

JESUS ZONE: The Coach as Mentor

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."
Proverbs 27:17

In many schools and businesses, mentorship programs are offered to support students/employees in areas such as confidence building and transitioning to a higher level of education/responsibility. True mentoring, however, is more than just answering occasional questions or providing help when needed. It is about an ongoing,

personal relationship between the mentor and his or her protégé.

And it is this relationship that really determines whether the mentoring process is successful. Studies have shown that the more the mentor and the protégé consider themselves to be similar, the greater the perceived benefits of the relationship.



GIRLS GONE STRONG lifters from left to right:
Faryn Antenucci, Genna Owen, Katy Morgan, Abby Mechachonis, Savannah Henderson, Brittany Barrerios, Sabrina Kirby, and Allie Henderson

Likewise, Scripture teaches that just as iron sharpens iron, we can "sharpen" or build each other up through genuine, caring relationships. Although Jesus put the disciples to work, He knew He had to touch their hearts before He asked for their hands. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus tells them: "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy

Iaden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." The word "rest" refers to an inward holiday – not a cessation of activity, but a whole new energy and motive.

In powerlifting, it is critical to encourage new lifters to press on until their training becomes reinforcing in itself. Once athletes reach this point in their lifting, and attendance and participation are no longer an issue, areas such as perfecting technique, goal setting, and long-term relationship building can begin to take place.

STRONG LIFE Training Facility, Melbourne, is a gym specifically designed for elementary, middle, and high school athletes that want to train for competitive lifting and/or sport specific strength training. In my role as a mentor and coach, lifting serves as the common ground in my relationship with the student athletes that train at STRONG LIFE. As they become more familiar with the facility, the equipment, the core exercises, and the other athletes, our relationship begins to extend beyond their training. This, in turn, allows me to have a positive influence in other areas of their life; for example, writing recommendation letters for college or summer programs and/or discussing personal issues and/or academic concerns are a few of the areas of their lives that can be impacted through this relationship.

Age doesn't really matter – whether you are coaching student athletes, young adults, or seniors, mentoring increases our leadership skills and helps us learn the importance of making a commitment and seeing it through to fruition. Following through with the young

men and women that train at STRONG LIFE doesn't just help my business – more importantly, it makes me a more responsible person and helps them grow as individuals.

Another positive benefit is that mentors can take pride in their personal achievements as they share their experiences with others. Our GIRLS GONE STRONG team has grown from six girls in August of 2012 to over 30 girls today, ranging in age from fifth graders to high school seniors. Several girls, to include fifth grader Sabrina Kirby, sixth graders Anya Johnson and Savannah Henderson, middle school lifters Megan Lee and Valery Linkenhoker, and high school athletes Faryn Antenucci and Dulcy Olson, have their names in the record books. All of our girls have worked very hard, and as their mentor and coach I am extremely proud of all they have accomplished. More important, however, is the relationship we have with each other and the confidence they have in themselves as a result. Today, they train and mentor our new lifters, and take pride when they perform well on the competitive platform.

In this regard, many of our lifters have had the opportunity to impact the lives of younger lifters in a unique way, providing them with the benefit of experience both in the gym and on the competitive platform. This allows both the mentor and the protégé to learn more about themselves, about relationships, and about future possibilities.



Liz Johnson (center) and her family – Matt (back row, left), Ben (right), Anya (front row, left), and Nathan (front and center) all train at STRONG LIFE Training Facility in Melbourne

Jesus also focused on this type of long-term relationship that changes us on the inside. He promises us four essential things that will build our hearts and minds in preparation for the work He has for us to do: (1) an inward **rest**, free from anxieties, (2) a **framework**, or

yoke, by which we are guided by a stronger partner, (3) a leader who meets our needs through **gentle and humble leadership**, and (4) a **system and manageable workload** that fits who we are.

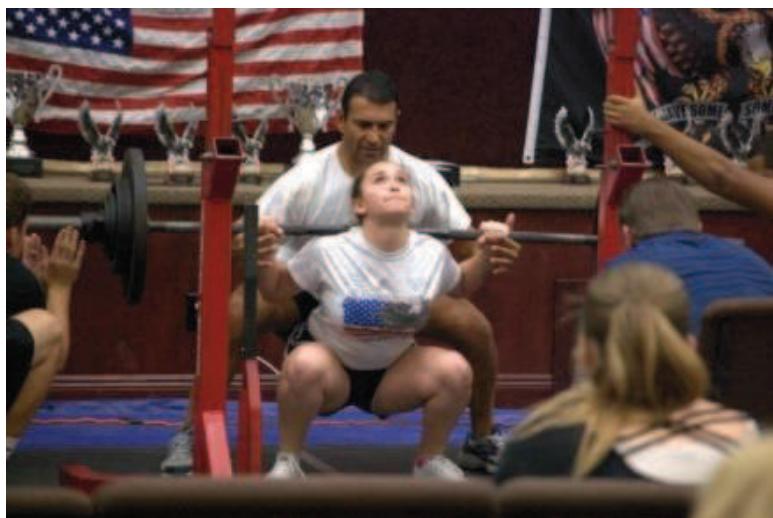


Courtesy of Johnny Fontaine

Jeremy Hoffower of STRONG LIFE Training Facility in Melbourne

Our new brochure has a picture of our girl's captain, Faryn Antenucci, with a quote of hers that reads: "Once you complete a lift you think you can't do, it's the most empowering feeling in the world." As Faryn's coach and mentor, watching her squat 220 pounds, bench 100 pounds, and deadlift 260 pounds at the Youth & Teenage

Championships was pretty awesome for me, too! But it's so much more than just record lifts. What's more important is the seventeen months of training and relationship building that brought Faryn to the platform on April 5th when she became the federation's top teenage lifter in her class – a journey we experienced together.



"Powerlifting has served as a stress reliever to my busy workload, and also as an aid in my performance for lacrosse. Once you complete a lift you think you can't do, it's the most empowering feeling in the world!"

-Faryn Antenucci, Varsity Lacrosse Player