



Older and Wiser: New Ideas for Youth Mentoring in the 21st Century

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Product Description

Youth mentoring programs must change in order to become truly effective. The world's leading expert shows how. Youth mentoring is among the most popular forms of volunteering in the world. But does it work? Does mentoring actually help young people succeed? In *Older and Wiser*, mentoring expert Jean Rhodes draws on more than thirty years of empirical research to survey the state of the field. Her conclusion is sobering: there is little evidence that most programs—even renowned, trusted, and long-established ones—are effective. But there is also much reason for hope. Mentoring programs, Rhodes writes, do not focus on what young people need. Organizations typically prioritize building emotional bonds between mentors and mentees. But research makes clear that effective programs emphasize the development of specific social, emotional, and intellectual skills. Most mentoring programs are poorly suited to this effort because they rely overwhelmingly on volunteers, who rarely have the training necessary to teach these skills to young people. Moreover, the one-size-fits-all models of major mentoring organizations struggle to deal with the diverse backgrounds of mentees, the psychological effects of poverty on children, and increasingly hard limits to upward mobility in an unequal world. Rhodes doesn't think we should give up on mentoring—far from it. She shows that evidence-based approaches can in fact create meaningful change in young people's lives. She also recommends encouraging organic mentorship opportunities—in schools, youth sports leagues, and community organizations.