



Project Amp pairs youth with young adults in recovery for brief mentorship that enhances resiliency and prevents alcohol and other drug use.

WHY PROJECT AMP? A MENTOR SHARES HER EXPERIENCE

My name is Kayce Courson and I am a person in recovery from drugs and alcohol. I was presented with the opportunity to be a Project Amp mentor through the Collegiate Recovery Center at my university. I eagerly applied to be a mentor because my passion is recovery, prevention, and intervention. My early experiences in life also gave me a genuine compassion for adolescents who might be experiencing some of the same social and environmental risk factors that I believe influenced me in my teens. I welcomed the opportunity to be part of the solution, offer my support of the research initiative at the Center for Social Innovation, and most importantly, to reach out to young people early in their journey through life.

The progression through the mentorship was an enriching experience. It was not only easy to connect to the adolescent I was paired with, but she was willing and eager to explore new ideas about goal setting and social influences. Throughout our time together, a revelation occurred to me: this young girl already possessed all the necessary characteristics – strength, resilience, and willingness – that would enable her to skillfully navigate this world. After discussing how to recognize risks, she realized that she intuitively already knew these skills and could imagine herself employing alternative avenues for exiting or totally averting risky situations. She was very similar to myself at that age. All I needed to do was listen to her as her equal, her friend, and her mentor. She did all the “heavy lifting.”

I believe in the importance and impact of Project Amp. From my on-the-ground involvement, I can see that the success lies in the connection between one human being and another.

Creating a dynamic of trust and equality early in the process opens the door for meaningful and influential discussions that both the youth participant and mentor can benefit from. Subsequent conversations allow youth to explore new ideas free from the sometimes intimidating or overbearing appearance of authority figures such as teachers, counselors, or even peers.

Who knew adolescents are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to connect to others with similar experiences? Who knew that they wanted to set specific goals for themselves and talk about wellness and social influences? I am not surprised at this reality anymore. I am surprised by the indescribable benefit to my life that the mentorship process has brought.

Gratefully,
Kayce J Courson

