be done to understand more about how the psychology fits into being an effective mentor. Also, I think believe there are an abundance of things that can be taken from other motivational movies and analyzed for understanding on what effective mentoring should be. I was able to interview two informants during my research process, but if given the opportunity again, I would ask more targeted questions about mentoring after knowing more about the research. The questions I asked were more about personal opinion and their personal experience, which was helpful but in order for the information from the informants to be helpful, I would need to develop what my focus of the interview would be and gear my questions accordingly.

Furthermore, I do feel like I have learned more about effective mentoring and how to empower students to move towards a career path, but I am still unsure of which opportunity I would like to pursue. I am not sure where I want to go from this point with the information I have collected from my project. By saying all of this, I would still like to do some further work an exploration on my topic. There is

no concrete outcome as of right now, but I will leave you with some ideas I have in mind:

1. Putting together an information booklet with relevant information that organizations can reference. (Training/ Motivational Booklet)

2. Using the strategies learned on close relatives, younger peers and friends (a starting point).

3. Join one of the organizations I've done research on (Part-time/flexibility with my work schedule). Provide this information to college mentoring programs so they can adopt some ideas or the acronym.

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