



“Pass It On”: Mentor Training Retreat Feedback

Prepared for: SWOVA

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“PASS IT ON” MENTOR TRAINING RETREAT

In March 2009, the SWOVA “Pass It On” project team hosted an overnight retreat in order that young women, in grades 9-12, who would soon be acting as Mentors to “younger buddies” in grade eight, could receive training and support. These young women spent this retreat exploring what it means to be a mentor and how to build connections with their younger buddies through effective communication, support and care. Specifically, under the guidance of adult facilitators, mentors had a chance to learn about key issues pertinent to relationship building and maintenance, discuss challenges and concerns, practice new skills through experiential activities, and take time to reflect on their overall learning and growth. Further to this, mentors examined ways in which they could ensure that they take care of their own needs (e.g., setting boundaries, seeking support when needed) while at the same time providing guidance to a younger buddy. In total, 15 mentors provided feedback about their experience of the retreat.

HEARING THE EXPERIENCE OF MENTORS

At the end of the overnight retreat, mentors were asked to reflect upon three questions.

1. What was your favorite or most useful part of the retreat?
2. After having attended the training retreat, how confident do you feel in your future role as a mentor?
3. Do you have any suggestions for ways that the mentor training could be improved?



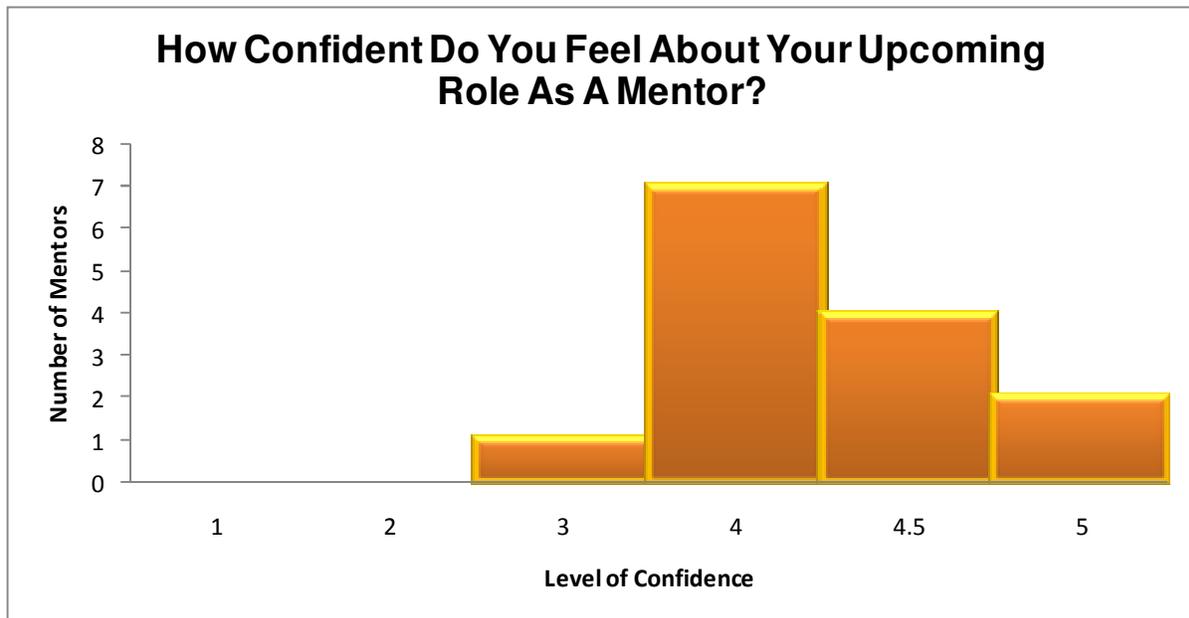
FAVORITE/MOST USEFUL PART OF THE RETREAT

The Mentors were asked to comment about their favorite/most useful part of the retreat. Answers were content-analyzed for themes which are presented below.

Favorite part, most useful activities.	Number of participants indicating this aspect	Comments (when noted)
Small group work	7	When we presented on separate topics; Working in small groups; Chance to connect with others and learn valuable information and ideas; Talking in small groups; Marble groups; It was easier to address questions in smaller groups.
Types of questions and clarification statements	5	Questions being asked and answered; Loved answering other people's questions (rolled up piece of paper).
Specific Activities	5	"What if" scenarios; Bonding games; Writing activities; Yoga
Discussions	4	Discussions with everyone involved; Big discussions; Before the program I imagined just friend-like conversations, now I know the fine line between what is appropriate and what is not; Discussing situations between you and your buddy.
Awareness Wheel	3	
Problem solving	3	
Role Plays	3	
Meeting Mentors and Facilitators	2	Meeting the mentors; Meeting the facilitators.
Boundary setting	2	
Energizers	2	Energizers are excellent!
Observing conversations	2	Observing conversations between facilitators.
Realizing we are friends to our buddies, not counselors.	1	

CONFIDENCE GAINS

Mentors were asked to report, at the end of the retreat, how confident they felt, on a scale of 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (very confident), about their upcoming role as a mentor.



Several of the mentors who noted 4 or 4.5 as their confidence level added the following comments.

"I am feeling very confident about being a mentor."

"I feel confident enough to know how to deal with different situations, and I think that I'll be more confident after meeting my buddy."

"I feel a 4, a bit unsure but mostly confident because I don't have that many good experiences with the age group."

"I feel very confident after this meeting. I felt that I learned a lot and that all my worries were addressed. 4.5 is my number because I am still anxious but confident."

"I feel more confident and excited to become a mentor than before this workshop."

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE MENTOR TRAINING

Suggestions	Number of participants	Comments
Retreat General Comments (7 comments)	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreat was great, lots of info in little time. • Having it right after school was hard. I had a hard time staying awake but still had fun. • Really liked the retreat format. • Nice to have a retreat instead of just a meeting. • I really liked the retreat. It bonded girls together which is the key aspect to have between you and your mentee. • I liked the retreat.
More....	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I didn't like having a sleepover thing.
Schedule/timing (5 comments)	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts for example "taking care of yourself" presentation. • Music and energizers; Yoga; Bonding Activities.
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not going so late at night. Not doing it after school when people are most exhausted (still overnight though). • Would have preferred Friday or Saturday night because I would have been a little less tired. • I didn't like that it started after school, I was too tired to concentrate.
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overnight was a great way to meet other mentors and be closer to them on a more personal level. Timing was well done- wasn't too long or draining but enough to absorb information. • I had a really great time, and I enjoyed how it was overnight. Great experience for all and were able to trust each other.
More time for...	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To think when given a prompt question. • More time for discussions to allow other truths to be exposed. • More time for the "what if" situations. • More time for sharing. • To talk about alcohol/partying issues. The fact that some of us like to drink can't be ignored, but it's also hard to say that you do drink because we're not supposed to.
Journals	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glad for journals, was able to take very useful notes.
Groups	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe switching groups more often would have been better. Group size was good (3-4 people). • More in-group conversations (as a whole).
Food	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waffles for breakfast!