At some point all relationships will come to an end; it’s a normal and natural part of life. However, it is critical that this stage of closure not be overlooked. Young people today have many adults come and go in their lives. Very rarely are they provided the opportunity to say goodbye properly. Consider the following guidelines as you and your student work towards closing your match:

1. Verbally clarify the reasons for match closure with both the mentee and mentor.

If the match is ending for non-behavioral reasons, be sure that the mentee is clear that it is not their behavior or fault that the match must end.

1. Discuss the memories you share from the time you have spent together.

Think back to the first time that you met. How have either of you changed in the time you have been together? Have you seen improvements in the mentee socially, academically, or behaviorally? What favorite activity did you do together? Use part of your last session to reflect on your mentoring relationship. Take time to tell each other what positive qualities you appreciate in each other. Use this opportunity to build-up your student by encouraging them with words of affirmation.

1. Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial, and resentment.

Help your mentee to express his or her emotions by modeling the behavior. For example, if your relationship is coming to a close and you and your mentee enjoyed your time together, you might say something like “I am going to really miss you. I have enjoyed our time together.” However, you must be honest. If your relationship is coming to a close and your time together was all right but not great, then don’t lie and say that you are going to be sad that this is over. Also, do not expect the young person to reciprocate. Even though you shared your emotions as a means of modeling how to, your mentee still might not feel comfortable sharing his or her emotions.

1. Provide options for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful, and affirming way.

Don’t wait until the last meeting to say goodbye. Make sure you start addressing this issue as soon as you know the relationship will be coming to a close.

1. Address appropriate situations for staying in touch with your mentee.

Many matches are interested in staying in contact in the future. Just to be clear, future contact must be with the mutual and informal agreement of you [the mentor], the mentee, and his/her parent/guardian. Don’t assume that just because you want to stay in contact that your mentee will want to as well. It must be mutual. Also, be sure not to make promises you won’t keep [e.g., that you will keep in touch].

If future contact is agreed upon, Affinity Mentoring will not be responsible for monitoring and supporting the relationship after the match has ended. Furthermore, Affinity Mentoring will not be liable for any incidents that occur after the match has closed.

\*Adapted from Mentoring Partnership of Long Island, *The ABC’s of Mentoring*.