



Cincinnati YOUTH Collaborative
United for Youth

Quick Reference Guidebook For Successful Mentoring

*Compiled exclusively for the
Cincinnati Youth Collaborative by
Miriam West, retired Founding
Director of Mentoring*

***The Message You Send to
Your Mentee–***

***“You are worth my time and
effort because You are a
valuable human being and I
can offer You – by My word,
deed or by the example of My
life – ways to expand Your
horizons and to increase the
likelihood that You will
achieve success.”***

- Author Unknown

This Guidebook Belongs to:

CYC Mentor

Relationship Starting Date:

Month Day Year

Mentee Information

Name: _____

Age: _____ **Grade:** _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

EMAIL: _____

Allergies: _____

Parent/Guardian Information

Name(s): _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

EMAIL: _____

Best Time to Call: _____

In case of Emergency:

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Mentor Coordinator

Name: _____

Phone 1: _____

Phone 2: _____

E-mail Address: _____

School Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Principal: _____

Secretary: _____

Office Phone: _____

School Hours/Lunch: _____

Teacher Name: _____

Phone: _____

EMAIL: _____

Mentor Resources

CYC Mentor Help Line 513.475.4148

CYC College Access 513.475.4167

Cincinnati Public Schools 513.363.0123

Recreation Centers 513.352.4000

Public Library 513.369.6900

Child Abuse 513.241.KIDS

United Way Services Directory 211

Neediest Kids Of All 513.768.8549

YMCA of Greater Cincy 513.651.3540

FOR EMERGENCIES DIAL 911

Other Important Numbers:

Cincinnati Youth Collaborative
513.475.4148 * www.cycyouth.org

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Susan Strain mentored with CYC for 12 years in a cross gender/cross racial match

I. How to Use this Guidebook

This “*quick reference*” guidebook is designed to provide volunteer mentors with answers, information and creative ideas “*at a glance*”, at anytime or at any place. It is a companion to the CYC Mentoring Handbook. It is essential that you take the time to read the Mentor Handbook and to call the HELP LINE if you have questions or concerns.

Remember, all the answers for building and maintaining successful adult and youth mentoring relationships will not be found in one book or one training session. You should understand basic mentor guidelines and have sufficient knowledge for building and maintaining relationships with young people after attending the CYC mandated orientation and training. Mentors are encouraged to attend additional skill builder trainings hosted by the CYC to learn more about mentoring.

Mentoring often brings together two very different people from very different worlds. In a close one to one relationship, each person brings their unique experiences, personalities, values and perceptions to the table. You will sometimes encounter challenges. This quick reference guidebook was put together to help you get answers, ideas or solutions “*at a glance*”.

We hope this additional tool will give you the confidence and knowledge needed to experience a satisfying, enjoyable, and productive mentoring relationship for many years to come. If you do not find the answers to your questions in the guidebook, rely on your common sense, good judgment and heart. Always call the HELP LINE if you need additional assistance.

Cincinnati Youth Collaborative and Volunteer Mentor Coordinators are working in the schools and are available to help mentors throughout their mentoring relationships. Please be sure to log your Mentor Coordinators contact information on the appropriate page in this guidebook.

School-based Mentor Coordinators are one of the main components that set our program apart from other mentoring programs. Coordinators serve as supportive liaisons between mentors, mentees, parents or guardians and school personnel. They are frequently called upon to answer school and mentee related questions. If you lose contact with your mentee, you can phone your Mentor Coordinator directly for assistance. Remember, "There are no dumb questions when you need answers!"

We encourage you to keep this guidebook close at hand and use it as needed. Ideal places to keep the guidebook are in your purse, briefcase or the glove compartment of in your car. Remember – "To Become a Mentor is to enter a complex relationship of roles, tasks, emotions, challenges and rewards." Please don't hesitate to phone the CYC HELPLINE with questions or concerns. We are here to help you!

II. History, Vision and Mission

The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative “United for Youth”

CYC History

- The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative began in 1987. The founders developed the program to serve as a response to studies that demonstrated a need for school, business, government and community groups concerned with education and employment to work together on the drop out crisis in America.

CYC Vision

- To see all Cincinnati area youth graduate from high school with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary to participate fully and responsibly in society.

CYC Mission

- We bring together people, institutions and other community resources to help youth graduate from high school, enter post secondary education and/or obtain employment.

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III. Mentoring & Tutoring Snapshot

- We recruit, train and match community volunteers to mentor and tutor young people attending Cincinnati Public Schools in grades two through twelve.
- Mentors and Tutors help youth (mentees) stay in school, improve self-esteem and increase their chances of graduating from high school, attending post-secondary education and/or obtaining employment.
- We are networking with many community partners (corporations, professional groups, business organizations, civic groups, college and universities and faith based organizations) who share similar interests in seeing young people become successful adults.
- We currently have over 2100 mentors and tutors serving in at least 90% of Cincinnati Public Schools.

IV. Ice Breakers

Ideas to help you get acquainted with your mentee and initiate meaningful conversations.

Try these easy, non-threatening conversation starters when your mentee seems shy or afraid to talk:

- What is your favorite food, sport, color, kind of music, etc.?
- What is your favorite season and why?
- What is your favorite school subject?
- Who is your favorite teacher and why?
- Who is your best friend?
- What do you do to have fun on the weekends?
- How many people live in your house?
- Describe a perfect day at school.
- What is your favorite holiday and why?
- What do you think you will be doing at age 21?
- If you could have three wishes, what would they be?
- What is your most precious possession?
- If you won a million dollars, what would you do with the money?
- What is most important to you, great wealth, great health or great looks?

- Who do you consider a role model?
- Who do you share your problems and concerns with?
- Describe your best vacation.
- What is your favorite city and why?
- What's more important to you, looking good or being good?
- Do you help with chores at home? If so, what kind of things do you do?
- Do you receive an allowance?
- What kind of a career do you want to do to earn a living?
- What is your favorite TV show?
- What kind of things would you like to do when we are together?
- Do you like animals?
- Do you have a pet?

V. “Teachable Moments”

The following are ways you can create simple spontaneous observations, comments and experiences with your mentee:

Newspapers ~ Consider keeping a local newspaper in the car or in your briefcase.

Great conversation starters include:

- Current Events
- Headlines
- Local/National News
- Business News
- Weather
- Sports
- Comics
- Classified Ads
- Entertainment

Traffic Lessons

- Safety
- Laws
- Signs & speed
- Directions (Use a map or MapQuest together)

Grocery Shopping

- Budget
- Bargains and coupons
- Making a list
- Reading labels
- Healthy food choices

Appropriate Pitch of Voice ~ Take advantage of opportunities to model appropriate voice pitch:

- *Inside voice* (soft – library, church, classroom)
- *Outside voice* (loud – playground, football game)

Important Landmarks ~ When driving past important places or buildings, discuss their function.

- Courthouse
- City Hall
- Public Library
- Red Cross
- Procter & Gamble

Turn Mistakes and Failures into Lessons ~ Discuss responsibility for consequences of behavior.

Discuss Nutrition & Good Health ~ Take the time to discuss nutrition, especially when making menu and food choices– “*You are what you eat.*”

Model Good Manners ~ When eating out, use magic manner words like thanks, please, excuse me, etc.

Empower Young People ~ Google subjects of interest on the internet and help your mentee find resources.

Always use good grammar and communication skills ~ Gently correct poor grammar usage without causing embarrassment.

Play Word of the Month Game ~ Teach your mentee a new word every month and help build good character. Talk about definitions, how it’s used in conversation and sentences. Suggested words are as follows:

- Honesty
- Respectful
- Integrity
- Trustworthy
- Industrious
- Curious
- Diligent

Discuss the Importance of Punctuality

Talk and model the importance of being dependable and on time at school, future work, your meetings, etc.

Compliment Good Grooming ~ First impressions are important. Compliment your mentee for good grooming and good hygiene. *“Lookism counts in America”*.

Provide Age Appropriate Answers ~ Always be honest and provide age appropriate answers when your mentee is curious about things.

Point Out Respectful Behavior and Actions ~ Talk about the importance of being respectful for:

- Authority and Laws
- Property and Possessions
- Others: Adults, Elderly, and Handicapped
- SELF

Mentee As Your Teacher ~ Encourage your mentee to teach you something new about:

- Music they enjoy
- Technology they use (cell phone, text messaging, IPOD)
- Clothing trends
- A “new dance”
- Cultural experiences

Turn Simple Tasks Into Life Lessons ~ Take your mentee with you when you shop, run errands, pay bills, maintain your car, etc.

Emphasize the Importance of Managing Time ~ Show your mentee how to use a planner to keep track of school related and job related activities, deadlines, mentor meetings and fun.

VI. Low Cost or Free Activities

- Take advantage of free community event tickets and activities hosted by CYC
- Check the local paper for free community events or 2 for 1 special event coupons
- Take an adventure trip on a Metro Bus
- Browse bookstores
- Attend school events, programs and extra-curricular activities
- Visit local college campuses
- Attend street fairs and festivals
- Eat ice cream at Fountain Square
- Visit the Art Museum (free)
- Visit local parks
- Exercise or walk together (YMCA)
- Take sightseeing tours in your car
- Visit the airport
- Visit Jungle Jim's or Findlay Market
- Walk across the Purple People Bridge
- Walk through the Courthouse or City Hall
- Practice writing a resume, filling out a job application or writing a thank you note
- Collect things like leaves or rocks
- Visit a flea market
- Volunteer at the Free Store, Soup Kitchen or a rest home
- Learn about nature, birds and plants
- Take pictures of things and scrapbook
- Get on the Internet and find resources
- Do homework and improve study skills
- Teach a new hobby like sewing, woodworking, photography, etc.
- Introduce mentee to friends who have interesting careers and discuss education needed, preparation and earning potential
- Show your mentee where you work
- Teach a new skill, i.e. how to play chess or tennis, use a thesaurus, computer skill, etc.

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VII. Money

Remember, mentoring isn't about spending money; it's about spending time together.

Down Play Money ~ Keep activity costs low or free. If you plan activities that require money, your mentee/family are not expected to pay.

Teach Your Mentee to Enjoy and Appreciate Non-cost Activities ~ Simple suggested activities:

- View free art exhibits
- Take a nature walk
- Exercise
- Read together
- Help others
- Visiting libraries

You Are Not a Financial Resource for Mentee or Their Family ~ Never give your mentee/family cash.

Don't Feel Obligated to Purchase Essential Need Items ~ (i.e. coats, shoes, glasses)~ Call the CYC HELP LINE.

Teach Your Mentee How to Earn, Spend, Save and Budget Money ~ Talk about the importance of managing money well.

Help Your Mentee Understand Money ~ Explore financial terms like the ones below:

- Credit
- Loans/Car Notes
- Rent
- Interest
- Investments
- Debt
- Foreclosure
- Garnishments

Talk About Making SMART Choices ~ Help your mentee see the difference between a good money choice and a bad choice. Talk about saving for a rainy day.

Be a Referral Source Instead of a Financial Resource ~ Empower your mentee/family by referring needs to the appropriate agencies. See the Mentor Resource page in this guidebook.

Connect EARNING with LEARNING ~ Talk to your mentee about how important it is to stay in school and graduate. MORE YOU LEARN – MORE YOU EARN

The more education you have, the more money you will make:

- High School Diploma - \$27,915 a year
- Bachelor's Degree - \$51,206 per year
- Advanced Degree - \$74,602 per year

*National Council for Community and Education
Partnership (Data 2006)*

Mentee Gift Suggestions

It is acceptable to purchase gifts as incentives or for special occasions, i.e birthdays, holidays or special achievements. Below are a few suggestions:

School supplies

Assignment book, Date book or Planner

Membership to neighborhood Recreation Center (very inexpensive)

Dictionary or Thesaurus

Journal or Diary

Inexpensive alarm clock

McDonald's gift certificates

Mentee's favorite college or sport tee shirt

Inexpensive camera or scrapbook

Gift certificate to a bookstore

Two movie passes

Trip to a fun place with you and one friend

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VIII. Caution

- Do not take mentee to church without parental consent
- Do not preach or probe (adults generally talk too much. Be a good listener)
- Do not touch student (hugs, kisses, or patting). Provide lots of handshakes and high fives. An occasional hug after trust and friendship are developed is appropriate.
- Never touch in the “bathing suit area”.
- Do not take your mentee to your home until you really “know” the student (3-4 months into the relationship)
- Do not recommend overnight visits
- Do not criticize your mentee’s family, friends or teachers
- Do not try to take on the role or authority of a parent. Be a caring supportive adult friend.
- Do not visit inappropriate places (bars, R-rated movies) with your mentee
- Do not travel outside the greater metropolitan area without SPECIAL CONSENT
- Do not smoke, drink or curse in the presence of your mentee
- Do not engage in high risk activities (swimming, canoeing, flying) without a special consent form
- Do not allow your mentee/family to borrow cars or valuable possessions
- Do not provide financial assistance to your mentee/family
- Do not get involved in legal or medical issues involving your mentee/family

- Do not give medication or allow the mentee to take unknown medicines while in your care. Contact parents, CYC HELP LINE or for emergencies 911.
- Do not over assimilate to be accepted. Be your wonderful self and appreciate who your mentee is!
- Do not be fearful of neighborhoods or the place your mentee calls home. Mentees do not choose where they live.
- Do not assume that your mentee will always be truthful about parental guidelines/restrictions
- Do not assume because your mentee is a certain age that he or she has a certain skill set
- Do not ignore bad behavior. If you do, you are sending a message to your mentee that his/her behavior is acceptable.

IX. Working with Parents

Parents have given you permission to be a trusted guide and supportive friend to their child. Keep your mentee safe and productive while helping them learn and grow.

Meet Face to Face ~ In the beginning, make a concerted effort to meet the mentee's parent/guardian face to face

Establish a Communication Method ~ Make an effort to discuss and establish the best way to communicate plans and activities to parents (by phone – by mentee???)

Keep Parents Informed ~ Keep the parent or guardian in the loop regarding planned activities (even parents of high school students)

Always Show Respect ~ Respect parents and give them unconditional regard (Be sensitive to their situations and opinions)

Be Aware of Boundaries ~ Do not question or undermine parent/family boundaries (Respect the guidelines, curfews and boundaries set by parents)

Respect Family Values and Religious Customs ~ Take the time to get to know your mentee's family values and religious customs. Are there specific religious customs or values (movies, television, etc) that you need to be aware of? (You don't want to offend the parent or guardian because you didn't know)

Do Not Criticize Parents to your Mentee ~ If you are uncomfortable with something the parent/guardian says or does, discuss it with your CYC Mentor Coordinator, NOT WITH THE MENTEE

Do Not Mentor Entire Families ~ Keep your SPECIAL FRIEND status with your mentee

Steer Clear of Involvement in Parent and Family Issues ~ It is sometimes necessary to politely tell parents that CYC does not permit you to intervene (Be firm)

Do Not Feel Obligated to Involve Parents/Families in Your Planned Activities ~ Concentrate on building a positive and supportive relationship with your mentee

Recommend Resources ~ Your role is not that of a social worker, banker, legal counsel or chauffeur (Refer concerns to appropriate agencies)

Do Not Question Punishment~ Support the parents and respect their decisions when your mentee is on punishment (Do not intervene, challenge or comment)

Always Carry Your Signed Parental Consent Form ~ Guardianship sometimes changes (You may need to show the permission form and explain your role)

Your Mentee's Family May Look Different than Yours ~ Accept whomever the mentee considers as "parents" i.e. guardian, aunt, grandmother or foster parents (Children do not choose their parents or caregivers)

Most children have unconditional love for their "parents", regardless of difficult situations at home.

Consider attending or accompanying parents to Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences.

X. Confidentiality & Safety

Mentees often share very personal, confidential information with mentors. It is important that mentors *clarify* with their mentees the confidentiality of the relationship in order to build trust. There may be circumstances or issues when you as a mentor must share information. Please report any of the following issues:

- Threat of physical harm to mentee or others
- Suspect the mentee is...
 - Pregnant
 - Using or selling illegal drugs
 - Pre-suicidal or depressed
 - Posses a dangerous weapon
 - Pre-run-away
 - Being abused

Report any of the listed problems to the school counselor, principal or CYC Mentor Coordinator, who by Ohio Law are required to take appropriate action.

As a responsible adult, you must always do your best to protect the child entrusted in your care.

XI. Establishing Boundaries

Mentors must always remember that they are the adult “in charge” of the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentors must establish the boundaries and guidelines for an enjoyable, productive and successful relationship. Generally, mentees will feel more secure, respected and appreciated with clearly stated boundaries and expectations.

Mentors should determine:

- What kind of behavior is appropriate
- How often, when and where you will meet
- How much money (if any) will be spent
- How often you will have contact via telephone, email, etc.
- How much you will involve the mentee with your family or personal life

It's important to be consistent, honest and fair. You can discuss and choose activities with your mentee but the mentee must clearly understand that you have the final say.

Many mentees live in single parent homes and often have dysfunctional families. When appropriate and if you are comfortable, consider introducing your mentee to your spouse and family. Mentees benefit by seeing healthy family relationships and marriages.

XII. Effective Communication

Your Mentee May be Shy ~ Mentors will need to do most of the talking in the beginning of the relationship. (It takes time for young people to feel comfortable with a new and different person)

Share Information about Yourself ~ Have conversations where information is being exchanged (Don't "grill" your mentee with too many questions)

Don't Focus on Family Relations ~ Avoid probing and prodding about family relationships, problems or home life (Eventually, you will learn a great deal about your mentee and their family)

Be Careful of Sensitive Issues ~ If your mentee appears to "shut down" the communication, you may have touched a sensitive area that may be painful for them to discuss (Change the subject and consider exploring the topic again in future when you know your mentee better)

Learn to be an "Active Listener" – Give your mentee your undivided attention and unconditional regard

Mentee's Don't Always Say What They Mean or Feel ~ Learn to listen with your ears, eyes and heart (You can learn a lot by observing your mentees body language while they are speaking)

Be a Patient Caring Listener ~ Become your mentee's "Golden Ear" (A caring listener provides a successful form of counseling and respect - Remember, hearing is NOT the same as listening)

Avoid Preaching ~ Try to avoid negative preaching and teaching tones (Young people often “shut down” or “tune out” when adults become preachy)

Honesty and Sincerity Count ~ Always be honest, sincere and caring when providing age appropriate advice and guidance

Learn New Lingo ~ Ask your mentee to share the meaning of slang or unfamiliar words (Understanding cultural language differences and generational lingo will help you know and understand your mentee better)

Keep Promises ~ In fairness to your mentee, “Mean what you SAY and say what you MEAN (If you make a promise, keep it - many young people are accustomed to hearing empty promises)

XIII. “Culture Smart”

Ten Strategies for Making Diversity Work

Strategy I. *Learn about Differences*

We learn by assertive inquiry, observation and experiences.

Strategy II. *Look for Commonalities*

Commonalities can be found if we create the opportunity for their discovery.

Strategy III. *Avoid Stereotypical Thinking*

Stereotypes can be about good or bad qualities and in both cases they keep us from seeing individuals for who they are.

Strategy IV. *Know your own Culture in order to know others*

Cultural self-awareness is a gift. It allows us to know ourselves better while more accurately interpreting the needs and behaviors of those who are different from ourselves.

Strategy V. *Communicate Respect*

You do not need to give up your own values in order to work effectively in a diverse environment. You do need to communicate respect for the rights of others to feel and believe as they do.

Strategy VI. *Empathize, Don't Patronize*

The more we do to minimize our discomfort in the face of diversity, the more apt we are to empathize rather than patronize.

Strategy VII. *Be Your Best Self*

It is far more important that we put our energy into learning to understand other groups and into making reasonable compromises than in worrying about adopting a cloak of culture that is apt to be both a poor fit and an unnecessary burden.

Strategy VIII. *Trust Your Instincts*

Uncertainty blocks your ability to act instinctively – the clarity, the situation, the sooner your most deep-rooted problem solving skills will be available to you.

Strategy IX. *Practice Person Correctness*

We must exhibit respect, compassion and fairness to people of all backgrounds.

Strategy X. *Expect the Best*

The sooner you are able to stretch your “Cultural Comfort Zone” and become optimistic about success, the more comfortable you will feel and the more successful you will be.

*From Valuing Diversity
The CSW Consulting Group*

XIV. Tips From the Successful

By Susan Strain

12 year CYC Mentor and Tutor

Permission Slip – Carry a copy of your CYC Parental Consent Form in your wallet. You never know when something may come up, that someone may question your right to pick the child up from school or take them somewhere.

School Involvement – You can have a great deal of influence in the child's school attendance, performance and choice. Don't assume the parents are paying attention to the opportunities available to the child through school. Get to know the home room teacher and school Principal. Ask about special programs, magnet school sign up, scholarships, entrance tests and extra circular activities. Then talk to your mentee and offer to call the parent. Often transportation is a problem for parents, offer to drive.

Safety – The child may live in a neighborhood that you consider to be unsafe. Try not to show your discomfort. Remember, the child has no control over where they live and you should not be critical or make them feel unsafe at home. The child may also be at an age when they are self-conscious, don't make them feel like their neighborhood or home isn't good enough for you.

Latch Key Kids – If you take the child home, and the house is empty, it can be alarming. If you've made it clear to the parent what time you will bring the child home and they are not there, use your discretion. But remember, their standards may not be your standards and by making an issue of it, you are criticizing the child's parent. If the child has a key and says they're use to being home

alone, leave them. I made an attempt to contact a relative and left my home phone number in case of an emergency.

Siblings – Don't get forced into taking the brothers, sisters and cousins along on outings. This is a special relationship between you and your mentee. Make sure you make it clear when you plan your activity, who is invited. You may wish to include a sibling once in a while. If you show up and there are more children waiting to go, than you planned on taking, tell the child you didn't realize they had plans with someone else and offer to reschedule your activity to another time when the two of you can go alone.

Your House – Should you take the child to your house? If you don't have a good reason to, don't. You will probably start with a lot of differences, i.e. age, race, gender. If your home shows an extreme economic difference, it may make sense to wait until you know each other better. If you wish to include them in your family activities or work on a project, that's fine. But avoid taking them just to "look at what I've got."

Activities – If you suggest an activity and the child isn't interested, you should encourage them to do it anyway. Their world is very limited and the first response to anything new is often "no". I tell my mentee, that even if he hates it, it's something that cultured, well-rounded people are familiar with, so he has to do it once, in order to scratch it off the list of "Things To Do Before You Die."

Gifts – I don't give gifts. I usually take my mentee out for a special event. I don't want to be a source of material goods. I try to keep all of our activities focused on learning, either academic or social skills. Whether we go to a nice restaurant, where he learns how to use all the silverware or to the Indy 500, where he computes lap times into miles per hour. Each

activity exposes him to new career opportunities; we talk about all the jobs, both obvious and behind the scenes. (We DO have fun too!)

Say What? – The child may come up with words you're unfamiliar with, or meanings for words that are different than what you were taught. When asked about their career aspirations they may come up with an answer that you're not prepared for. When this happens, keep your mouth shut. Before you say anything, think about why the child said that. Then explain that, while theirs may be one definition, there is a "traditional" definition that may work better on a standardized test. The jobs they are interested in may be the only jobs they've been exposed to.

Beware – Sometimes people will make "good natured" comments that are very condescending. The child needs to learn from you how to respond graciously. Another trap is at public events, in an effort to say how well the child is doing or how much you do for the child, the child's family is offended. After all, if the child is succeeding "against all odds" what does that say about the people who are rearing that child? Respect the child and the family and insist that others do too.

Remember – When the going gets tough, when the child isn't where they're supposed to be, or doing what they should be doing, THAT'S WHY THEY NEED MENTORS! You are the adult; you must set the example for punctuality and commitment.

A MENTOR IS A:

- Supportive Friend
- Role Model
- Advocate
- Motivator
- Coach
- Good Listener
- Cheerleader
- Confidante
- Tutor
- Academic Advisor
- Connector (to opportunities, resources)
- Adult Companion

A MENTOR IS NOT A:

- Miracle Worker
- Magician
- Savior
- Babysitter
- Entertainer
- Parent/Legal Guardian
- Social Worker
- “Sugar Daddy/Mama”
- Cool Peer
- Therapist

