

From a StrengthBank Mentor:

Mentoring for Myself

By Tamara Payne, StrengthBank® Mentor



As a teenager and child in a family of 7 children, I often felt lost and confused. I was active in my church youth group and a few other social activities that placed influencing adults in my life. I think back to those one or two people who affected my life like a mentor: my junior year writing teacher and my youth group pastor. They encouraged me to become a better person, to follow through with my dreams but their time in my life was too brief. Not until I reached my thirties and became a mentor to high school young people had I thought about the lifelong affect those special people had on my life.

I have always wanted to work with teens in some capacity, to help mold their lives and possibly help a young girl or boy who struggles with life like I did when I was their age. As an entrepreneur, opportunities arise to give back to the community through the Chamber of Commerce or other business groups but not until I heard Sandra Shelton, *StrengthBank® Talk Groups [StrengthBank Inc.] Founder* speak, did I find the best way to reach young adults, **mentoring**. As I laughed through Sandra's humorous presentation, I thought deeply about what she was saying, about working within your strengths and surrounding yourself with others who have different strengths than me.

At the end, Sandra talked about her High School initiative and mentoring program, *StrengthBank® Talk Groups*, where business people can mentor high school students, helping them learn their bank of strengths and how to work successfully with others who have different strengths. I knew this was the opportunity I had been waiting for. I remember how nervous I was the first few times I stepped into the classroom. I was afraid of the kids, of not doing right by them. But no matter how nervous I was, I always came away feeling fulfilled and joyful. The kids had a way of reaching me while I spoke to them. It seemed we were actually mentoring each other.

My heart grew full during my time of mentoring and participating in the *StrengthBank® Talk Groups* at Burlison High School. The *StrengthBank® Talk Groups* is successful at reaching children through humor, sharing, and food, which is always a great way to get kids involved. Mentoring allowed me to give back to my community but mostly to young people who need guidance most during their teen years. Some days a child that had been quiet and subdued would come out of his/her shyness and other times, the loud mouth kid was quiet and introspective, more than his fellow students thought possible. I remember one semester when the class clown, and often most disruptive boy, lost his father in a tragic accident. The *StrengthBank® Talk Groups* lessons helped draw the entire class closer before the event and therefore, helped the class deal with it better during the event and wrap their arms around a child that needed it most.

I was blessed to be a mentor with *StrengthBank® Talk Groups*. I think now I did it more for myself than for the kids but we both received the gift of mentoring.

StrengthBank for High Schools is a Relationship Skills Initiative that provides specific steps to improve the lives of high school youth in local communities. It's primary focus is to ensure that each child understands:

- Who he or she is created and designed to be.
- Each one's inborn equipping to that design.
- How to relate with others positively.
- How to find sustaining hope in tough times.

Ultimately, youth who are mentored through *StrengthBank® Talk Groups* will bring about a decrease in the numbers of at-risk teens and can become adults who are willing to give a hand up to the next generation.

For more information about *StrengthBank® Talk Groups*, visit www.StrengthBankInc.org or call Sandra Shelton at 817-230-4523.



From a StrengthBank® Mentee:

My name is Robert Courtney, graduate of Santa Fe High School (SFHS), Santa Fe, Texas, and former StrengthBank® class student of David Balderrama, StrengthBank® Coach at SFHS.

“StrengthBank® is the plan created in each person for a life that will prosper you and not harm you, the plan to give you hope and a future.” When I first signed up for StrengthBank® my senior year in high school I had no definite plan for the direction of my life and I can assure you grades happened to be the last thing on my mind. I had not even taken the time to envision what I wanted for the future.

As the year progressed and the closer it came to graduation Strengthbank taught me the skills essential to become successful in and out of the classroom. “Strengthbank used as designed renders a life that works to its full potential.” After I graduated I can honestly say I have used and am still using all the lessons that StrengthBank® has taught me. Not only to better my life but the lives of others as well.

I am now on track to graduate with an associates in general studies with a 4.0 g.p.a after which I plan to attend a four year university where I will double major in biology and environmental science. My life now has a plan and I am living it to its full potential.

Thanks to StrengthBank® I am no longer satisfied with imperfection, not when I know perfection is out there. “Each of us comes equipped with a unique StrengthBank® that when used as designed, helps our life work better in relationship to others.” I believe StrengthBank® should be a required course in high school for all incoming freshman. Further, as a college freshman, I realize that high school freshman are no different in the way that they are both lost in a new environment and looking for guidance. All students’ possess the potential to become great; they just have to recognize it.

If high school freshman took this class it would help millions discover their ability at an early age and provide them with chances to persevere earlier in life. That is what StrengthBank® did for me; it helped me recognize my full potential, if only I had taken it sooner. In a world where so many young ones are lost. StrengthBank® provides the light necessary to get through the tunnel, while at the same time providing chances for a successful future.

