

Hello, Neighbor: A Process of Person-centered Mentorship Inspired by Carl and Fred Rogers

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***Abstract.** Though professionally unaware of each other, Carl and Fred Rogers had much—including religious upbringings, early career interests in child well-being, and primary aspects of their philosophies on life and human potential—in common. Carl Rogers became one of the most influential American psychologists to date, in formulating person-centered approaches to psychotherapy and life, and as a children’s television host Fred Rogers was—and has remained, in the eyes of generations of kids and adults alike over the last 50 some-odd years—in many ways perhaps the most exemplary late 20th century embodiment of Carl Rogers’ proposed way of being. Here, I—a mentor to motivated students in the meteorological and psychological sciences, and others in wider life—discuss my discovery of the person-centered approach, via childhood exposure to Fred Rogers. I provide perspective on the ways the person-centered approach can be utilized to foster more effective and meaningful mentorship and learning-based relationships.*

“People are just as wonderful as sunsets if you let them be. When I look at a sunset, I don't find myself saying, “Soften the orange a bit on the right hand corner.” I don't try to control a sunset. I watch with awe as it unfolds.” – Carl Rogers (1902-1987; quote 1995a)

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“...Deep down, we know that what matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What really matters is helping others win, too. Even if it means slowing down and changing our course now and then.” – Fred Rogers (1928-2003; quote 2002, see footnote²)

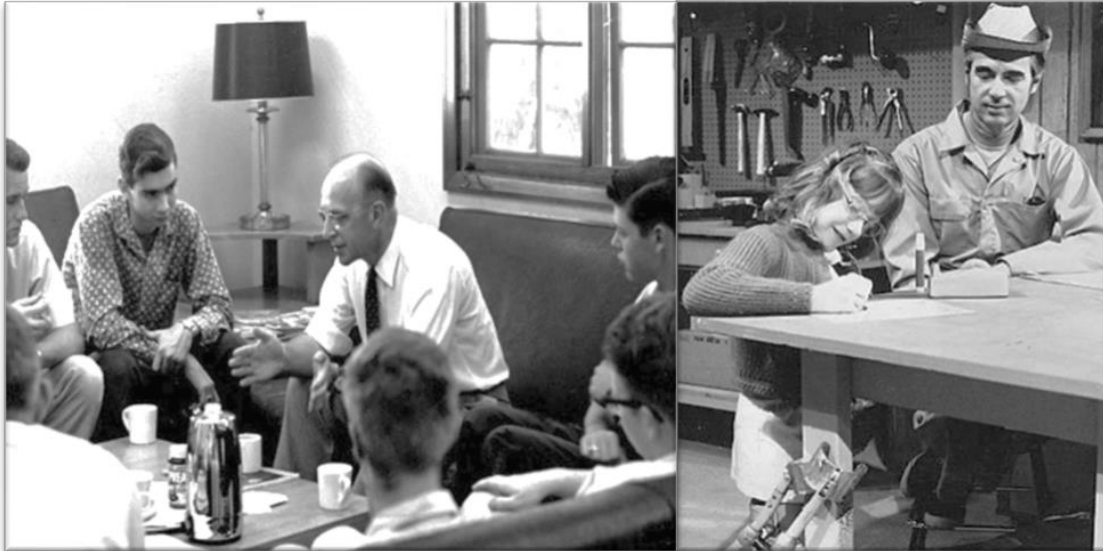


Figure 1. Carl³ and Fred Rogers⁴.

Growing up, I aimed to become a meteorologist. My career path, however, changed through an accumulation of high school and early college experiences, including the difficult revelation that a math disability precludes me from completing the meteorology degree. Thanks in part to steadfast supporters, including several devoted mentors in the meteorological and psychological fields, I have been able to find a satisfying career track. I am a psychology Master's candidate working to bridge gaps in research related to the psychology of weather and climate (Bolton, Ault, Greenberg, & Baron-Cohen, 2018; Bolton, Blumberg, Ault, Mogil, & Hanes, 2020; Bolton & Ault, 2020; Bolton, Mogil, & Ault, 2020). I am likewise interested in psychotherapy, both generally and with respect to psychological problems that arise due to severe and dangerous weather (Bolton, Stewart, & Mogil, 2020; Bolton, Mogil, & Stewart, 2020). I intend to eventually pursue a counseling degree and specialize in natural disaster

² In a 2002 commencement speech at Dartmouth University; please see <https://news.dartmouth.edu/news/2018/03/revisiting-fred-rogers-2002-commencement-address>.

³ McClanahan, J. (1960). Carl Rogers with students [digital image]. California Institute of Technology, Calisphere. <http://archives-dc.library.caltech.edu/islandora/object/ct1%3A9271>

⁴ [Photograph of Chrissy Thompson and Fred Rogers on "I Am, I Can, I Will"]. (1981). Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fred_Rogers_and_Chissy_Thompson_on_I_Am,_I_Can,_I_Will.jpg.

trauma and meteorologically-focused counseling from a primarily person-centered perspective.

Mentorship kept me afloat following the math diagnosis early in my college career. Ever since, I have worked to pay forward the energies and efforts that were invested in me not just then, when I needed guidance the most, but while I was in high school, fresh to professional meteorology, and which continue to be invested in my ongoing growth and journey of lifelong learning. I have been a mentor to nearly two dozen motivated middle and high school students, college-level students, and others in daily life. Most of the relationships in which I have been a formal mentor have been the result of a summer weather camp program I co-directed from 2013 to 2020.

Mentorship is governed as much by trial-and-error, mistakes, and failure as by successes. Moreover, like many life experiences, it is governed by various transactional, interpersonal processes. Here, I intend to more fully elucidate the processes I consider essential to a person-centered approach to mentorship and learning—not only how they originated in my life but also their practice, application, and underlying philosophy. I aim to bring together and more formally codify these ideas so far written about in lesser, piecemeal detail (Bolton & Mogil, 2019a, 2020; Mogil & Bolton, 2019a, 2019b) as a specific perspective on Carl Rogers' person-centered approach, recognizing my ideas may coincide with and/or be approximated by the methods of others who have worked or are working in the learning facilitation and education spheres. Along the way, I will also show how my views have also been mightily influenced by the late child educator Fred Rogers (unrelated to Carl, though they shared much overlap in perspective, including religious upbringings and interests in childhood development).

Carl Rogers himself generalized the principles and “core conditions” of person-centered psychotherapy to learning and teaching contexts (e.g., Rogers, 1969, 1995b). He argued that the personal growth which person-centered modalities can elicit produces a deeper, more rapid learning that is pervasive beyond classroom contexts (Rogers, 1977). But whereas his viewpoint encompassed a radical centering on the student-learner as the *sole* driver of his or her own learning, I prefer a somewhat more mentor-guided approach. That's not to say I don't believe in student-driven learning; actually, at the most fundamental level, relationships in which I consider myself a formal mentor stand on the belief that education is supplanted by the self-driven learning Rogers championed. Rather, while I seek to facilitate student learning I also conceptualize mentorship as heavily transactional: I believe the formal mentor and student (note, I interchange the terms mentor and teacher; and student, learner, and mentee) enter into a symbiotic relationship which has the power to affect each person quite directly, and that both individuals in the relationship learn from one

another in the course of the mentor serving the mentee as a facilitator of learning.

Functional Aspects of the Mentoring Relationship

This view of mentorship-as-symbiotic-relationship emerged from the observation of one of my mentors that education—via teaching—traditionally a one-sided communication affair—has long been synonymous with indoctrination and is therefore much more passive (for a review and philosophical discussion, see Hansson, 2018). Learning as a process, in contrast, is active and engaged (Corbett, 2005; Kintsch, 2009; Smart & Csapo, 2007; Phillips, 2005; Watkins, Lodge, Whalley, Wagner, & Carnell, 2002). Further, it is a common postulation in everyday life that *to learn* is taken to mean *being educated*; the two are often conflated and synonymously interchanged. I have come to believe that a person cannot truly learn, in the most genuine sense of the word—beyond rote memorization, that is—without first being self-motivated and employing self-regulation processes to actively seek out and acquire knowledge for him or herself.⁵

Teachers learn and learners teach but it is far more realistic to say that each of us learns and teaches every day, outside of “learning” and “teaching” contexts and often without being aware we are doing so. Mentoring relies on a person wishing to share something (knowledge, skills, or experiences), but it is and can be done by everyone, because every social interaction is inherently defined by the existence of potential for an individual to teach another in some manner, or to learn something, even if just in passing and/or for a few moments. One can thus mentor without such teachings being formally defined or declared, and in this sense a “mentor” could be anyone who is modeling behavior in a given moment. Mentorship, further, transcends age (there are no limits or expiration dates on learning or teaching) and all other individual and/or socio-cultural differences. While some are more dedicated than others and actually view themselves as mentors (in formal relationships that typically have expiration dates), we are—all of us—an interconnected web of mentors and mentees on a lifelong learning journey.

⁵ This is not merely ideological or pedagogical hyperbole; looking to the empirical literature, there is much discussion on self-regulation’s role in learning (e.g., Burman et al. 2015; Heikkilä & Lonka, 2006; Panadero, 2017; Schunk & Ertmer, 2000; and Zimmerman & Labuhn, 2012), and much empirical evidence to suggest that students not only benefit from (e.g., Gingerich et al., 2014; Hébert & Hauf, 2015; Huffaker & Calvert, 2003; Prince, 2004), but also prefer active learning strategies (e.g., Cavanagh et al., 2014; Lumpkin et al. 2015; Miller & Metz, 2014; Smith & Cardaciotto, 2011; Ul Huda, Ali, Nanji, & Cassum. 2016).

A recent review (Chen, Watson, & Hilton, 2016) reveals similarities in most common research conceptualizations of mentorship. Schockett and Haring-Hidore (1985), Ragins and McFarlin (1990), Dreher and Ash (1990), Scandura (1992), Pollock (1995), and Hu and colleagues (2011), for example, all focus on career-related and psychosocial functions of the mentoring relationship. Others, including Wilde and Schau (1991), Sands and colleagues (1991), Chow and Suen (2001), Fowler and O’Gorman (2005), and Crisp (2009) focus not just on these factors but also (for example) on role-modeling and coaching, emotional support, and the facilitation of learning opportunities. I draw on many of these aspects in facilitating a primarily student/learner-centered approach. Be aware, however; myriad other frameworks exist.

While these various processes of interpersonal symbiosis are at work within the mentor and mentee, the relationship’s timer invariably counts down. Indeed, mentorship is comprised of stages (see Haensly & Parsons, 1993, for one view of how these work). My view is that one starts out as a student primarily focused on learning, and then slowly begins to reciprocate these and other learnings to the mentor. All mentees eventually grow out of formal mentorship, but never stop learning from the mentor (and the same is true of the mentor, who can always learn from the mentee; thus, because mentorship is symbiotic and transactional, these terms may only be arbitrary descriptors).

I previously took part in a conference panel on mentorship (viewable at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_OoU4zFu0A) where, consistent with some of the aforementioned frameworks, the term was conceptualized as a “professional friendship.” I prefer to view mentorship as an active state of being in which one is either mentor or mentee, and often both at once. One who consciously acknowledges and strives to operate within this state, teaching and simultaneously learning, can of course have a “professional friendship” with another who is in this state. But beyond simply being in a “zone” or state of engagement, and beyond simply giving another person information, I believe the mentor’s role is to motivate the individual in his or her own learning, to enable self-driven growth. I therefore ask myself not “how can I better educate the individual,” but rather, “how can I better enable the learner to meet his or her own needs.”

Applying Person-centered Principles to Mentorship and Learning

“In my early professional years I was asking the question: How can I treat, or cure, or change this person? Now I would phrase the question in this way: How can I provide a relationship which this person may use for his own personal growth?” Carl Rogers (1995b)

“There's a world of difference between insisting on someone's doing something and establishing an atmosphere in which that person can grow into wanting to do it.” Fred Rogers (1995)

Carl Rogers staunchly defended the view that people are innately *good* and in possession of latent potential; that each person fundamentally possesses a desire for, and can manifest a tendency towards, personal growth and integrated wholeness. He supported Abraham Maslow's notion (Kaufman, 2018, 2020) that, freed from concern for the most basic needs, people are drawn towards growth and can become fully-functioning and therefore “self-actualized.” These are foundational concept in person-centered psychotherapy.

Indeed, Carl Rogers believed (Rogers, 1951, 1957, 1958) that positive helping relationships occurred, and the proper environment for client growth was created, when the therapist was (1) *congruent*, or genuine, able to honestly express feelings for the client; (2) when the therapist could adequately *empathize* with the client; and (3) when the therapist could *demonstrate unconditional positive regard* for the client so as to accept him or her exactly as he or she was as a person, in whatever the individual's presenting state, as he or she *was*, in essence, the feeling or emotional state that was being expressed (Rogers, 1995b). Believing himself only a guide rather than an instructor, Rogers was non-directive in helping clients towards self-actualization, preferring instead to ask open questions, re-frame, reflect, and paraphrase stated concepts, ideas, and feelings, and to gently encourage clients forward in seeking out and traversing through their own reflections and introspections. This is the basic model I apply to learning-focused, and particularly, mentorship-based, interactions.

The purpose—and sometimes, the challenge—of unconditional positive regard, and often a barrier to achieving congruence in the mentoring relationship, is recognizing and acknowledging the learning-focused individual as intrinsically *good* in whatever state he or she exists presently. Mentor-mentee congruence is made possible when the mentor first embraces him or herself with unconditional positive regard, via self-directed empathy (compassion) and acceptance, transparently acknowledging his or her own state as *good* and then extending this same grace and acceptance to the mentee. This often means, as a formal mentor, recognizing and accepting one's own failings and imperfections. This process is activated again and again with each interaction; hence, the mentor must reassess him or herself regularly. Congruence is developed only through an awareness earned by self-reflecting. Just as one cannot, for example, teach another person to dance without him or herself first learning

to dance, so too can the mentor not demonstrate other-oriented compassion without first expressing self-oriented compassion.

Once congruent, the mentor is better able to lead-by-example and reflect and model to the mentee essential behaviors, beliefs, and values (note, this concept can also be applied to leadership positions). It is crucial that the mentor recognizes that attitudes and beliefs are caught, not taught (see Aspy & Roebuck, 1974; and C. Rogers, 1995a, p. 309, for discussion), and that some of the most important lessons for mentees come through the mentor's own actions and examples. Effective, formal mentors are personally as well as professionally cognizant, striving to model appropriate behaviors to their mentees. Ideally, the mentor grounds him or herself in humility and selflessness and strives to remember that what he or she is doing in mentorship is bigger than him or herself alone. The learner-oriented mentor works from this position not to mold the mentee into a mirror image of him or herself but to allow the mentee room to grow into his or her own person.

Taking a Broader View: The Development of my Specific Approach

“I'm very concerned that our society is much more interested in information, than wonder; in noise, rather than silence. How do we do that? How do we encourage reflection? Oh my, this is a noisy world.” Fred Rogers⁶

Carl Rogers' psychotherapeutic principles notwithstanding, my approach also incorporates the life principles of renowned television host and child educator Fred Rogers, of whom I have, since childhood, been a viewer and fan. The overlap in the principles and philosophies espoused by Carl and Fred Rogers has been discussed elsewhere (Gladding & Wallace, 2012; Palmer & Carr, 1991; also see Lietz, 2014), but not in a mentoring context. I believe Fred's views contribute much to person-centered mentorship, and that from him we can discern the notion of mentorship as a mindset.

Mentorship, in my view, is a mindset because self-reflection is necessary if one is to successfully model behavior. Such introspection requires a certain mindful commitment and willingness to embrace not only growth, but also, perhaps, the side of oneself with which one is not necessarily pleased—yet, this can be a deeply rewarding experience. That self-reflection is necessary is a logical proposition, because the essential qualities, traits, and ideals the mentor wishes to convey are, as Rogers stated, “invisible to the eye” (F. Rogers 2005, p. 10). They—humility and selflessness, to name just two—are inherently intangible traits that must be

⁶ In a 1994 interview with Charlie Rose; please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djoyd46TVVc>.

sorted out. The mentor would not find and acquire, and then could not model, them, without introspection. The state of mind one inhabits within this process lends itself to personal growth and, in turn, allows the mentor to be more congruent—inwardly as well as with mentees.

This realization emerged during some of my earliest serious discussions of mentorship-as-process, with a mentor who had also been a childhood viewer of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and subsequently embraced Fred's wisdom. I began incorporating regular self-reflection into my mentoring process (Bolton, 2015) and my belief that mentorship is transactional soon followed. It was on an unconventional path to enlightenment that I first became acquainted with these varied person-centered principles, through my childhood exposure to Fred Rogers. Growing up in the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* was a staple on my television, and it is not unreasonable to posit that these principles lay dormant within my mind until activated later by my mentorship experiences. They have long been part of my philosophy (Bolton, 2015; Bolton & Blumberg, 2017; Bolton & Mogil, 2019b).

For many, myself included, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and the gentle approach of Fred Rogers himself offered stability. His was a devoted demonstration of the concepts put forth many years before by Carl Rogers. Much as Carl Rogers endeavored to create a safe and welcoming therapy environment, Fred Rogers sought to create a space in which each person watching his television program, “visiting” with him, parasocially, could feel, regardless of individual difference, accepted exactly and entirely as unique individuals. The following quote (F. Rogers, 2003, p. 95) showcases his belief not only in unconditional positive regard but also a form of congruence:

“When we love a person, we accept him or her exactly as is: The lovely, the unlovely, the strong along with the fearful, the true mixed in with the façade, and of course, the only way we can do it is by accepting ourselves that way.”

One may see, also, in Fred Rogers, echoes of Carl Rogers' belief in self-actualization (Fred Rogers Center, 2019):

“Knowing that we can be loved exactly as we are gives us all the best opportunity for growing into the healthiest of people.”

An ordained minister who actively (but quietly, in a way that avoided openly proselytizing) put his beliefs into practice, and whose beliefs informed a view not dissimilar to that which is central to person-centered psychotherapy (Harris, 2019; Salonon, 2020; Wilczynski, 2019), Fred Rogers practiced radical kindness and viewed whomever he was with

in the moment to be his “neighbor.” He strove to instill, on *Neighborhood* and in each person he interacted with, what he called an “expression of care” (Eisenstat, 2018; F. Rogers, 1969). Comparable in essence to Carl Rogers’ empathic stance and unconditional positive regard, this expression was and is still, today, a demonstration of the ways in which he sought not only to “make goodness attractive” (F. Rogers, 2003), but to make feelings mentionable and, therefore, more manageable (King, 2018; Klaren, 2019). He quite literally embodied the empathic, congruent, self- and other-acceptant way of being put forth by Carl Rogers. One participant in a discussion-based presentation I gave on this topic at the 2020 Carl Rogers Conference, hosted by the Center for Studies of the Person, after viewing a video of Fred Rogers, even remarked that he physically carried himself and gestured in a manner similar to Carl Rogers.

Amidst renewed public interest resulting from the recent *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?* documentary (2018) and *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* film (2019, inspired by the relationship between Fred Rogers and journalist Tom Junod; see Junod, 1998/2017, 2019), scholars concerned with the philosophy and methods of effective teaching have long discussed, and are still discussing, Fred’s social-emotional-focused pedagogy (e.g., Evans, Russell, Furgione, & Sheridan, 2018; Kerry, 2015; Long, 2015; Serriere, 2018; Sharapan, 1977; Poole, 2017). Researchers, meanwhile, have consistently found positive effects on psychosocial and personal emotional functioning not only for child, but also adult, viewers of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* and its modern offshoot *Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood*.

These, consistent with other mass and electronic media findings (e.g., Rushton, 1979; Mares & Stephenson, 2017), are related to improvements in task persistence and rule obedience (Friedrich & Stein, 1973, 1975), prosocial behaviors and levels of social contact (e.g., Coates & Pusser, 1975; Coates, Pusser, & Goodman, 1976; Cosgrove & McIntyre, 1977; Friedrich and Stein 1973, 1975), and increased empathy, self-efficacy, and emotion recognition (Rasmussen et al. 2016). Newer research has even begun to explore, with some promising findings in preliminary small-sample studies, possible media-psychological effects of *Neighborhood*-viewing on life and social skills in children on the autism spectrum (Dotson et al. 2017); and on syntactic language in children with Down Syndrome (Burnett & Lund, 2017; Jameson, 2019).

Some Specific Thoughts on Applications of Person-centered Mentorship

Summarizing to this point, my view is that learner-centered mentorship is conducted by a person wishing to share knowledge or

experience with another, whether or not it is within the bounds of a formally-declared relationship; that mentorship is transactional—that the mentor can learn from the student, since a mentor is anyone who models behavior and attitudes and beliefs are naturally and inherently caught, not taught—and that periods of formal mentorship generally exist between individuals in such a relationship, but that such symbiotic learning can be sustained past this timeline. I also view mentorship *as a mindset*, because people who formally consider themselves mentors regularly introspect on their own imperfections, in order to connect with the learner. Finally, insofar as it entails a process, I believe that *the goal of mentorship is to enable the learner* to become self-actualized with respect to his or her own learning and that the mentor's role is to guide this journey.

Since teaching at weather camp in 2014, I've made mentorship of weather-passionate K-12 students a primary goal. In addition to after-camp mentorship of other students, I and my former co-director and longtime research colleague, meteorologist H. Michael Mogil, who owns a weather learning-facilitation company and who has long facilitated high school and college student internships—have involved five high school students in some of my research (Allen et al., 2020; Bolton, Mogil, Ault, & Harvey, 2018; Bolton et al., 2019, 2020) or their own projects.⁷ Attendees of the 2019 Annual Meeting of the National Weather Association had the chance to meet two of them, as they presented our research as well as one of the morning weather briefings (see Allen, Serré, & Bolton, 2019 for their recap of experiences). They've helped devise surveys and compile results for publication, and assisted in designing and presenting conference materials. Hopefully, they've come to more fully understand scientific research and principles of both meteorology and psychology.

Depending on individual mentee interests, I've provided guidance on weather forecasting, writing and online blogging, interpersonal and professional communication—one mentee maintains a weather-focused Facebook page for a readership of over 15,000 people—and photography and videography. Other guidance has focused on professional skills, like networking, and managing life and high school demands.

⁷ Mogil and I have a long collaborative history dating back to a high school internship I worked under him.



Figure 2. Collage of mentorship photos. Leftmost photo: High school weather camp student and then-research assistant/intern Grace Carpenter Top-right photo: The author (Matt Bolton, L) with high school weather camp students and research assistants/interns Dylan Allen (middle) and Aaron Serré (R) after a map analysis workshop at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the National Weather Association. Bottom-right photo #1: Then-middle school weather camp student Nico with a mentored science fair project. Bottom-right photo #2: Former high school weather camp student and research assistant/intern Jake learning video editing techniques for a camp project.

Sometimes, potential mentees turn down offers of guidance. Other times, mentorships decay due to conflict or lack of interest. Conflict—whatever its source, though it often manifests through lack of communication or various factors that play into mentor-mentee match strength (Hodges, 2009; Rhodes, Schwartz, Willis, & Wu, 2017)—is the most irredeemable, destructive force that can act upon a mentorship. It can result in one of the individuals, perhaps inexplicably, refusing to acknowledge the other, with reconciliation attempts on the part of the other being to no avail. Such situations can induce deep questioning and doubt for the student (here, the person to whom the negative behavior was modeled), who may think he or she is at fault. Alternatively, mentor-mentee match strength can erode over time for any number of reasons. Fortunately, and this has most often been my experience, formal mentorship periods in

which one individual is recognized as more of a teacher and the other more of a student typically end naturally, with grace.

I believe the psychosocial aspects of mentorship are just as important in fostering student growth as those that are career-focused, that the emotional well-being of the learner is as important as the physical; and further, that the psychosocial aspects are just as important as the actual epistemic learning that the mentoring relationship facilitates. Thus, I strive to foster mentoring relationships that appropriately straddle the boundaries between teacher and friend and help fulfill the requirements of the self-actualization process (see Kaufman, 2018, 2020).

Within this, the-mentor-as-advisor is a topic of importance to me. This is necessary to consider since the mentor may be called upon to give more than simple professional guidance, or feel the need to serve as a sounding board. The mentee might be going through difficulties; these could be academic issues or on-job problems, trouble with friends or in a significant relationship, burnout in some facet of life, or something else entirely. Perhaps the mentee is depressed or anxious, confronting a physical injury or medical condition, or feeling inadequate when confronting self-criticism and doubt; or a family member or close friend passed away recently and the mentee is struggling with this event. Whatever the case, it is important that the mentor knows how to approach sensitive topics. Fortunately, there's no shortage of ways in which to engage and instant messaging, e-mail, and video chat can easily facilitate communication.

Familiarity with some basic psychological first-aid concepts and mental health intervention principles is helpful (see, e.g., Ruzek et al., 2007, and Wells, 2005; Bolton & DePodwin, 2019 also has simple coping strategies), but one does not need, necessarily, to play the part or have the training of a psychotherapist—rather, only to possess a sincere desire to help and willingness to listen in times of need (in moderation, of course). Mentorship is a growth process, and in helping the learner become self-actualized, so too does the mentor transform him or herself—learning from and, importantly, *through* the process, alongside the mentee (just as psychotherapists can learn from clients about the mechanisms of emotional processing and change; e.g., Pascual-Leone & Greenberg, 2007). Many factors affect mentee well-being, but listening is often the best medicine for mildly-distressed mentees—. One strategy that can act against many of these simultaneously is to guide the mentee in establishing a sense of meaning and purpose that will sustain him or her through hard times. It is all too easy for a person to become discouraged and begin to think negatively. A sense of meaning—that what one is doing is worthwhile despite the hardships one will inevitably face—can help buttress oneself against these feelings and

positively affect well-being (see Grouden & Jose, 2015, for a review). Helping the mentee identify the values which are important to him or her, and then helping him or her remain committed to them, is another helpful strategy (Bramwell & Richardson, 2018; Sharp, Schulenberg, Wilson, & Murrell, 2004).

As an aside on my own experiences as a mentor in the meteorological field, I have observed that pre-college student mentees sometimes have only fledgling weather interests that may not withstand the emotional and other trials of adolescence. It is important to gently nurture these students—and those focused on other career pathways, when weather is not the focus—taking care not to overwhelm them with too much at once but also not to underwhelm them with a dearth of enthusiasm or opportunity. Pre-college and early-career mentees should be engaged with a variety of opportunities and their exposure to the breadth of the field, whatever it is, should be maximized. Further, if one cannot answer a learner's question, a tried-and-true method is directing them to someone who can. These principles, of course, can and should be applied outside of the meteorological example I have just provided. Students in any topical area should be led or better yet accompanied, and not thrown, into their area of interest; they should be encouraged to continue on their journey of self-learning; and help should be rendered them when deemed necessary and appropriate.

I have also observed that many weather-interested kids and teens—myself included, back in the day—have few other interests, finding their desire for a meteorological career to be all-consuming. That seems to be a common theme, and the fact that young students may be alone in this interest at school and possibly in the wider community (at least within his or her social network) is another consideration warranting attention. The young learner's constant focus on weather can be challenging and complicated (not just for the student, but for parents and school counselors as well) and can interact with any number of factors. Sometimes, whether the learner is young or old, circumstances beyond individual control—family or wider social problems, non-academic changes at school, car accidents, sport-induced or other extracurricular injury, or other serious neurological or psychological problems, and disease, to name just a few—may develop and add serious strains and stresses.

In these cases, especially for younger learners, focusing on weather (or whatever thing about which the learner cares) and other possible passions as distractions (and the mentor-mentee relationship more generally, through learner-venting and the mentor's sharing of coping skills) can be a life-saver. One of my mentees, for an example of a situation I've fielded in this arena, has been challenged by acute, progressive hearing-

loss; alongside a nurturing of the student's meteorological, and encouraging of other, interests, I've informally provided advice about simple coping techniques, goal-setting and pursuit, and the maintenance of motivation.

Not if, but when the mentee begins to doubt or to experience hardships, there is a tendency to spiral downwards; this is where a mentor can step in and be a highly positive and stabilizing influence. And, being aware of the potential for drops in mentee self-esteem and/or well-being, the mentor can take care to help prop the mentee up. Guidance and, if available, experiential learning opportunities—even of a long-distance nature, as are those I often provide my high school students—can help stave off negative outcomes and set the learner back on track when negativities do occur. As an example of ways one can think outside the box about learner engagement, I've provided three students with the active-learning experience of proof-reading and providing feedback about several iterations of this paper, so they can better understand the academic writing process.

The positive outcomes of experiential, person-centered learning strategies are well-known (Cornelius-White, 2007) and have long been discussed within person-centered frameworks—especially with respect to the activation of learning for the whole person, affectively as well as cognitively (e.g., Rogers, 1995a). Learning involving the emotions is just as important as learning involving knowledge; where possible, strategies involving both aspects should be invoked to further the fullest levels of self-growth.

Employing active listening skills is one of the easiest methods by which the mentor can connect and provide counsel to learners. This involves processing what is being said (or perhaps not being said) and putting effort into genuinely understanding not only the "what" but the "why" of this content; trying to read body language and facial expressions if communicating in-person or through video chat, or intent if communicating through text; and hearing and noticing changes in tone, inflection, and emotional state, while accepting the individual for who exactly he or she is in that moment. Another method involves re-framing negative circumstances and helping the learner see and find the positives in different situations. The mentor's role in these situations becomes, on a metaphorical but also quite literal plane, to help the learner recognize opportunities for petting cats and dogs when they see them in the street—to help them find joy and happiness even in the apparently- and actually-dark moments of life.

I am not suggesting negative cognitive experiences be ignored (although they are normal, to a point), since at more severe levels such ignorance, or denialist behaviors, could be dangerous. However, the pain brought by the likes of social difficulty, minor anxiety and depression, self-

doubt, and/or grief can be blunted to some extent by a strong motivational drive and meaningful goal pursuit. Helping the mentee through difficulties—with a careful eye for when professional help may be needed, and then providing guidance through that process, if needed—is mentorship of the highest magnitude, at the heart of Fred Rogers’ injunction to help others win.

Concluding Thoughts, on the Ethics and Process of Mentorship

To conclude, I want to briefly discuss the ethics of mentorship as I see them. Individuals should think carefully, when choosing to actively engage in mentorship, to determine the rules and values which will be maintained in the relationship (including that, with all mentorships of youth under legal age, one should regularly coordinate and communication with parents and/or guardians). These will differ depending on many factors that can combine at times but are crucial to the health of any mentorship. For example, one must consider the mentee’s age and whether the mentee is a minor, or a college or minor student; if the mentee has a disability or learning-affecting condition; or if the mentee faces challenging socio-economic factors that could affect access to learning tools and resources. One must also carefully consider the power dynamics these relationships inherently involve, particularly if the mentee is a minor or a student—and especially if that student is under the mentor’s direct supervision, say in a classroom environment or while working on a research project. Personal and professional boundaries are not only helpful, but necessary. This does not mean a level of friendship cannot exist—recall the notion of mentorship-as-professional-friendship—but rather that care and appropriate boundaries must be exercised.

The rules and guidelines I’ve set for myself are inspired by the American Psychological Association’s Code of Ethics (<https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>) as well as my own beliefs, values, and experiences on both sides of the mentoring relationship. This list distills these into a form that may help readers wishing to improve their own mentorships. Note that some apply to mentors, some to mentees, and some to both states of being.

1. Recognize that each person you interact with is unique. Strive to accept him or her no matter the differences existing between you.
2. Be honest but kind in evaluations. Criticism wrought is fear caught: Harsh, non-constructive critiques impede the mentor in achieving and maintaining unconditional positive regard, and discourage the mentee from trusting the mentor.
3. Aim to give the mentee space to grow and make mistakes. Don’t immediately provide answers; rather, give gentle nudges in the

right direction. People learn (and retain) information best in working things out for themselves.

4. Whether mentor or mentee, be of benefit and do no harm. Should harm inadvertently occur, accept responsibility for your behavior and act to rectify the situation. Hold no grudges, even with yourself. Work to be the mentor you wish *you* could have, as you would (hopefully) strive to be the friend you wish you had.
5. Recognize that mentorships, while symbiotic, are inherently trust-based. Do not abuse the natural power differentials of the relationship. Uphold and model professionalism, precision, honesty, and truthfulness.
6. Remember that you don't (and won't) know everything—even, sometimes, after deep reflection—but that this is okay. What's important is how you respond to your lack of knowledge, and (inevitable) failures. Remember to be patient with yourself in the unclear moments. Forgive yourself when you do know the answers but may not understand or are disappointed by them.
7. Seek open-mindedness, humility, and selflessness; strive to remember that what you are doing in mentorship is bigger than yourself. Help others win, too.
8. Endeavor to be congruently present when interacting with the mentee; strive to *be* with, as well as to receive, him or her as fully as you can.

I hope this discussion—showcasing what I have so far learned and am passing on, from Carl and Fred Rogers and from my own mentors and mentees—will help make readers' own mentoring (and learning) endeavors more successful and effective. I have focused on pre-college mentorship because that is where my familiarity and activity is strongest, but many of these ideas, principles, and concepts can readily apply elsewhere. Mentorship is a mutually-affecting helping relationship (e.g., Frymier & Houser, 2000; Hodges, 2009) that can apply in all facets of life, both formally and informally. Perhaps the most crucial element in all of this is just how critical it is that individuals empathically and openly listen to one another, to understand and not merely to respond, so that potential learnings are not missed.

Carl and Fred Rogers both believed in the power that mentorship holds through teaching and learning (and had their own impactful mentors; see Flecker [2014] and C. Rogers [1995a]). In fact, psychologist Margaret McFarland, a contemporary of Erick Erikson, not only mentored Fred Rogers in life but served as a child development expert for *Mister Rogers'*

Neighborhood. See: <https://www.misterogers.org/articles/margaret-mcfarland/>). Both set out, in their own unique ways and contexts, to unlock the potential hidden in others. Where Carl Rogers facilitated helping relationships directly, enabling growth in the psychotherapy client's journey of self-discovery, Fred Rogers delivered his signature expression of care through television. I strive to keep their principles alive.

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