

Yiul Yiul and Aki Choudhry have found that sometimes the second time is the charm in mentoring. They first met at a Denver Urban Scholars pairing event. Aki and Yiul both remembered liking each other immediately when they met playing a get-to-know-you game. Aki remembers how Yiul was not shy about sharing, and how he even told Aki at the end of their conversation, "I hope I'm paired with you." As things turned out, Yiul and Aki also connected with other students and mentors and ended up being paired with different partners. Over the next year, group activities and regular engagement with their Denver Urban Scholars community kept them both involved even when their first pairings didn't work out. When it came time to re-match, Aki and Yiul were thrilled at the opportunity to be paired together as mentor and mentee.

Yiul and Aki love going to the movies, going out to eat, and both remember special outings like going to a Broncos game or hiking in the mountains. Yiul, despite having lived in Colorado for a long time, hadn't done a lot of hiking before and loved the new experience. The two also really enjoy hanging out with other mentors and mentees from the Denver Urban Scholars program and like to get groups together for activities. Making new friends and "exploring the whole world," as he says it, is something that Yiul was looking for in joining a mentoring program. Yiul is a very social young man, for better or for worse. He can occasionally become distracted by friends and social drama at school, but feels he has grown a lot in this area by talking through situations with Aki. He also credits the program for introducing him to new friends who encourage him to stay focused on school. Aki notices how much Yiul cares about other people and is attuned to the emotions of others. Aki remembers a time when the two of them were driving and Yiul asked to stop the car so that he could check on a distressed bicyclist. Yiul's desire to help people has translated into a post-graduation goal of working in the medical field.

Now that Yiul is a junior in high school, he and Aki plan to visit colleges and research program offerings. He is eager to learn about different career opportunities in the medical field and the types of degrees and educational requirements involved to narrow down his future plans. Denver Urban Scholars provides formal opportunities to explore careers and colleges, such as career fairs and job shadowing days. Yiul and Aki are also working together to help leverage the knowledge and experiences of other mentors in their group to help Yiul gain a better understanding of future possibilities that would be a great fit for his skills and talents.

Although not everything has been easy in their experience or turned out the way they expected, Aki and Yiul are excited about continuing to grow their relationship. Aki recommends mentoring to his friends and family because, "It's difficult in our current society to just have a relationship, especially with how disconnected you can be sometimes with people. The fact that you can have this relationship, it can be awkward, but there is a process for it... it's a good way to get started." Both Yiul and Aki value the connection they have created with each other, and with the other students, mentors, and volunteers at Denver Urban Scholars and look forward to what the future holds for them.