



## Precious Times - Term Two 2021

Mentoring Weekend - Precious Blood School Riruta – October 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> 2021



Dear Precious Girls,

It is a joy for me to, once again, compile an edition of Precious Times – summarising another great weekend of mentoring, learning and interacting with girls from other schools and our devoted mentors.

### Introduction

The turnout was great with 56 of 57 of you in school turning up for the event. As we started doing last term, failure to attend the mentoring event results in automatic forfeiture of the term's school fees. This is the second mentoring event for the 2021 academic year. The theme of the event was **Commitment** which is the 'C' in our ABC theme. To simplify the theme, we divided commitment into biteable sizes and covered the following topics:

- ✚ Self-awareness and assertiveness
- ✚ How to deal with negative peer pressure
- ✚ How to deal with failure

### Self-awareness and assertiveness

Muthoni took you through the session on self awareness and assertiveness. She explained that we all use different styles of communication in different situations but we tend to rely more on one style. The style of communication is a learned behaviour, and behaviour can be changed. You cannot change or improve the style of communication until you identify what it is. To help you in this, Muthoni had each of you fill out a questionnaire to identify your style of communication which is either one of these three:

- 📌 **Passive behaviour** – when people avoid eye contact, cover their mouths and speak in a low or hesitant voice. They may go along with something they know is wrong because they are too scared to say no. They are timid and often regret not saying what they intended. **Passive behaviour may be considered weak.** People who act passively often feel as if others take advantage of them. They may feel hurt, angry, or resentful or even depressed. When you hold back what you think and feel, others don't get to know or understand you. The group doesn't benefit from your input or ideas. If you start to feel like your opinions or feelings don't count, it can lower your confidence and rob you of the chance to get recognition and positive feedback for your good ideas.
- 📌 **Aggressiveness** is when people act as if they are more important than others and behave in a pushy way. They are overconfident and only focus on their own needs. They do not consider or respect other people's views or need. They act as if their point of view is the only relevant way to think and make it uncomfortable for others to express disagreement. They may stare, get too close, shout, threaten or hurt someone in their determination to coerce or compel others to agree with them. They lack listening skills and do not know how to respectfully ask for other people's opinions. **Aggressive behaviour may be considered mean.** Although they may get other people to do things their way, they often lose the respect of others and may end up being rejected or disliked. People who come across as too aggressive can find it difficult to keep friends.
- 📌 An **ASSERTIVE style of expressing yourself is a way that is not too timid or too pushy. Many people find it hard to ask for something directly in case they get no for an answer. Those who assert themselves are brave enough to go ahead anyway, which is why assertive behaviour is considered strong.**

If you are assertive:

- ✚ You are positive and confident about yourself
- ✚ You use good eye contact to show you are paying attention
- ✚ You speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard
- ✚ You can offer your ideas and suggestions because you know that your thoughts, skills and talents are valuable
- ✚ You can give your honest opinion and express how you really feel
- ✚ You can ask for what you want or need
- ✚ You can calmly say no without feeling guilty

- ✚ You can disagree in a respectful manner because you know that everyone is unique and entitled to their opinion
- ✚ You are more concerned with understanding the reasons why someone thinks differently than in winning an argument.
- ✚ You respect yourself and other people. You are respected in return.
- ✚ You can disagree without making those who think differently feel bad
- ✚ You do not let criticism dent your self-confidence
- ✚ You are likely to be good at working out conflicts and disagreements
- ✚ You can speak up for someone else
- ✚ You can stand up for what you believe

### Tips to help you deal with Shyness (*most common reason for passive behaviour*)

1. **As the saying goes, 'Fake it till you make it!'** Most people cannot tell the difference between fake confidence and real confidence, so start by faking it. If you speak in a loud voice and look people in the eye, they will not believe that you are shy and their reaction will help you feel less shy.
2. **Be the first to speak.** When a teacher or someone asks a question, take a deep breath and raise your hand. Once you have spoken, the nerves will lessen as the pressure is off. And those who speak first are not seen to be shy.
3. **Focus on topics and ask questions.** Try to forget yourself and focus on what the conversation is about. Try to turn the conversation away from you by asking questions and following up on what they answer. If you lose yourself in the conversation, others are likely to find you more interesting.
4. **Focus on the other person.** Most people like attention so when you ask them questions, it makes them feel good. Listen to what they say and try to come up with follow-up questions. If they say something that reminds you of something, share it. And remember, there are many shy people who will be grateful that you are going out of your way to put them at ease.
5. **Encourage others.** Seek ways to build on each other's thoughts (those you agree with). Acknowledge what you hear, and proactively offer examples to show your understanding.

### Tips for those with an Aggressive style of communication

1. Give others space to respond or offer opinions – breathe deeply, and count to three before speaking.
2. Acknowledge what you hear (paraphrase what is said) before responding.
3. Trust that what you have to say matters so you don't (always) have to shout to be heard.
4. Aim to win over hearts and minds. Remember: 'Nobody cares what you know until they know you care.' Smile more, crack jokes, especially during introduction, to appear less intimidating.
5. Focus on winning the war, not the battles/skirmishes.

### Remember Words Matter

One of the most effective ways to build your vocabulary so you can express yourself more clearly is to read lots of storybooks and biographies. To help you understand how words matter, Muthoni gave you an exercise to discuss in groups synonyms (words that convey the same meaning) for the following words: Happy, Sad, Persistent, and Scared. This gave you an example of the importance of developing a wider vocabulary and how to use it. In your groups, you also discussed ways that you will work to become assertive.

### How to deal with negative peer pressure

The group session where there were three of you from different schools and a mentor focussed on discussing how to deal with negative peer pressure. Negative peer pressure can be defined as influence that can sway you toward risky activity. Some of the ways you came up with to overcome negative peer pressure include:

- 📌 **Saying 'no' like you mean it.** The most basic way to respond to peer pressure is to just say 'no'. Be firm and make eye contact. This shows that you're not willing to compromise.
- 📌 **Make your own decisions.** Do things that make you happy and make those decisions on your own. While some people might ask you to do something that pushes you outside your comfort zone in a good way, be mindful of any negative consequences that could occur.
- 📌 **Plan a response.** Having a response ready will mean you won't feel under pressure if you're asked and you'll already know what to say.
- 📌 **Avoid places and situations that make you uncomfortable.** Avoiding situations that might tempt you can help you avoid peer pressure altogether.

- 📌 **Choose positive friends.** Start by choosing friends who won't pressure you to do things. Your friends should accept you for who you are without wanting to change you. If your friends don't make bad decisions, you're less likely to make them too.
- 📌 **Keep busy with healthy activities.** Another way to avoid peer pressure is to spend your time doing activities that you really enjoy which can help you meet people with shared interests.
- 📌 **Use the buddy system.** If you have a friend who has similar values, spend time with her. You can keep each other in check as well as look out for one another. Back each other up and support each other in making good decisions.
- 📌 **Talk to a trusted friend.** If you're struggling with peer pressure, talk to someone you trust. Your friend might have some advice for how they handle peer pressure that you could use. They can also help support you in handling peer pressure in the future. It's okay to admit you're struggling, and they most likely want to help you.

## **Afternoon session - How to deal with failure**

As the 1-1 sessions were going on in the afternoon, those of you waiting to see a mentor and who had completed their sessions, had a session with Wallace where he introduced the topic of how to deal with failure. He defined failure as not achieving a goal or being unsuccessful. Everyone has dealt with failure and it is important to cope with it, learn the lesson and use it as a stepping stone to success. It is important to embrace self competition, seek help when necessary, rest, put in proper planning, reviewing and comparing results. Remember giving up is not the solution.

Wallace gave the example of someone who fails in a subject despite putting effort in practise. In groups, you were to discuss how one can respond to failure in such a situation and you came up with the following points:

- ✚ Find the root cause of the problem – which may be wrong study methods
- ✚ Don't let your pride stop you from consulting someone who is better in the subject and get a study partner
- ✚ Try new study methods
- ✚ Practise without giving up – be persistent
- ✚ Appreciate self for small achievements
- ✚ Find your best working time
- ✚ Identify your weakness
- ✚ Ensure to maintain a positive attitude towards the subject
- ✚ Consult teachers more
- ✚ Put in extra work aside from the homework given
- ✚ Ensure to pay more attention during lessons and listen to understand before taking notes



## **Sunday morning Career Talks**

### **Engineer Mary Njau – Electrical engineer who works with KPLC**

An alumna of Riruta, she enjoyed Math, Chemistry and Physics while in school. She had not made a choice of what to pursue in the university until a speaker in school spoke about engineering and she felt drawn to it. She ended up studying Electrical Engineering at JKUAT. The course took 5 years to complete and involved a lot of Mathematics especially in the early years. The first two years of study are on general electrical engineering subjects. In third year, she made the choice to pursue heavy electrical engineering after having done internship at Kenya Power. At university, there were very few girls pursuing the course as they were 3 in a class of 35 students.

Upon graduation, she felt at a crossroad: she was glad she had achieved what she set out to do but what next. Her first job involved installing street lights and this attracted many questions from passersby on why a woman was doing what was perceived as a 'man's job'. This did not worry her since from university days she had realised that she would always work in a field with more men than women. When she joined Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC), there were older women engineers who encouraged her.

**Engineer Joanne Mahugu – Civil and structural engineer who works at Kenyatta University and is also a part-time lecturer.**

An alumna of Riruta who was very good in Math, Biology and Chemistry. She wanted to pursue medicine but a visit to a hospital after KCSE made her realise she could not deal with blood and all the suffering. Her brother helped her make the choice to study civil engineering since she was good in Math and engineering is mostly Math. She also studied at JKUAT where there were 4 girls in a class of 36. She used to be shy when she was in school but had to become assertive at the university. At the university, she joined a club and through it went for internship in Germany. She was so focussed at university and worked hard that she graduated with a first class honours. She also pursued a master’s degree in Building and Construction Management.

**Dr. Rhoda Munuve – Pharmacist currently interning at Machakos Level V Hospital**

Another alumna of Riruta but also an alumna of Precious Sisters from the Class of 2013. Although she was very good in academics, PS developed her self esteem through all the mentoring events she attended. Her favourite subjects were Math, Physics, Chemistry and Business studies. She dreamt of being a doctor from the time she was young. Because of this, she intentionally worked to improve in Biology as it never stood out for her. She did this by allocating more time for Biology and Kiswahili. Her KCSE grade was excellent and she was admitted to pursue pharmacy at Nairobi University. Her most satisfying day is when she, together with the rest of the medical team at the hospital alleviate the suffering of patients or seeing a patient improve enough to be discharged from hospital.

**Our Take Away from the career speakers**



- ❑ To succeed in a male dominated field, you have to be very skilled as you will need to continuously prove yourself.
- ❑ As a woman, you need to be quite assertive and look for the positive in yourself.
- ❑ If you know your value, you do not let gender define you and although the world may be unfair to you, it has been unfair to others in the past but they succeeded and you too can succeed.
- ❑ It is not easy for people to accept new ideas from a woman and there is the tendency to want to stick to the way things have always been done. Whenever you propose change, you need to think ahead so you are a step ahead.
- ❑ We can fix the whole world by fixing where we are.
- ❑ A man will treat you the way you want to be treated and people address you the way you dress, so endeavour to be the best of yourself.
- ❑ Be honest in time management, embrace teamwork, strive for perfection and hold yourself to the highest ethics.
- ❑ Remember that outside, you will be judged on the same platform as the others. You will not always carry the story but you will be judged on your qualities and skills. You should therefore focus on where you are going not where you are coming from.

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We greatly appreciate all our Mentors for making the time to come and mentor our girls; you are a source of motivation to our girls and every Saturday you turn up to mentor the girls is an investment in their lives that is of enormous value. Thank you once again to all the Administration and Catering staff of Precious Blood Secondary School, Riruta for your wonderful hospitality. The girls always mention how well they are treated and fed. We appreciate all our Sponsors for believing in Precious Sisters and partnering with us to **'Give the Bright Girls a Chance to Shine'**

