



**Big Brothers
Big Sisters.®**

OF NORTHWESTERN
MICHIGAN

VOLUNTEER MATCHKIT



MATCHKIT INTRODUCTION



Thank you for committing your time and energy to mentoring children. It is our goal to provide Bigs with comprehensive training to empower you as trauma-informed volunteers with the education and tools to successfully mentor your Little. In this Matchkit, you will find information to supplement your Volunteer training manual, including tips and resources to make the best of your match relationship.

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TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE



RECOGNIZING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE

A listing of indicators of sexual, physical, neglect and emotional abuse is below. Your role is not that of a social worker or to search for these indicators, but we do ask you to familiarize yourself with the warning signs and contact your Mentoring Specialist with concerns.

Emotional Abuse

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Shows extremes in behavior; extremely compliant or demanding, extremely passive or aggressive
- Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver
- Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, tantrums)

Physical Abuse

- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts
- Is always watchful and "on alert," as if waiting for something bad to happen
- Injuries appear to have a pattern, such as marks from a hand or belt
- Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeve shirts on hot days

Neglect

- Clothes are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather
- Hygiene is consistently bad (un-bathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor)
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries
- Is frequently unsupervised or left alone, or allowed to play in unsafe situations and environments
- Is frequently late or missing from school

Sexual Abuse

- Trouble walking or sitting
- Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age, or even seductive behavior
- Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason
- Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities
- Frequent urinary infections, an STD or pregnancy, especially under the age of 14
- Runs away from home

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect and a range of household dysfunction. ACEs can impact the physical development of a child's brain and can have profound effects on a child's long-term physical, behavioral and emotional health. The good news is, the impact of ACEs can be eradicated. Relationships with caring and competent people are vital contributors to resilience and recovery. That's where you come in! As a supportive adult, you can help buffer the effects of ACEs by helping to build resilience in your Little. Resilience means that, even in the face of adversity, your Little can navigate life well. Give thought to how you can implement the following Core Protective Systems into your match relationship and activities.

CORE PROTECTIVE SYSTEMS

CAPABILITIES <i>"Let me contribute my gifts"</i>	ATTACHMENT & BELONGING <i>"Let me feel safe and loved"</i>	COMMUNITY, CULTURE, & SPIRITUALITY <i>"Let me belong"</i>
Encourage hope and a positive narrative about life	Build relationships with caring, competent individuals	Identify interests, skills, faith or cultural traditions that can be used to connect with others
Encourage and teach the ability to gauge their internal state and self-regulate	Be a relationship coach. Teach behavioral and emotional self-regulation. Learn social cues, healthy communication skills, planning ahead, monitoring situations and solving problems	Find a positive community group to make social connections and be an accepted and valued part of a tribe, such as an athletic team, school group, church, or club
Identify or teach something they can do well and share with others. Find their capabilities so they can feel accomplishment. Strengthen that skill through practice and reinforce its value	Encourage positive, healthy relationships with adults who play a critical supportive role, in school and their own communities, such as teachers, coaches and other mentors	Identify and encourage leadership and growth opportunities within those groups

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AGES AND STAGES



These "Ages and Stages" may help you understand your Little's characteristics, based on their age. It will be a helpful resource throughout your match as your Little grows up. Remember, you can always ask your Mentoring Specialist for extra education, ideas, and suggestions.

Keep in mind, these are generalizations. You may encounter differences with your Little. This does not mean there is something wrong with them, rather they are not like the average Little. Sometimes a Little's development may be delayed because of trauma or negative experiences, or they simply have a slower or faster development than the average youth. The stage they are in may not correlate with their age in years.

5-7 YEAR OLDS

General Characteristics

- Eager to learn, easily fatigued, short periods of interest
- Learn best when they are active while learning
- Self-assertive, boastful, less cooperative, more competitive

Physical Characteristics

- Are very active and need frequent breaks from tasks. They like to do things that are fun and involve use of energy
- Need rest periods
- Large muscles are well developed. Activities involving small muscles are difficult (i.e., working on models with small pieces)
- May tend to be accident prone

Social Characteristics

- Like organized games and are very concerned about following rules
- Can be very competitive. May cheat at games
- Are very imaginative and involved in fantasy playing
- Are self-assertive, aggressive, want to be first, less cooperative than at five, and boastful
- Learn best through active participation

Emotional Characteristics

- Are alert to feelings of others, but are unaware of how their own actions affect others
- Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are easily hurt
- Inconsistent in level of maturity evidenced; regress when tired, often less mature at home than with outsiders

Mental Characteristics

- Are very eager to learn
- Like to talk
- Their idea of fairness becomes a big issue
- Have difficulty making decisions

Developmental Tasks

- Sex role identification
- Early moral development
- Concrete operations—the child begins to experience the predictability of physical events

8-10 YEAR OLDS

General Characteristics

- Interested in people, aware of differences, willing to give more to others but also expects more
- Busy, active, full of enthusiasm, may try too much, accident prone, interested in money and its value
- Sensitive to criticism, recognize failure, capacity for self-evaluation
- Capable of prolonged interest, may make plans on own
- Decisive, dependable, reasonable, strong sense of right and wrong
- Spends a great deal of time in talk and discussion, often outspoken, and critical of adults although still dependent on adult approval

Physical Characteristics

- Are very active and need frequent breaks from tasks to do things that are fun for them and involve use of energy
- Bone growth is not yet complete
- Early maturers may be upset with their size
- May tend to be accident prone

Social Characteristics

- Can be very competitive
- Are choosy about their friends
- Being accepted by friends becomes quite important
- Team games become popular
- Worshipping heroes, TV stars, and sports figures is common

Emotional Characteristics

- Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are hurt easily
- Because friends are so important during this time, there can be conflicts between adults' rules and friends' rules. You can help by your honesty and consistency

Mental Characteristics

- Their idea of fairness becomes a big issue
- Are eager to answer questions
- Are very curious, and are collectors of everything. However, they may jump to other objects of interest after a short time
- Want more independence, but know they need guidance and support
- Wide discrepancies in reading ability

Developmental Tasks

- Social cooperation
- Self-evaluation/skill learning
- Team play

11-13 YEAR OLDS

General Characteristics

- Testing limits, "know-it-all attitude"
- Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings
- Identification with admired adult
- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance

Physical Characteristics

- Small-muscle coordination is good, and art, crafts, models, and music are popular
- Bone growth is not yet complete
- Early maturers may be upset with their size
- Are very concerned with their appearance, and very self-conscious about growth

- Diet and sleep habits can be bad, which may result in low energy levels
- Girls may begin menstruation

Social Characteristics

- Being accepted by friends becomes quite important
- Cliques start to develop outside of school
- Team games become popular
- Crushes on members of the opposite sex are common
- Friends set the general rule of behavior
- Feel a real need to conform. They dress and behave alike in order to "belong"
- Are very concerned about what others say and think of them
- Have a tendency to manipulate others ("Mary's mother says she can go. Why can't I?")
- Interested in earning own money

Emotional Characteristics

- Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are hurt easily
- Because friends are so important during this time, there can be conflicts between adults' rules and friends' rules
- Are caught between being a child and being an adult
- Loud behavior hides their lack of self-confidence
- Look at the world more objectively, adults subjectively, critical

Mental Characteristics

- Tend to be perfectionists. If they try to attempt too much, they may feel frustrated and guilty
- Want more independence, but know they need guidance and support
- Attention span can be lengthy

14-16 YEAR OLDS

General Characteristics

- Testing limits, "know-it-all attitude"
- Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings
- Identification with admired adult
- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance

Physical Characteristics

- Are very concerned with their appearance and very self-conscious about growth
- Diet and sleep habits can be bad, which may result in low energy levels
- Rapid weight gain at beginning of adolescence. Enormous appetite

Social Characteristics

- Friends set the general rules of behavior
- Feel a real need to conform. They dress and behave alike in order to "belong"
- Are very concerned about what others say and think of them

- Have a tendency to manipulate others (“Mary’s mother says she can go. Why can’t I?”)
- Going to extremes, emotional instability with “know-it-all” attitude
- Fear of ridicule and of being unpopular
- Strong identification with an admired adult
- Girls usually more interested in boys than girls, resulting from earlier maturing of the girls

Emotional Characteristics

- Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are easily hurt
- Are caught between being a child and being an adult
- Loud behavior hides their lack of self-confidence
- Look at the world more objectively, adults subjectively, critical

Mental Characteristics

- Can better understand moral principles
- Attention span can be lengthy

Developmental Tasks

- Physical maturation
- Formal operations
- Membership in the peer group
- Relating to the opposite sex

MATCH RELATIONSHIP STAGES



IN THE BEGINNING

From the first meeting to about four months

- Get to know each other, gradually and naturally
- Embrace the initial awkwardness! Try to see the positive in the relationship
- Little may try to get their Big’s approval or impress them
- Your Little may not open up or talk very much.
- You may not initially see your Little’s need for a mentor or why they are enrolled in the program
- Littles must not be expected to assume responsibilities or engage in experiences beyond what they have been taught to handle

What you can do to progress the relationship

- Learn facts about your Little and reference them in your conversations. Learn their favorite things, such as their best friend and favorite foods and activities
- Be reliable. Show up to your activities and confirm with the parents/guardian ahead of time
- Engage with your Little with the assumption they are intelligent. Avoid talking down to them
- Involve your Little in deciding how you will spend your time together
- Remain positive, non-judgmental and patient- it may take some time for your Little to warm up
- Ask open-minded questions, use body language that is open, actively listen and demonstrate empathy

BUILDING THE FRIENDSHIP

From about four months to one year

- This is the most crucial time to build trust and develop the relationship. A deeper level of friendship begins
- It is common that your Little will begin testing you and the boundaries to see what they can get away with and how far your commitment really goes
- You may start to feel underappreciated because you are not being thanked by your Little
- Difficult feelings or emotions may surface

What you can do to progress the relationship

- Show your Little they can trust you through reliability, consistency, and time spent together. As your Little develops trust with you, they may begin sharing bits of information
- Most Littles don't have the maturity to thank their mentors or realize the impact of the relationship until years later. That's OK! Model courteous behavior by sharing how much you appreciate them
- Reinforce the boundaries you've established
- Recognize and praise accomplishments
- Demonstrate respect
- Give advice sparingly, but if you need to give advice or address behavior problems, lead with productive and positive encouragement, without scolding. Avoid "shoulds"
- Make sure to separate behaviors from who your Little is, recognizing their behavior is a result of their living environment and past experiences
- Communicate and engage with your Little in an empathetic manner, through a compassionate lens
- Disclose personal feeling and experiences when appropriate

MATURITY STAGE

Around the one-year anniversary date

- Trust has been established and the relationship is becoming more positive and realistic
- Conversation is more comfortable, personal and open
- Match activities are less structured
- Most Bigs shed their preconceived notions regarding the match and their Little
- Your Little may take more of the lead in what you talk about or do together

What you can do to progress the relationship

- Use the trust you have built to move your Little along the developmental pathway, focusing more on goals and trying new things
- Support your Little, reinforcing what they decide. Security and confidence grow as you express appreciation and trust in the Little as an individual.
- Identify past shared experiences and enjoy shared jokes
- Learn something new for both of you, together

TRANSITIONS IN YOUR MATCH

As your match progresses through the child development and match relationship stages, you may notice changes in your relationship. Routines, communication, and patterns of behavior that were your norm may no longer exist. Recognize that transitions may be bumpy, especially as your Little develops through adolescence. We encourage you to embrace a new normal and see change as an opportunity for relationship growth. You or your Mentoring Specialist may request a Match Review Session with your Little and their parent to identify the strengths of your match and areas of growth. Together, you can work on ideas, actions and creating new goals to progress your relationship through transitional periods.

SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR MATCH

By helping your Little learn how to select and achieve goals now, you're helping them develop tools for successful goal setting as adults. Not only is goal setting important for your Little's development, but it can also be great for relationship development within your match. For example, working on Match Goals with your Little can help your match with activity planning, promote bonding through the shared experience of trying something new together, increase opportunities for role modeling and demonstrating your role as a mentor, and shake things up from your normal routine.

Your Mentoring Specialist will work with you and your Little, annually, to set appropriate goals for growth in your match, and plan action steps to achieve them. But don't stop there! We encourage you to initiate the creation of your own match goals throughout the year, to foster optimum growth in your relationship. You can use the following goal-setting template to get started.



MATCH GROWTH PLAN



An important part of your match relationship is to grow and learn together to build a strong relationship within your match. Your Match Goals can be accomplished within the first few activities or be an ongoing learning experience. This Match Growth Plan can help guide you as you set goals and build action steps for achieving your goals together as a match.

SECTION 1: Parent/Guardian Recommendations

Your Little's Parent/Guardian may have suggestions of areas they would like to see their child grow and develop. Consider taking a moment to ask for their feedback and use the information to shape the goals you and your Little set together.

Personal Growth

- Improving self-confidence
 - Ability to express feelings
 - Making decisions
 - Relationship with family
 - Relationship with peers
 - Relationship with other adults
 - Other: _____
-

Learning

- Using community resources
 - Using school resources
 - Academic performance
 - Attitude toward school
 - School attendance
 - Other: _____
-

Community & Leadership

- Having interests and hobbies
 - Respecting other cultures
 - Ability to avoid delinquency
 - Awareness of community and its opportunities
 - Respect laws and authority
 - Sense of the future
 - Other: _____
-

SECTION 2: Match Goals

Use the suggestions below to think of your own Match Goals, selected from each category. Please consider your Little's Parent/Guardian suggestions to inform which goals you select. You and your Little can work together to pick areas in which you want to improve and you will enjoy. Be sure to share these goals with your Mentoring Specialist so they can check in with you throughout the year.

Personal Growth

- Teach my Big how to do something new
- Learn to respectfully show appreciation
- Build confidence in social situations
- Ask my Big to help me solve a problem
- Help my Big solve a problem
- Find out something my Big likes
- Share Goals
- Share facts about a family member
- Other: _____

Learning

- Research a high school or college
- Learn about Michigan history
- Increase visits to the library
- Complete 2 volunteer projects
- Learn about different cultures
- Sign up for an activity at school
- Research a topic of interest
- Learn about a new sport
- Take a free class together in your community
- Read # _____ books
- Other: _____

Community & Leadership

- Try a new food with my Big
- Start a long term project with my Big
- Find one outdoor activity to do each month
- Cook a meal together
- Visit local law enforcement
- Research local native tribes
- Have a conversation about local non-profit organizations
- Volunteer time and help others
- Be on time for match activities
- Visit community college and/or Career Tech Center
- Other: _____

SECTION 3: Action Steps

When setting goals, it's important to make a plan for how you will work to accomplish them. Write the goals you selected together and then outline three actions for each goal.

Personal Growth Goal: _____

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Learning Goal: _____

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Good Citizenship Goal: _____

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Examples

Personal Growth Goal: *Build confidence*

Step 1: *Express self more*

Step 2: *Write down feelings in a journal*

Step 3: *Interact more with peers*

Learning Goal: *Learn about Michigan's history*

Step 1: *Research history in the library or online*

Step 2: *Watch a documentary*

Step 3: *Speak with an elder member of the community*

Citizenship Goal: *Volunteer our time*

Step 1: *Research different volunteer opportunities*

Step 2: *Help at local organization*

Step 3: *Do something nice for someone else*

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES



Use these tips and suggestions when conflicts arise:

Calming

- Take a slow, deep breath through the nose for the count of five. Hold that breath for three seconds and then exhale slowly through the mouth for the count of five. Repeat

Negotiating

- Bigs and Littles listen to the others' points of view and discuss which position might be the best for their situation.

Compromising

- Meeting halfway. Both parties agree to sacrifice something in order to resolve the conflict.

Active Listening

- Show your Little you understand your Littles words, thoughts, and wishes. Fully concentrate on what your Little is saying. Pay attention, use gestures to show you're engaged, provide feedback, defer judgement, and respond appropriately.

Distracting

- Help your Little forget about the conflict by focusing their attention on other interesting activity. This is especially useful for younger Littles with shorter attention spans, and when the conflict doesn't need a lot of discussion.

Humor

- Diffusing negative emotions by looking at the brighter side of the situation. A negative mood can quickly change with light heartedness and humor.

Chance

- Having a hard time deciding or coming to an agreement? Flip a coin or draw straws with your Little.

Sharing

- Work together to meet the needs of both you and your Little.

Attitude

- Often youth, especially teens, do not react to what adults are saying, but how it's said. Be aware of your demeanor and attitude as it may negatively affect the way you talk and listen to your Little.

STRATEGIES FOR COMMON CHALLENGES



The most important thing for you to remember is that you will need to be patient and persistent throughout your relationship. Your relationship may take time to develop, but if you are able to manage your expectations, be open to surprises, and accepting of your Little as an individual, you will have a more positive match experience! Your Mentoring Specialist is available to help you through any of the following scenarios, or others. Remember to seek help when necessary.

My Little doesn't show appreciation

- Coming into the match with a preconceived notion of how your Little should show appreciation will set you up for a letdown. Your Little may not say "please" and "thank you" when you first start

meeting, and even after time spent together, they still may not respond in a way you deem appropriate.

- Model behaviors you would like to see your Little demonstrate. Be consistent. Remember that everyone shows love and appreciation in different ways, as we all come from different backgrounds.

My Little doesn't share feelings or initiate conversation

- You may feel that your Little is not putting as much into the relationship as you would like. The relationship may seem one-sided for a long time, with you doing the talking.
- As your Little starts trusting you, they may start confiding in you as an adult who will not disappoint them. Conversation between you may grow, and your Little may share more feelings with you. Remember, no relationship is perfect and all relationships are defined in a variety of ways.

My Little never calls me

- Littles love receiving phone calls, but many do not feel comfortable initiating them. It's important to not stop calling with hopes they will start calling you. Ask your Little the feeling they get when someone calls them, and share with them your positive feelings, which may help them understand that adults also like to receive calls from people they like.
- Give your Little definite times they can try to call you and enlisting their parent's help in encouraging your Little to call can be helpful. Be patient, and be sure to reinforce the behavior with positive remarks when they call you.

My Little doesn't act right

- Your Little may come from a family with a very different value system than yours. It is not your responsibility or role to change the values of your Little. Your match is a learning experience for you and your Little. For example, you may be taking your Little to a movie. If they have never been to a theatre before, they may not know how to appropriately act or what behaviors are expected of them. Teach them by modeling.
- Try to be content with the understanding that through your example, your Little may come to respect values that are more positive. This may be a long process.

My Little doesn't seem to need me

- Every Little should have someone to bring a little magic to them, but they may not respond in a way that makes you feel as though you are needed. Feeling needed may be expressed by your Little in small ways, and may not be verbal.
- In time, you will recognize small signs that your Little needs you. This will help you in being content with the knowledge that you are making a difference and are a much-needed part of your Little's life. Discuss this concern with your Mentoring Specialist. They speak with your Little and parent frequently, and will be able to convey to you the changes they have observed or discussed in Match Support.

My Little doesn't make time for me

- Your Little may seem to have little time for you, but be assured that although other activities and family issues appear to interfere, your Little is benefiting from the interest and involvement of a caring adult friend, in their life; YOU! You are the person spending one-on-one time with your

Little. Listening, sharing, and showing your desire to be together on a regular basis is helping them grow their potential.

- Talk with your Mentoring Specialist if finding time to meet with your Little is becoming a concern. Mentoring Specialists can facilitate the conversation between you and the parent, and many times a carefully planned, set, designated day and time to spend with your Little solves this issue.

My Little doesn't seem interested

- Keep in mind that we all demonstrate interest in different ways, and your Little may not know how to communicate their interest. Be sure not to make assumptions based on your Little's behavior or lack of verbal affirmations.
- Talk to your Mentoring Specialist about this concern.

My Little doesn't want to improve

- Your Little may have adults in their life that are more eager to tell them what they are doing wrong, not right. Positive reinforcement may not be a part of their daily life.
- Your Little will respond well to someone who praises their strengths. These strengths range from the values that the Little holds to things they are great at doing. If your Little knows that you are going to be positive towards them, give them compliments and encouragement, and appreciate the unique person that they are, change will happen in positive ways. Your Little will grow in confidence, competence, and become more caring over time.

COMMUNICATION TIPS



Be available

- Notice times when your Little is most likely to talk, and be available
- Learn about your Little's interests and hobbies, and show interest in them
- Initiate conversations by sharing what you have been thinking about rather than beginning a conversation with a question

Demonstrate active listening

- Listen with the intent to understand
- When your Little is talking, stop whatever you are doing and listen
- Ensure you are physically showing that you are listening, by turning your body toward them and maintaining eye contact
- Express interest in what they are saying without being intrusive
- Listen to their point of view, even if it's difficult to hear
- Let them complete their point before you respond, and don't interrupt. Give them some extra time to explain their opinion or desires, even if you think you know what they are going to say
- Repeat what you heard them say to ensure that you understand them correctly

Respond in a way your Little will hear

- Use positive and productive words
- Soften strong physical and verbal reactions and use a calm tone of voice; kids will tune you out if you appear shocked, angry or defensive

- Express your opinion without putting down theirs; acknowledge that it's okay to disagree. Resist arguing about who is right. Instead say, "I know you disagree with me, but this is what I think"
- Focus on your Little's feelings rather than your own during your conversation. Verbally acknowledge their feelings, to show you understand their point of view, even if you disagree

Remember

- Listen to the "Little Stuff." If they know you are listening, they are more likely to trust you enough to talk about everything in their life
- Ask your Little what they may want or need from you in a conversation, such as advice, simply listening, help in dealing with feelings or help solving a problem
- Kids learn by imitating. Most often, they will follow your lead in how they deal with anger, solve problems and work through difficult feelings
- Listen between the lines. Realize your Little may test you by telling you a small part of what is bothering them. Listen carefully to what they say, encourage them to talk and they may share the rest of the story
- Ask their opinion. We all like it when someone asks our opinion. You don't have to ask about just important issues – ask them simple things too
- Catch them doing something good! Take that opportunity to praise them and tell them that you are proud of them

CONVERSATION STARTERS



What would you like to be when you grow up?	What is your favorite food?	What is your favorite color?
What is your favorite TV show?	What is your favorite book?	If you had three wishes, what would they be?
Can you remember a time when you laughed so hard you snorted?	What is the best way to eat an Oreo?	Do you normally do chores and homework right away, or do you wait until the last minute?
If you won the lottery, what would you do with the money?	Would you rather take a picture or be in the picture?	If you could be any animal, what would you be?
If you could do one thing, every day, for the rest of your life, what would it be?	What's the best smell you've ever smelled?	Do you think you could go an entire day without talking?
What is your favorite joke?	When was the last time you helped someone without being asked?	If you became President of the United States, what would you do?
What is the one thing you don't know how to do, but you wish you did?	If you could trade places with anyone for a day, who would it be?	When was the last time you gave someone a high-five?

HOW TO BUDGET ACTIVITIES



We encourage free to low-cost activities, but understand that there will be times when there is a cost. Money is often a sticky subject, so the sooner a budget is discussed, the more relaxed everyone can be when choosing activities. Determine how much each person is able and/or willing to contribute and stick to it. Make sure the Little knows the budget and help remind them that the focus is spending time versus spending money.

TIPS FOR BUDGETING

- Make a monthly activity budget
- Utilize Big Brothers Big Sisters sponsored activities, discount list and recommendations for free community events
- Connect with community resources
- Discuss high cost activities with each other to determine who will pay
- Talk to your Mentoring Specialist if you need ideas or resources

LEARNING LIBRARY



ASK YOUR FELLOW BIGS

Have you ever wondered if all matches are like your match? Or if you are the only Big facing a challenge in your match? However your match is going at the moment, you're not alone! It may be helpful to speak with a fellow Big to seek guidance, feedback and gather ideas. We have a team of seasoned Bigs available to speak with you, upon request. Contact your Mentoring Specialist for details.

HELPFUL LINKS

This is a list of general resources that will direct you to external websites, not endorsed by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan.

- **Mentoring:** General mentoring website
<https://www.mentoring.org/>
- **Self Esteem:** Strategies to help your Little develop self-esteem.
<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-psychology/self-esteem/#gs.ud1tt6>
- **ACEs:** An overview of Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Michigan ACE Initiative
<https://www.miace.org/>
- **ADHD:** Information about mentoring children with ADHD
<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/psychology/adhd-add/children-with-adhd-add/#gs.udOnwg>

MATCH ACTIVITY IDEAS



When you spend time with your Little, you are demonstrating that you care, which nurtures responsibility, success and happiness for your Little. When planning activities with your Little, keep in mind that the most important aspect is that you are spending consistent time together, sharing, talking and listening. A list of activity ideas is below. Make your decisions on your interests and the interests of your Little. The possible range of a child's interest in activities can be endless. Use your imaginations and have fun!

- Start a collection of something you are both interested in
- Build a model car, plane or rocket
- Draw, paint, work with clay, or do an art project
- Play charades, checkers, chess, board or card game
- Take a bike ride together
- Attend your Little's sporting event to cheer them on
- Fly a kite at the park
- Visit an area firehouse or police station
- Go roller-skating, skate-boarding, or ice-skating
- Do a science project together using household products
- Go bowling
- Check into local history/archeology
- Go swimming or play with the water hose or sprinkler
- Keep a journal of all your outings
- Make friendship bracelets or other crafts
- Play Frisbee, catch, basketball, volleyball, touch football
- Make paper airplanes and gliders
- Pick apples
- Visit a local museum
- Play golf or putt-putt, or hit golf balls at a driving range
- Teach your Little how to change a flat tire (if old enough)
- Make an obstacle course in your yard or local park
- Use sidewalk chalk and draw pictures on the sidewalk
- Take your Little grocery shopping
- Go geo caching (www.geocaching.com)
- Prepare a meal together
- Take a walk and photograph interesting objects
- Make your own greeting cards for special occasions
- Take your Little to your place of employment, talk about the education and preparation you needed to do your job
- Help your Little with homework or a school project
- Build a bird house or feeder
- Visit the Farmer's Market
- Write and send letters in the mail to each other, or get pen pals
- Create a Match scrapbook or photo album to record all your fun times together
- Start a garden; indoors or out
- Teach them how to change the oil in your car, or other skill
- Complete a jigsaw puzzle
- Have a picnic (make your own sandwiches, etc)
- Make a collage from old magazines and newspapers
- Listen to music together
- Blow bubbles
- Learn to juggle
- Go on a camera scavenger hunt
- Play a musical instrument or learn one together
- Take a first aid class together
- Go to a football, basketball, or other sporting event
- Go fishing
- Go skiing, sledding or build a snow fort or snowman
- Collect fall leaves and identify the trees they fell from
- Teach your Little how to read a map

MATCH ACTIVITY BUCKET LIST



Sometimes it can be hard to come up with ideas for activities, so many new matches find it helpful to create a bucket list to try over the next year. In the first month of your new match, plan an outing at your local library, coffee shop, or park and take some time to complete this bucket list together.

Things to do in the summer:

Volunteer opportunities:

Things to do in the spring:

Visit a new place:

Things to do in the fall:

Things to teach your Big:

Things to do in the winter:

Things to teach your Little:

Things to do inside:

Things to try in your neighborhood:

Things to do outside:

Big Brothers Big Sisters events to attend:

Tip: Keep this list in the Big's car and check it off as you go, and reference it when you're stuck on panning your next hang out. Don't forget to contact your Mentoring Specialist if you need help coming up with ideas!

TAKE YOUR ACTIVITIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL



DO

Do an activity based on your Little's interests or a new, shared experience. If your Little is struggling to come up with ideas on their own, offer suggestions and ask them to pick the one that sounds most interesting.

Example: Your Little tells you they like board games and after discussing each other's favorite board games, you discover you both love Connect Four. You plan an activity to go to the library to play Connect Four.

REFLECT

Reflect on activities together so you and your Little can learn more about each other. This will build your relationship and help plan future activities. Ask and answer questions such as:

- What did you like?
- What would you change?
- How could we make it more fun next time?

Example: While playing Connect Four, your Little liked keeping track of who won. They seemed to be having a lot of fun, but got upset when they lost three games in a row. On the ride home, your Little shares they had fun and wished the two of you could have played different games too.

APPLY

Apply this information for future activities. Learn from what went well and what didn't, to help your next activity be a success. Use this as a way to help your Little recognize their strengths, and improve and learn in areas of their choosing.

Example: Plan a future activity to a local game shop or comic book store that has a variety of games to play together. Remember they like keeping score and let them be the banker or scorekeeper.

RELATE

Relate the takeaway aspects and teachable moments that happen organically in your Little's life. Learning opportunities can be artistic, attitude, educational, pleasure, social, physical, career, family or financial. Also, remember that you are learning too. Be sure to take these lessons to heart.

Example: While playing future board games, talk to your Little about how they work through frustrations and what resiliency is. You learned that youth process feelings of failure and success differently.

THE DO, REFLECT, APPLY, RELATE MODEL

The DO, REFLECT, APPLY, RELATE model is more than just a way to process activities. It underscores some important elements of any relationship and helps youth understand their role within their own experience. Here's an example of how this model can be used.

<p style="text-align: center;">DO</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Discover what your Little enjoys and plan an activity around it</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">REFLECT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ask questions to determine what they like, dislike and learn</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">APPLY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use the information you gathered to plan future activities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RELATE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Connect life skills and teachable moments during activities</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">BAKING:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Recreate a traditional family recipe</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Liked to measure/mix ingredients, disliked waiting during bake time, learned to use kitchen appliances</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Plan an activity with less down time, look into doing a chemistry project.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Talk about the importance of being able to cook for yourself, making healthy choices and share your family traditions.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ART:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visit a local art museum</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Liked the samurai and mask exhibits, disliked trying to do the scavenger hunt, learned about a different culture and how to read a map</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Plan activities with more exploration and less rigidity, make masks together with household materials or watch an age appropriate samurai movie</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Talk about the significance of art in different cultures, how your Little sees art in their own life and share art that you've created</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SOCCER:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Go to a local park and play soccer</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Liked setting up drills to do together and having a shootout, disliked the heat and got thirsty, taught Big about footwork</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Go to a soccer game or plan more physical activities, make sure to bring plenty of water and take cool down breaks</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Talk about other sports, good sportsmanship and share stories about winning and losing</p>