



Creating Environments

There are three environments that you'll create for your mentoring group.

Monthly Sessions in the Mentor's Home

You'll want to pick a location in your home where the meetings will take place. Some Mentors have chosen the dining room table, others have chosen a living room area. It's important, even if it's uncomfortable for you, for them to see you clearly as the leader. This is NOT a peer group. You're NOT going to be called on to recite the memory verses (although we hope you'll memorize them to grow in your own walk and to model behavior for your mentees). But assume leadership of the group positionally by where you sit—provide a visual representation of your distinction as Mentor.

If you choose "living room" kind of spaces, be sure the farthest seat is no more than twelve feet away from you. You want people to be in social space. If they're too far away, they'll feel disconnected and it will be harder to create personal sharing and interaction. "Up close and personal," as they say, should be the focus of this environment.

On their first night in your home, take a few minutes to familiarize everyone with your place. Walk them around; let them meet your husband, your kids, your dog. Show them where the bathrooms are—that kind of thing. The more comfortable they are physically, the more open they tend to be spiritually or emotionally.

Keep a low-key environment when it comes to refreshments—drinks and a simple snack. Too many groups get focused on food at the expense of faith, so tell your mentees, "Show up physically fed but spiritually hungry." Don't let food become a burden to you and don't let it become a distraction to the group. This models for the women simplicity in opening up your home to others. Please do not get caught in the trap that you need to display a "Southern Living" home to them. That will set them up to feel very inadequate and put undue pressure on them to perform when they host meetings in their own homes.

Set the standard that smart phones and cell phones go OFF when they walk in the door—and it's actually better if they leave them in their cars. Their spouses know where they are and can reach them if necessary. This is three hours each month when there's to be purpose, focus, and engagement. There's no place for distractions from the outside world in the session.

And remember to start promptly and end promptly. Be a good steward of their time and honor your commitment to their families consistently.

If you've got the energy, feel free to say, "When our session is over tonight, feel free to hang around," but always honor their time by ending on time. Most of the women will be getting up the next day to take care of their family or go to work, so you need to be sensitive about this.

Retreat Environments

You'll be taking your young women away on a retreat, so let's talk about what that environment looks like.

Thus far, mentors have had access to mountain, lake or beach vacation homes at no cost. It seems that between the mentor and the mentees, someone knows someone who has a place they're willing to make available to the group for free. Another option is to have the retreat at the mentor's home with no husband or other family members there. That way the only cost being shared by the group members is for food and fun stuff. An easy way to handle the meals is to assign each meal to one or two women, depending on how many are in your group.

One-on-Ones

Two to three times during the mentoring year you'll want to meet each mentee for breakfast, lunch, or just coffee. If the mentee is a mom with young children, sometimes it works best to go to their house and meet during nap time. We really encourage meeting one-on-one before the mentoring year starts to discuss the commitments. This also allows the potential mentee to meet you and ask any questions she might have. This is also a good time to discern if this is the right time in her life for this type of commitment.

These one-on-one time provides the opportunity to give that challenge, confront that issue, or raise that question that has been on your mind but hasn't been shared in the group setting. It also gives the mentee an opportunity to discuss anything she might not feel comfortable sharing with the group. Here's your chance to go deep with your mentee.

It's also a time to get some real-time feedback on how you're doing as a mentor. Ask your mentee to tell you how you could improve the group or your leadership of the group. You're modeling a teachable spirit AND getting some useful knowledge yourself.

In everything else, use common sense. We've tried to share what we've learned about being a good mentor to the next generation. There's no way we've answered all your questions, so you're going to have to use your own judgment and common sense—and we're always just a phone call or email away to support you and help you be successful!