

My mentee is thrilled about summer, right?

Who wouldn't be happy about having no homework, sleeping a little later, and playing outside in the sunshine? But summer may include some other differences for your mentee. You might be surprised by some issues that could result in subtle signs of anxiety in your next few visits.

For many children, school represents a place of predictability and physical and emotional safety, feelings that may be diminished or absent in the three months of summer. How can a mentor help?

A good open-ended question such as "What do you think your summer will be like?" can open the door. Use your best active listening skills to watch for small changes in tone, facial expression or body language, and invite your mentee to talk about feelings.

Other questions might be:

- How will you spend your time away from school this summer?
- Who will you be with? (How old is your cousin?)
- Is there any part of the summer that you are really looking forward to?
- Is there any part of the summer that you're worried about?
- Who do you talk to in the summer when something is bothering you?
- What do you usually do about lunch in the summer? ****See below.**

Talk about qualities in friends who are "good" and friends who are "not so good". This conversation may also be an opportunity for personal sharing. For example, you can let your mentee know the tricks and self-talk you use when faced with inadequate personal space or with inevitable boredom.

Check out the section in this newsletter about end-of-year gifts that may help. And last, if your mentee describes glorious summer plans that make you doubtful, avoid asking for details that can require a child to continue making up facts. Instead, ask open-ended questions that allow the child to explore the would-be adventure, such as "I wonder...what do you suppose that would be like – to visit Disney World?"

****Summer Food Service Program**

Nutritious free meals are available for children and teens 18 and younger throughout the summer and are paid for by USDA and program sponsors. Kids do NOT need to register, show proof of age or proof of income. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks> or text FOODTX to 877-877.