

# Youth Voice LENS

Learning, Engaging, Networking, Sharing  
with Adelaide Moschler, MENTOR Independence Region



**Youth voice: any expression of a young person, regardless of the content, the time or place, or the reason.**  
- Author Adam F.C. Fletcher

Young people have a lot to say, and mentors have a responsibility to hear their voices and elevate their perspectives. In our society, adults have the power. We get to decide if we will share our power with youth or hold it over them.

Mentoring mindset helps adults prioritize youth power.

Mentors supporting young people play a key role in 1) centering youth voices and helping them build their power; and 2) helping youth form their identities. What does positive support and empowerment look like, according to young people?

## Mentoring Done Right

**Mutuality:** Mentors and mentees can learn from each other offering mutual support and encouragement in various aspects of life.

**Unbiased Perspective:** Mentors should provide an unbiased opinion and listening without fixing.

**Encouragement and Opening Doors:** Mentors should be encouraging and provide constructive feedback.

**"Sometimes you just want someone to just listen, I guess, rather than giving an opinion back."**

## Mentoring Done Wrong

**Lack of Listening; Unwanted Advice:** Adults sometimes impose their own opinions/solutions without fully understanding the mentees' perspectives.

**Judgemental and Invalidating:** Mentors may inadvertently make mentees feel small or inadequate by not respecting their views and experiences.

**Failure to Relate:** Mentors sometimes struggle to relate to the experiences/challenges faced by young people.

**"You want me to just take your point of view and run with it. But if I run with it, imma fail."**

## Building Strong Relationships and Amplifying Youth Voice

Boundaries are critical to relationships.

Respect goes both ways -- it must be reciprocal.

Mentors need support through regular check-in's and self-care.

Youth are ready for hard conversations with adults, but adults oftentimes are not. Don't be afraid to have conversations about race, gender and equality.

Youth and adults -- stay open-minded and speak freely! Be OK with being uncomfortable. Change won't come for you by keeping your experience to yourself.



Source: Abigail Ellis, MENTOR Independence Region, *Unlocking Youth Perspectives: Fresh Insights on Modern Relationships* (2024)