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Why and How Matches End Matters - A LOT

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Webinar for Mentoring Works Washington
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“This I Believe”

Most, if not all, mentoring relationships end
1/3 to 1/2 matches end prematurely
Many of these early endings are preventable – but doing so is not easy

How they end matters
Most of us are pretty bad at saying goodbye
Programs need to help mentors and youth end relationships well
Study to Analyze Relationships (STAR)

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Agency Partners:
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BBBS Central Arizona
BBBS of Colorado
BBBS of Columbia Northwest
BBBS of San Diego County

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Conceptual Framework: Systemic Model of Mentoring
Conceptual Framework: Systemic Model of Mentoring

(Keller, 2005)
Study to Analyze Relationships: Study Design

MSS General Survey

Big Baseline Survey

Little Baseline Survey

Parent Baseline Survey

AIM Tracking (match record, SOR)

Match Begins

Big Survey

Little Survey

Parent Survey

MSS Match-Specific Survey

Subsample In-depth interviews

Match Ends

Predictive survey data on all study matches / Retrospective survey data on closed matches
Qualitative Study Design (n=36 trifectas*)

*Cases with all three perspectives obtained
Research Questions

Why do matches end?

How do matches end?

What is the impact of the endings?
Why Relationships End
Match Closures*

STAR matches = 358
Closed in 15 months or less = 142 (40%)
Closed in 12 months or less = 108 (30%)
Of these, official reasons for closure indicate
  64% due to mentor
  36% due to child/family

*As of June 30, 2016
## Official Reasons for Closures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>Child/Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moved</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time constraints</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost contact w/ agency (not responding)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels incompatible with match</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost interest</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure changed</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infraction of rules/policies</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of challenges</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Relationships End

Changes in life circumstances

Youth dissatisfaction

Mentor dissatisfaction
  - Perceived lack of mentee motivation
  - Unfulfilled expectations
  - Inadequate agency support

Gradual dissolution

Mentor abandonment

(Spencer, 2007; Spencer et al, 2017)
Match Support

One Match Support Staff person:
   65%

Multiple Match Support Staff
   35%

   Number of previous staff:
      One = 51%
      Two = 35%
      Three or more = 14%
Case Study 1: Life Intervenes

Match Length: 14 months

Mentor: 28, White, Male
Youth: 14, Black, Male

Mentor and Youth had good relationship with each other, although it took a while to develop. This was challenging for Mentor who said were it not for the 1-year commitment he made, he might have given up. Youth opened up to mentor after 9 months and the two became close. This relationship ended after 1 year because Mentor became a first-time father and did not feel that he would have the time to commit to the relationship. They are still in contact outside of their official mentoring relationship and Mentor hopes that Youth will continue to reach out in the future.
Case Study 1: Life Intervenes

MSS felt that PG was invested and responsive; PG felt that MSS was also responsive.

*Mentor: Works & goes to school, Married, has baby during match, Only looking for 1 yr match, Similar SES/family background to Y

Child: Shy, slow to open up

Good working relationship, liked each other; PG encouraged and welcomed M to stay in contact with Y

M & Y had a great companionship; Y was slow to open up so M felt like it took 9 months to start bonding

M didn’t feel he needed agency support; MSS checked in regularly, no extra support

PG: Very involved with Y and family; Looking for positive role model with similar background; Invested

MSS: Underestimates Y’s engagement Consistent contact w/each party

M & Y had a great companionship; Y was slow to open up so M felt like it took 9 months to start bonding

M didn’t feel he needed agency support; MSS checked in regularly, no extra support

PG: Very involved with Y and family; Looking for positive role model with similar background; Invested
Case Study 2: Great Expectations

Match Length: 10 months

Mentor: 22, White, Female
Youth: 13, White, Female

The match started very enthusiastically with Youth excited about having sisterly relationship. Mentor had high expectations in her own ability to mentor. Early in the match, Mentor got frustrated and aggravated with Youth, saying she was very sensitive and had what Mentor thought were a lot of psychological problems. Mentor didn't feel comfortable going to the family home, and didn't have rapport with the mother whose lifestyle and economic background was very different from hers. Eventually, communication broke down and after a gap in not being able to reach the family, the mentor decided to quit. Mentor also planning to move out of the area in a few months.
Case Study 2: Great Expectations

*Mentor:
Unrealistic expectations about making connection w/Y; Inflexible, difficulty taking Y/PG perspective; Interested in psych, looking to grow professionally

MSS: Match not well documented, Not well connected since didn’t make match

PG: Other daughter w/chronic health problems; financial challenges; outgoing, talkative

Child: Family stress; Excited at start to have a M; Waited 1 yr for match, Y low self-esteem; Few same age friends, bullied at school; Shy

M appreciates availability of MSS support; MSS likes M, thinks ideal type of volunteer; MSS tries to normalize slow rel dev.; MSS provided coaching, but M didn’t always execute

PG thinks MSS could not have done anything to stop match ending. MSS had hard time making contacts w/PG but understood family context; MSS wishes PG put in more effort to connect with M

PG liked M but thought M was inflexible; M thought PG could have helped more in relationship; M expected PG to send S, didn’t understand realities of financial limitations; M uncomfortable w/family & home

Y liked M at beginning, but though inflexible; M found visits draining; M struggled when Y shared personal issues; M frustrated when Y doesn’t respond to texts; M felt “obligated” to help Y w/ “psychological problems”
Case Study 3: Mentor-Youth Relationship Matters

Match Length: 2 weeks
Mentor: 32, White, Male
Youth: 11, Multi-racial, Male

The Mentor was interested in becoming a mentor because he had a great past experience as a Youth. Youth waited a year to be matched. The Mentor and Youth went on one outing together. All parties found the Youth reluctant towards the match. Youth was hard to engage, with a history of trauma. After the outing the Youth told PG that he did not want to continue the match, so PG called MSS, and MSS ended the match. ("He not only matured a year, ... and had more life experience... in that year, and potentially more disappointment... in his relationship with dad and others... in that year")
Case Study 3: M-Y Relationship Matters

**Mentor:**
Had big as a kid, wanted long match/deep bond
Friendly, flexible, engaged

**One visit, no connection**
Y was “upset to the point of tears” The Mentor was fully invested in making the relationship work.
Child soon initiated ending.

**Child:**
Reluctant to be matched. Long wait.
High needs: Trauma history/Poor relationship w/FA

**PG:**
Very invested, tried to convince Y to continue, and wants positive male relationship for son

PG really liked M’s personality, background w program, and interest. M felt supported by PG.

**M MSS:**
Good working communication with all involved

The communication was productive and consistent.
MSS felt PG was invested.
PG able to tell MSS when son wanted to end match

**M felt supported, expectations were clear, consistent comm. M thought MSS support was overly generalized and standard.**
How Relationships End
### Mentor Report on Closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Said goodbye to Little formally?</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In person</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text message</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone call</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early Qualitative Findings on Match Endings

How matches ended varied but generally fell into one of three major categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Closure</th>
<th>n=20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned and completed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned but not completed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency ended</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reason for Closure and Type of Ending (n=20)

- Life Circumstances
- Mentor Dissatisfied
- Mentor Overwhelmed
- Mentor Abandoned
- Youth Dissatisfied
- Youth / Family Abandoned

- Agency Ended
- Planned Not Completed
- Planned Completed
## MSS Role in Facilitating Closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in Facilitating Closure</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None - no direct contact between Big and Little at closure</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coached Big on how to end the match/say goodbye</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coached Parent/Guardian on how to help child say goodbye</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coached Little on how to end the match/say goodbye</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranged a match closure meeting between Big and Little</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a match closure meeting</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitated the match closure meeting between Big and Little</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mentor Report:**
Agency provided ideas about how to handle match ending - 56%
### Parent/Guardian Role in Match Closure

(n=70; on-line surveys only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in Match Closure</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I told my child the match was closing.</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gave my child ideas for how to say goodbye to the Big.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gave BBBS support staff information about how best to handle the closure process with my child.</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spent time with my child and the Big during their final visit.</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gave the Big ideas for how to say goodbye to my child.</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How satisfied are you with the way the ending of this match was handled?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all/Not Very</th>
<th>Somewhat/Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Guardian</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Understanding How Matches End

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions being asked:</th>
<th>Results so far (20 matches):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did anyone say goodbye?</td>
<td>85%: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was this sudden to anyone?</td>
<td>75%: Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Who initiated? | Mentor: 60%  
MSS: 15%  
Youth: 25% |
| Was there a cover story provided? | Yes: 35%                 |

How was the little told of the ending?
What is the story of how this match ended?
How were the Mentor, Youth, PG & MSS impacted by how this match ended?
Case Study 1, Life Intervenes: How It Ended

1. Final goodbye?
   Yes, M & Y had final outing and have stayed in touch

2. How was Y told?
   M told him in advance

3. Sudden to anyone?
   No

4. Who Initiated?
   Mentor

5. Cover Story?
   No

How Story:

M told MSS he needed to close the match. Since he had made up his mind, MSS didn't try to change it and just provided coaching on approaching closure with Y & P/G. MSS then told P/G the match would end. M let Y know in advance that the match would officially close at the 1 yr mark because he wasn't able to keep up the required visit schedule. P/G was happy M could tell Y directly, and both understood he was busier after becoming a father. M & Y have talked on the phone since closure and expect to stay in touch and occasionally visit.
Case Study 2, Great Expectations: How It Ended

1. Final goodbye?
   Some texting between M and Y after MSS tells family match is ending

2. How was Y told?
   MSS left message

3. Sudden to anyone?
   P/G

4. Who Initiated?
   Mentor

5. Cover Story?
   No

How Story:
Mentor and MSS talking about closure option since M was so frustrated with match. M eventually told MSS she was having trouble reaching family and was done with match. MSS offered to contact family to tell them about closure. MSS suggested a last outing or sending a card, but that never happened (P/GG says Y wasn't interested because she was too hurt). MSS then had trouble reaching family. Seems like MSS and P/G did eventually talk about ending via text- there had been mention of an in person meeting, but that never happened. P/G told Y about ending. MSS suggested a final outing, but Y wasn't interested (too hurt). M says Y texted her saying she was sorry for not being a good Little. M responded saying that wasn't the case and offered that Y could be in touch any time. M also alerted MSS to this exchange.
Impact of Match Endings
How disappointed are you that the match ended early?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Not at all/Not very</th>
<th>Somewhat/Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Guardian</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>80% - Disappointed (Y/N question)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mentee Reflections on Match Closure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did the ending of your match make you feel?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relieved</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glad</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Coping with Closure: Extended Grief Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mostly or Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy good memories of my Big.</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy thinking about my Big.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find myself wishing that my Big would come back so we could be together again.</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that, even though my Big is gone, he/she is still an important part of my life.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel more lonely since my match ended.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant thoughts about how the match ended get in the way of enjoying good memories of my Big.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try not to think about my Big because it brings up upsetting memories and feelings.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t bring myself to accept my match is really over.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get upset thinking about my match ending.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s harder to trust people since my match ended.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my life is empty without my Big.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t talk about my Big because it is too painful to think about him/her,</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel jealous of other people who haven’t had a match end.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t see myself having as good a life without my Big.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel angry about my match ending.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about getting revenge on my Big.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Case Study 1, Life Intervenes: Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of How</th>
<th>Other Feelings related to Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>Felt that match ended as it should and felt positively that M had a final goodbye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Felt obligated to reach out directly to Y when he knew match was going to end. Told MSS and PG he wanted to meet with Y about match closure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>All parties report Y was understanding of need for M to close official match relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Guardian</td>
<td>PG felt great amount of admiration because M took responsibility for addressing match closure with Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Hopes relationship continues outside official match
- PG supported continuing contact
- M & Y are still in contact
- Y is considering being re-matched, even though he is busier with school/athletics
- Because of the great communication between M and PG, PG sad to see M go, but ultimately understood why he had to leave match
Case Study 2, Great Expectations: Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of How</th>
<th>Other Feelings related to Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| MSS           | Felt responsible for playing “bad guy” role of having to inform P/G & Y of match closure | • Felt closure was inevitable since M was moving anyway.  
• Because PG was not as involved, MSS felt they did all they could to support match. |
| Mentor        | Felt guilty she did not say goodbye to Y | • Felt she had done all she could to make the match work.  
• Felt match ending was inevitable since she was going to have to move anyway.  
• Apprehensive about being a mentor again. |
| Youth         | Y was too hurt to say goodbye to M | • Y did not want to be re-marched.  
• Y felt guilty match ended because she thought P/G worked hard to get her in BBBS program. |
| Parent/Guardian | According to M & MSS, P/G and Y were very upset about how match was closed | • Frustrated communication was difficult and led to closure. |
Impact of How Matches End - Emerging Trends

- How matches end matters!
  - Many youth and PGs have gone through significant losses in their lives and may have trouble handling yet another

- Parties who are abandoned and don’t understand why the match closed are often left confused and frustrated
  - Even in short matches!

- Some Mentors and Youth are relieved to not have to say good bye, especially if they were frustrated with visits and disappointed in the match

- Some Mentors feel guilty about not saying good bye
Reflections, Conclusions and Next Steps
## Structuring Healthy Closure
*(Zilberstein & Spencer, 2017)*

### Planned
- Final meeting to say goodbye
- Scheduled in advance – participants have time to prepare, countdown to goodbye

### Process-oriented
Provides opportunities to:
- Express feelings about the ending
  - Sadness, anger, fear, loss
- Express feelings about the relationship
  - Review highlights, share memories
  - Exchange gifts that honor relationship and/or provide a lasting reminder
- Express appreciation of one another
- Clear the air, complete any unfinished business

### Growth-Promoting
- Normalize endings
- Positive, celebratory
- Tailored to participants’ needs, strengths, vulnerabilities – space for expressions of pain, loss, regrets
- Provides positive model for relationship endings
- Developmentally appropriate

### Clear
- All know relationship has ended
- Nature of future contact, if any, is made clear
Mentor Connections

Military student mentoring
School-based
All matches close at the end of the school year
Two session endings
Ripcord bracelets
Pizza party

Wrapping up your match at the end of the school year is just as important as it was to get your match started on the right foot when you first met. While working on your ripcord bracelets, take some time to look back on your time together and share some of your thoughts and feelings by taking turns answering the following questions:

• What three words would you use to describe your match and why?
• What was your favorite activity? What didn’t you like?
• What will miss the most about your Big/Little when you are not seeing each other in school each week?
• What will you remember the most about your time together this year?
Preventing Early Endings: Potential Areas for Agency Focus

*Recall:
- 64% official reason for premature closure due to mentors
- Parents are telling child match is closing
- Most mentors and youth are not saying goodbye