

Saying Goodbye

Okay. I would like to now officially welcome everyone. We might hear a couple more beeps as folks who are logging on join us on the phone. But I would like to welcome you. My name is Nicky Martin, and I'm the director of the LEARNS Project. We are the corporation for National Community Service Training and Technical Assistance Provider for programs that serve youth. That includes tutoring programs, mentoring programs, out-of-school time, and general youth leadership programs of all types.

And we're really happy today to convene all of you — it looks like more people joining us there — to convene all of you for this Webinar called "Saying Goodbye." It's the time of year where you might be thinking about helping your tutors and mentors wrap up some of their relationships with kids, or maybe some of you are tutors and mentors. So we're glad you could join us today. And I'd like now to introduce our presenter, Judith Gold.

Hi, everybody. It's nice to have you here. I'm the Bank Street part of this partnership, and I think we should just sort of get started.

And before we do, I'm going to quickly go over a tiny bit of housekeeping if that's okay. We're starting to get a good number of people on the phone, so one thing that might make it easier for everyone to hear is if you can mute your phones during the presentation. You can do that either with your mute button phones, or on some phones pressing star six will do that effectively.

If you have a question or you want to share anything anytime throughout the presentation, feel free to jump in, and you can do that either by unmuting your phone or by using the raise hand feature.

And I'm hoping everyone sees slide three right now on their phone, which says, "Housekeeping" and it indicates where the raise hand feature is, and we'll take some practice using that in just a minute.

There are also some annotation tools that you should hopefully see on your screen right now, and a little mock up that we'll invite you to use to participate in our Webinar as we go along.

So just to see if we're all on the same page here, I wanted to learn a little bit about who has joined us today. And if you can practice using your raise hand icon, and first of all, raise your hand if you yourself are a tutor or mentor. Okay. So it looks like Mark has raised his hand, and Anita. Okay.

And once you've raised your hand, you need to click it again to lower it. And how about, raise your hand if you're responsible for training tutors or mentors. Melissa, Beth, Pamela, Deb, ooh, lots of folks. Seems like just about everyone else. Okay. So we've got definitely the right mix of folks on the phone. That was just a little way to get you familiar with that and for us to learn about who we've got here. And then I will turn it back over to Judith to officially get us started.

All right. So today we're going to talk about separation and how to say goodbye. And some of the important factors in this process are giving kids advanced notice, what kind of conversations you have around closure, and what kinds of celebrations are appropriate for the last meeting.

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So, you know, separation is something that we all go through, whether it's kids, it's adults, in all different phases of our life. So my question to you is, what comes to mind when you hear the word "separation," and then use one word to describe the image or feeling that you get when you hear the word "separation."

And while you're thinking about this, I've put up a whiteboard on your screen. And we can use some of our tech tools. You can either click on the "T" if you want to write or on the pen feature if you want to draw, and go ahead and share some of your thoughts there. And I'll model it for you.

After you do, you need to click somewhere else on the screen for it to show. So you should see, I typed the word "fear" and "worry." Great. It looks like people are catching right on.

You can also feel free to use the text tool if you'd like to draw a picture of, you know, what comes to your mind when you think about separation. And if you're having any trouble using your tool or you'd rather just call out your thoughts, you can also unmute your phone and do that, too.

So my assistant's fooling around here, put my name up on this board. No, that wasn't me.

No, it's Judith Killen [PH].

Oh. Okay. Therefore you can't erase after something's on, or you can?

You can. You can use a little eraser icon.

Right.

Okay. So I think most people have had a chance to put some ideas up there.

Okay. So it's interesting, these words, because except for someone who wrote "New beginnings," they're all words that represent loss, finality, fear. They're all kind of anxiety producing words. Nicky, can you go back to the picture?

Sure.

Okay. So would the person who did that picture that's circled in pink say what that represented? You have to unmute your phone to do that. Okay.

If you're wondering how to unmute your phone, you can unmute — if you did it by pushing the mute button, just push it again, or if you did it with star six, you can just push star six again as well to unmute.

Okay. I'm unmuted.

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Great.

Well, it represented leaving everybody behind is why I put it.

All right. Okay. And what about the person who put the blue?

I was trying to draw the same thing; it just doesn't look as good. It was the sadness.

Sadness. All right. So, you know, okay. So saying goodbye, as we all know, is a part of life. And we want to turn this into a positive experience for you the tutor, or you the mentor, and most of all, we want to model to kids really positive ways to say goodbye.

You know often people just kind of sneak off or, you know, there isn't a really a kind of an official ending. And so learning to say goodbye is really an important thing that we need to learn how to do in life. And we all know how difficult transitions can be for children and that they really need support in this process.

So for the sake of this Webinar, we're really going to assume that the separation is going to be a positive one. It doesn't mean that there won't be sadness but that we're going to handle it in a very positive way. And it's happening for normal circumstances, i.e., it's the end of the school year, the mentor relationship was only meant to be one year, the child is moving, the adult is moving, whatever the really positive relationship reasons for separation can be.

Okay. So now, let's think about what kind of behavior do you expect to see from younger children as the relationship ends?

And I'm going to just jump in. This time we'd like you to go ahead and use your chat function. You can see at the bottom of your chat panel you can send a chat to all participants, and just go ahead and do a little brainstorm and type in your ideas about what type of behavior you might expect to see from younger kids.

Okay. Acting out. It looks like some people are typing to the host rather than all participants. That's okay. I'll call those out. I see acting out, anger, tears. If you click on your "Send to all participants" then everyone will see your chat. But if you're sending to the host, that's okay too. I'll just call them out for you.

Anyone else want to add to that brainstorm? Okay. So acting out, anger, tears.

Okay. I think, though, you've got it. You see that. And then of course you'll also see that they start to pay less attention and they might regress around routine. And I think it's important, instead of — sometimes I've heard tutors say how — I heard one guy, let's — I'm an exaggerator — say, "Oh, I got so angry with my child because he wasn't paying attention" and this is that which made me realize, oh, my gosh, I haven't warned them about separation.

So you are going to see regression. And on the other hand, you might start to see the child clinging to you more and suddenly, you know, appearing more needy. Okay.

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And then we have older kids. So let's do this again. And this time will you send it to all participants. What's the kind of behavior you might expect to see from older children as the relationship ends?

Okay. Some testing behavior, Amy Cannata shared. I posted an idea, maybe skipping some meetings with your mentor or your tutor. Abandonment someone posted. Nasty behavior.

All right. So I think, you know, they will often become angry, older kids will often actually say something to you, and you'll see a kind of shift in attitude, some aggressive behavior. I think the picture on this slide sort of expresses it well.

So although individuals' need for closure vary, it's important that we provide some kind of closure because it's really essential in these relationships that we're focusing on. And the closure happens through the conversation and through the preparation that you make and have with the kid. So the importance of this kind of closure conversation really cannot be overemphasized.

And some of the things that happen during this conversation include a learning that takes place, because you recap the learning that you've done with your tutor and the kind of things you're done with you mentee, and it's the appreciation that you feel for having had this experience, and then a celebration.

Now in some cases this also might be an occasion where you renegotiate the relationship. You might be spending another year in your service, or some of your tutors might be, and they might continue with the same child. Or in the mentee relationship you might be going on and continuing with the same child. It all depends upon the parameters of the program.

But what's important is that if the program is only a one-year program, that it's very clear to the child that that's the case, and the mentor isn't rejecting the child, or the tutor isn't rejecting the child, that's the way the program's set up. Anybody have any questions up until now?

I don't see any hands raised.

Okay. Everybody remembers about the icon. Okay.

So let's go onto talk about the process. It's a process, and it's not a singular event. Nicky is now going to do a poll with you to see how many of your programs have a formal closure process outlined or in place.

So you should see it now on your screen. I see folks already starting to answer. I'll give you just a couple minutes. Okay. Looks to me like I think everyone got their answers in. And interesting results here. You should be able to see them on your screen.

In case you can't, two people have an official closure process in their policies and procedures and the rest don't. So that might be something important to think about. And Judith will talk a little bit more about that.

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Okay. So, you know, many of you, especially those of you who are dealing with mentor programs are dealing with children who have lost significant adults in their life, who might have self-esteem issues, emotional issues, and it's especially crucial for these children to have a real process around this closure.

I also want to say that this is often a time that's very hard for the tutors and the mentors, so they need as much help around this separation as the children do. So this is a great thing to have a meeting with them about. If you're still going to see them as a group to, you know, talk about it in a group, and to do a bit with them what we just did with you. What is the word, "separation," when you hear the word, "separation," what comes to mind for you? Because you really want them to be acting on behalf of the child.

And after all, in most of your programs, you're going to have some kind of celebration for them, you're going to thank them in some way, and we're trying to get them to see. In many ways you are the people, the trainers who will be modeling effective separation for your tutors and mentors, so I would urge you to consider instituting some kind of formal procedure and process in your programs. Because the last thing we want is for the kids to feel any kind of betrayal or deserted when the relationship ends.

Amy, do you want to add anything about mentors.

No, I think that's really good. And I know in a few minutes, Judith is going to talk about some specific ideas on what you might do for closure, but it is really, really important, especially in the mentoring relationships.

Okay. If anybody wants to unlock their mute button here to have — to say anything, we'll give you a couple seconds do to that. Feel free.

Our school plans a thank you for the volunteers, which includes us. So that's part of the procedure. And the children participate.

The children participate.

Yes. They thank us and they have a little program. It's all proper, and usually they fix our food for us and bring it to us, and they meet us at the door.

Oh, that's really nice.

It's not (INAUDIBLE). And they have a little gift for us.

Huh. Did they make the gift?

I didn't understand.

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No. No. But they compose their speeches that they give.

Uh-huh. That's great.

It's really great.

Right. And you know, those speeches — those times when tutors and mentors have gotten letters from kids, those are the things that are the most important to them. Those are the things that they hold onto that they come back or they show their own kids or husbands or wives or friends. It's those personal kinds of letters that matter most.

Judith, I'm not sure who that was who was speaking, but it was a little hard for some of us to hear. Can you recap that a little bit.

Do you want me to recap? Oh, sure.

Or maybe the person who —

Who do you want to recap it, the person who spoke?

Either way. I don't know, maybe it was just on my end and it's not necessary, but I want to make sure all of our participants were able to hear. It sounded a little broken up.

All right. Would you — who spoke?

Oh, I did.

Yeah, we're logged on as Pam Donald. I'm a program director, and I have some of my tutors with me.

Great.

One of my tutors was speaking.

Oh, great. Go ahead, say it again.

I always talk too much. No. For our volunteer luncheon that is given in our honor every year at Mount View School, it's really a very, very special occasion, because I mean we have, like the table cloths, we have the food brought in, the children meet us at the door, and usually escort us to the rooms and want to know if there's anything they can do for us, and if we would like, they would fix our plates and bring it to us.

And then they have a program for us. Sometimes they write poems. Sometimes they write little essays. And they're always thanking us for the time that we give to them.

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And then of course we have a little memento, some type of gift, and usually we have some kind of plant that we can take home and plant in our garden. And it's just a really, really nice thank you from them.

Okay. Great.

Thank you for repeating that.

Okay. Does anyone else want to say anything? Okay. So I'll go on.

So we think of closure as a kind of three-step process. First, it's giving advance notice to the child and then having a conversation about the relationship, its end and how you spent this time together. And then during the last meeting, some kind of celebration that honors the relationship. It can be an event as just described, a kind of project, or even a gift.

I want to say something about gifts before — we're going to talk about appropriate gifts. But when you're giving the child about a gift, you always have to warn the classroom teacher, because the worst thing that happens is when the kid comes back with a gift, screams into the room, "Look what my tutor gave me," and it causes a kind of havoc and it's a surprise to the teacher. So make sure your teachers know.

Okay. So now let's talk about giving advance notice. You know there are all sorts of different theories about this and it depends upon the culture of your school. But for tutors it should be at least two weeks in advance, because that really provides enough time for the tutor and the student to plan what they're going to do in their last sessions. And you know, it's not going to come as a huge surprise to the child because they all know that school is ending.

On the other hand, for mentors, we really recommend that it happen at least two to three weeks ahead of time, because often the relationship between the mentor and the mentee has been different than that with the tutor. It's often been, you know, more intense in some ways, more personal things might have come up.

And even though if the relationship was only meant to last for a year, which is part of the program, and the mentee knew that in the beginning — you know when kids get attached, they can easily forget that kind of thing. And if this is a child who's really done well and who should continue with a mentor, then it should be encouraged that that child be referred maybe to the same program, to another program, so that the child can receive another mentor.

Judith, this is Nicky. I just wanted to jump in and clarify a little bit there. I think you made this pretty clear for folks, but just in case. Two to three weeks should really be when the mentor starts kind of reminding the young person and talking about how they might want to celebrate or mark the end of their match. But it's really important that that's not the first time that the young person is hearing about it, but they know from the beginning that there's a certain duration to the match, whatever it is. Thanks.

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Okay. All right. So depending on how concrete your child is, it's always great when you're giving advance notice to put it in the a calendar so they have something they can hold onto, or you put it on a piece of paper, or you just use the computer, and you know, print out the month of June and mark, this is the day.

Okay. So now you have to get ready for this conversation, which is easy for some people and hard for the other. And of course everything depends upon the age of the child, what kind of language you use. So some of the questions that you might ask as you're getting ready and doing this conversation is, "What was the most fun activity that we did together?" In both cases you would say, "So did we accomplish what we set out to do?" But if it's a younger child you would be — you would be a little more specific, and we'll get to that. So what did you learn?

What you want this conversation to do is to reflect the growth that has happened for the child over the course of the year. You want the child to end this feeling like I'm wonderful. Look what I've done. Look how I've grown. Look what I've accomplished. And then it's important, what did we learn from each other? Because, you know, often in these situations the adult ends up learning just as much and in some cases not more than the child. So you do want to share with the child what you've learned.

Okay. So we're going to go through, you know, some examples. For example, you got me so interested in... So maybe you had a tutee who was a skateboarder or a basketball player or whatever, and it came up in their writing, it came up in their conversation.

So what's most important here is that you be genuine. Maybe what you want to say is, "I learned so much about children's books from reading to you," or whatever was real about it.

And I'm assuming, Mark, that you tutored in math, so you might want to say, "You've taught me so much about how," whatever age kids you've worked with and the different ways they've solved problems, or "You made me really think about algebra, or you made me really think about geometry. You made me really think about the different ways that children learn how to read, the different strategies that you use."

Okay. So when you're working as a tutor, you really want to review the work that you've done together. So maybe you'll make a list of all the books you've read and talk about favorite parts. It's really critical that you go over the reading and comprehension strategies that the tutee has used or learned how to use. What do they know now that they didn't know in the beginning of the year? They'll know it and for sure you know it. Maybe for younger kids it will be you now know all the names of the letters in the alphabet, you know the sounds, and, you know, you can — you really are great at predicting what's happening next in the story.

When you're giving praise, what's so important is that you be specific and that it be genuine. Not that you're just a great reader now, but what are the skills and strategies you've acquired that now make you a great reader. What are the skills and strategies that you have acquired that make math much easier for you?

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Okay. And then there's kind of the future that you're looking at. What books would the child like to read over the summer, and what would they like to learn about next year. Because this is something, you know, to carry it onto the future, and maybe if the child is making this list of books, that might be a book that you want to give the child as a going away present.

Okay. Now mentors. You know for those of you who are doing pure mentoring and not mentoring and tutoring, you know, your conversation is going to be a little bit different. You really want to reminisce about what you enjoyed about your time together. Hopefully you'll say something and — or the mentee will say something, and it will just take you down memory lane. “Oh, yeah, I really liked it when we did that. Do you remember when” — whatever — “we dropped the ice cream or we went to the zoo or that funny day when it was pouring out and” — you know, whatever the occasion is.

Right now in my institution there are two major figures leaving, and we get endless notices about the memory book. And, you know, you've got to push sometimes to come up with something that's more meaningful besides how great it's been to know you.

You know, and then you can share your sense of loss when the child shares their sense of loss. If you feel that the child is reluctant, it's really easy for you to model that and to say, “I'm really going to miss you.” If the child gets upset or angry, “Why're you leaving me, you don't like me,” just acknowledge the feeling. Don't try to say it's, you know, it's silly for you to be angry. Say, “I understand you're angry, it's fine.” These are the kinds of feelings people have at times like this.

And then you really need to plan with your mentee what's going to be the special final meeting. We're going to talk about that in a couple of minutes.

And then if some of you really need much more in-depth information about mentoring, you can always contact Amy, who is an expert on this. And Amy, you want to just give them your e-mail.

Sure, and Nicky will send it out as well. It's cannataa@nwrel.org. And like I said, Nicky will send it to you guys at the close.

But just as Judith said, if you guys are doing mentoring and you need some more ideas or you want to maybe run a session idea by me, feel free to give me a call or send me an e-mail.

And I've just typed it on the whiteboard, but you'll also receive it with some other information after the Webinar. Thanks.

Okay. So one of the things that you'll want to do when you have a mentor/mentee relationship is to talk about what are the next steps for the mentee to achieve his or her personal goals. It's really important that you talk about the program's policy about future contact with each other. Some programs are going to say it's fine to write to each other. Some programs are going to say other things. Whatever your program says or does, and you have to go along with it.

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The most important thing in this in this moment that can be highly emotional is not to make a promise that you can't keep. Don't say we're going to see each other all the time or I'm going to write to you every week. You know a false promise does a lot more harm than it does good. So — and of course everything depends upon what's age-appropriate for the child.

And, you know, some kids are going to be fine with the separation. I don't think we can assume that everybody's falling apart. And maybe a kid will write to you once or twice and then maybe it will fall off. You know everything depends. We all make these kinds of promises how we're going to stay in touch forever.

And so, again, if this was a mentoring program that is a program that continues and the mentor is moving away or leaving or, especially someone who's in service, then you have to really work to help refer the child to a program where they could have another mentor.

Okay. Now sometimes during these kinds of conversations the adult gets very nervous and the adult talks a blue streak. And it's really helpful if you give you mentors a little — and tutors — a little clue. Let the child have time to respond. Children aren't going to always respond right away, and often what adults do when faced with silence from children is to fill the silence. Just write something down in your record-keeping sheet or do whatever they need to do so that you give the child a chance to talk.

And again, I urge you to accept whatever feelings they have about the relationship and its end, and always, you want to help them remember all the positive and good things that you did.

It's helpful when you're talking about what the good things are is why the relationship has been so positive for you, why you've enjoyed it. So for some kids it's going to be because the kid had a great sense of humor. For others, it's going to be because the kid was so artistic. You really enjoyed those conversations.

Always for all kids, it's because of how hard they worked. You want to really articulate for them the qualities and strengths that they have that are going to be significant for them throughout their lives.

Okay. So now we're at the last meeting and the celebration. For those of you who were tutoring, it is really critical that you have a book, some kind of notebook that you've made together, which really shows everything that the child has learned. You might want to do that together, bring the materials, decorate it as a reference book, but something that clearly, clearly articulates and describes all the learning that's taking place, because that's the essence of the relationship between the tutor and the tutee.

You might want to bring a gift. This should be a very small gift and be a reflection of the work you've done together. So if you're tutoring, maybe it's going to be a book. If you've done math, maybe it's going to be some kind of math puzzle, something that's significant about the kind of work that you've done together.

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And then for you who — those of you who have been mentoring, you're going to decide together what's going to be this very special kind of thing you're going to do for your last meeting. Sometimes mentors and mentees go on a picnic with each other, sometimes they share pictures of each other, they write a letter to read to each other. And you see in this visual, this is kind of a collage of the kid and — it's kind of a memory box of all the things that you've done together, your memories that depict your feelings, kind of a very high-end closure.

Okay. So what other kinds of ideas for closure do some of you have or that you've already experienced and done in previous years with kids?

Nicky, how do you want to do this? Do you want to unlock or do it on the chat room?

Go ahead and have people unmute their phones or chat, whatever you feel comfortable with. We just want to hear your ideas and questions. I can hear some people typing away. Anyone have questions or suggestions, things you do in your program to share?

It looks like Amy shared one. "Program sets up a final group celebration for all mentors and mentees and invites parents as well." That's a great suggestion, and it's a good time to bring parents in and let them see what all their kids have achieved by being part of your program and also give them a chance to appreciate mentors or tutors as well.

Anyone else have thoughts, examples, questions? Okay. It sounds like maybe we don't have any right now. Judith, do you want to —

No. I just want to say, have a wonderful end of the year and, you know, thanks for all the work that you do.

And I want to second that appreciation of everything you do. And to make that easier, one thing you'll receive after the end of the Webinar, by the end of today, is a copy of the PowerPoint file that we use, if you want to adapt that to give this training. Many of you said you're responsible for training tutors and mentors, and you can use this or parts of this information with them.

I'll also send you, again, Amy's contact info and just our general LEARNS contact info to work with you more in depth on these topics, and also a very brief survey, just for you to let us know what you thought of this Webinar because we take that seriously and always use that information to improve however we can.

So thanks very much to your presenter.

Whoa. Whoa. Beth has a question.

Yes, I have a question. We do a manual for our volunteer tutors and we — I would like to add something to the manual on saying goodbye, because we've never done that before. I wonder if you would have some other materials that you might recommend that would fit well in a manual format or some other suggested readings, or the Tutor magazine, has that had something on saying goodbye?

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I don't think we've ever done a Tutor on that, have we?

No, we haven't. You know I think some of the material in this presentation would fit well in a manual if we kind of formatted it differently.

That's what I was thinking too.

Uh-huh.

As long as I have permission to use that, I'd be glad to.

Absolutely. And there's something too, Judith you used to put something —

The letter.

Uh-huh, on the listserv.

Right. Do you have everybody's e-mail?

Yes. I can add that — if you send it to me, I can add that to what we share after.

Okay. I'll send it to you.

Very good. Thank you.

Okay.

And this is Amy. I think, also, a lot of times when folks are looking for examples, it's always a good idea to maybe send out a message on the AmeriCorps listserv or the mentorexchange and say, "Hey, what are other people doing for closure? Do you have a, you know, worksheet or some sort of reading for mentors or tutors?" That's always a good way to get kind of ideas of what folks are doing all across the country as well.

I mean, Beth, if you feel you have enough, that's fine. If not, you should e-mail me. Because there are thousands of articles on separation.

Right. Thank you, Judith.

Thanks, Beth, and sorry I missed your hand there.

That's okay.

Anyone else? I'm scanning. I don't see any other hands. I want to be sure. Okay.

Okay.

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Well, thanks very much, everyone, and thanks to you Judith, and all of our participants, and the LEARNS partners will be in touch soon.

Thank you.

Okay. Bye.

Bye.

Thank you.