NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
MINISTRY WITH
YOUNG ADULTS

FORMATION

Mentoring Young Adults

A practical guide for adults who want to mentor a young adult in faith, leadership, and life, for one season at a time

Begin
Qualities of a good mentor and how to make a match

Meet
A first conversation, a monthly rhythm, and good questions

Commit
A mentoring covenant and a way to end well

A free resource from the National Institute for Ministry with Young Adults · ministrywithyoungadults.org

WHY MENTORING MATTERS

Someone who believes in you

Ask a ministry leader how they got started and you will often hear about one person who noticed them, named a gift, and kept showing up. Mentoring makes that kind of relationship intentional.

A mentor is an experienced Christian who commits to meeting regularly with a young adult for a set season to support their growth in faith, leadership, and life. Mentoring is one form of the accompaniment the Church calls for. It is more structured than a friendship and less formal than spiritual direction.

HOW IT COMPARES

ACCOMPANIMENT

Walking alongside

The broad posture of being present to young adults in their real lives. Every minister is called to it.

MENTORING

A season of growth

A committed relationship with regular meetings, shared goals, and a clear beginning and end.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Attending to prayer

A trained director helps a person notice God in their prayer and life. Mentors can refer to a director.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE LOOK FOR IN A MENTOR

In *Christus Vivit* (no. 246), Pope Francis passed on what young people themselves said they hope for in a mentor. In summary:

- A faithful Christian, engaged with the Church and the world
- Someone who keeps seeking holiness
- A confidant who listens and does not judge
- Someone who responds with kindness and honesty
- Someone who knows their own limits and weaknesses
- Someone who knows the joys and struggles of the spiritual life
- Someone who is honest about their own mistakes
- Someone who walks beside young people rather than making them followers
- Someone who respects young people's freedom

GETTING STARTED

Making a good match

Mentoring works best when it is simple, clear, and supported by the parish or ministry, not left to chance.

1 Notice who is ready

Look for young adults who are taking on leadership, preparing for a big transition, or asking deeper questions. Some will ask for a mentor. Many will say yes if someone asks them.

2 Invite mentors personally

Look for adults whose faith is alive, who listen well, and who have time. They don't need to be experts or much older, and some of the best mentors are only ten years ahead. Have them read **Accompaniment Basics** first.

3 Match thoughtfully

Consider shared interests, schedules, life experience, culture, and language. Same-gender matches are usually wise. Let the young adult have a say.

4 Follow safe environment practices

Mentors complete your diocese's safe environment training and background check. Meetings happen in public or visible places.

5 Agree on a season

Six months is a good first season: one meeting a month for about an hour, plus a short check-in between meetings. Sign the mentoring covenant at the end of this guide at your first meeting.

6 Support your mentors

Gather mentors once or twice a season to share what's working, pray together, and ask questions. Mentors need companions too.

MEETING TOGETHER

The first conversation

The first meeting sets the tone. Your goal is to get to know each other, not to solve anything.

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER

1. Tell me a little about your story. Where did you grow up? What's your life like now?
2. Who has shaped your faith, for better or worse?
3. What do you do for fun? What drains you?

Share your own story too, briefly and honestly.

LOOK AHEAD

1. What made you say yes to this?
2. What's one area of your life where you'd like to grow in the next six months?
3. What would make this time worthwhile for you?
4. How do you like to be supported or challenged?

Before you finish, walk through the mentoring covenant together, set your next meeting, and pray for each other.

A MONTHLY RHYTHM · 60 MINUTES

10	**Check in**	"How are you, really?" Catch up on life since you last met.
15	**Look back**	Revisit last month's step. What happened? What did you notice? Where did you see God?
20	**Go deeper**	Talk about one topic that matters to them right now. Use the conversation starters on the next page if you need them.
10	**Look ahead**	Name one small, concrete step for the coming month.
5	**Pray**	Pray for each other by name. Take turns leading.

Times are in minutes. Between meetings, send one short message, such as a text after something important or a note that you're praying for them.

GOING DEEPER

Conversation starters

Pick one theme per meeting. Let the young adult choose when you can.

FAITH AND PRAYER

- What does your prayer look like these days?
- When did God feel close this month? Far away?
- What question about faith are you carrying?

VOCATION AND WORK

- What kind of person do you want to become?
- Where do your gifts meet the world's needs?
- How does your faith show up at work or school?

RELATIONSHIPS

- Who are the people you can really count on?
- Is there a relationship that needs attention or healing?
- Where do you feel you belong?

LEADERSHIP

- What's a leadership moment you're proud of? One you'd redo?
- Who could you invite to lead alongside you?
- How do you handle conflict on a team?

SERVICE AND JUSTICE

- What need in the world moves you most?
- Where could you serve in a way that stretches you?
- How does Catholic social teaching shape your choices?

REST AND WELLBEING

- What helps you rest? What gets in the way?
- How are you caring for your body and mind?
- Where do you need more support right now?

WHEN A CONVERSATION GETS STUCK

Ask about something concrete. "Tell me about your week" works better than "How's your spiritual life?"

Share first. A short, honest story of your own makes it safer for them to open up.

Change the setting. Walk, cook, or serve together. Side by side is often easier than face to face.

Name it kindly. "It feels like we're staying on the surface. Is there something you'd rather talk about?"

Naming gifts, raising leaders

One of the most powerful things a mentor can do is say out loud what they see: "You ask thoughtful questions." "People trust you." Naming a gift is often the first spark of a call to lead.

INVITE ONE RUNG AT A TIME

BELONGING
"A few of us are getting coffee after. Want to come?"

VOICE
"We're dreaming about what this could be. What do you think?"

CONTRIBUTION
"Would you help shape one night?"

SHARED LEADERSHIP
"Would you walk with us in this for a season?"

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- Meet in public or visible places and follow safe environment policies.
- Be clear about when you're available.
- Keep confidences, but never promise to keep secret something that puts someone at risk.
- You are a mentor, not a counselor. Refer to professionals when needed.
- Point toward community, not only toward yourself.
- Talk with your ministry leader if something feels off.

ENDING WELL

Every season should end on purpose. At your last meeting, look back together, celebrate growth, and decide what comes next: another season, a new mentor, or a natural close. Then consider who the young adult might now mentor themselves.

QUESTIONS FOR THE LAST MEETING

1. How have you grown since we started? What are you proud of?
2. What did you learn about God? About yourself?
3. What do you want to carry forward? Who could you walk with next?

PRINTABLE

Mentoring covenant

Complete together at your first meeting. Each keeps a copy.

MENTOR _____ YOUNG ADULT _____

OUR SEASON RUNS FROM _____ TO _____

WE WILL MEET _____ AT _____

BETWEEN MEETINGS WE WILL STAY IN TOUCH BY _____

DURING THIS SEASON, I HOPE TO GROW IN

_____

_____

_____

WE AGREE TO

- [ ] Show up, on time and prepared, and let each other know if we need to reschedule.
- [ ] Listen honestly and speak with kindness.
- [ ] Keep what is shared in confidence, except when someone's safety is at risk.
- [ ] Pray for each other between meetings.
- [ ] Follow our diocese's safe environment policies.
- [ ] End this season with a conversation about what comes next.

MENTOR SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

YOUNG ADULT SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Keep going

Mentors grow best when they are formed and supported too.

FROM NIMYA

Accompaniment Basics: A Crash Course

Four short sessions on listening, good questions, discernment, and boundaries. A good first step for every new mentor.

FROM NIMYA

Small Group Starter Kit

Pair mentoring with community. Many mentees thrive when they also belong to a small group.

CHURCH TEACHING

Christus Vivit

Pope Francis's 2019 apostolic exhortation to young people, including his reflections on mentors and accompaniment.

U.S. BISHOPS

Listen, Teach, Send

The national pastoral framework for ministries with youth and young adults, with guidance on accompaniment and leadership.

FUTURE OF FAITH

Relational Discipleship

A white paper on trust-based relationships as the primary context for faith formation. Future of Faith is a free resource designed to support all those working in ministry. No strings attached.

CONSULTING

Work with NIMYA

NIMYA offers leader accompaniment, cohorts, and consulting to help parishes and dioceses build mentoring into their ministry.

Free for your ministry

NIMYA resources are free for everyone who ministers with young adults. Copy them, adapt them for your community, and share them widely. No strings attached.

The National Institute for Ministry with Young Adults forms and accompanies pastoral leaders who minister with young adults in their late teens, twenties, and thirties, through pastoral formation, leader accompaniment, research, and advocacy. Learn more at ministrywithyoungadults.org.