



GEM Lab

Canadian Centre for
Evidence-Based
Mentorship Solutions

Mentorship Through a Feminist, Anti-Racist Lens

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Please Note: The full version of this report is available by request at <https://www.girlsementorship.com/gemlab/main#access-full-reports>.

Executive Summary

Mentees who are able to maintain successful relationships with their mentors report feeling both supported and challenged in their personal and professional development, as well as their goal setting. In order to provide youth with the support they need, it is imperative that mentorship programs are conducted using a feminist, anti-racist lens at the relationship and program level.

This report will begin with a discussion on the importance of vulnerability and representation in mentorship, followed by discussions on feminism, anti-racism, and intersectionality in mentorship. The goal of this report is to provide GEM's mentorship program participants with the context they need to employ an intersectional approach to their mentorship relationship.

The following definitions will be elaborated on throughout this manual:

- **Critical Consciousness:** A fundamental understanding of oppressive social elements, hierarchical structures, and one's place in society.¹ An active process of learning truths and unlearning biases.
- **Vulnerability:** Willingness to show emotion or to allow one's weakness to be seen or known.² Being open about the challenges we've faced to help others learn and grow.³
- **Feminism:** The belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes.⁴ Feminism is about respecting diverse women's experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realize their full rights."⁵
- **Patriarchy:** A social system in which power is held by men, through cultural norms and customs that favour men and withhold opportunity from women.⁶
- **Autonomy:** Self-directing freedom and especially moral independence.⁷ Simply, autonomy is about a person's ability to act on his or her own values and interests.⁸
- **Empathy:** The ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.⁹
- **Anti-Racism:** The active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes.¹⁰
- **Systemic Racism:** Systemic racism includes the policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups. It differs from overt discrimination in that no individual intent is necessary.¹¹
- **Self-Reflection:** The activity of thinking about your own feelings and behaviour, and the reasons that may lie behind them.¹²
- **Micro-Aggressions:** A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.¹³
- **Bias:** The action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgement.¹⁴

- **Identity:** The distinguishing character or personality of an individual.¹⁵ Who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others.¹⁶
- **Accountability:** An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.¹⁷
- **Intersectionality:** A framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages.¹⁸

Best Practices and Recommendations

1. Apply a Feminist Lens to Mentorship

- Be aware of gender-based social constructs
- Engage in problem-solving exercises
- Encourage mentees to develop their own autonomy
- Promote authenticity in the relationship¹⁹
- Be dependable and consistent²⁰

2. Apply an Anti-Racist Lens to Mentorship

- Engage in self-reflection²¹
- Recognize your own intersectional identity²²
- Respect other identities
- Recognize that all mentors can engage in anti-racist work²³
- Be vulnerable²⁴
- Actively listen to others²⁵

3. Apply an Intersectional Lens to Mentorship

- Recognize Difference²⁶
- Avoid Oversimplified Language²⁷
- Analyze the Space you Occupy²⁸
- Seek Other Points of View²⁹
- Show Up³⁰

For more context about these best practices and recommendations, view our full report.

Please Note: The full version of this report is available by request at <https://www.girlsementorship.com/gemlab/main#access-full-reports>.

Notes

¹ Jamie N. Albright, Noelle M. Hurd, and Saida B. Hussain, "Applying a Social Justice Lens to Youth Mentoring: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Practice," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 59 (2017): 369.

² "Vulnerability," Dictionary.com, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/vulnerability>.

³ "Mentoring and Vulnerability," Oppidan Education, October 5, 2020, retrieved from <https://www.oppidaneducation.com/blog-posts/2020/10/5/mentoring-amp-vulnerability>.

⁴ "Feminism," Britannica, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism>.

⁵ "What is Feminism?" International Women's Development Agency, n.d., retrieved from <https://iwda.org.au/learn/what-is-feminism/>.

⁶ "Patriarchy," Dictionary.com, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/patriarchy>.

⁷ "Autonomy," Merriam Webster, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autonomy>.

⁸ Faye Tucker, "What is autonomy and why does it matter?" ifamily, November 11, 2014, retrieved from <https://www.ifamilystudy.eu/what-is-autonomy-and-why-does-it-matter/>.

⁹ "What is empathy?" Greater Good Magazine, n.d., retrieved from <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/empathy/definition>.

¹⁰ "Anti-Racism," Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.aclrc.com/antiracism>.

¹¹ "Forms of racism," Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.aclrc.com/forms-of-racism>.

¹² "Self-reflection," Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/self-reflection>.

¹³ "Microaggression," Merriam Webster, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microaggression>.

¹⁴ "Bias," Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bias>.

¹⁵ "Identity," Merriam Webster, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity>.

¹⁶ "Identity," Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity>.

¹⁷ "Accountability," Merriam Webster, n.d., retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/accountability>.

¹⁸ "What is intersectionality, and what does it have to do with me?" YW Boston, March 29, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.ywboston.org/2017/03/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/>.

¹⁹ Belle G. Liang, Anne Bogat, and Nicole Duffy, "Gender in Mentoring Relationships," in *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, ed. David L. DuBois and Michael J. Karcher (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2014): 161.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

²¹ Jamie Utt and Shelly Tochluk, "White Teacher, Know Thyself: Improving Anti-Racist Praxis Through Racial Identity Development," *Urban Education* 55, no. 1 (2020): 133.

²² *Ibid.*, 139.

²³ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁴ Anita Chikkatur, "More than curriculum: the barriers to developing an anti-racist school culture at a middle school," *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* (2021): 15.

²⁵ Utt and Tochluk, "White Teacher, Know Thyself," 144.

²⁶ "What is intersectionality, and what does it have to do with me?" YW Boston, March 29, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.ywboston.org/2017/03/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

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