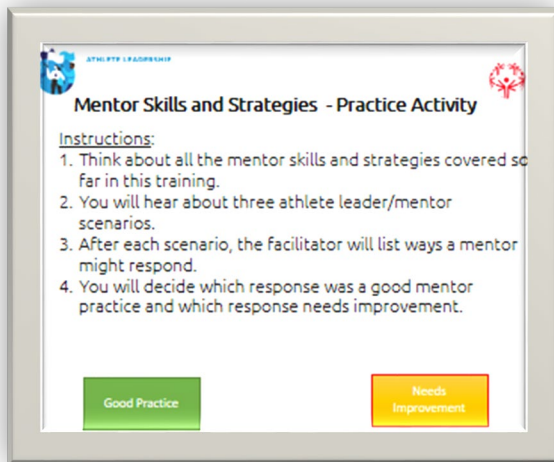


## Mentor Skills and Strategies – Practice Activity – Lesson #3

Facilitator instructions:

This list of scenarios with potential responses, below, is an accompanying resource for the Mentor Skills and Strategies Practice Activity (Lesson #3), which is part of the Program-led Special Olympics Course for Mentors.



Before the course:

1. Review the list of scenarios below with the athlete leader co-facilitator, and choose 2-3 scenarios to use that are most relevant to your Program. Some of the scenarios are repeats from the eLearning course (they are marked as such below), so if the majority of your participants took the eLearning course, select different scenarios.

Facilitate the activity:

1. Explain to participants that it's time to **review all the mentor skills and strategies covered so far in this training.**
2. **Read each of the three scenarios** you have chosen. After reading each situation, **read the list of possible** ways a **mentor might respond.**
3. Ask the participants to **decide which response(s) was a good mentor practice** and which response needs improvement.
  - a. The answers highlighted in yellow are the responses that "need improvement."
4. If a participant is struggling, the facilitator can **give them a hint.**
5. Feel free to have them come up with their own answers as well if you'd like instead of making them pick from a list of existing answers. The point here though is to highlight the less-than-ideal answers and explain why.

\* Remember this activity is facilitated or **co-facilitated by an athlete leader.**

\*\*Feel free to come up with your own scenarios as well.

## **Mentor Practice Activity Scenarios:**

- 1. An athlete leader is having trouble communicating what they want to express.**
  - Talk with the athlete leader to help them try and get to the bottom of what might be causing the trouble.
  - **Speak for the athlete, which will take the pressure off them, while keeping the flow of communication going.**
  - Provide communication strategies and offer to practice with them, until they fine the strategy that works best for them.
- 2. (A repeat from the eLearning course) You are having a conversation with a coach who does not want to let the athlete leader lead or doesn't believe in the power of putting athletes in meaningful positions of leadership.**
  - Be prepared with facts and stats to show how and why the athlete leaders give back, and why that's important to the mission of Special Olympics.
  - Point out specific examples of how an athlete leader has made a difference and describe the training athlete leaders take.
  - **Explain that in athlete leadership the mentor does a lot of the work, as not to set the athlete leader up for failure, so it's ok to let athletes lead.**
  - Explain that you too felt that way until you learned about Unified Leadership, and describe what it is.
  - Have the athlete leader explain to the coach what they can bring to the position and back them up if they need it
- 3. (A repeat from the eLearning course) The athlete leader is frustrated with what they feel is a lack of progress in their leadership skills and knowledge.**
  - Talk with the athlete leader to better understand what, specifically, is the cause of the frustration. Reinforce that you are there to help them acquire additional skills and knowledge, as needed.
  - Break down the athlete's success in leadership training so far, so that they can see their progress.
  - **Talk to the class instructor and tell them to give the athlete something easy to do so that the athlete feels a sense of accomplishment.**
- 4. The athlete leader has a speaking engagement and shows up in clothes that are not appropriate.**
  - Patiently explain that they are representing their fellow athletes and Special Olympics and part of that responsibility is looking professional. Then, describe specifically what professional attire and hygiene is and what it is not.
  - **Explain to them that you should not have to support the athlete leader in this way and they need to get their act together if they want to continue being an athlete leader.**
  - Create a checklist for them of things they should do before every meeting/engagement (brush teeth, shower, deodorant, brush hair, show them how to pick out clothes depending on the audience, etc.)
- 5. The athlete leader has clear opinions about adding a new sport, but when the time in the meeting with staff or board to say something comes up, they don't speak up.**

- At a break in the meeting, take them aside and ask if there is a way you can support them so that they can share their thoughts in this or future meetings.
  - Pause the meeting and explain that it is important that the athlete leader speak up since they have something they wanted to add. Don't move to the next agenda item, until the athlete has shared the opinion.
  - Accept that the athlete may not be ready to share an opinion yet, but note that assertiveness and communication skills building might be something you work on in the coming months.
- 6. (A repeat from the eLearning course) The athlete leader is on a committee and is dominating the conversations at those meetings – most of the time talking about things that either are not important to the discussion at-hand or refusing to let things go when a decision does not go their way.**
- There is no need for honest feedback; they will figure out that this is unacceptable meeting behavior and protocol.
  - Review the meeting rules to make sure the athlete leader knows when a decision is final and that sometimes they will need to support that decision publicly even if they disagree with it privately.
  - Teach them to follow the meeting agenda and keep side conversations to the breaks during meetings instead of during the actual meetings. If they have something they want to share that isn't on the agenda, teach them to talk to the person running the meeting ahead of time to see if there is an opportunity for them to talk about it at the end.
- 7. The athlete leader wants to give up on classes and Athlete Leadership as a whole.**
- While you do not want them to give up, if they decide that they no longer want to be involved, that is their decision. However, try to get at the heart of why they want to stop and see if you can work together for a possible solution.
  - Seek agreement on delaying a decision for a few weeks / meetings/etc., to see if things eventually work themselves out and get better.
  - Tell them that leadership is not for everyone and it's ok to leave.