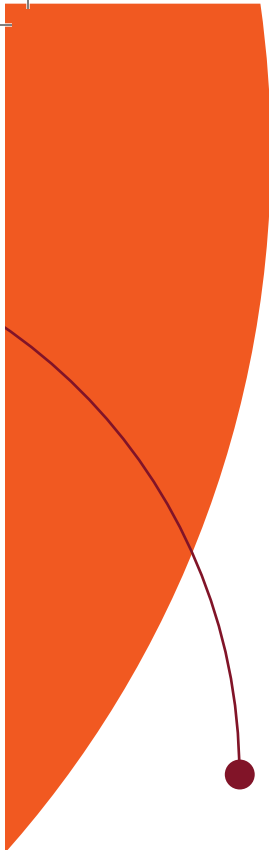




**Mentor
Handbook**

Introducing Cybermentor

Cybermentor is an online mentoring program aimed at girls, ages 11 through 18. This is a formative stage in the young girls' development. This program matches girls with women like you who have chosen careers in science, math, engineering or technology. Together you will explore careers and questions about life as a scientist or engineer.



How will this handbook help me?

This handbook will guide you through the mentoring process, specifically, what it means to be a mentor, the benefits and essential elements, and stages of a mentoring relationship.

You will find tips, advice and questions to support and enhance your mentoring journey. The questions are purposely placed to prompt reflective thoughts on time spent with your own mentors and to move you closer to defining what mentoring means to you.

For this reason, we hope that you will find the handbook helpful along the mentoring path.

Mentoring, what does it mean?

Mentoring is about believing in the unlimited potential of another person.

It is a balancing act – holding high expectations of someone and allowing her to reach those expectations in her own unique time-frame.

It is a long-standing method of transferring knowledge, insight, expertise and wisdom of one person to another.

It is an organic and voluntary process evolving and changing over a period of time.

The relationship serves as a safe place for testing and challenging assumptions and beliefs.

● Why should I become a mentor?

Given that women in Canada made up 47 percent of the total workforce in 2006 and just 22 percent of these professionals are working in the sciences, engineering and mathematics field, we believe this program is more important than ever. When you consider that women held 20 percent of these positions in 1987, these figures are quite disappointing.

As well, it is unlikely that things will get better in these occupations, because women continue to account for relatively small shares of total university enrolments in these fields despite the fact that there are no significant gender differences in math and science performances in school.

One way to increase these numbers is to nurture and inspire girls to develop their talents in math and science. Beyond expanding a girl's knowledge of careers, opportunities and benefits that exist for women in science and engineering fields, mentoring is a catalyst for building the resiliency, confidence and assertiveness that young people need to succeed at school, effect change and advance their careers.

Mentored students report higher academic achievement and gain a sense of community. This is particularly important in the fields of engineering and science since the under-representation of women in these fields results in low numbers of informal mentoring relationships.





What does a mentor do?

In the Cybermentor program, mentors provide guidance and friendship to young girls, hoping to expand their knowledge of careers and the opportunities existing within the science and engineering fields.

Mentors serve as role models and provide the resources that young girls in the program need to make educated decisions regarding career choices. Mentors are nurturing and caring individuals. They come alongside their matches, helping them to explore interests and develop passions. Mentors carry a toolbox of thought-provoking questions and rely heavily on intuition to develop a deeper understanding of their mentee's needs. Mentors are a group of empathetic women who know when to challenge their Cybermentor partners and understand the importance of feedback that is timely and invited.

Mentors share their strategy for setting and reaching goals and work alongside their matches to create ones that are realistic and obtainable for them. Mentors know that inspiration and motivation are key elements to helping a young woman reach her goals.

A mentor is:

- a trusted guide and friend
- someone who listens
- someone who helps others explore opportunities
- someone who knows what it is like to be a girl interested in math and science, and also what it is like to be a woman who is working in the sciences
- someone who will have good ideas about how to deal with difficult situations

A mentor is not:

- a teacher
- a parent
- a psychiatrist

A microscopic view of cells, likely from a plant or animal tissue, showing various sized cells and structures. The image is overlaid with a red gradient that is darker at the bottom and lighter at the top.

What are the proven benefits of mentoring?

Mentors who believe that it is only the girl who benefits from the mentoring relationship are often surprised. While it is true that the young women discover strengths and passions at the purposeful hand of their mentor, mentors report feeling invigorated by challenging discussions with their matches who hold fresh perspectives and ideas.

There is a sense of reward and affirmation for some mentors around their own decision-making ability for past career choices and decisions they have made. Mentors enhance their communication and leadership skills and experience heightened levels of enthusiasm.


Reflection exercise: 'Past Mentoring Experience'

Think of mentoring relationships you've had in your life. Select one that has been especially important to you and explain how you were affected by this relationship.

Consider a time in your life, perhaps during your formative years, when you would have

benefited from having a mentor but didn't. What kept you from finding a mentor at that time?

What are the main benefits you have received from mentoring someone else? This can be a work relationship or some other mentoring experience.

A microscopic view of cells, likely from a plant or animal tissue, showing various sized cells with nuclei. A prominent red circle is overlaid on the image, highlighting a specific cell in the upper center. The background is a warm, yellowish-orange color.

"Being a mentor is excellent practice for me to describe my technical work in terms that are easy to understand."

What does mentoring mean to you?

While we attempt to define mentoring and establish the benefits of mentoring for the mentor and her match, mentoring is ultimately a personal experience.

These materials and resources should only serve as a guide to nurture your thoughts as you try to decide what mentoring means to you and how you will reach the goals that you may choose to set for yourself as a mentor. Often, we find that the opportunity to reflect upon past mentoring experiences facilitates this process for mentors. By reflecting upon your own mentoring experiences, as a mentor

you will move with empathy and grow close enough to a young girl to help her overcome the inhibitions and fears that she might be experiencing. Mentors often find that these inhibitions and fears are no different than the ones that they experienced at the same age and at a similar stage along their journey.


We encourage you to discuss your responses to the questions in the reflection exercise 'Past Mentoring Experiences' with your current match. Of course, it is completely up to you. Mentoring is not only natural and flexible, it is personal too!

A decorative red circle is positioned at the top left, with a thin red line curving downwards and to the right from its bottom edge.


What is expected of me?

Successful mentors know that by being consistent, reliable and making and keeping promises, they build trust with their mentoring partner – the first step in the mentoring relationship. By reaching out and being available, asking the right questions at the

right time and engaging in honest conversations with her, you create a safe environment for her to test assumptions and beliefs about life outside the walls of the classroom. Here are some tips for building a good relationship with your mentee.

A large red circular graphic occupies the bottom half of the page. It features a pattern of overlapping white circles of various sizes, creating a textured, bubble-like effect. A white circle is also present in the lower-left quadrant of the red area.

“This is a very good and useful program which does not require large time commitments for participants and still allows positive relationships to develop.”



1 Share your own personal stories and experiences. There is enormous value and learning attached to storytelling and the sharing of experiences. Consider sharing what has worked for you as opposed to telling her what to do. It is just as important to share what didn't work for you, too. Our stories often provide clarity and make it easier for young people to make decisions.

2 Explore your communication and learning styles. If you knew that your match had a natural tendency to learn best by reading and you were a visual learner, would you relate differently to her? Communication and learning styles can be one of the biggest stumbling blocks inside a mentoring relationship. By having a pulse on your mentoring partner's style and reaffirming your own, you can be much more effective working towards your goals and building your relationship. Exercises to assess your communication and learning styles can be found on the program website (www.cybermentor.ca).

3 Ask your partner questions that affirm how much you care about her. By asking her the right questions, you validate and affirm her concerns. You show her that you understand and you help her gain insight into a problem. Example:

Girl: There is a lot to figure out and keep track of when you are thinking about applying to a university.

Mentor: I sense that you are feeling a little overwhelmed by the whole process of narrowing down a university. Is that it?

4 Do not be afraid to say that you don't know. If you do not have the answer to a question she has asked or lack the expertise, be up front with her about it. You will gain credibility with her by being honest. If you don't have someone within your immediate network who can help, consider making some inquiries to see if someone you know might be able to connect you with someone that can help. This is a great way for mentors to build and increase their own networks.

5 Reflect upon your conversations with your match. Discuss your observations after spending time together. To make this a meaningful experience for both of you and to give the relationship some direction, consider some of these questions:

- What are the goals of this young person? How will I help her achieve them? Will I give her something to read or review? Is there some research that I should suggest that she do? Are there colleagues or friends that she could connect with to get the information that she needs?
- What are my goals? Can this be a win/win relationship? What am I gaining from this relationship? If my goal is to become a better listener and leader, how will I know if I am making progress?
- What are the specific ways that I can be of assistance to the young girl I am mentoring?

How is it going to work?

1 Take the time to get to know the girl matched up with you and let her get to know you

Remember that your mentee sees you as a well-accomplished and smart woman. She may be feeling intimidated and might be reluctant to call on you for fear of imposing upon your valuable time. At times, you may have to take the lead by putting forth suggestions and ideas that will serve you both well in accomplishing your goals and objectives for the relationship.

2 Explore the things that interest her


Contribute what you can and suggest that you set some goals for the program year. Encourage her to write down everything that she is curious or concerned about. Create an environment where she feels free to share her dreams absent of analysis and self-doubt. If nothing comes to mind for her, consider visiting the website together and make finding common interests your first goal. You will find some goal setting tools on the website at www.cybermentor.ca.

3 Create a mentoring agreement

One way to reduce confusion and clarify expectations is to create a mentoring agreement. It can help to guide your relationship or “keep things on track”, and can be used to:

- capture goals
- acknowledge your intentions to openly discuss any real or perceived challenges that might arise in your mentoring relationship from time to time
- address things like anticipated response time to messages (for example, mentors and their matches often create a timeline and establish deadlines to reach goals and accomplish tasks)

While spontaneous communication should not be reduced to little or no significance, relationships with a purpose and direction provide a sense of satisfaction and personal fulfillment for both people involved. A sample mentoring agreement can be found on the program website.



4 Explore what it will take to help her succeed in her chosen field or profession

Talk to her about what it takes to succeed in a profession or field. The website contains exercises that will help her understand how her personal values, beliefs and passion can play out in the workplace by aligning her with careers in various career fields.

5 Celebrate the accomplishment of all large and small goals

There are a number of ways to track your accomplishments, dreams and desires for the mentoring relationship. Mentors and their matches often find journaling to be a powerful reflective tool for capturing the significance of time spent with one another. The next step in the process for many mentors and their matches is to keep a log of those reflections and share it with each other on a regular basis. Example:

- *Date*
- *Things we talked about*
- *Wishes or concerns that came up*
- *Things I promised to follow up on*
- *The best things about her message*
- *Together we decided that*

6 Keep your connection going

Remember to correspond regularly. Tips for communicating effectively can be found on the program website.

7 Use the program website

The information, ideas, and activities are there to engage both you and your mentee. How you move through the material on the website is up to you and your match. Let the program office know if you have any ideas on what could be added to support your relationship with your current match or enhance your mentoring skills.

Maintaining the energy of your relationship

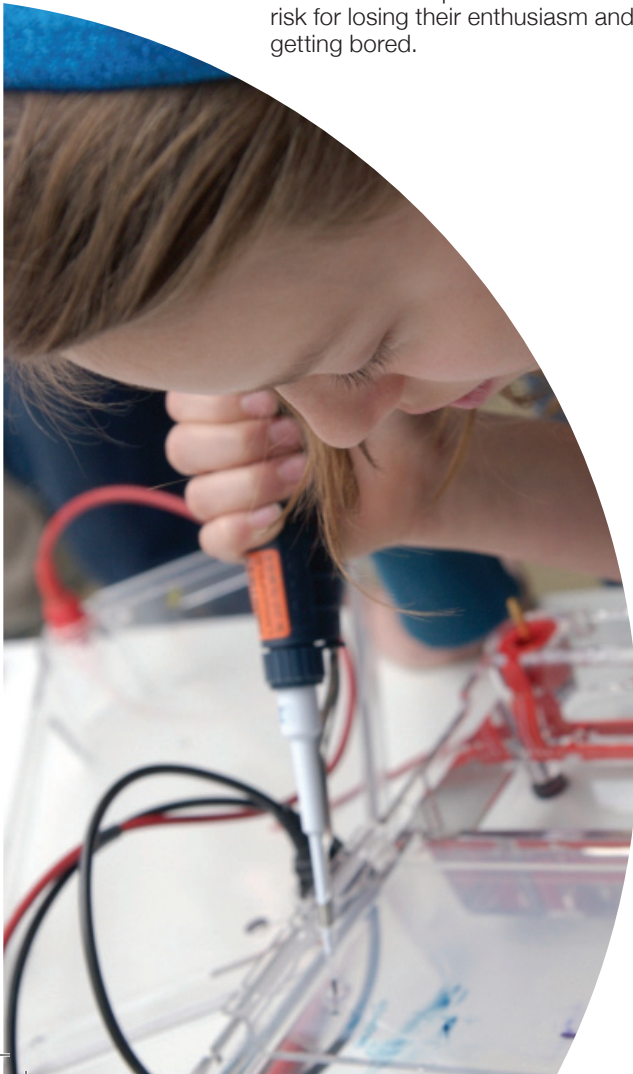
Eventually you reach a point in your relationship where it feels like the 'newness' has worn off. While it is a comfortable place to be, it is also the most vulnerable stage of the relationship. Partners are at risk for losing their enthusiasm and getting bored.


Here are some tips for maintaining relationship energy:

Use the program website! The site is changing all the time. There are new activities and information being added on a regular basis.

The girls in the Cybermentor program are encouraged to use a link on the website to materials that are meant as a guide and resource. The site has useful mentoring tips, fun exercises to do, and information to assist in career planning. Following a visit to the site, you may:

- suggest that you learn together about other amazing women in science and engineering
- explore possibilities for a future career
- suggest that she join a discussion forum on topics that interest her in science and engineering
- arrange to "meet" your Cybermentor partner in the secure chat room
- participate in a webinar or "meet an expert" online
- solve a puzzle
- point her in the direction to find out what's out there for young women like her, such as science opportunities, youth conferences, and even scholarships that she can apply for





The program website materials are designed in modules with a variety of progressive elements. Some mentoring pairs may explore the modules consecutively. Others may work through the materials one element at a time (e.g. general science and engineering fields, biographies, career planning). You are encouraged to browse.

Building your mentor connection

1. Articles, exercises, quizzes and more to help with a mentoring relationship and help you both to enjoy online exchanges. Some of the topics included are:

- positive initial contact and connection
- giving and receiving trust
- what mentoring can do for you
- thinking through where a young girl may want her life to go
- suggestions for building your mentoring relationship

2. Articles with ideas to consider and things to try that can help you focus on the abilities of the young girl you are mentoring so that you can make good things happen for her.

3. Tips every month that will keep your relationship moving forward.

Spotlight on women in science and engineering

1. Bios of women who inspire. Women scientists and engineers from the past, as well as current mentors, are presented.

2. Ask an expert. Encourage your partner to ask questions. Questions on a featured industry or career area are answered.

Planning your future - careers in science, math, technology and engineering

1. Ideas and information to think about and move on.

- deciding on the career that could be a good fit
- careers related to an area of study (what are the possibilities?)
- making a career plan
- education possibilities (universities and colleges, tech schools, etc.)

The program is dynamic. The website will change and develop as areas of interest are added and old news is dropped. Look for:

- stories on breaking “science news” and issues of interest to girls and women
- innovative research reporting: interviews, stories, articles
- science and the arts
- scholarships and internships, volunteer opportunities
- quizzes, fun activities, puzzles done individually or with mentor
- chat rooms for participants to expand networks and talk
- info on resources, conferences, contests of interest

Ending the relationship


Think of the ending of a mentoring relationship as a process rather than a singular event. The separation phase of a mentoring relationship is a period of adjustment and a time for redefining the relationship. Regardless of the reasons for ending the mentoring relationship, your goal should be to make the ending positive and affirming for you both.

If you are thinking about ending your mentoring relationship earlier than initially planned, consider talking with other mentors about the challenges and struggles you are experiencing and see if they can help. The Cybermentor program team has a lot of experience dealing with the setbacks of mentoring relationships.

Call on them. When the time comes to move on, consider these questions and ideas to weather the transition:

- What was the most fun activity?
- Talk about what you found most important and satisfying about your relationship.
- Let your match know how much she means to you. Thank her for the opportunity to get to know her. Let her know how she has changed you for the better.
- Did you achieve the goals you set together?
- What did you learn from each other?
- What will you each take from the relationship?





"You matched me with a young woman who is interested, interesting and enthusiastic. She has made such a difference in my perception of the program. And she's enriched my life as much as I have enriched hers."



More questions...

What if my Cybermentor match isn't interested in moving into the same career or field as me?

Often the things that interest a young person in grade 7 are not the same things that fascinate her in grade 9. Your match might be hoping that you will put her on the path to becoming something that was not even on your radar growing up. One of the greatest gifts you can give to someone else is permission to explore her dreams and play to her strengths and passion. The impact that you have on a young person reaches beyond the confines of career counselling. Mentoring is a holistic approach to personal development. Remember:

"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own."

Benjamin Disraeli

How do I know if my Cybermentor match is finding value in our relationship?

Girls in the program are encouraged to acknowledge their mentor's efforts from time to time by saying thank you or demonstrating ways that your time together has made a difference. If you are struggling to determine whether or not she is finding value in the relationship, consider engaging her in an honest conversation that helps you to better understand how she is feeling about things.



Why does it take my Cybermentor match so long to write back?

The girls in the program are still at an age where they may rely heavily on other adults to manage commitments and fulfill obligations. As a role model, you can only continue to demonstrate the importance of common courtesy by responding in a timely fashion and being true to who you are and what you believe. When she does respond promptly, consider telling her how much you value her attentive and timely response and how much more important that will become when she enters the career world.

I have never tried to mentor anyone online. How can I be really effective communicating with the young person I am mentoring?

Every day mentoring relationships are being successfully built between two people living continents apart. The mentors and their matches seldom meet in person and spend little or no time at all talking over the telephone. Here are some helpful tips for building and maintaining an online mentoring relationship:

- Be focused on the communication underway. Try not to let coworkers distract you from the flow of communications.
- Don't send a response to your match's message unless you are certain about what is being asked or said. Ask for clarification.
- When you sit down at the keyboard to respond to your messages, your mind-set is typically to get through everything – to empty your mailbox and free yourself for other tasks. Be mindful of speed when you are answering a message from your match – a terse, quickly worded response to a critical question can destroy the considerable time you have taken to build a positive relationship with your distance match.
- Write in a friendly tone. Use words and phrases that come naturally.



Parents and family members

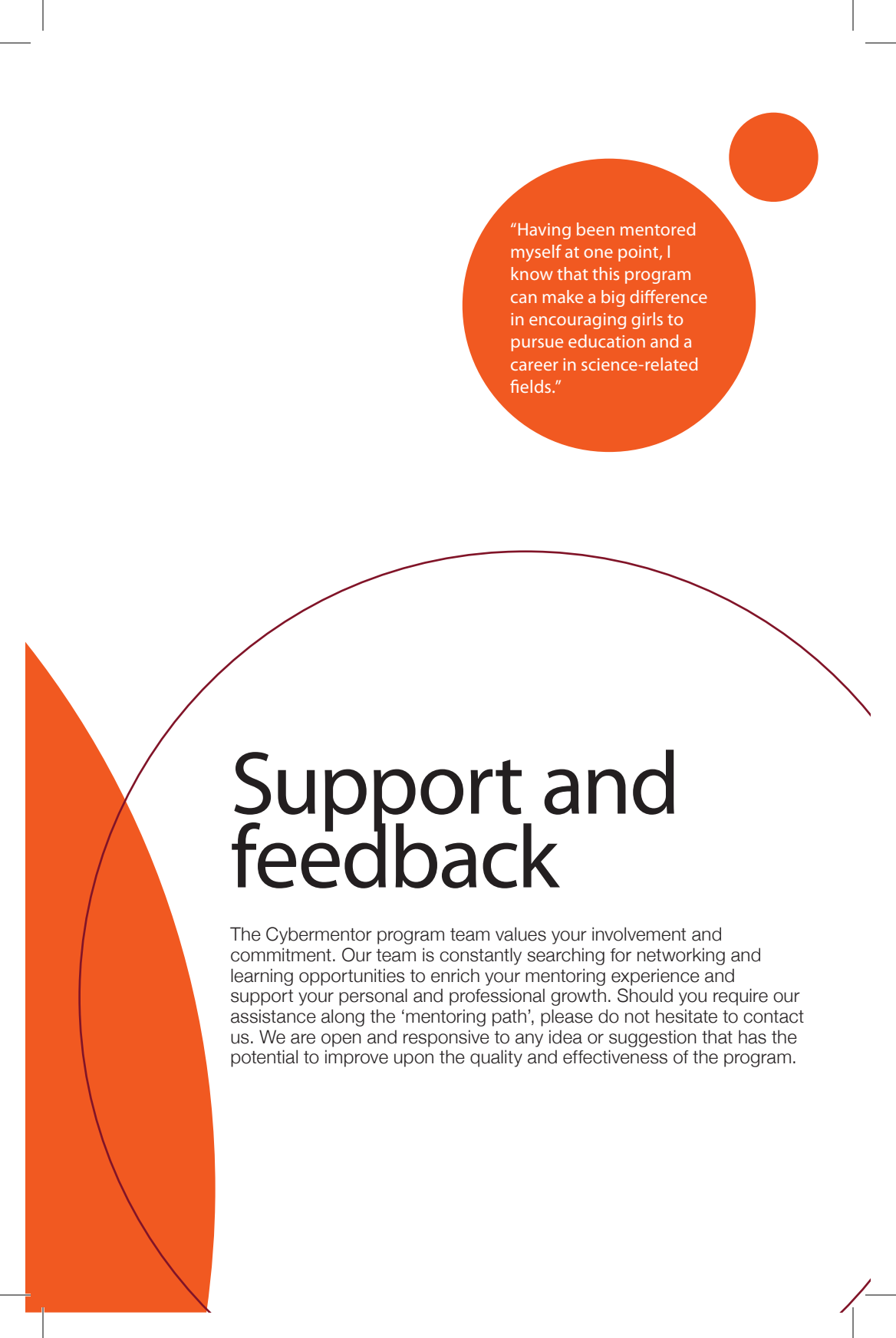
Encourage your match to talk to her parents, guardian or family members about the activities that you are engaged in and the opportunities for the future that you are exploring. By keeping parents and family members informed about your relationship,

you increase the likelihood that she will respond in a timely manner and give the relationship priority in her life. Parents and family members can support her by coming up with questions to ask you and provide additional resources to strengthen the mentoring relationship.

Setting mentors up for success

The Cybermentor program team values the contribution of mentors and seeks to understand their needs to be successful in their roles as mentors. They are committed to providing the training and education that increases the mentor's confidence and enhances the mentoring experience.

Cybermentor offers web-based and evening courses to deepen the mentor's understanding of the mentoring role and provides the professional development sessions designed to enhance communications skills.



"Having been mentored myself at one point, I know that this program can make a big difference in encouraging girls to pursue education and a career in science-related fields."

Support and feedback

The Cybermentor program team values your involvement and commitment. Our team is constantly searching for networking and learning opportunities to enrich your mentoring experience and support your personal and professional growth. Should you require our assistance along the 'mentoring path', please do not hesitate to contact us. We are open and responsive to any idea or suggestion that has the potential to improve upon the quality and effectiveness of the program.

Mentors are people who have a special or memorable effect on us and our lives

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Program collaborators



Program supporters

