

Eat Well Stay Active Have Fun

A Guide
for Mentors



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To order copies of the Guide send an email to:
mentor@hsph.harvard.edu

The Guide is also available at:
www.WhoMentoredYou.org



**Center for Health Communication
Harvard School of Public Health**

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Simple Things You Can Do to Eat Well and Stay Active

- Eat a healthy breakfast every day.
- Pay attention to portion sizes at meals.
- Eliminate sugary beverages (soft drinks, juices, sports drinks) and drink water instead.
- Have a colorful meal—fruits and vegetables should make up 50% of your plate.
- Know what you’re eating—read the labels, compare products, and choose healthier options.
- Choose whole grains instead of foods made from white flour.
- Save the less healthy options (*e.g.*, sugary items) as treats for special occasions.
- Keep moving—walking is great!
- Engage in some form of physical activity every day.
- Reduce the amount of time spent in front of the television and computer screen.
- Get enough sleep.

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About the Center for Health Communication:

The Center for Health Communication of the Harvard School of Public Health, directed by Jay A. Winsten, Ph.D., has created a series of national media campaigns to promote the adoption of healthy behaviors. The Center’s National Designated Driver Campaign demonstrated how a new social concept—the designated driver—could be rapidly introduced through mass communication, promoting widespread adoption of a social norm that the driver doesn’t drink. The Center’s Harvard Mentoring Project, a national media campaign conducted in collaboration with leading media companies and non-profit organizations, recruits volunteer mentors for young people to encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles and to achieve their full potential. More information about the Center is available at www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc.

The purpose of this guide is to provide mentors with information and guidance on how to make healthy eating and physical activity natural parts of the mentor-mentee relationship. This guide is not intended to provide personal nutritional or medical advice, which should be obtained from a doctor.

About MetLife Foundation:

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife in 1976 to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants support health, education, civic and cultural programs. To help young people succeed and maintain healthy lives, the Foundation funds initiatives that promote mentoring, education, nutrition awareness, substance abuse prevention and education and physical fitness activities. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.metlife.org.

Introduction

Eat Well, Stay Active, Have Fun: A Guide for Mentors provides mentors with information and guidance on how to make healthy eating and physical activity natural parts of the mentor-mentee relationship. The guide includes information on nutrition and physical activity, tips on how to promote healthier habits throughout the course of a mentoring relationship, examples of activities that mentors and mentees can do together, and a list of resources for further information.

The mentoring environment is an ideal place for mentors and mentees to learn about making healthy choices. Mentoring relationships are built on trust, communication, learning, and having fun, and mentors are always on the lookout for new and creative ways to engage their mentees. This guide encourages mentors and mentees to share in the learning experience by trying out new foods and activities together, communicating throughout their relationship, and of course having fun at the same time.

You, as a mentor, are in a unique position to address these important issues with your mentee in a safe, nonjudgmental, and casual way. One of the most important goals of mentoring is to form a trusting and positive relationship with your mentee. Conversations about healthy eating and staying active may not happen right away. However, as you and your mentee get to know each other better, incorporating these ideas into your conversations and activities will come more naturally, and hopefully, the concept of being healthy and active will have positive associations. You and your mentee should think in terms of all the fun and wonderful things you *can* eat and do rather than have negative associations about all the things you shouldn't eat or can't do. Most importantly, you and your mentee can make healthy choices together.

The discussions and activities suggested in this guide were developed with the following elements of effective mentoring in mind:

- Get to know your mentee and build a positive relationship.
- Encourage and compliment your mentee – even for small accomplishments.
- Listen to your mentee.
- Speak with your mentee in language that is easy to understand.
- Engage your mentee in decision-making about what you do together.
- Share knowledge rather than lecturing or telling your mentee what to do.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Help to identify your mentee's strengths, interests, and abilities.
- Tell your mentee about yourself, including your hopes and dreams.
- Honor your commitment.
- Have fun.

This guide is designed to:

- Reinforce the elements of effective mentoring.
- Provide tips and suggestions to help you and your mentee eat well and stay active while building a strong relationship.
- Be adapted for different ages, interests, and mentoring programs.
- Encourage you to avoid terms such as *weight control*, *obesity*, *being on a diet*, or being *overweight* or *fat* when talking and interacting with your mentee.
- Encourage you and your mentee to have fun while making healthy choices together.

This guide is NOT designed to:

- Talk about weight loss and dieting.
- Prescribe a specific dietary or physical activity plan.
- Assume that you are an expert in nutrition and fitness.
- Give medical advice.

In addition to information on healthy eating and physical activity, this guide includes frequently asked questions (FAQs), “Did you know?” fun facts, activity ideas, mentoring tips, and online resources for you to find more in-depth information about each topic. It is important to remember, though, that there is no one way for how or when to raise these issues with your mentee. Everyone's relationship with their mentee is different, and young people will vary in their level of engagement in these conversations, depending on their individual circumstances.

This guide was developed for mentors to use with mentees who may be in grade school all the way through high school and even college, so some of the suggested activities may be more or less appropriate depending on the specific age and personality of your mentee. In addition, some of the activities may need to be adjusted to meet the needs of your specific mentoring program (e.g., if you are part of a community- vs. a site-based program). Look for this 🏠 **SITE-FRIENDLY** icon throughout the guide for suggestions of activities that are especially appropriate for site-based programs. Feel free to take the ideas in the guide and adapt them into activities that will be fun and engaging for you and your mentee.

The guide is not a curriculum to be followed but rather a resource to allow you, the mentor, to pick and choose those ideas and activities that work for you and your unique mentoring situation. Hopefully it will prepare you to take advantage of those “teachable moments” that inevitably arise as your relationship with your mentee develops. The bottom line—do what you can do comfortably and do it when it feels right.

FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)

Q: I don't know anything about nutrition and fitness. How can I help my mentee?

A: This guide provides the basic information you will need to start a conversation with your mentee about eating healthy foods and staying active. It also offers suggestions and tips for activities that are healthy and fun. It is perfectly fine for the two of you to learn together; in fact, it could become a bonding experience. The guide also includes a list of online resources where you can find more in-depth and comprehensive information.

Q: What if my mentee clams up when I raise the subject or resists talking about it?

A: Finding the right time to raise these issues is key. The best way to be successful is to look for natural opportunities that present themselves during the course of a normal visit or conversation with your mentee. For example, if you and your mentee are about to grab something to drink, you could say "Let's have water today. It really is the best thing to drink when you're thirsty." This could then prompt a conversation about why it's healthier to avoid sugary beverages. But remember to prod lightly. If it's not the right time, don't push it. Another opportunity will arise.

Q: What if my mentee rejects my suggestion of, for example, drinking water or selecting a healthier option to eat when we are together?

A: It still might be a good opportunity to discuss the subject. Probe gently and you might be able to determine if your mentee is rejecting the entire subject matter or just isn't interested in the specific topic. However, if you are met with too much resistance, now might not be the right time to continue the conversation. Try again another time. And don't forget that you, as the mentor, can be a great role model. Even if your mentee does not appear interested in eating healthier foods or staying active, seeing you snack on fruit instead of cookies, drink water instead of soda, or take the stairs instead of the escalator, sets a good example. But remember, you don't need to be perfect, just being mindful and aware are steps in the right direction.

Q: What if I don't have healthy eating habits and I'm not physically active myself?

A: What you currently eat and do in your own life is not as important as your interest and commitment to learning about healthy options with your mentee, and taking

advantage of opportunities to start a conversation about these issues with him. Learning the basics together and showing your mentee that some of these issues are challenging for you as well could become a way for the two of you to bond. Building a solid, trusting relationship is key to successful mentoring.

Q: What if I don't want to adopt any of the suggestions (e.g., I don't like eating healthy foods and I don't like to be physically active)?

A: If you as the mentor aren't interested in eating well and staying active, it will probably be obvious to your mentee, and you will have a difficult time convincing her to adopt any of these suggestions. If you are not comfortable raising these issues with your mentee, then you should not feel forced to do so. However, it can't hurt for you to skim through this guide to prepare yourself should your mentee raise the subject on her own.

Q: Do we always have to choose the healthiest options?

A: No. Eating a healthy diet means making healthier choices most of the time. Most things in moderation work just fine. It is a good idea to try to limit the less healthy options, so consider saving them as treats for special occasions.

Q: My mentee doesn't have a weight problem, she eats healthy foods, and keeps pretty active. Do I still need to discuss these issues with her?

A: It's terrific that your mentee is already doing the right things to stay healthy and fit. An important part of being a mentor is to offer encouragement and positive support, so when you see your mentee make a healthy choice, compliment her on making a good decision. Keep in mind that young people are constantly tempted to go astray by their friends, and even more so by the media, so encouraging healthy behaviors is a great thing you can offer as her mentor. You also might find some new and creative activities to do together that reinforce good nutrition and physical activity.



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Jon Feingersh/Media Bakery



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Q: What if my mentee asks me a question that I can't answer? I don't want to look stupid.

A: You are not expected to have all the answers. Coming up with a plan together about how you can find more information online or in a trip to the library is a great activity for the two of you to do. Asking additional questions is a sign your mentee is interested in learning more. This guide includes a list of online resources where you can find more in-depth and comprehensive information.

Q: When I get together with my mentee, we often end up eating at a fast-food place—it's quick, convenient, and inexpensive, and my mentee likes the food. Restaurants with healthier options are often too expensive for my budget or aren't located nearby in my community. Even when we shop at the grocery store, the healthier options often cost more money. What can I do to try to promote healthy eating but stay within my budget?

A: It is unfortunate that many communities do not have easily accessible, affordable places to get healthy options. One way to cut down on your cost and have a healthier meal is to reduce your portion size. In particular, avoid the temptation to “supersize”—it might seem like a better deal, but it does cost more money and you will end up eating more than you really need to. Also, think about substituting water for sugared soft drinks and juices—it will save you money and is a healthier choice. Finally, encourage your mentee to try some of the healthier options now available at many fast food restaurants—such as salad or fruit. Even if these options cost a little more, you can offset the added costs by skipping the sodas and having water instead.

Q: I volunteer as a mentor in a school-based program for one hour per week. The program requires that I meet with my mentee indoors at the school, i.e., I am not allowed to meet with my mentee outside of the school setting. How can I make healthy eating and physical activity a part of my mentoring relationship?

A: While site-based mentoring programs may limit the types of activities that you and your mentee can engage in together, you can still incorporate principles of healthy eating and physical activity into your mentee visits. Look for the  **SITE-FRIENDLY** icon throughout the guide for ideas that may work well for these types of programs. For example, if you and your mentee eat a meal or snack together, make sure to bring in healthy options. Or consider bringing in two different packaged options and read the nutrition facts labels together to select the healthier item. In addition, ask if you can have access to the school gym to engage in some type of physical activity.

Q: How do I discuss healthy eating and physical activity with my mentee without making him feel that I am calling him “fat?”

A: It is best to always keep the conversation centered on the positive reasons for choosing a healthy option rather than on the negative ones. For example, when choosing to eat an apple, you might say, “I love the taste of a nice, sweet, crisp apple!” rather than, “I’d rather have a cookie now, but I’ll settle for an apple because I’m feeling kind of fat today.” It is best to steer clear of talking about “dieting” and better to talk about “delicious healthy eating.” It is also best to avoid messages that eating healthy will help a child stay thin. Rather, these foods are for helping a child grow up healthy and strong.

What to Say...

- ✓ “Why don’t we try walking to the movie theater today instead of driving.”
- ✓ “Vegetables are so tasty.”
- ✓ “Fruit is delicious and is a great snack.”
- ✓ “Sweets taste good and it’s okay to have them once in a while.”
- ✓ “I drink water because it tastes refreshing and it is the best drink to quench my thirst.”

What Not to Say...

- ✗ “All this driving around is going to make you fat. You need some exercise.”
- ✗ “I eat vegetables to stay on my diet.”
- ✗ “I can’t have cookies because they will go right to my hips.”
- ✗ “Fat? No way! My diet is no fat at all.”
- ✗ “I drink water because it’s not fattening.”



Getting to Know Your Mentee

Conversation Starters to Help Build Your Relationship

This activity is a good way to start a conversation about the importance of eating well and staying active. Regardless of the stage of your relationship, you and your mentee can exchange answers to all or some of the questions below as you get to know one another. It might also give you ideas of what the two of you can do together during your visits with each other.

What Do You Eat?

- What are your favorite foods?
- What do you like to eat when you go out?
- Do you cook? If not, do you want to learn how to cook?
- If yes, what do you like to cook at home?
- Do you have any favorite recipes?
- Do you think you have any healthy eating habits?
- Do you eat breakfast every day? If yes, what do you eat? If not, tell me about your morning routine.
- Do you eat three meals a day?
- Do you like to snack?
- What are your favorite snack foods?
- What's your favorite meal for breakfast? For lunch? For dinner?
- Do you like fruits and vegetables? What are your favorites?

Is Physical Activity a Part of Your Life?

- Are you an active person?
- Do you like being physically active?
- What are your favorite physical activities?
- Do you play any sports?
- Are you a couch potato?
- How many hours per day do you watch TV, play video games, spend time online, or text?
- Do you like to dance?
- Do you engage in some form of physical activity every day? If so, for how long?
- Do you like to walk or do you always look for a ride (e.g., a car, bus, train) if at all possible?
- Do you wish you could be more physically active?

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Eat Well



Nutrition 101

Here is a short description of the basic components of the foods we eat and the impact they have on our overall health.



Leaf/Veer

Carbohydrates Don't be deterred by those fad diets that say all carbs are bad. Carbohydrates are important in providing the body with the energy it needs to function and are an important part of a healthy diet. Some carbohydrate sources, however, are better than others—whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans provide the best choices.

Protein Proteins are an essential part of a healthy diet, and they can come from different sources (animal and plant). However, it is important to consider the “protein package” when choosing your proteins. For example, eating a steak and eating a plate of beans provide you with very different amounts of other nutrients—the steak is high in unhealthy saturated fat, the beans are high in healthy fiber. Vegetable sources of protein include beans, nuts, tofu, and whole grains. The best animal sources are poultry and fish. Limit red meat and avoid processed meat.



Rafael Angel Irueta Machin/Veer



Ocean Photography/Veer

Fats Healthy fats from vegetable oils, nuts, avocados, and fish are good for you. Fats from butter, red meat, and partially hydrogenated oil are bad for you. It's important to substitute good fats for bad fats. Check out **Fats: Good, Bad, and Very Bad** (page 20) for information on making healthy choices about fats.

DID YOU KNOW

The Importance of Eating a Healthy Breakfast

After a night's sleep, the body needs to be refueled to have enough energy to function during the day. Studies show that young people who regularly eat a healthy breakfast have more energy, are more focused and attentive in school, and tend to eat healthier foods throughout the rest of the day. Eating a healthy breakfast is a good habit to adopt.

Fiber Fiber is a type of carbohydrate that the body does not digest, and it is an important part of a healthy diet. Including fiber-filled foods – vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains – in all of your meals and snacks throughout the day will help you get enough fiber. The more calories you eat each day, the more fiber you need.



Evgenii Zadravka/Veer

Here are some easy tips to remember when making choices about what to eat:

- **Go with whole fruit instead of juice.** Whole apples and oranges are packed with a lot more fiber and fewer calories than their liquid counterparts.
- **Eat breakfast with fruit.** Add melon, berries, or bananas to your breakfast for a treat that will fill you up, provide you with energy, and start your day off right.
- **Check labels for fiber-filled whole grains (particularly for bread, crackers, and cereal).** Choose foods that list whole grains (such as whole wheat or whole oats) as the first ingredient, and choose 100% whole grain over multigrain, which is often lower in fiber. Check out **What Are Whole Grains?** (page 18).
- **Eat more beans.** Beans are an easy, cheap, and excellent source of fiber, good carbs, protein, and other important nutrients.



Ivonne/Veer

Fruits and Vegetables Fruits and vegetables provide us with a variety of nutrients that keep us healthy and strong. The easiest way to get all of these nutrients is to make sure we are eating fruits and vegetables of every color. Dark leafy greens and anything that is red, yellow, or orange are great. Check out **Fruits and Vegetables** (page 16) and **The Art of Snacking** (page 31) for ideas on how to incorporate fruits and vegetables throughout your day.

Calcium Calcium is a key nutrient in building healthy bones in childhood all the way through adulthood. Low-fat milk is a good source of calcium. However, milk and other dairy products are not the only sources of calcium; ideally, we should be getting it from other places as well. Calcium-rich, non-dairy foods include leafy green vegetables and broccoli, beans, and tofu.



Sandra van der Steen/Veer

Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are a key part of a healthy diet. They contain essential vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, all of which play a role in helping to prevent a variety of illnesses. Many of us, however, do not get enough of them and find it difficult to know exactly how much we should eat.



Want to know how many fruits and vegetables you need each day?

Check out www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Here you can put in your age, gender and level of physical activity, and it tells you how many cups of these colorful and delicious foods you need daily.



We often hear that we should eat several “servings” of fruits and vegetables every day, but just how much is a serving? Here are a few examples of one serving of some common fruits and vegetables.

One serving of fruit:

- 1 medium apple
- ½ large banana
- 1 medium orange
- ½ grapefruit
- 4 large strawberries
- 16 grapes
- ½ cup chopped fruit

One serving of veggies:

- 1 cup raw spinach
or ½ cup cooked spinach
- 6 baby carrots
- ½ cup broccoli
- ½ large sweet potato
- ½ cup peas
- 1 cup of lettuce

It is really easy to get caught up in eating foods with your mentee that may not be the best for either of you. These often include soda, candy, chips, ice cream, and fast food. While it’s okay to eat these foods some of the time, it is really important to have fruits, vegetables, and whole grains every single day.

Think Color!

Healthy fruits and vegetables come in a variety of colors. Why not mix them up and create a colorful meal!



Alexander Mychko/Veer

Add Them In

Tips for adding in those recommended servings of fruits and vegetables to your meals:

- **Having whole grain cold cereal or oatmeal?** Throw in a sliced banana or berries of any color.
- **Making whole grain pancakes or waffles?** Toss in some berries.
- **Snacking on cheese?** Try it with slices of apple.
- **Making pizza?** Add in veggies (spinach, bell peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes) to make a colorful pie.
- **Having whole grain toast?** Top it with peanut butter (*make sure there are no partially hydrogenated oils*) and sliced banana.
- **Making an omelet?** Add in a variety of vegetables (bell peppers, broccoli, spinach, mushrooms, tomatoes).
- **Having a sandwich?** Add lettuce, cucumber, and tomato.
- **Making a dinner?** Prepare two vegetable side dishes instead of one (you make one, invite your mentee to make the other), or make a vegetable-heavy main dish, such as stir-fry.
- **And don’t forget that fresh fruits and vegetables make great snacks all by themselves!**



Start a Fruit/Vegetable of the Month Club

Are you tired of eating the same old fruits and vegetables? Why not start your own fruit/vegetable of the month club with your mentee? Each of you can choose a new fruit or vegetable that you have never tried. Pick something exotic looking. Not sure how to eat it? Go online together to see its country of origin and how to prepare it. You can also find recipes that use it—or make up your own! Look for items that are “in season” in your area. Depending on where you live, consider visiting local farmers markets to find fresh, locally grown produce.



Tequi/Veer



What are Whole Grains?

Grains are divided into two subgroups – whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel – the bran, germ and endosperm – and are a good source of fiber. Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes bran and germ (meaning they have a finer texture and longer shelf-life), but also removes dietary fiber, B vitamins, and iron. As a general rule, products made of white grains (white bread, white rice, regular pasta) are refined.

Whole grains are an important part of healthy nutrition. Eating whole grains helps to lower cholesterol and insulin levels, and has been found to reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, and possibly some cancers.

Whenever possible, try to select products that contain whole grains, and substitute whole grains for refined grains.

Popular whole grains include:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Whole-wheat | Buckwheat |
| Bulgur (cracked wheat) | Wild rice |
| Oatmeal | Quinoa |
| Whole cornmeal | Whole wheat pasta |
| Brown rice | Whole wheat tortillas |
| Whole-grain barley | |

Examples of refined grains include:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| White flour | White bagel |
| White bread | White English muffin |
| White rice | Grits |
| Cornbread | Pretzels |
| White pasta | Corn tortillas |

DID YOU KNOW?

Multigrain vs. Whole Grain

Foods that are advertised as “multigrain” are often not “whole grain.” For example, the first ingredient in multigrain bread is often white flour, so look for foods that say “whole grain” on the package and have whole grains in the list of ingredients.

M. Sheldrake/Fotolia



The Whole Grain Taste Challenge

Do you think that whole grains cannot possibly taste as good as refined grains? Put your taste buds to the test with these simple and fun foods.

- Pizza made with whole grain crust
- Whole grain crackers with low-fat cheese
- Whole grain cereals
- Oatmeal with fruit toppings (try raisins, bananas, or apple slices)
- Whole wheat pita bread filled with salad, cheese, or turkey
- Brown rice with chicken or veggie stir-fry
- Whole wheat waffles covered with berries or low-fat yogurt
- Homemade popcorn (popped with healthy oil)

MENTORING TIPS

- Be an active listener.
- Share knowledge.
- Encourage and compliment your mentee when making healthier choices.

Fats: Good, Bad, and Very Bad

Contrary to popular belief, not all fat is bad, but some fats are better than others. Unsaturated fats (the “good” fats), in the form of monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, are an essential part of a healthy diet. Saturated fats should be limited, and a good way to do that is by using butter and eating red meat sparingly. Trans fats are not healthy and should be avoided completely. Here is a list of “good fats,” “bad fats,” and “very bad fats” to remember when deciding what to eat with your mentee.

Good (Unsaturated) Fats

Unsaturated fats are primarily found in food from plants, and are liquids at room temperature. These good fats include mono- or polyunsaturated fats, and can be found in:

- Healthy oils from plants, including olive, canola, corn, soybean, safflower, and cottonseed oils
- Most nuts including peanuts, almonds, and cashews
- Seeds including pumpkin, sunflower, and sesame
- Avocados
- Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish (oilier fish like salmon, trout, and herring, are higher in omega-3 acids than leaner fish like catfish, cod, and haddock). Young children should eat fish lower in mercury. High mercury fish tend to be steakier fish like tuna and swordfish.



Bad (Saturated) Fats

Saturated fats come from both animal and plant sources and are mostly found in meat and cheeses, whole milk, cream, butter, and some oils such as palm oil. Adults and children alike should limit the amount of saturated fat they eat by choosing foods rich in good fats more often than foods rich in saturated fats.

Very Bad (Trans) Fats

You may have noticed that trans fats are being talked about a lot in the news, and many products and restaurants have eliminated them. Trans fats are made by heating liquid vegetable oils in the presence of hydrogen gas, and are referred to as **partially hydrogenated oils**; they are solid at room temperature. They can be found in:

- Packaged snacks like chips, candy, microwave popcorn, and crackers
- Bakery goods like brownies, cookies, breads, and cakes
- Hard stick margarine and vegetable shortening
- Deep fried items like chicken nuggets, taco shells, fish sticks, donuts, and french fries

Make sure to check the labels on the foods you buy to ensure there are no trans fats. If you see “partially hydrogenated oil” in the ingredient list, the product has trans fats. In restaurants, look online or ask your server if the restaurant uses trans-fat-free oils; if the restaurant uses partially hydrogenated oils, try to order foods that are baked, broiled, or grilled instead of fried.



Eating a Balanced Diet: Look for Healthy Alternatives



Blend Images/Veer

For all aspects of life, it is important to have good nutrition and a balanced food intake. With the ever-changing news about what is healthy and what is not, keeping up with nutrition guidelines can be confusing. Here are a few simple principles to help you make healthy choices:

- Eat a lot of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Eating these will help lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of stroke and possibly some cancers, and help with digestion.
- Choose healthy, unsaturated fats like olive and canola oil, and the fats in nuts, seeds, and fatty fish. These fats are good for your heart and provide you with nutrients that your body needs.
- Limit saturated fats from butter, full-fat dairy products, lard, and red meats.
- Avoid trans fats (also known as partially hydrogenated oils).
- Go easy on the salt.
- Eat refined grains, sweets, soda, and candy sparingly.

When you and your mentee are together, take the opportunity to try new foods, cook together, and discover how delicious healthy alternatives can be! Here are some easy ways to eat well without losing the flavor or fun of food.



Prepare a Meal Together

Cooking your own meals is a great way to know exactly what you are eating. It's also a wonderful way for you to spend quality time with your mentee, share favorite family recipes, and create new recipes together. You and your mentee can find new recipes online or in cookbooks (or make up your own), do the grocery shopping, and make wonderful meals together. Your mentee can help with stirring, peeling fruits and vegetables, kneading dough, cracking eggs, measuring ingredients, and setting the table. Check out www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/recipes/ for tasty recipes you and your mentee can make together. And don't forget about creating your own cookbook using your favorite recipes!

When cooking, replace butter, hard stick margarine, or vegetable shortening with olive, canola, safflower, or sunflower oil, or with soft margarines that are trans-fat-free.

At a restaurant, skip the butter, creamy and cheese sauces; order broth-based instead of cream-based soups. Ask if the restaurant uses trans-fat-free oils for frying; if they use partially hydrogenated oil to fry in, avoid the fried foods. Order a side salad or a side of vegetables instead of fries.

Spreads and sauces – Substitute avocado for butter, and use salad dressings with an olive oil and vinegar base instead of cream.

Got milk? Choose skim (fat-free) or 1% (low-fat) milk instead of higher fat varieties. Want to make a fun drink and get your calcium at the same time? Put low-fat milk in a blender with some fruit for a tasty and healthy smoothie.

Delicious dairy – Choose low-fat or non-fat cheese, yogurt, sour cream, and cottage cheese.

Pizza party – Load up your pizza with veggies and stay away from processed meats like pepperoni and sausage. When making your own pizza (a great activity for you and your mentee), buy whole-wheat dough and low-fat cheese.

Protein – Limit red meat by substituting healthier animal protein choices such as fish, chicken, and eggs, and healthy plant protein choices such as nuts, seeds, tofu, and beans.

Thirsty? Replace soft drinks and fruit drinks with water or seltzer, or try flavoring your water with fruit slices.



Jenny Acheson/Getty Images

Sometimes you and your mentee just want to eat fast food—or that’s all your mentee will eat. You don’t want to spend a lot of money, and there aren’t any healthier alternatives out there. Here are a few tips for the next time you go out to a fast food eatery with your mentee or bring food in:

Downsize – Don’t get sucked in by the supersize options – lots of fast food restaurants love to offer larger portions for little extra cost, convincing us that we should eat more than we actually need. Try to avoid these upgrades in sizes and stick to the regular sizes.

Choose foods that are broiled, grilled, baked, roasted, steamed, or sautéed in healthful trans-fat-free oil.

Avoid foods that are cooked au gratin, breaded, buttered, creamed, or crispy, and foods that are fried in partially hydrogenated oil.

Kids meal – Feel free to order from the kids menu as these selections usually come in smaller portion sizes and cost less—and they’re not just for kids. You can also share a regular entrée which might be a healthier option than some of the choices on the kids menu.

Choose chicken or fish– When choosing meat or fish, choose those that are baked, broiled, grilled, or roasted, rather than fried.

Don’t double – Resist the urge to order that second hamburger patty and just have one. Also, skip the bacon on your burger.

Veg out – Make sure to order lettuce, tomato, onion, and any other veggies you like on your burgers and sandwiches. This is a great way to get picky eaters to learn to like their vegetables.

Substitute a side salad for the fries.

Drink water – Ask for a slice of lemon to make your water taste nice and refreshing. If you really want something else to drink, opt for low-fat plain milk, or share a small bottle of 100% fruit juice, instead of sugary sodas and fruit drinks.

Sweet tooth – If you’re craving ice cream, order a kiddie-sized cup. Add sprinkles instead of cookies, caramel sauce, or hot fudge. Keep in mind that low-fat frozen yogurt and sherbet/sorbet are very high in sugar, and are not necessarily the healthier choice.



Blend Images/Veer

Mexican – Choose vegetarian refried beans (not cooked with bacon or lard) or plain black beans. Choose soft wheat or corn tortillas (like those used for burritos) instead of the fried taco shells; whole wheat tortillas are best. Replace the cheese or sour cream with salsa or guacamole, and go easy on the chips.

Chinese – Order steamed rice instead of fried rice, and brown rice instead of white rice. Try broiled, steamed, boiled, or lightly stir-fried dishes. Pile on the vegetables such as broccoli and bok choy, and avoid dishes that are fried in partially hydrogenated oil. Soups can be high in sodium, so try some tea, which is also warm and filling.

Italian – Avoid creamy sauces on pasta. Instead, try marinara sauce, red clam sauce, or pasta primavera (with lots of vegetables, and no cream). Pasta portions can be hearty, so order a half-size or take some home. You can also share a pasta entrée and a salad. Try dipping your bread in olive oil instead of using butter.

Burgers – Try the regular or kids-sized portions instead of the super-sized. Opt for grilled chicken or veggie burgers. Add lettuce, tomato, and onion.

Deli foods – Cut the calories and sodium on sandwiches by omitting bacon and special sauces. Instead, add mustard, lettuce, tomatoes, and onions. Choose hummus, fish, deli chicken, or turkey on a sandwich instead of red meats, and go for a whole wheat roll when you have the option.

Indian – Order yogurt-based salads, tandoori chicken, and fish or dal (lentil) dishes. Try the roti bread (traditionally made with whole wheat), rather than naan bread, which is made with white flour. Watch out for foods cooked in cream or ghee (clarified butter), and if the restaurant isn’t trans-fat-free, try to stay away from fried foods like samosas. And don’t forget to eat your vegetables.

Japanese – Opt for miso soup and steamed vegetables such as edamame. Eat omega-3-rich fish like salmon. Ask if the restaurant uses trans-fat-free oils for frying; if it does, enjoy the vegetable or shrimp tempura, but if it uses partially hydrogenated oils, try a different menu item instead. Add avocado to your sushi rolls.

It's What's Inside that Counts: Know What You're Eating

How to Read Nutrition Facts Labels

What's a serving size? How many servings are in a container of yogurt? A bag of potato chips? A bottle of soda? How many calories are in a single serving? Figuring out the answers to these questions is really important. Sometimes we think we are eating something that is healthy because it looks low in calories and fat. However, what we forget to do is look at how many servings we are eating; if you eat more than one serving, the numbers can start to add up.

Learning how to read the Nutrition Facts printed on food packages, and knowing what to look for in the list of ingredients, can help you have a better idea of what you are putting into your body, and what choices could be healthier.

Nutrition Facts Label at a Glance

A quick look at the Nutrition Facts listed on food packages can teach you a lot about what is in the food you are about to eat and help you make the best choice. Make sure to always check out:

Serving size and servings per container – To make accurate calculations about what the food contains. All of the other amounts on the label are based on the serving size. See Page 27 for more details.

Saturated fats – Make sure they are low.

Trans fats – Should always be zero.

Sodium – Look for lower sodium.

Fiber – Look for high fiber.

Sugars – Keep them low.

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1 cup (29g)		
Servings Per Container about 12		
Amount Per Serving		with 1/2 cup skim milk
Calories	110	150
Calories from Fat	10	10
% Daily Value**		
Total Fat 1g	2%	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	3%
Trans Fat 0g		
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g		
Monounsaturated Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	1%
Sodium 160mg	7%	9%
Potassium 85mg	2%	8%
Total Carbohydrate 23g	8%	10%
Dietary Fiber 3g	10%	10%
Sugars 6g		
Other Carbohydrate 15g		
Protein 2g		

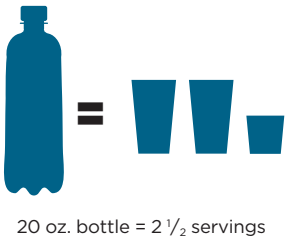
DID YOU KNOW?

Be an Educated Consumer

More and more products are being made with healthier ingredients (such as whole grains), but it is important to check the Nutrition Facts on the side of the package AND read the list of ingredients. Do not rely solely on marketing claims made on the front of the package such as “0% Trans Fat.” If “partially hydrogenated oil” is listed in the ingredients, the product has trans fats. The labeling requirements state that the manufacturer can claim “zero trans fat” as long as there are fewer than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. Serving sizes on food labels are often smaller than the amount you might serve yourself to eat. And, if you eat more than one serving of a product that contains even a small amount of partially hydrogenated oil, your trans fats could add up! So be an educated consumer—read the label!

Serving Size

Serving size is the most important number to know on a label because all the other numbers are calculated using it. Nutrition labels are based on one serving size, but usually there is more than one serving per package. Think about it: if you double the servings you eat, you double the number of calories and nutrients. Serving size usually appears as a familiar measurement such as cups or pieces, with a weight amount such as number of grams. It is usually followed by the number of servings per container. It is important for you to determine your own “portion size”—that is, the actual amount that you eat. For most people, “serving size” and “portion size” are not the same. For example, a 20-ounce bottle of soda is actually two-and-one-half serving sizes, yet many people drink the entire bottle at one time.



Helpful Tips:

- Check Nutrition Facts labels and the list of ingredients when you buy products at the store.
- Try to avoid products that include “partially hydrogenated oils” as this is another name for trans fats and something you should avoid.

- Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, that is, the most abundant item is listed first. For example, if white flour is the first item listed, it is the most plentiful ingredient, and you should look for a healthier option with whole grains.
- Check nutrition facts at restaurants. Many restaurants, especially chains, are starting to post nutrition information online and in the restaurant. If they don't have it posted publicly, ask to see if they can give it to you.
- Go online and make comparisons between different foods that you like to eat.

Sugar by Any Other Name

The amount of sugar listed on the Nutrition Facts label refers to the total amount of sugar per serving size, and includes both naturally occurring sugar and added sugar. It is best to consume foods with little to no added sugar. To find the added sugar, you need to read the list of ingredients—and that can be challenging since added sugar goes by many different names and can appear several times throughout the list. Some common added sugars include: high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, dextrose, malt syrup, and maltose. The more of these ingredients a product contains, the more sugar you will be consuming in each serving. And remember, if any of these terms appear near the top of the list, or there are many sources of added sugar throughout the list, the product is a high sugar item and you should look for a healthier alternative.

DID YOU KNOW

Do you know how much sugar is in a can of soda?



12 oz.

=



One can of soda contains up to 10 teaspoons of sugar.



Search for Hidden Sugar

You might want to play a game with your mentee to see how many sources of added sugar are contained in some of your favorite packaged foods. For a more comprehensive list of the many sources of added sugar check out: www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/added-sugar-on-food-labels/index.html or www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter7.htm



MENTORING TIPS

- Offer encouragement and praise.
 - Be enthusiastic.
- Make decisions together.



Blend Images/Veer

Plant a Vegetable Garden and Eat What You Grow!

You don't have to have a large plot of land to plant a vegetable garden. In fact, you and your mentee can make a "container garden" indoors in a pot on a sunny windowsill or outside on a patio, balcony, or other open space. Where you live will determine what vegetables are most likely to grow in your area and when you should start planting them. Easy to grow "cold-weather" crops, which can be planted in early spring, include spinach, lettuce, chard, peas, and broccoli. "Warm-weather" crops, which can be planted after there is no danger of frost, include beans, zucchini, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and eggplant. And don't forget about your herbs and spices. If you want to get your feet wet with gardening, try planting a small herb garden. Basil, cilantro, oregano, thyme, rosemary, and mint are relatively easy to grow, and can be grown indoors in small pots in a sunny windowsill. This activity is especially well suited for mentors participating in site-based mentoring programs such as at a school or community center.



SITE-FRIENDLY

All of these plants can be started from seeds, but some of you might feel more comfortable starting with small seedlings. It's easy—just prepare your soil, plant, water, and watch your vegetables grow!

Once your produce is ready to harvest, you and your mentee can experiment with your vegetables and herbs and create great fresh salads and other new dishes—or rely on old favorites. Collect your recipes and make a cookbook for each other or to share with family and friends.

Need more information on starting a garden? Go online to find a local agricultural extension service or university to learn about the best vegetables to grow in your area, and when and how to plant, care for, and harvest them.

The Art of Snacking

Martin Jacobs/FoodPix



Snacking is an almost inevitable part of spending time with your mentee. Here are some great dips and scoopers that you and your mentee can try instead of the usual junk food variety.

Dips

Hummus – A dip made from mashed chickpeas, olive oil, lemon juice, and salt.

Salsa – Make your own salsa with chopped tomatoes, onion, cilantro, lime juice, and jalapeno peppers.

Mustard – Try different kinds like deli, brown, spicy, honey, and Dijon.

Plain low-fat yogurt with honey or maple syrup, or mix with fresh herbs to make a savory ranch-style dip.

Guacamole – Avocado mashed with tomatoes, onions, and lime juice.

More fun dips

Olive oil and balsamic vinegar

Marinara sauce

Bean dip

Unsweetened applesauce

Peanut butter or almond butter

(without partially hydrogenated oils)

Scoopers

Fruit – You can buy fresh fruit and slice it up (try apples, bananas, and pears) or frozen fruit in the off-season (like grapes and strawberries).

Veggie pieces – Try carrots, celery, cucumber, bell peppers, green beans, broccoli, and cauliflower.

Whole wheat foods – Look for whole wheat and other whole grain crackers, whole wheat pita chips, and whole wheat pretzels (but watch the sodium content).

More snack ideas

- Mix together dry whole grain cereal, dried fruit, and nuts.
- Roll deli chicken or turkey or low-fat cheese into a whole wheat tortilla and spread with mustard.
- Try popcorn popped in healthy oil, without butter.

Snacks to Limit

There are some foods you should try not to snack on all of the time. These include:

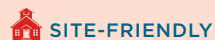
- Sugared cereals
- White bread and tortillas
- Cookies, cakes, and candies



Monkey Business Images/Veer

Choose Healthier Options

If you and your mentee ever go food shopping together, it is a perfect opportunity to raise the issue of healthy food choices. If one of you picks up a favorite snack item, have your mentee read the product label and look for a similar item on the shelf to compare the nutritional content of both. It's a good way to reinforce the message that not all products are equal from a nutritional point of view; some choices are healthier than others. It may spark a discussion about the healthy and less-healthy ingredients in foods and how to make good choices. If you are part of a site-based program, you could bring in different snacks and have your mentee read the package labels and pick the healthier choice.



MENTORING TIPS

- Get your mentee to participate in decision-making about activities you can do together.
 - Don't lecture.
- Help identify your mentee's strengths and interests.



Make Food Sculptures Together

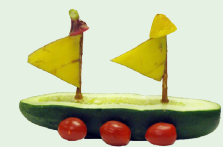
Food has never been so fun! Ever make an edible car? What about edible insects? The “recipes” that follow will show you how you and your mentee can have great fun creating sculptures with healthy foods. This activity is a sure-fire way to get you and your mentee laughing and creating a mess that is delicious to clean up! The best part? Healthy snacking along the way! Feel free to use your imagination to create your own edible sculptures together.

Lemon-Lime Fish

- 1 lemon
- 1 lime
- 2 berries or grapes
- red radish
- toothpicks
- sharp paring knife



1. On a work surface, position a lemon on it side to form the fish body. Trim away a small, round slice to create a flat bottom. Save the slice for the fish's fin.
2. Towards the back of the fish body, cut a small slit; insert the round slice to form the fin.
4. From the lime, cut two same-size rounds from the rind; attach them to the front with toothpicks to form fins.
5. Also from the lime rind, cut two small circles or half circles; attach them with toothpicks to form eyes. In the centers, attach berries or grapes.
6. Cut a small slice of radish; attach it with a toothpick to form the mouth.



Banana Caterpillar

- 1 medium banana
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of peanut butter (without partially hydrogenated oils)
- 2 raisins
- thin pretzel sticks



1. Peel and slice the banana into $\frac{1}{4}$ " – $\frac{1}{2}$ " segments. Assemble the “caterpillar” by spreading segments with peanut butter and pressing the pieces together.
2. Use additional peanut butter to press the raisins onto one end to form “eyes.” Break the pretzel sticks into small pieces for “legs” and the “antennae.”

Ants on a Log and Veggie Cars

This is an old-school favorite! Cut celery up into sticks. Spread peanut butter and add raisins, and voilà, ants on a log! Want to turn this into a car? Take two toothpicks and stick one through each end of the celery stick. Slice up a carrot into four carrot wheels, and press them onto the ends of the sticks. Now you have a delicious and healthy veggie car! Want to hold a veggie drag race? Create another car using a cubanelle or jalapeno pepper, cucumbers for wheels, and the ends of cherry tomatoes for hubcaps. Not satisfied? Try making a cucumber boat out of cucumbers, tomatoes, pretzels and banana peels for sails!

Water Works



Johannes Wienke/stock.xchng

Did you know that the largest source of added sugar in kids' diets isn't cake or candy, but sugary beverages? These drinks add a lot of calories and cause weight gain. Unfortunately, the case is not much better with juice. Just because juice is made from fruit and is healthier than soda, ounce for ounce it has the same amount of sugar as soda does. So even drinking 100% fruit juice is not advisable in large quantities. The same is true for those sports drinks. Not only are soda, juice, and sports drinks not healthy choices, they also cost a lot of money! Imagine how much money you would save if you didn't buy these products, but just drank water from the tap? Water is the healthiest beverage we can drink.

DID YOU KNOW

What about Diet Soft Drinks?

Although diet soft drinks do not contain sugar, the sugar substitutes used are extremely sweet and may prime the body for craving even more sweets. The jury is still out about the true health impact of drinking diet soft drinks. So if you're looking for a zero-calorie beverage, drink water.

Finding the Alternative

Of course it can be difficult to give up sodas, juices, and sports drinks, and the idea is often met with resistance. However, there are healthier alternatives.

Common Challenges

My mentee always shows up with a soda or a sweetened beverage when we get together.

My mentee and I leave the house and are out and about all day, so purchasing drinks is the only way to do it.

"I don't like to drink water. It's boring."

My mentee says he drinks soda for the caffeine.

Easy Solutions

Set up a "Water Savings Account" with your mentee – a piggy bank where for every day you get together, you deposit the money you would have spent on sodas and juices, and drink water instead. Decide in advance on something great you are saving up for, and then celebrate your water intake together when you reach your goal. Bet you it takes less time than you think!

One thing you can do is purchase some water bottles for you and your mentee that you can fill up before you go out, and carry them around with you.

Look for water fountains along the route to your favorite places, and if you have to buy a drink when you are out, bottled water is usually available.

Here are some ways to jazz up your water:

- Add a slice of fruit like lemon, lime, or orange; frozen berries are a great addition too.
- Make a juice spritzer using just 2 to 4 oz. of juice mixed with seltzer water.
- Drink hot tea or pour hot tea over ice and let it cool in the fridge for iced tea.

Ask your mentee why he is always so tired. Discuss the importance of getting enough sleep, and make sure he is drinking enough water. Dehydration can also make you feel tired.

Stay Active

Kevin Dodge/Masterfile



Get off the Couch

Television viewing is the most common sedentary activity of children in the United States. Many studies have shown that for children and teens, watching TV is associated with an increased risk of being overweight. When watching TV, young people are usually not moving, and they are more likely to be eating. What might not be so obvious, however, is that television advertisements specifically target children and teens with tempting images of candy, soda, and fast food – making them more likely to eat those foods while watching TV or directly afterwards. In addition, young people are exposed to many unhealthy behaviors on television shows and in movies, particularly smoking, drinking alcohol, and other drug use. The media often glamorize these behaviors, which can have a lasting impact on a young person’s ability to make healthy choices. Lastly, watching violence on TV can lead to young people acting out aggressively, and thinking that something bad or scary will happen to them.

It can be difficult to come up with creative activities for you and your mentee to do when you get together, which is why plopping down in front of the tube is often the easiest option. However, there are many things that you can do right inside your living room that will help stimulate your minds and bodies as well as help you build your relationship with one another. 🏠 [SITE-FRIENDLY](#)

Common Challenges

Movies are an easy way to kill time on a rainy day.

Video games are the only activity my mentee enjoys.

I let my mentee watch TV while I prepare a meal for us.

Easy Solutions

Try a new indoor activity like freeze dance or an arts and crafts project.

Okay, try a game like “Dance Dance Revolution” or other computer games that get you moving.

What a perfect opportunity for you to prepare the meal together.

Even if you and your mentee cannot or do not feel like running around, there are countless games and activities that you can do together that will foster bonding in your relationship as well as provide mental stimulation. Try playing board games, card games,

or charades. Work on an arts and crafts project like painting, beading, graffiti art, or pottery, or work on a jigsaw puzzle together. Write or read a story together, make a collage, take photographs, or make up a skit. Get your creative juices flowing and remember that you can never be too silly! For more ideas on what you can do outdoors, check out **Get Moving** (page 39).

MENTORING TIPS

- Get to know your mentee.
- Share information about yourself.
- Build a positive relationship.

Get Moving



Most children and young people do not get enough physical activity, and as they enter their adolescent years, they tend to get even less. Children and adults should try to engage in some form of physical activity every day. It is recommended that children and teens get one hour of physical activity per day, which can be broken up into shorter amounts of active time throughout the day that add up to one hour. Although there are physical education classes and recess at most schools, many schools have cut down on this time, and some have eliminated it entirely. Being active is one of the most fun things you can do with your mentee. Not only will you both feel great afterwards, but it will help to build your relationship with one another.

Moderate Physical Activity

- Walking
- Bike Riding
- Frisbee
- Kickball
- Hopscotch
- Yoga
- Gymnastics
- Ballet
- Shooting Baskets
- Swimming for fun
- Volleyball
- Baseball, Softball
- Hula Hooping

Vigorous Physical Activity

- Running Games (tag)
- Jogging
- Jumping Rope
- Basketball Game
- Football Game
- Soccer
- Aerobic Dancing
- Karate
- Tae Kwon Do
- Jumping Jacks
- Push-ups, Pull-ups
- Water Basketball

DID YOU KNOW?

Young people 8-18 spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes watching television, playing video games, and using cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices per day (more than 53 hours per week). This “screen” time should be limited to less than 2 hours per day.

Common Challenges

I am not really physically active and not very comfortable exercising around other people, particularly around my mentee.

My mentee never wants to do anything that involves physical activity. He really likes to just sit and play video games.

Easy Solutions

Exercise comes in all shapes and sizes, just like we do. Even taking a walk or doing some stretches is a great way to get moving and will help you feel great.

Get your mentee to make up a game with you. The more young people are engaged in the planning, and the more creative they feel they can be, the more they will want to play. You don't have to stick to traditional sports like basketball and soccer. Why not combine them for wacky basket-soccer!

Physical activity can take place in as little as 10-15-minute blocks of time, and activities don't have to be organized or regimented. Frequent bouts of physical activity help children to build and maintain strong bones, muscles, and joints as well as maintain a healthy weight. Physical activity also has an enormous impact on young peoples' mental health and self-esteem, and it enhances life skills such as teamwork, discipline, sportsmanship, and leadership. And remember, it can have the same positive effects on you!

Quick and Easy Ways to Stay Active

- Find inexpensive and transportable things to play with like Frisbees, hula hoops, kites, jump ropes, and balls.
- Head out to a climbing wall, skating rink, pool, or other activity place during your time together.
- Learn a new activity with your mentee like canoeing, swimming, cross-country skiing, or bicycling.
- When you are just hanging out and catching up, go for a walk.
- Dance to your favorite music.
- Stretch out and try yoga.
- Encourage unplanned activities like racing to the house after being outdoors or playing tag.

Walk, Walk, Walk



Walking is one of the simplest ways to be active. Walking also fosters talking and observing, allowing you and your mentee to become better acquainted with one another and the community. It's a great way to spend quality time with your mentee, even if you don't have a destination in mind. Find a park, interesting neighborhood, or body of water to walk near and go for a stroll. If you have to go somewhere that is too far to walk and you are taking public transportation, try getting off the bus or train a stop or two early and walking the rest of the way to your destination. If you are driving, see if you can park further away from your destination and walk some of the way. If you are part of a site-based mentoring program, such as a school or community center, find out if you can have access to a gym or some other open space to move around.

MENTORING TIPS

- Plan activities in advance.
 - Be yourself.
 - Have fun!



Challenge Each Other to Walk

Here's a fun challenge that you and your mentee can do together, indoors and outside, regardless of the season or weather conditions.

Necessary supplies: A pedometer for you and your mentee. A pedometer is a device that you wear to count your footsteps.



What you need to know: You can convert the number of steps measured by the pedometer into distance by knowing the length of your footstep (also called your “stride”). Most people say it takes about 2000 steps for every mile (of course everyone's stride is different). If you want to do the math yourself, remember this: one mile is equal to 5280 feet. So measure your stride in feet and multiply that number by the number of steps shown on your pedometer. Take that number and divide it by 5280 to get the distance you've traveled in miles. For example, if your pedometer reading is 10,000 and your stride is 2.5 feet, then $10,000 \times 2.5 = 25,000$ feet. Divide 25,000 feet by 5280 feet/mile to get 4.73 miles—and that's the distance you've traveled.

Ask your mentee if he knows how many steps he takes during the course of a day. Give him a pedometer and show him how to attach it to a belt or shoe. Have him take a few steps and check the reading on the device.

The challenge is to see who takes the most steps from now until your next visit together. It isn't necessary to specifically designate that each of you must walk for a certain amount of time per day. Instead, the goal is to see how active you and your mentee are during your normal routine. You can of course up the ante and encourage each other to walk instead of taking the bus or jumping in a car, but remember your safety and that of your mentee is of the utmost importance. Do not promote walking in unsafe areas (crime-wise), in areas where there are no sidewalks, at night, etc.

You can even set goals and award prizes. Identify places each of you would like to visit. Go online to determine how many miles away each destination is, and see who can walk the distance to their destination first. You could each pick a place the same distance away (but in a different direction), and you could plot your travel progress on a map. You can even make up your own counting system by making one step equal to 10 or 100 miles so you can reach far away destinations such as Europe, China, or Australia.



Vladislav Gurfinkel/fotolia



Eat Well, Stay Active, Have Fun

It is important for young people to be aware of what they eat, and to learn to enjoy eating well and keeping active. This knowledge will set the stage for a lifetime of good health as they grow into adulthood. Learning together with your mentee about what you are eating and drinking, and the healthy options that are available, is a great way for the two of you to bond. As a mentor, you are in a great position to provide guidance along this path. Always be on the lookout for natural opportunities that occur in your daily routine with your mentee to start a conversation about healthy eating. You don't have to bring up the subject all the time, but when it feels like the time is right, do it. It doesn't mean that you can never go out to eat burgers and fries or have ice cream and a soda, but it does mean that you shouldn't do that all the time. Moderation is the key, so if you do want that popcorn and soda at the movies, you can choose to skip the added butter, and go with the smaller size containers.

The same is true for being physically active and starting a conversation about physical activity with your mentee. Simply put, being physically active makes you feel better and gives you more energy. Try to incorporate some type of physical activity into every visit. While being able to go outside might offer more options, be creative about what you can do even if limited to being indoors. No need to lecture—just do it! And don't forget about walking. Just like basic water should be the beverage of choice, walking is a great activity that keeps the body moving and doesn't cost a thing.



Setting Goals Together

An important part of mentoring is setting achievable goals together. For example, your mentee might decide that he drinks too much soda, so a short-term goal could be to decrease the amount of soda he drinks each day (or week). You might decide that you don't get enough physical activity, so your short-term goal could be to walk more (using a pedometer to measure) by walking instead of driving or taking a bus, or even parking your car farther away in a mall parking lot instead of looking for the closest spot. Likewise, you could get off one stop earlier on the bus or subway and walk the extra distance.

New goals can be added as your relationship progresses, and you can think of fun rewards to give each other for reaching your goals.



Want More Information?

For more information about nutrition, physical activity, and ideas for activities you can do with your mentee, check out the resources below.

Alliance for a Healthier Generation: The Alliance’s mission is to reduce the nationwide prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015 and to empower kids nationwide to make healthy lifestyle choices.

www.healthiergeneration.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): The CDC, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides information on public health issues affecting the United States. It is a good resource for information on nutrition and physical activity.

www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/index.html
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html

Let’s Move! Let’s Move is First Lady Michelle Obama’s campaign to tackle childhood obesity in the United States. The website has tools and resources for helping children make healthier food choices and become physically active, while at the same time advocating for healthier foods in schools.

www.letsmove.gov

National Institutes of Health (NIH): The NIH site provides information on the We Can!® campaign, a national childhood obesity prevention program. Included are tips on eating right, staying active, and reducing screen time.

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/index.htm

The Nutrition Source: A website from the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health that provides nutrition information and tips for healthy eating.

www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/index.html

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA): The FDA site provides information and activities that help with reading labels and making healthy food decisions.

www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/LabelingNutrition/ConsumerInformation/UCM193079.pdf

For more information on mentoring:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

www.bbbs.org

MENTOR

www.mentoring.org



Ten Things to Do with Your Mentee



- 1 Cook together.** Create healthy recipes and put together a cookbook of your favorites.
- 2 Challenge each other** to set a goal to improve one personal behavior (e.g., drink fewer soft drinks per day; eat whole wheat bread instead of white bread; or decrease the amount of time spent watching TV).
- 3 Try a new fruit or vegetable** every month.
- 4 Make a game** of avoiding elevators and escalators—take the stairs whenever possible.
- 5 Plant a vegetable garden**—indoor or outside. Plan a special meal that you and your mentee can cook together from the vegetables harvested from your garden. Add the recipe to your cookbook.
- 6 Walk, walk, walk.**
- 7 Do a neighborhood assessment** to determine the location of nearby food markets and restaurants that have fruits and vegetables and healthy options; do the same to locate parks and gyms where you can engage in physical activity.
- 8 Make up a sports game** with your own rules.
- 9 Try a new place to eat** each time you go out for a meal together (or pick up food to bring in). Look for places that offer healthy options, are affordable, and offer cuisines you and your mentee have never tried before.
- 10 Have fun with fruits and vegetables.** As an alternative to watching TV or a movie, create edible food sculptures together.



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