



Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts
**Supplemental Handouts for
Volunteer Orientation**

Effective Relationships

Conflict Resolution Strategies

- **Negotiating:**
 - Bigs and Littles listen to the others' points of view and discuss which position might be the best.
- **Compromising:**
 - Meeting halfway -- both parties agree to sacrifice something in order to resolve the conflict.
- **Active Listening:**
 - Big shows that he or she understands the Little's wishes.
- **Distracting:**
 - Helping Littles to forget about the conflict by focusing their attention on some other interesting activity. (Especially useful for young kids 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. It's amazing how quickly a mood can change with some humor.
- **Chance:**
 - Flipping a coin or drawing straws.
- **Sharing:**
 - Working together to meet the needs of both parties.



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Effective Relationships

“Big” Skills to Help Develop the Relationship

Below are some communication tips for use in your Match relationship.

- **Listening:**
 - One of the most overlooked aspects of communication is the act of listening. Listening in the true sense means not talking, not lecturing, and not advising.
 - Many times, a few minutes spent really listening will defuse much of the frustration of adult-youth communication.

- **Attitude:**
 - Another important aspect of communication is attitude. During communication, youth often react not to what adults are saying, but the way they say it. This is especially true with teenagers.
 - Be aware of your attitude after a particularly tough day; it may negatively affect the way you talk or listen to your Little.

- **Humor:**
 - Humor is often the missing link in many adult/youth relationships. Sometimes even the most intense discussions can use an injection of humor. It can serve to relieve a particularly stressful moment and, at the least, can indicate that things are still okay in the world.

Basic rules of communication (Source: Students In Business, Inc., Be A Mentor Program)

- Make your communication positive
- Be clear and specific
- Recognize that individuals see things from different points of view
- Be open and honest about your feelings
- Accept your Little’s feelings and try to understand them
- Be supportive and accepting
- Do not preach or lecture
- Learn to listen
- Maintain eye contact
- Allow time for your Little to talk without interruption; show you are interested in what he or she has to say
- Get feedback to be sure you are understood
- Listen for feeling tones as well as for words



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- Ask questions when you do not understand
- Set examples rather than giving advice

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.



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- Concrete operations - the child begins to experience the predictability of physical events.

General Characteristics

- Interested in people, aware of differences, willing to give more to others but expects more.

8-10 YEAR OLDS

- Busy, active, full of enthusiasm, may try too much, accident prone, interest 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.
- Spend 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 friend's 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.



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Developmental Tasks

- Social cooperation.
- Self-evaluation/Skill learning
- Team play.

General Characteristics

- Testing limits, “know-it-all attitude.”
- Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings.
- Identification with admired adult.

11 - 13 YEAR OLDS

- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance.

Physical Characteristics

- Small-muscle coordination is good, and interests in 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.



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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.



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Developmental Tasks

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



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Age			
5-7	8 –10	11-13	14-16
Bake and frost cut out cookies	Start a scrapbook with a page for pictures of favorite things	Watch a TV program and identify negative stereotypes	Figure out how to program your VCR
Fly a kite on a windy day	Go on a camera scavenger hunt to find odd objects to photograph	Look up your state on the internet: major industry? Biggest cities?	Research what happened on the day and year each of you was born
Go on a walk and collect interesting rocks, leaves or other items	Make greeting, get well or holiday cards to give to special people	Build and paint a bird house – watch for occupants	Check out the classified ads and discuss what each job requires in terms of education and experience
Feed the ducks at the park	Make a bug cage and catch lightening bugs together	Rent rollerblades and learn to skate, safely	Visit a fish market, meat market or other place where food is not prepackaged
Make a present for someone special	Visit the zoo at feeding time	Make a list of people you admire – look them up on the internet	Go out for dinner at an ethnic restaurant; who else is eating there? Favorite dishes?
Play UNO, Crazy 8s, Old Maid	Read a selected book out loud and tape record it	Take a long ride on public transportation to the end of the line	Explore a new radio station together; discuss ads and target audience
Play bat mitten or croquet	Play Miniature golf or go bowling	Visit the SPCA and offer to walk the dogs	Plan, shop for ingredients and cook dinner
Go for a walk and find interesting places to practice “balancing”	Play Monopoly, Life, Sorry, hangman	Mow the lawn or wash the car together	Go to a concert featuring a favorite performer
Have a peanut and jelly sandwich picnic	Go on a field trip to the museum – focus on one exhibit and discuss it	Play computer and video games together	Try mastering something difficult: juggling, cooking a soufflé, water color painting
Visit a pet store and decide which is the oddest pet	Call ahead and visit the local fire station or police station	Plan and plant a garden or visit a community garden and offer to help	Watch a professional or semi-professional sporting event



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SAMPLE MATCH SCENARIOS

1. You and your Little Brother are shopping at the mall and he asks you to buy something for him.

It is important that your match be based on friendship, not money or material possessions. Set financial boundaries and stick to them. There is nothing wrong with the occasional treat or gift on a special occasion, but buying things for your Little should not be a regular practice. In this scenario, you may want to help your Little think of ways to earn what he wants rather than relying on you to buy it for him.

2. Your Little Sister wants to see an R-rated movie and she tells you that her mother lets her watch this type of movie all of the time.

While there is no policy against taking your Little to an R-rated movie, it is important to remember that the adult content of R-rated movies is inappropriate for most of the children in our program. In this scenario, first consider if you are comfortable going to this movie. If not, say so. If you wouldn't mind seeing the movie, consider if you know enough about the content, if it is appropriate for the age and maturity level of your Little, and if it really is OK with the Little's parent before buying the movie tickets.

3. Your Little Brother tells you that he has a secret. He will tell you only if you promise not to tell anyone else.

A Big Brother or Big Sister cannot promise to keep all secrets. Some secrets may be harmless, such as information about a gift or a surprise for someone. However, if your Little tells you that he is being harmed in some way, or someone he knows is being harmed, you will have to tell the Little's parent and/or Match Support Specialist. In this scenario, it is best to tell your Little that he can tell you anything, but some things are serious enough that you may need to ask for help on how to handle it, so you cannot always promise that you won't tell anyone else.

4. You do something really special for your Little Sister, but she does not thank you. In fact, she seldom says "thank you" and neither does her parent.

It can be frustrating when your Little doesn't thank you, but there are many factors to consider. Has this been role modeled for your Little? Is your Little too embarrassed to thank you? Is your Little shy and uncomfortable verbalizing her feelings? It is fine to remind your Little when to say "thank you", but try to not to take it personally if it takes some time for your Little to make it a habit. If you watch closely, chances are that your Little is showing appreciation through behavior more than through words.

5. You find that you are always the one planning outings. Your Little Brother is very complacent and never makes any suggestions.

This is an example of how a friendship with a child can be different from a friendship with an adult. With your adult friends, it is likely that you take turns suggesting activities to do when you are together. That is not always the case with a child and there can be several reasons. Perhaps your Little doesn't know what his options are, maybe he hasn't been exposed to enough different things to know everything he likes or doesn't like, or maybe he isn't sure if you are really interested in the things he wants to do. A good strategy is to keep asking for his input, but don't get frustrated if he doesn't have anything to offer. Pay attention when you are at your Little's home and you can pick up some clues on his interests, even if he can't tell you.



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6. You arrive to pick up your Little Sister for an outing and discover that nobody is home.

This is not a frequent scenario in our program, but it is important to know what you would do if it happens to you. If your Little's parent has a cell phone, make sure that you have that phone number. If you aren't able to reach your Little or the parent, leave a note on the door or a phone message saying that you were there. At your first opportunity, speak to the parent about the incident. Perhaps it was a simple misunderstanding. Remember that it is generally best to make sure the parent knows about your scheduled outings by making a quick confirmation phone call or email. With younger children, schedule the outings directly with the parent to avoid any misunderstandings. If this does become a regular occurrence, contact your Match Support Specialist and ask for assistance in approaching the parent.

7. After several outings, you notice that your Little Brother has a problem with body odor and cleanliness.

As difficult as it can be to discuss this topic, ignoring it is probably the worst thing you can do because if YOU notice it, chances are your Little's friends notice it, too. Depending on your Little's age, you could talk to either your Little or your Little's parent. If you talk to the Little's parent, an offer to help will probably be received better than a simple statement about the child's hygiene. If you are talking to the Little, approach the topic from an educational standpoint. Maybe your Little isn't aware of the changes in his body as he gets older and he hasn't developed a daily hygiene routine yet. For younger children, there are several good books on the importance of cleanliness.

8. You frequently find yourself talking to your Little Sister's mother about her personal problems such as her divorce, her job, or financial situation. You feel that you need to help because if you don't, nobody else will.

It is natural for you to feel the urge to help your Little's parent. Sometimes you can do that just by spending a minute listening and sympathizing. However, it is important to keep boundaries with the Little's parent and not lose sight of who you are matched to. Taking on too many of the families problems can quickly lead to burn-out and then you might not be able to help your Little at all. If you are concerned about your Little's parent, encourage the parent to seek appropriate assistance from her support system or from professionals who are better equipped to advise her.

9. Your Little Brother's mother has said she will give him money to spend on outings, but you often find that you have to pay for everything.

It is always best to determine at the beginning of the match if the Little's parent will pay for your Little's events and activities. This can help avoid awkward moments later in the match. It is the expectation of the program that the Little pays his own way, but that is not always possible. If your Little cannot pay, then you may have to pay for both of you. If your Little's mother has agreed to give your Little money but hasn't been doing so, it is fine to ask if there has been a change in your agreement. Remember that it is not necessary to do costly activities on your match outings. Contact your Match Support Specialist if you need some ideas for low-cost or free activities.



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Match Transition-Closing the Match

What is Match Closure (termination)?

- Termination is not something unique to a Big/Little relationship. Many examples from life show that growth and change usually imply or involve some sort of termination from the old to the new, from something past to something future. Changing jobs, leaving school, moving, losing a spouse or boyfriend are all types of terminations.
- Often these relationships are allowed to fade away, and a person moves on relatively unscathed. *Your relationship with your Little, due to his/her age and level of vulnerability, is somewhat more complicated and requires more than a “fade out.”*

Reasons for termination in the Big Brothers Big Sisters’ program:

- Transfer of Big Brother/Sister (i.e., leaving town, moving)
- Mutual agreement of both Big and Little with Match Support Coordinator consultation
- Indications that such a relationship is no longer needed
- Personal reasons, including marriage of Big, change of employment, financial pressures, lack of time, etc.
- Changing situation of Little, including leaving town/moving, institutionalization (hospital or alternative school), family problems, etc.
- Program ends due to participant completion

The reasons will vary, but there are feelings involved for both Bigs and Littles in all of the above cases. During your relationship some of the feelings developed and encountered include:

- Affection and dependence - Both the Big and Little will share affection for each other and may be mutually dependent on each other. During the relationship, your Little may have developed a dependency that has helped him/her in his/her environment.
- Understanding and patience - Throughout the relationship, there may have developed some understanding of each other. Unfulfilled expectations may have been handled through patience.
- Guilt - The Big may feel unsuccessful. He/She may feel defeated but unable to admit it. Guilt sometimes accompanies termination and the Big may feel



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he/she did not help or that the Little did not benefit from the relationship. All matches have a positive impact.

- Anger and frustration - During the relationship, the Big may have experienced some frustration, including an inability to manage or control the relationship, too many or too few phone calls from the Little, a feeling of being “used” by the Little, etc.

Feelings involved for both Bigs and Littles during termination:

The termination process is significant because it deals openly with the feelings associated with it:

- Denial
- Depression
- Anger, hurt
- Behavioral issues
- Acceptance and positive growth

The Little may feel frustrated and rejected. They may even be angry at losing their friend. The reaction to termination is usually one of anger. The reason for the termination has little to do with the kinds of feelings that may be evoked. Bigs may consider the reasons for termination genuine and valid, but the Little may still feel hurt.

Feelings of anger when termination is discussed are very real. Why are you leaving? Will you no longer be my friend? What have I done to cause you to leave? I must be bad or you would not be leaving. All of these and many more questions and comments/remarks indicate some deep feelings of regret and anger.

Termination Process

It is clear that each relationship is different, the gains and successes are different, and the feelings are different.

The termination process is flexible for each match relationship developed. *It is also clear that a good termination is significant to ensure that the gains of the relationship are maintained/remain undiminished.*

- Each termination should be done with the consent and supervision of your Match Support Coordinator. There are not just two people involved; there are parents, siblings, schoolteachers, social workers, and staff involved in the lives of almost every Little. It is important that you do not attempt to terminate the relationship on your own.
- Give yourself a minimum of four weeks to terminate the match. That is, begin to involve your Little in discussions regarding termination four weeks prior to separation.



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- The best way to terminate is to be honest. Tell why you are officially terminating the match and share your feelings about the relationship. Admit your feelings of affection, guilt, or disappointment. Then, give the Little the opportunity to talk about his/her feelings.
- Do not rush it. Do not attempt to initiate and conclude the termination process in one visit. It is advisable to merely mention it the first visit of the termination. Then discuss it in more detail during future visits.
- Inform your Match Support Coordinator of any pertinent information regarding termination. If you need help in approaching your Little, ask your Match Support Coordinator for advice. He/She is there to help.

It is helpful to evaluate the relationship. This should be done by the Big and the Little through an open-ended conversation about the past years and what the relationship has meant to each of you. It is a way of reminding each other that the relationship was worthwhile to you both.

Your friendship will last beyond your official termination as a Big. Feel free to keep in touch by phone, mail, or e-mail with your Little if all parties included agree. Activities or interactions, such as exchanging pictures, keeping and sharing journals, making a scrapbook, etc. will keep memories bright for you and your Little.

Volunteer Re-engagement on Match Closure

At the end of a match you may be asked if you're interested in remaining involved with the agency.

BBBS has a volunteer retention process in place to reengage volunteers through:

- A new match
- Other volunteer role (administrative, fundraising, etc.)
- As a donor

When a match is nearing closure, staff encourages volunteers to remain involved with the agency. If the match support staff has been effective, your individualized needs and interests have been identified and addressed during regular communications, and hopefully we have laid the groundwork for you to continue as a Big or in another role.