



Thinking About the Holidays

Navigating the holidays in a mentoring relationship can be tricky. As Seedling mentors we are sensitive to the fact that some households may not celebrate holidays we hold dear. This reality might be due to religious practice, financial distress or family strife. The safest and most effective open-ended questions on the topic are, “What do you think you’ll do during the break from school?” or “What are you

looking forward to during the break from school?” Your mentee’s choice to share about holiday traditions or memories (happy OR sad) can be a springboard for rich conversation. As always, we let the mentee take the lead.

At this time of year, mentors often have questions about giving gifts. You are in no way obligated to give a gift during this season. If you are considering gift giving as a mentor, Seedling strongly encourages you to be relationship focused and to limit it to a small token costing no more than \$15.00. You are already giving the most important gift: your time and undivided attention each week. If you are considering giving a gift in addition to your time and attention, [here is a list](#) of low or no cost gift ideas that can be tailored to reflect the special nuances of your individual mentoring relationship.

Remember that a gift is a gift. If you’re considering an actual physical gift, take care. There are different guidelines for mentoring relationships than those for other personal relationships. Here are some quick cautions:

1. If you give a gift, your mentee gets to choose what to do with it. Some mentors become disappointed or resentful if their mentee doesn’t use the gift as intended or if the gift becomes lost or damaged. Letting negative feelings about the gift enter your relationship can damage other parts of the mentoring experience. While we hope you will not feel this disappointment, your Mentor Director can help you process these feelings and offer the perspective that you are respecting your mentee’s individuality and voice.
2. Gift-receiving is not necessarily comfortable for mentees. They may be unaccustomed to opening a wrapped gift or may not know how to express gratitude.
3. Select a gift that is not about what you think the child needs or what the child or his family could never obtain without you. It should be respectfully modest and focus on the meaningfulness of your relationship

[For Teen Mentees](#)