



Big Brothers
Big Sisters.

Preparing Volunteers Guide

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 them for you in the next few pages, including some tips on how to handle them. After your match gets going, if you are experiencing one of these challenges, you can bring the issue up with your Match Support staff 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.



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“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 the right way.”

- 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.



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“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 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.

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.

