



Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

# Supplemental Handouts for Volunteer Orientation

<b>Supplemental Materials/Handouts for Volunteer Orientation</b> <i>(these materials can be given to the volunteer on an "as needed" basis-depending on their specific need)</i>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Handouts</b>
Effective Relationships	Outlines tips on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conflict resolution</li><li>• Communication skills</li><li>• Basic rules of communication</li></ul>	Pages 2-3
Strategies for Common Problems	Common questions from Bigs with responses from a Match Support Specialist	Pages 4-5
Sample Match Scenarios	Outlines nine match scenarios and appropriate responses to the situations.	Pages 6-7
Match Transition-Closing the File	Reviews in detail Match Closure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is it?</li><li>• Reasons for</li><li>• Feelings involved</li></ul> Process Re-engagement	Pages 13-15



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

### 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.



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

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



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts Strategies for Common Problems

Over the years we have seen some common problems that can occur in any match. These are called common because they are, well... *common*. It's normal for Little/Big relationships to experience some of these situations.

We've collected some examples of these common problems and included the problems in the next pages. After your match gets going, if you are experiencing one of these challenges, you can bring the issue up with your Match Support Specialist and discuss in more detail how to proceed in a successful way.

### **“What do I do?”**

#### ***“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 many times together he/she may still not respond in a way that you deem appropriate.
- “I had a good time” may eventually be a response, but may be a long time in coming. Sometimes he/she might only say, “It was o.k.” Be sure you model the behavior you would like your Little to demonstrate, and be consistent.

#### ***“My Little doesn't share feelings and/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, but your Little not saying much.
- Eventually your Little may well respond in a more open and honest way, trusting you and confiding in you as an adult who will not disappoint or walk out on him/her. Conversation between you will grow and your Little may share more feelings with you. If this happens, rejoice in it, but remember that no relationship is perfect and all relationships are defined in a variety of ways.

#### ***“My Little never calls me.”***

- Littles love to receive phone calls, but seldom feel comfortable initiating them. Asking your Little to share with you the good feeling that comes from getting a phone call may help him/her to understand that adults also like to receive calls from people they like. Giving your Little definite times to call may help, as can enlisting the parent's help in encouraging your Little to call.
- It is important not to stop calling with hopes that they will start calling you. It is important to be patient, and be sure to reinforce the behavior with positive remarks when they do call.

#### ***“My Little doesn't act appropriately.”***



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

- Your Little may come from a family with a very different value system than yours. It is not your responsibility or role to try to change the values of your Little. Your match is a learning experience for both of you. If your Little has never been to a play, they may not know what behavior is expected of them.
- Try to be content with the understanding that, through your example, your Little may come to respect values that are more positive. But this may be a long process.

### ***“My Little doesn’t seem to need me.”***

- Every child should have someone to bring a little magic to them, but your Little may not respond in a way that makes you feel you are needed. Feeling needed may be expressed by your Little in small ways, and may be non-verbal.
- In time, you may learn to 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.

### ***“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 may appear to interfere, your Little is benefiting from the interest and involvement of a caring adult friend. 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.
- No group activity, school event or family commitment can take the place of your special relationship with your Little. If you recognize the importance of what you are doing, chances will increase that your Little will recognize this too.

### ***“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 that he/she is interested.
- Be sure you do not make assumptions based on your Little’s behavior, and talk to your Match Support Specialist if you have questions.

### ***“My Little doesn’t want to improve.”***

- Your Little may have many adults eager to tell what she/he is doing wrong.
- What your Little will respond to is someone who will point out and praise strengths. These strengths (assets) can range from the values that the child holds to things he/she is good at doing. If your Little knows that you are going to be positive, give encouragement and compliments, and appreciate the unique person that he/she is, change will happen in very positive ways, and your Little will grow in confidence, competence and caring.



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

# 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.*



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

### **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.*



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

### 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.
- By working through feelings and problems with your Little when termination is imminent, you show him/her that your relationship was worth the effort, and you better ensure within your Little the ability to handle future “terminations” that he/she will encounter.

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

- Transfer of Big Brother/Sister (i.e., leaving town, moving)
- Mutual agreement of Big, Little with Match Support Coordinator
- Indications that such a relationship is no longer needed
- Personal reasons of Big including marriage, change of employment, financial pressures, lack of time, etc.
- Changing situation of Little, including leaving town/moving, institutionalization, 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. 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 he/she did not help or that the Little did not benefit from the relationship. All matches have a positive impact.



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

- 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.
- 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.



## Volunteer Orientation Supplemental Handouts

- 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.

You have shared many positive moments in your relationship with your Little. Let termination be another.

### 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.

The most important thing 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 are in for a fantastic ride! Your Match Support Specialist is available to help you through any of the above situations. Remember to seek help as necessary.