

# Dare to Dream<sup>®</sup> Manual

EMPOWERING YOUTH  
IN FOSTER CARE  
TO SUCCEED



*Cassie, Dare to Dream<sup>®</sup> mentee*

**“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the **hope** inside yourself. A mentor is someone who allows you to know that no matter how dark the night, in the morning joy will come. A mentor is someone who allows you to see the higher part of yourself when sometimes it becomes hidden to your own view.”**

**-Oprah Winfrey**



<b>01</b>	THE PROBLEM
<b>02</b>	BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP
<b>03</b>	THE SOLUTION
<b>04</b>	MENTOR CHECKLIST
<b>05</b>	PROGRAM MILESTONES
<b>22</b>	ACTIVITY IDEAS
<b>23</b>	CONVERSATION STARTERS
<b>25</b>	WORKING WITH FOSTER FAMILIES
<b>26</b>	MANDATED REPORTING
<b>27</b>	AGING OUT RESOURCES
<b>28</b>	BOOK LIST
<b>29</b>	REFERENCES



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



# THE PROBLEM

Youth who experience foster care disproportionately face instability, often leading to learning differences, limited life skills, health issues, and emotional, social, and behavioral challenges. Approximately 20,000 youth between the ages of 18-21 will age out of foster care each year, often with less financial, emotional, and social support compared to their peers. This, compounded with the trauma they have experienced, can negatively impact their journey into adulthood.

Without a healthy foundation of support, it becomes increasingly difficult to break the generational cycles that affect youth who experience care. Statistics say that 1 out of 5 former foster youth will become homeless after the age of 18, and 60% fall below the poverty line despite earning an income. These, and other, harrowing statistics are what we are working to change



Difficulty forming healthy relationships with adults and peers



Chronic health problems



Substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, or involvement in risky behaviors



Delays in academics and educational progress, which put them behind their peers developmentally

"The consistent, enduring presence of a caring adult in a young person's life can be the difference between staying in school or dropping out, making healthy decisions or engaging in risky behaviors, and realizing one's potential or failing to achieve one's dreams."

(Bruce and Bridgeland, 2014)

# BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP

Youth who have aged out of the foster care system are often expected to be as self-sufficient as their non-foster community peers who benefit from consistent parental support and guidance. Lack of support and available resources, combined with the multiple complex developmental traumas these youth have experienced affects their success and overall well-being. They have to overcome a childhood of abuse and neglect, removal from their caregivers, unstable living arrangements as well as multiple placements, and weak support systems. Youth who have experienced foster care are expected to enter young adulthood without a solid foundation and support system upon which they can build their futures.

It is critical for youth to have the stability of safe and loving relationships for the success of their emotional, mental, and social development. The formation of healthy relationships serves as a key component in healing relational trauma, counteracting negative outcomes, and reaping the following benefits:



**BUILD  
CONFIDENCE &  
SELF-WORTH**



**INCREASE  
COLLEGE  
PARTICIPATION**



**ENCOURAGE  
OVERALL ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE**



**FORM  
TRUST-BASED  
RELATIONSHIPS**



**BUILD  
INDEPENDENT  
LIVING SKILLS**



**POSITIVELY  
IMPACT PHYSICAL  
& MENTAL HEALTH**

# THE SOLUTION: MENTORING YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

## HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In addition to our training and coaching, this manual will help equip you to make a real impact on youth in the foster care community. You will need to be ready to learn about trauma, listen and hear youth's stories, heartaches, and respond with compassion and understanding. You will learn what it means to give feedback that provides encouragement, affirmation, and appropriate guidance. You will be able to help youth set goals so they can start building the foundation to attain their dreams! Your role is to make these youth feel safe, capable and loved. You get the unique opportunity and privilege to help change and mold their self-perceptions and views of the world.

**Mentoring is all about being a consistent friend, positive role model, and advocate. It's knowing how to assess what role to embody in different situations to best support the youth.**

## END GOAL OF PROGRAM

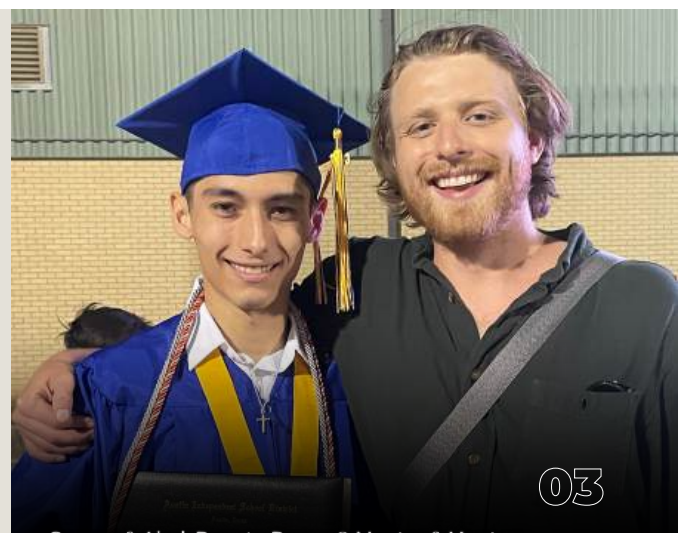
**Short-term goals:** Each youth will have completed appropriately tailored milestones as well as their own goals that they have identified, the youth will see their mentor as an asset to their support system, and the mentor will be a consistent role model who initiates and follows through on their commitment.

**Long-term goals:** Each youth will have a sense of normalcy, placement stability, educational progress, independent living skills, and relational permanency.

**Normalcy:** Providing a young individual with typical childhood experiences helps promote positive mental health, emotional well-being, and identity formation. Mentors look for opportunities to help provide some of these typical experiences (i.e. sports, camps, extracurriculars, etc.).

## ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD MENTOR:

- Consistent
- Good listener
- Patient
- Caring
- Positive role model
- Focuses on strengths
- Non-judgmental
- Empathetic
- Understanding
- Present
- Takes initiative
- Has time to commit



# GETTING STARTED

## MENTOR CHECKLIST



Complete the initial intake phone call with your chapter's case manager OR volunteer coordinator.



Pay fees, sign a waiver and send two character references (personal and professional) and biography and photo to your assigned case manager.



Read the Dare to Dream Manual and pass an initial background check.



Get matched with a youth in foster care.



Get approved through the youth's agency. Send a copy of the driver's license and driving insurance to the case manager OR counter coordinator.



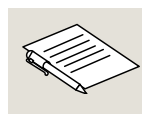
Schedule and attend a Dare to Dream training.



Attend an initial introduction between the case manager, youth, foster parent, and you.



Meet with the youth at least twice a month.



Fill out an impact report form by the 10th of every month.

# PROGRAM MILESTONES

Our 10 recommended milestones are tailored to each individual youth and are supplemented with goals that the youth and family identifies.

**BUILDING RAPPORT**

**PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS**

**SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

**HEALTHY HABITS**

**DRIVER'S LICENSE AND PERSONAL DOCS**

**SEXUAL HEALTH AND INTERNET SAFETY**

**INTERVIEW AND RESUME SKILLS**

**MONEY MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET PLANNING**

**LONG-TERM PLANNING**

**LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**



"Virtually every aspect of human development is fundamentally shaped by interpersonal relationships. So it stands to reason that when close and caring relationships are placed at the center of youth intervention, as is the case in mentoring programs, the conditions for healthy development are ripe."

Dr. Jean Rhodes, Director, Mentor -  
The University of Massachusetts Boston  
Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring

## MILESTONE 1

# BUILDING RAPPORT

“From the moment we enter the world, our deepest need is to love and be loved by other human beings and to engage in lasting relational bonds.” - Danny Silk

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Mentors have to be willing to initiate and follow up. We know that meeting someone new in the context of mentoring can be intimidating. These youth feel the same way, so be intentional and consistent and don't overthink it! Relationships take time and effort.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What is an interesting fact about you?
- What are some of the things that bring you joy/make you happy?
- What is your favorite movie/show and why?
- If you had a whole day to do anything you wanted what would you do?
- After getting to know you what strengths will I discover you have?

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Use these fun tools to create a ritual together

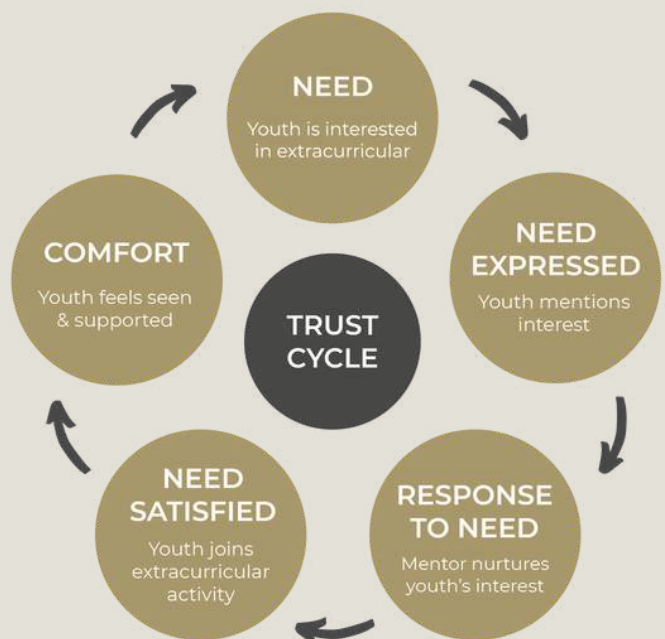
- Click [here](#) for a link to some get-to-know-you cards (Totika Self-Esteem Question Cards).
- Click [here](#) for a link to some get-to-know-you cards (Hygge Question Game).
- Click [here](#) for an Ice Breaker tool (Ice Breaker Ball).

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has built a trust-based connection with you. This milestone is foundational to successful mentoring and it is a process that never ends. Get to know each other, meet needs, connect, build trust, and dream together. Keep in mind that needs are not always verbally expressed.

### THE TRUST CYCLE

These youth have not experienced much consistent trust in their life. Look for EVERY opportunity both big and small to meet needs, say YES, empower, and build trust. Every positive interaction strengthens brain chemistry and builds rapport.



## MILESTONE 2

# PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL GOALS

"Autonomy isn't the opposite of accountability - it's the pathway to it." - Daniel H. Pink

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Goals provide a sense of accomplishment and personal agency. For our youth, they have had many decisions set for their best interest, but they have often not been involved in the decision-making process. As a mentor, you want to involve them in the process of prioritizing milestones and defining personal goals they are interested in working on. Setting goals gives youth a sense of control. Regular follow-up provides encouragement and accountability. Achieving goals boosts self-esteem. The whole process creates a space to learn resilience.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What do you want to achieve?
- How are you going to achieve it?
- How can I support you reaching your goals?

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Click [here](#) for access to a Printable 2021 Goal Kit.
- Let the youth pick out their planner or journal to track goals or get matching ones and bring them to hangouts!

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified, established, achieved, or working on achieving personal and professional goals. Create mirroring goals that you can work on together! Celebrate wins with your mentee, and encourage them to accomplish their goals by having incentives to look forward to.

### SMART GOALS

- Help set up a plan for the youth with milestones achieved in a realistic time frame.
- Celebrate wins- get creative about using positive reinforcement.
- Establish specific and realistic goals (SMART). Ensure goals are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound**.
- Ex. In six weeks time, I'll have studied and passed the chemistry final.
- Ex. Before the end of the school year, I will have joined one extracurricular activity.
- Ex. In three months time, I will have trained and run my first 5k.

## MILESTONE 3

# SUPPORT SYSTEMS & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

"Interpersonal relational trauma requires authentic and intentional relational repair"

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Many of our youth have experienced negative, inconsistent, or harmful relationships. It's a mentor's role to engage in discussions around healthy and unhealthy relationships. As a mentor, you are committing to being a safe and positive person in their life.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Who is your support system?
- How do you identify what makes a healthy and unhealthy relationship? Three things to look for are: Are they safe? Are they loving? Are they supportive?
- Whom can you identify as a healthy and positive person? Be sure to ensure the youth has their contact information.
- In what areas are there specific people you can rely on?

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Youth in foster care have both formal and informal relationships. Formal relationships may include caseworkers, CASA workers, attorneys, and therapists. Informal relationships may include biological parents, siblings, and peers. Some people fall into both of these categories and are considered blended relationships, including foster parents, mentors, teachers, faith leaders, etc.

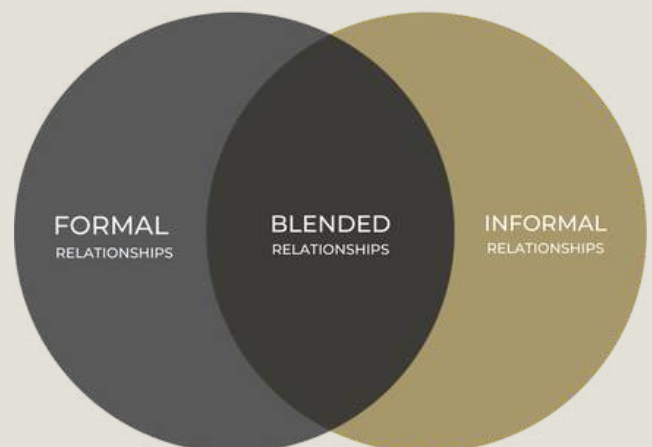
Have the youth draw a Venn diagram and write who falls in the categories.

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth have identified healthy relationships in their lives and can map their circles of support. Model how to identify and build healthy relationships.

### CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

Draw a Venn diagram and have the youth write who falls in the categories. Being a mentor you become a part of the youth's circle of support. As a mentor your role is to partner with the youth's formal and informal support systems (caregiver, caseworker, CASA, attorney, etc.) in order to empower the youth to reach towards their goals. Where would you fit into their Venn diagram?



## MILESTONE 4

# HEALTHY HABITS

“He who has health has hope and he who has hope has everything.” - Thomas Carlyle

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

A foundation to healing is healthy brain chemistry which is influenced by diet, hydration, and movement (exercise). Many of our youth have experienced food insecurity and struggle with healthy habits. Mentors need to provide access to nutritional foods and intentionally spend time outside with their youth. Encourage and model healthy habits and make sure you provide access to snacks and water (at least) every 2 hours! Make an effort to get the youth food if they are hungry.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What activities do you enjoy doing?
- What is an activity that you have always wanted to try?
- What does food mean to you? What is your favorite meal to eat? What do you know how to cook? What is a meal that you have always wanted to try or learn to cook?

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Read [this](#) blog post about Nutrition and Hydration through the eyes of trauma.
- DIET: Provide healthy snacks at hangouts!
- H2O: Provide a trackable water bottle sample [here](#).
- EXERCISE: Take walks during hangouts, do physical fitness classes together!

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has opportunities for healthy choices (1) nutritional diet (2) hydration (3) movement (exercise). Inquire if they are connected to their family's cultural foods

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION CONTINUED

#### FOOD/COOKING:

- Bring over some cookbooks or online recipes for the mentee to choose a meal from and go shopping for ingredients, cook together- incorporate favorite foods with new helpful healthy foods.
- Cook a meal for the foster family together.
- Order Hello Fresh, Blue Apron, or any other meal delivery service, or attend a local cooking class together!
- Visit a local farmers market!

#### GETTING ACTIVE:

- Determine the physical activities they are interested in (yoga, hiking, basketball, dance, etc.)
- Playing team sports is a great opportunity for peer engagement and identity formation.
- Talk to your Case Manager about donations or discounts for the YMCA, gyms, and sporting events.
- Click [here](#) to read more about physical fitness for teens.

## MILESTONE 4

# HEALTHY HABITS (CONTINUED)

### WHY ARE FOOD GROUPS IMPORTANT?

- **Carbohydrates:** They are the main source of energy for our body and brain; fibers are complex carbohydrates that contribute to digestive and cardiovascular health.
- **Protein:** They play an essential role to support the development and repair of muscles, tissues, bones, hair, skin, nails, as well as the function of hormones, neurotransmitters, and countless other bodily functions. Proteins contain many essential and beneficial vitamins and minerals. Protein ensures satiety, which ultimately leads to increased focus and engagement.
- **Fats:** They are a source of energy that helps our body absorb certain vitamins like A, D, and E. Our brain also uses omega 3-fatty acids to build cells that are important for learning and memory.

### WHY ARE VITAMINS AND MINERALS IMPORTANT?

- **Iron:** An essential nutrient our body cannot produce itself. The key role of iron is that it transports oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Iron is a key nutrient in the childhood years because of the rapid rate of growth and development. Studies have shown when children are iron deficient, results can be dizziness, headaches, lower IQ, increased social problems, and inattention.
- **Zinc:** A required nutrient the body is unable to make on its own. Zinc can be found in every cell within the body, and helps with immune function, growth and development, assisting the body in creating proteins, the development of new DNA, wound healing, digestion, nerve function, and metabolism. It can be found in both animal and plant products alike.
- **Choline:** Choline is a nutrient that plays a role in memory, muscle movement, regulating heartbeat, creating DNA, and body cell structure.

### TIPS FOR BUILDING A HEALTHY SNACK

Try your best to combine a carbohydrate source with a protein or fat source. The carbohydrate source is what will provide energy, and the protein and/or fat source is what will provide a sense of fullness. Together, they provide an energy-giving and satisfying snack! Some fun examples:

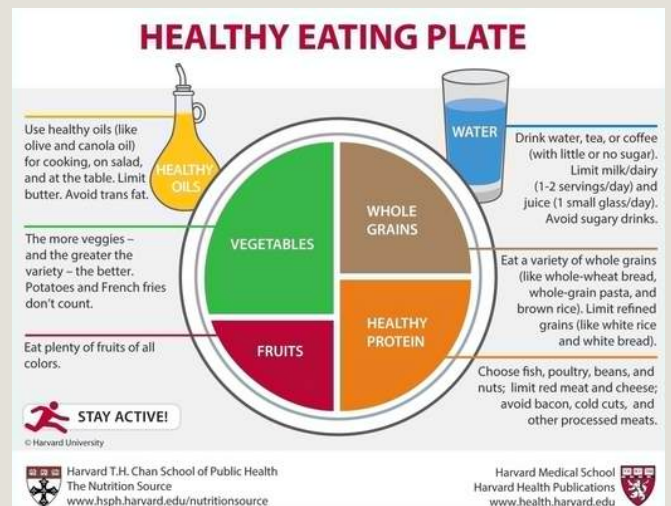
- Cheese and crackers
- Trail mix
- Apple and nut butter
- Baked tortilla chips and guac

### TIPS FOR BUILDING A HEALTHY MEAL

The more colors involved in the meal, the more vitamins, and minerals are present. If appropriate, make it a fun game with your mentee for how many different colors can be part of a meal.

### HYDRATION

Hydration helps regulate body temperature, minimizes infections, spreads nutrients through the body, and allows organs to function properly. Hydration increases mood and cognition and helps improve sleep.



## MILESTONE 5

# DRIVER'S LICENSE & PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

"The greatest gifts you can give your children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence." -Denis Waitley

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Transportation is an important step in independence for youth because it gives them the ability to get to work, school, and other activities on their own. Engage with the youth's caregiver and/or caseworker on this milestone.

### DRIVING CHECKLIST FOR YOUTH (IF OVER 18)

Many youth in care are missing important govt. issued documents, advocating for gathering these documents is essential - Partner with the youth's case worker.

- \_\_\_Proof of adult drivers education
- \_\_\_Social Security card
- \_\_\_Proof of US citizenship or lawful presence in the United States
- \_\_\_Proof of state residency
- \_\_\_Proof of identity (ID card)
- \_\_\_The youth driver's license fee waiver letter from your caseworker or other CPS staff (if still in foster care)
- \_\_\_A car that has current registration, inspection stickers, and insurance
- \_\_\_The driver's license application

*Contact your case manager when additional questions arise.*

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth have obtained a license and learned to use public transportation (if applicable in your city).

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

DRIVING:

- Pick up an application for a driver's license.
- Get the necessary paperwork together.
- Enroll youth in driver's education classes.
- Help the youth study for the written test.
- Talk about the responsibility that comes with driving.

POTENTIAL HURDLES:

- Paying for a car.
- Finding a car to complete driving hours in.
- Money to pay for insurance and gas.
- Paying for driver's education course. Check with your case manager to inquire about applying for funds to cover driver's education course.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:

- Identify the types of public transportation available.
- Go together on routes that are helpful for the youth and show them how to read transportation schedules and maps.

## MILESTONE 6

# SEXUAL HEALTH & INTERNET SAFETY

"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live." -Jim Rohn

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

We want mentors to feel empowered to have open conversations about sex, sexuality, safety, and boundaries with their mentees.

This milestone is not one big conversation to check a box, but a commitment to non-judgmentally listen and equip youth with trauma-informed tools to make positive and safe choices with their bodies and online. We want to **engage caregivers** to be a part of these conversations.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What do you know about sex? Have you had a safe person share with you about sex and have you been able to ask questions?
- What does safe sex mean to you?
- When do you think is the appropriate age to have sex?
- What do you value most in a partner?
- When is the best time to have a child?
- Do you have a social media account?
- What do you think of social media?
- Who do you "friend" online?
- How do you use social media?

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth have a basic understanding of positive and safe sex education and internet safety. Be an "askable" adult!

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION - SEXUAL HEALTH

- Speak about the importance of consent.
- Talk about condoms and different forms of birth control to protect against unplanned pregnancies and STDs/STIs.
- Click [here](#) for information on how to approach the sex education talk.

These conversations can be uncomfortable but with permission from caregivers, we can have real, healthy, and hopeful conversations with youth about sexual health, safe sex, and healthy boundaries.

Youth have the right and ability to make informed choices about **their** bodies. It is our job as caring adults in their life to provide education, respect, and support for this life-long exploration. We commit to communicating with **truth and honesty** and do not stigmatize, shame, or create fear.

## MILESTONE 6

# SEXUAL HEALTH & INTERNET SAFETY

(CONTINUED)

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION - INTERNET SAFETY

- Describe the purpose of popular social networking platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok).
- Explain the function of a personal profile.
- Help to make their personal profile safer with permission.
- Explain three potential consequences of posting inappropriate photos/language on your profile.
- Engage in conversations about bullying/cyber-bullying and in-person bullying.
- Talk about "friending" people they know and unfriending people they do not know.
- Click [here](#) and [here](#) to learn more about youth internet safety.

*Disclaimer: Make sure you have written permission from the youth's caregivers (text/email) to be "friends" on social media. Always let the youth initiate social media connection and if you choose to accept make sure that your profile is a reflection of you as a role model.*

### S.M.A.R.T - A GUIDE TO INTERNET SAFETY

S

**SAFE:** Share with the youth that they should not give out personal information such as their full name, email address, phone number, house address, or school name to people they don't know.



M

**MEET:** Tell them about the dangers of meeting with anyone they have spoken to online.



A

**ACCEPTING:** Explain the importance of not opening direct messages, emails, or files from people they don't know- they may include viruses or inappropriate content.



R

**RELIABLE:** Remind them that just because something is posted on the internet does not mean it is true or accurate information. Emphasize that not everyone will be truthful about their identity or age.



T

**TELL:** Express that you are a safe space and your mentee can come to you with any questions, concerns, or worries.



## MILESTONE 7

# INTERVIEW & RESUME SKILLS

"The secret of acing a job interview is to stop believing in luck and start believing in yourself."

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Help youth create their résumé and know how to adapt it based on the job they are applying for. Teach youth how to look and apply for jobs. Support youth in practicing interview skills. Some employers/companies are willing to work with at-risk youth and can provide employment as well as professional development.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION - RÉSUMÉ

- Show the youth your resume.
- Research fields, jobs, and companies that the youth is interested in.
- Identify a list of potential jobs.
- Show the youth a few sample resume formats (e.g., functional, chronological). Have youth choose the format they like.
- Develop a resume using one of these formats together.
- Incorporate [StrengthsFinder](#) results into a resume.
- Explain what a cover letter is and what it should contain.
- Develop a cover letter to accompany a resume or application together.

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has their own physical and electronic résumé (summary of work experience, career, qualifications, and education). Youth feels confident and competent in interviewing. Youth has an opportunity to conduct an informational interview in a field of their interest.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION - INTERVIEW SKILLS

- Describe the role of the interview in the job application process.
- Research the company and prepare
- Model appropriate grooming, attire, and behavior for a job interview.
- Help them shop for a new outfit!
- Identify possible interview questions and develop responses. Make flashcards!
- Describe the verbal and non-verbal communication skills used in an interview.
- Practice a job interview or have the youth schedule an informational interview- go with them if appropriate or follow up.
- Teach them to send a thank you card!
- Click [here](#) for a list of interview tips & flashcards!

## MILESTONE 8

# MONEY MANAGEMENT & BUDGET PLANNING

"A budget is telling your money where to go, instead of wondering where it went." -John Maxwell

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Support youth in financial literacy: setting goals, budgeting, saving, spending, borrowing, and using credit. Learning how to manage money will help youth in long-term financial success. We want to engage caregivers to be a part of these conversations/action steps.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

Money Mindset:

- What does money mean to you? Do you like money? Is it important to you? How did your family view money? What are your short-term and long-term financial goals?
- Talk to them about what money means to you and important lessons you have learned.

Income:

- Are you making any money? Do you have a part-time job, allowance, any form of income?

Debit/Credit:

- Talk about the dangers of credit cards, loans, borrowing, and debt.

Savings/Investment:

- How much would you like to save? Are you saving in a jar or investing it in a bank? Do you what it means to invest your money?

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has basic comprehension and confidence about their money mindset, savings, budgets, and ability to open up a bank account.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Start an emergency fund by saving between \$500 and \$1000.
- Save 10-15% of income until you reach 3-6 months of expenses.
- Encourage them IF they get a credit card to only use it on gas and groceries. When the bill comes, pay it off in FULL.
- Talk to them about a Roth IRA.
- Research their dream job salary (ie: a teacher makes \$42,000/year). Then create a sample budget based on their dream job salary and projected expenses (calculate the cost of living).
- Help them create a simple budget.
- Take them to meet with a financial advisor to educate themselves on wise financial decisions. If possible, help them to set up their own bank account.
- Click [here](#) for a budgeting resource.

## MILESTONE 9

# LONG-TERM PLANNING

"Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." -Warren Buffett

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Help youth identify and pursue their next steps on one of the following paths:

- 1) College/ Trade School
- 2) Military Service
- 3) Workforce

We want our youth to have stability and a clear direction to pursue their dreams and achieve independence. Make sure graduating youth have a post-grad plan.

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified their next step in life based on their interests and feels empowered with the practical tools and emotional support to follow through on their plan. Mentors have connected youth to recruiters, college visits, or assisted in filling out applications.

### COLLEGE / TRADE SCHOOL

- Click [here](#) for some college application tips and [here](#) for trade school tips.
- Click [here](#) for a College Planning guide.
- Visit FAFSA.org to help fill out the necessary paperwork.
- See if the school requires an SAT or an ACT; help your youth study and take one of those tests.
- Help your youth have their high school transcript or GED sent directly to colleges they are applying to.
- Identify if your state offers a [tuition waiver program](#) for foster youth for state schools.
- Contact a liaison at the institution they're applying to see if special paperwork needs to be filled out.
- Help the youth apply to the colleges directly and fill out their application.
- See if an entrance exam is necessary to check for placement of English, language, and math skills.
- Encourage the youth to apply for a work-study program \*if applicable.
- Apply for housing and find the best place suitable for the youth.
- Apply for meal plans and find the best one suitable for the youth.
- Apply for scholarships and grants (see scholarship section for those that apply to foster youth).
- Bring your youth on a college or trade school tour.

## MILESTONE 9

# LONG-TERM PLANNING

(CONTINUED)

### MILITARY

Click [here](#) to see if any medical conditions will prevent them from serving in the military.

THINGS FOR THE YOUTH TO KNOW BEFORE JOINING:

- Join for you and no one else.
- Fitness Foundation: Research to see what the physical expectations are to get in.
- Take Initiative: Research jobs in the military you'd like or places you could potentially move to.
- Dealing with the Recruiter: Make an appointment and bring all necessary paperwork with you and make sure you have an adult with you to review the contract **before** signing.
- Medical Records: Be truthful about your medical history.
- ASVAB – Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery: Buy study guides and take practice tests.
- Stay out of trouble: Your criminal record will be accessed. Be truthful when asked.
- Expect to gain discipline.
- Expect to be away from friends and family for long periods.
- Expect to gain an education and lifelong skills.
- Click [here](#) to read about joining the military.

### WORKFORCE

- Make sure the youth has all necessary paperwork (school/employment records, birth certificate, driver's license, Social Security card.)
- Help them work on networking and practice interviewing.
- Brainstorm together what the youth is passionate about and what they are looking for in a company.
- Contact companies they are interested in to see if they have any shadowing/internship opportunities or set up an informational interview with someone in their field of interest.
- Work with the youth to create a resume and cover letter.
- Encourage them to clean up their social media accounts.

## MILESTONE 10

# LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

"Home is not a place but a feeling."

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

It is essential youth have a plan for safe and stable living conditions. Mentors can help youth create a plan for ensuring that they have arrangements for independent living or applying for housing programs.

### INDEPENDENT LIVING

- Identify and calculate all start-up costs (e.g., application fee, security deposit, utility deposits, installation fees, first month's rents).
- Create a list of necessary items (e.g., furniture, kitchen equipment, towels, and linens).
- Have 2 pay stubs for proof of employment. (Some complexes require 2-3x the total monthly amount you make to make sure youth can afford the rent.)
- Click [here](#) to read some tips for first-time independent living.
- Click [here](#) for an apartment checklist.

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified a safe and stable place to live and is working on becoming self-sufficient.

### TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS

- TLPs provide housing and services to older youth in foster care and those who have aged out. These programs provide an environment where youth can continue to hone the skills needed to live independently.
- TLPs can have waitlists- apply early and check in often!
- Engage with the youth's caseworker to determine eligibility and appropriateness.

### LIVING WITH RELATIVES OR FRIENDS

- Youth may have a friend or family member that they can live with. Engage in conversations around expectations, boundaries, etc.
- The caseworker may need to approve/license the placement  
*\*depending on the status of the youth.*

## EXTRA MILESTONE

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

"Small acts when multiplied by millions of people can transform the world." -Howard Zinn

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

We want to cultivate a heart of giving back and service for our youth. Encourage youth in taking an interest in their community and finding where they "fit in" to serve best! For youth from hard places volunteering/community service can be therapeutic and an important part of healing.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Have you ever volunteered before?
- What does volunteering mean to you? Is it important to you?
- What does it mean to you to help someone in need?
- What can you offer the world?
- What do you want to learn or achieve?

*Disclaimer: Talk with the caregiver first to make sure whichever activity/event is chosen will not be a trigger based on their past trauma.*

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has an opportunity to volunteer in the community with their mentor. Youth is able to identify the types of volunteering they enjoy.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Try a whole day of random acts of kindness.
- Find a community tree-planting group.
- Volunteer at an animal shelter.
- Purchasing a meal/drink in a drive-thru.
- Cook for the youth's family together.
- Go to a local park and pick up trash/recycle.
- Do yard work for an elderly neighbor.
- Join a community garden.
- Deliver canned foods to a local food bank.
- Visit a local senior center.



## EXTRA MILESTONE

# MINDFULNESS & SELF-REGULATION

"Mindfulness is a way of befriending ourselves and our experience." - Jon Kabat Zinn

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Encourage youth to develop healthy and positive mindfulness practices. Help youth identify what self-regulation practices they enjoy. Mindfulness and regulation are key for youth to achieve resiliency and build on their strengths to overcome the effects of trauma.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

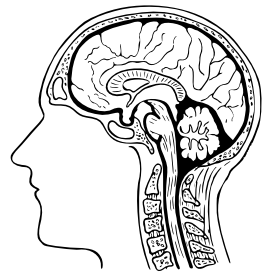
- What helps you relax when you become stressed, anxious, or fearful?
- What is your sleep routine like?
- When do you feel most anxious? What are your triggers?

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified techniques to practice mindfulness and regulation strategies.

### WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention to the present with our body, mind, and feelings. To be mindful is to observe one's thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad.



### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Try mindfulness practices like journaling, crafts, painting, meditation, and yoga.
- Try the 7-11 breathing regulation tool. Breathe in for a count of 7 and out for 11; repeat.
- Try mindfulness health apps like Headspace or Calm for meditation, breathing, and sleep.
- Try paying attention to what keeps you in the present. Music, board games, coloring books, exercise, fidget tools, or sensory toys.
- Make a coping skills box with ideas your youth comes up with to use when stressed.
- Have a journal you share with youth where they can write hard things they have trouble talking about and respond to them in the journal.

# EXTRA MILESTONE

---

## SELF-ESTEEM

"It's not who you are that holds you back. It's who you think you're not." - Denis Waitley

### OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

Youth from hard places often struggle with positive beliefs about themselves, we want to support, affirm, and encourage them to "dare to dream" and believe in who they are and can become!

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Talk about youth's strengths and what they see in themselves (take [Strengths Finder](#) test).
- Explain how self-esteem is related to self-awareness and self-image.
- Describe how self-esteem is affected by the willingness to try new things.

### MILESTONE GOALS

Youth has identified techniques to strengthen their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and positive self-regard.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

Help youth develop a positive self-regard and a healthy worldview by empowering them to answer these questions:

- Who am I?
- What is likable and lovable about me?
- What am I capable of?
- How can I make sense out of what's happened to me?
- Whom do I want to be in the future?
- How do I want people to feel about me?

### SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

#### DREAM BOARDS

STEP 1: Bring magazines — lots of them! Scissors, markers, tape, or push pins.

STEP 2: Buy or make a corkboard with a frame.

STEP 3: Identify personal, professional, academic, health, spiritual, family, financial, activity/ hobby, and social dreams.

STEP 4: Find and cut out pictures together that remind youth of goals.

#### FIND YOUR PASSION PROJECT

STEP 1: Draw three circles (think Venn diagram).

STEP 2: First circle: write passions.

STEP 3: Second circle: write talents/gifts/strengths.

STEP 4: Third circle: write dreams, goals, and positive qualities people see in you.

REFLECT: Where do they intersect? what jobs, hobbies, activities accomplish all three?



## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Visit a native plant sale or plant nursery
- Train for and participate in a 5K together
- Go to the movies/movies in the park during the summer
- Go to the park and have a picnic
- Go to an arcade
- Go bowling
- Go mini-golfing
- Volunteer together at an animal shelter or food bank
- Tutor the youth or help with homework
- Learn to do something creative, such as knitting, quilting, making pottery, taking photographs, or painting
- Do a puzzle together
- Take a trip to the library (make it extra fun by picking out a book for each other and discussing them at your next meet up)
- Go hiking
- Rent kayaks/paddleboards
- Go to a play or museum
- Go to a sporting event
- Play a board game together
- Go to their school and have lunch with the youth
- Take the youth on a tour of your workplace
- Go to a light show
- Take a yoga class
- Go shopping for back to school supplies or a first-day outfit
- Take them on a college tour
- Go go-karting
- Create a vision board together to help the youth visualize their goals
- Go on a food tour. Example: All the best BBQ places

# CONVERSATION STARTERS

We want you to build a meaningful connection with your youth as their mentor/role model. These are some ideas that can foster intentional communication. Think of them as tips for success.

## **Good advice to give to your mentee that they may never have heard before:**

- Do the best you can. No one can judge your best but you.
- Do more than you're asked. When someone hires you to perform a task, always deliver more than is expected of you.
- Take pleasure in your work. There are few things in life as satisfying as doing a task to the best of your abilities.
- Be on time. Make it a practice to always be early or on time for your commitments.
- Ask for what you want. There is no harm in asking and there is no harm in receiving.
- Be honest. You will generate trust, and trust will generate opportunity and respect.
- Stand up for what is right. Even if others disagree, don't compromise your core values or your integrity.
- There will be consequences. Doing the right thing is usually no more difficult or time-consuming than doing the wrong thing.
- Don't put things off. One of the keys to success in school and business is to do what needs to be done right away.

## **Tips when asking the youth questions:**

- An open-ended question requires an answer greater than a single word or two. A closed-ended question can be answered with a simple "Yes," "No," or another very simple answer.
- After you've asked your open-ended question(s) and have not gotten the response you were looking for, it is then effective and acceptable to ask more specific questions like, "What happened?"
- Another technique that can help you generate a more thoughtful answer is to ask a closed-ended question followed up with "Why?" or "How?"

# CONVERSATION STARTERS (CONTINUED)

When navigating conversations with the youth it is important to listen first and be both open-minded and non-reactive. Listen to what is being said, interpret the meaning, and then provide feedback based on what your mentee needs. This takes time as trust is formed, but can help in establishing healthy and honest communication.

## Examples of open-ended questions:

- What does that mean to you?
- What do you think will happen next?
- How did you go about solving that problem?
- How did you make that choice?
- What information do you have about that?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Why do you feel that way?
- What have you considered as areas of growth for the year?
- What do you feel contributed to your success today?
- Imagine it is the end of the school year. What would you want to say about the year?
- How exactly did the fight between the two of you start?
- How did you and your best friend meet?
- Why do you seem upset today?
- What are some of the things that bring you the most joy?
- What interests do you and your siblings share, and which interests do you not share?
- Do you have a pet? What are they like?
- Do you like animals and why?
- When is your birthday? How do you like to celebrate?
- What do you usually do during rainstorms?
- What is your favorite flavor of ice cream and why?
- What is your favorite movie and why?



# WORKING WITH FOSTER FAMILIES

National Angels is committed to working collaboratively with supportive and caring adults who are part of a youth's life. These relationships may include a foster parent, kinship parent, adoptive parent, guardian, biological parent, teacher, coach, CASA, RTC/group home staff, or their social worker/caseworker.

This page outlines how mentors can interact with these adults in healthy ways to create the best possible circle of support for youth in our program. Youth who are 18 and older and have aged out of care will have more natural networks.

Involving important adults in the mentor relationship is one of the best things you can do to ensure the success of the program for your mentee. There are some aspects of involving caregivers that can be challenging, but the goal of our program is to build a cohesive connection with a collective goal to help the youth better themselves.

**We have a few simple strategies to help navigate relationships with caregivers:**

- We will make sure to communicate with caregivers why our Dare to Dream program exists and what we hope to achieve for youth in care. You will need to make sure to communicate why you want to mentor and how you hope to support their child.
- During initial meet-ups (for youth in foster or kinship homes ages 11-17) your Regional Angels case manager will go over a Hot Topic Agreement with the mentee and caregiver to ensure that you know which subjects of discussion caregivers are comfortable with being addressed. This helps foster trust and respect for the caregiver.
- As a mentor, it is important to keep the caregiver in the loop with your plans, clearly communicating where you will be with the mentee at all times and about drop-off and pick-up logistics.
- You can help reinforce the goals, values, and decisions of caregivers by supplementing them with further wisdom and guidance.
- Have open communication with the caregiver about what you are working on with the youth so that everyone is on the same page.
- Utilize a group text to make a plan with the youth about when and where you will be.
- Emphasize that participation in the program should not be used as a reward or punishment. Caregivers should not keep the youth from seeing you as a punishment in hopes of modifying behavior.
- Get together with the foster or kinship family, share meals, attend community events, picnics, or group trips to cultivate the mentor-parent relationship.

# MANDATED REPORTING

All volunteers and mentors are considered mandated reporters. This means that National Angels requires anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect to report their suspicions to the appropriate local abuse hotline or law enforcement agency. If a volunteer sees something that they are uncomfortable with/don't understand in the home or with a worker/volunteer, the volunteer should not confront the youth's parents, caseworker, CASA volunteer, etc. Dare to Dream® mentors should bring those concerns to their National Angels case manager.

National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453



# AGING OUT RESOURCES

## EDUCATION

[Achieving Higher Education Goals](#)

[College Fund for Foster Youth](#)

## MEDICAID

[Health Coverage](#)

[Health-Care Coverage for Youth in Foster Care and After](#)

## GENERAL NEEDS

[How to Establish Credit](#)

[Transition to Adulthood/Independent Living](#)

[Support Services](#)

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Family Fellowship

College Scholarships and Support for Higher Education

College Scholarships

Scholarships.com

Scholarships and Grants

Casey Family Programs\_(dedicated to improving the child welfare system and providing educational opportunities for children in foster care.)

Horatio Alger Scholarships (between \$2,500 and \$10,000 disbursed annually, to each qualified recipient.)

All-Star College Scholarship (awards one incoming college freshman under the age of 20 up to \$40,000 to help cover the costs of college, including tuition, books, and other expenses.)

Porch Scholarship (To help assist the next generation of professionals, Porch will award a \$2,000 scholarship four times a year to eligible students.)



# AUSTIN ANGELS

## RECOMMENDED BOOK LIST

### **TRAUMA-INFORMED BOOKS**

- The Connected Child by Dr. Karyn Purvis
- The Whole-Brain Child by Daniel J. Siegel
- The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk, MD
- The Deepest Well by Nadine Burke Harris, MD
- Childhood Disrupted by Donna Jackson Nakazawa
- What happened to You by Bruce Perry and Oprah

### **TEEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOOKS**

- StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath
- 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens by Sean Covey

### **MENTOR AND LEADERSHIP BOOKS**

- Grit by Angela Duckworth
- Start with Why by Simon Sinek
- Dare to Lead by Brené Brown
- How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

### **MINDFULNESS BOOKS**

- A Still Quiet Place for Teens by Amy Saltzman
- Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Daniel J. Siegal
- Stuff That Sucks: A Teen's Guide to Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can by Ben Sedley

# REFERENCES

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012). Health care of youth aging out of foster care. *Pediatrics*, 130(6), 1170-1173. doi: 10.1542/peds.2012-2603

Berzin, S. C., Singer, E., & Hokanson, K. (2014). Emerging Versus Emancipating: The Transition to Adulthood for Youth in Foster Care. *Journal Of Adolescent Research*, 29(5), 616-638.

Bilaver, L., & Courtney, M. (2006). Science says: Foster care youth. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Retrieved from [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS27\\_FosterCare.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS27_FosterCare.pdf)

Brown, M. J., PhD. (2018, December 7). What Is Choline? An Essential Nutrient With Many Benefits. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/what-is-choline#sources>

Casey, Jim. Youth Opportunities Initiative. (2012). Promoting development of resilience among young people in foster care. Issue brief. St. Louis, MO: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org/issue-brief%E2%80%94promoting-development-resilience-among-young-people-foster-care>

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). Helping youth transition to adulthood: Guidance for foster parents. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

Edwards, S. (n.d.). Sugar and the Brain. Sugar and the Brain | Harvard Medical School. <https://hms.harvard.edu/news-events/publications-archive/brain/sugar-brain>.

Freundlich, M. (2011). The adolescent brain: New research and its implications for young people transitioning from foster care. St. Louis, MO: Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. Retrieved from <http://jimcaseyyouth.org/adolescent-brain%E2%80%94new-research-and-its-implications-young-people-transitioning-foster-care>

Greeson, J. K. P., Thompson A.E., Evans-Chase, M., Ali, S. (2015). Child Welfare Professionals' Attitudes and Beliefs About Child-Welfare Based-Natural Mentoring for Older Foster Youth in Foster Care. *Journal of Social Service Research*. 41(1). 93-112.

Gunnars, K. B. (2019, March 8). 10 Science-Backed Reasons to Eat More Protein. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-reasons-to-eat-more-protein>

Kaplan, S. J., Skolnik, L., & Turnbull, A. (2009). Enhancing The Empowerment of Youth in Foster Care: Supportive Services. *Child Welfare*. 88(1). 133-158.

Kohn, J. K. (2021, March 29). Iron. Eat Right. <https://www.eatright.org/Error-500?aspxerrorpath=/food/vitamins-and-supplements/types-of-vitamins-and-nutrients/iron>

Kubala, M. J. S. (2018, November 14). Zinc: Everything You Need to Know. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/zinc#sources>

## REFERENCES

Mackie, T., Hyde, J., Palinkas, L., Niemi, E., & Leslie, L. (2016). Fostering Psychotropic Medication Oversight for Children in Foster Care: A National Examination of States' Monitoring Mechanisms. *Administration And Policy In Mental Health And Mental Health Services Research*, 1-15. doi:10.1007/s10488-016-0721-x

Nutrition rules that will fuel your workout. (2021, February 23). Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/nutrition-rules-that-will-fuel-your-workout/art-20390073?reDate=08072021>

Outreach Program:Center for Information Assurance Research & Education | The University of New Mexico. (2019). Center for Information Assurance Research & Education. <https://ia.mgt.unm.edu/outreach-program.asp>

Prado, E. L., & Dewey, K. G. (2014, April 1). Nutrition and brain development in early life. OUP Academic. <https://academic.oup.com/nutritionreviews/article/72/4/267/1859597>

Silk, D. (2013). *Loving Our Kids on Purpose: Making a Heart to Heart Connection* (Revised ed.). Destiny Image Publishers.

Spencer, R.C., Ward, R., Collins M. E., Smashnaya, S. (2010). Mentoring for Young People Leaving Foster Care: Promise and Potential Pitfalls. *Social Work*. 55(3). 225-234.

The 6 health benefits of volunteering. (2017). Mayo Clinic Health System. <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/helping-people-changing-lives-the-6-health-benefits-of-volunteering>

Trans fat is double trouble for your heart health. (2020, February 13). Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/in-depth/trans-fat/art-20046114>

Weinandy, L.W. (2018, November 14). Boost your brain power with the right nutrition. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/blog/boost-your-brain-power-with-the-right-nutrition>