

SCORE!

Mentor Training for SNAP

Special Needs Athletic Programs - Morristown, NJ

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What is SNAP?

SNAP is a program committed to promoting disability awareness. We strive to promote topics like acceptance and inclusion to help our community embrace and celebrate the qualities that make each of us unique.

WHO is a SNAP mentor?

Our mentors are kids ages 12-18 with big hearts and a passion for working with young people with special needs. If this is you, you're in the right place.



Benefits for the mentor

Improved leadership skills

Increased confidence in ability to handle challenges

Increased self awareness

Improved emotional literacy

Exposure to (and improved tolerance for) new and different perspectives

Increased empathy and awareness of others' needs

Opportunity to connect with new friends with similar goals

All the good feels!

Who do we mentor?



PEOPLE

Our participants (also called buddies) are people.

**Wonderfully curious, intelligent, quirky, adventurous, beautiful,
careful, brainy, cheerful, busy, charming, clever, challenging,
talkative, determined, delightful, distinct, eager, energetic,
enthusiastic, fantastic, fierce, friendly, funny, gifted, healthy,
inquisitive, joyous, kind, lively, lonely, nervous, proud, real, silly, shy,
smiling, splendid, stormy, talented, UNIQUE...**

More about our participants

- **In some ways, our participants are just like us. Unique.**
- **A specific disability that contributes to their uniqueness could include:**
 - **A cognitive challenge that affects the way their brain works**
 - **A communication challenge that affects their ability to speak or understand language**
 - **An emotional challenge that affects how they follow directions or may behave**
 - **A physical challenge that impacts their ability to move**

WHAT does a mentor do?

- You accept the responsibility of being someone's buddy for the duration of the session**
- You play whatever sport or game your buddy is interested in**
- You provide friendship, conversation, and support while keeping your buddy (and other participants) safe**
- You encourage, praise and make your buddy know how awesome they are!**
- Use your best judgement in challenging situations**

Conversation Starters

Building trust and getting to know your mentee

- Find out what they are passionate about...
 - We all like to talk about things we know a lot about.
 - “Can you tell me what your favorite toy/game/television show is?”
 - “What do you like to do when you have free time?”
 - “I would like to know more about your family. Do you have brothers/sisters?”
- Find Common Ground
 - “You have two brothers. I do, too.”
 - “You love to play chess? That’s amazing. I won the chess tournament at my school!”
 - “You don’t like ice cream? You and I are the only two people I know who don’t!”
 - For participants who have communication challenges
 - Read their body language to discover what they enjoy playing and explore the gym together...

Challenges you may face

Different and sometimes unpredictable responses

Sensory overload from too much noise, touch, or visual stimuli

Coordination and communication challenges

When in a challenging situation

When someone else is upset, it's about them, not you.

- Be calm and patient and don't take it personally
- Always use positive reinforcement with positive body language and gestures. (While giving a thumbs up, say, "I love the way you kicked that ball to me.")
- Ignore attention seeking behavior and redirect to something more appropriate. When a child starts to climb the bleachers, say, "Let's go play with the _____ with _____ and have some fun."
- Use "First... then..." If your buddy just wants to sit on the gym floor, try saying "FIRST let's have a catch, THEN we can sit on the gym floor."
- Remind your buddy of the schedule for the night.
 - 1.) Play in the gym
 - 2.) Exercise to music
 - 3.) Parachute
 - 4.) Duck, Duck, Goose
 - 5.) Go home

Some tools to regulate feelings

Emotions happen quickly.

- CREATE SPACE by changing the scenery, stepping away, taking deep breaths
- If the other person isn't aware of what's happening, try to identify what they are feeling
 - For example, if your buddy is getting agitated bouncing a red ball, notice their behavior.
- Naming the feeling(s) "It seems like the red balls are FRUSTRATING you today."
- Accepting the emotion(s) "It's OK to be frustrated. Sometimes I get frustrated when I strike out at bat."
- Practicing mindfulness "Sometimes it helps me to take some deep breaths. Want to try?"
- Identify and reduce triggers "Let's explore the gym. Maybe those balloons would be fun to play with?" Or, "Maybe we could take a break and move to the hallway and try something else?"
- Read your buddy's body language
 - Tune into physical symptoms (holding ears, constant distraction, faster speech)
 - Watch for signs that they enjoy an activity, such as clapping, increased energy, standing taller
- For the mentor: Consider the story you are telling yourself. These feelings belong to someone else, stay calm.

S-C-O-R-E.

YOU will be GREAT

S: SHOW UP.

You don't know what you're good at unless you try

C: COMMIT.

You will matter to your mentee AND to their family. It's important to stick with it.

O: OPEN MIND.

Sometimes it can be hard to be in a new or different situation.

Keep an open mind and discover how rewarding it is to lean into the discomfort.

R: RELATE.

Try to understand the other person. Think about what might motivate their behavior.

You can tap into your own experiences to relate to the way they are experiencing something.

E: EMPATHY & EVALUATE

Spend some time (on the way home, perhaps) thinking about what worked and what didn't. Always think about how your buddy wants to be treated. Each week you will build new tools and you never know when they will come in handy.

Oh- this too.

HAVE FUN.