

Big Advice

By Jazlynn Smith

Welcome to the family! Whether you're just joining or have been part of our team for a while, we're lucky to have you. Being a Big is fun. It can also be scary, hard, stressful, and straight-up confusing. At the end of the day, you're not alone. That's why we've brought together some Bigs with a little advice on how to have a successful match.

1. Attend REACH events.

Jordan, a Big Sister in our program, says, "Go to the REACH events. They're free, you don't have to plan, and you get to see how other Bigs and Littles interact. And they're free". REACH events are a fun and easy way for you to become connected with your Little along with other Matches.

The purpose of the REACH initiative is to partner with businesses and other programs within our community to offer intentional, structured, group activities to our one-to-one matches.

REACH activities focus on developmental goals in five focus areas:

- Recreation
- Education and Careers
- Arts and Culture
- Civic Engagement
- Health and Wellness

Whether it's cookie decorating or a painting session, REACH events are always a blast and easy to plan for.

2. Don't get discouraged.

Big Brother Logan states, "It's tough at first. It's a tough adjustment to be able to work into your Match. It's difficult to get started because you don't necessarily know where to start. Just be confident in yourself and know that whatever you're doing is making an impact. Taking small steps is the first thing that you can do. Eventually, those will grow into bigger things. Small changes and small moments can really make big differences later. Don't get discouraged". Big Brother Logan is



right. We know being a Big is a lot of work and it's easy to give up, which is why BBBS staff is here to help. Match support specialists are amazing resources to help with any question you may have. Although there is a mandatory monthly check-in with your Match Support Specialist, they are constantly available as we want to build successful matches.

3. Show up.

Big Sister Jazlynne explains, "Don't get discouraged. It's likely that your Little has had someone betray their trust or just doesn't feel comfortable opening up to a stranger. That's okay! Make sure to let them know you're always around when they're ready to talk. I like to share stories with my Little about things I struggled with at her age, such as making friends or focusing on schoolwork, as a reminder that I was once eleven too. It's okay if you don't have all the right answers. You just have to show up". Being persistent in your relationship with your Little will show that you're not just around when they're at their best. Sometimes all they need is someone that will stay connected no matter the season of life they're in.

4. Be Patient.

Big Sister Lexi, a previous Big in our program, states, "My biggest advice to a new big is to be patient and go in with an open mind, I truly can't emphasize it enough. I wish I went into my match with more of an open mind. I thought it was going to be easy from the first time I met her, and to be honest it wasn't. I had to show her that I was someone she could trust. Having a Little is not always easy and it's a very big responsibility. But, through patience and an open mind it will be one of the best experiences you will have. BBBS is an amazing opportunity, one that not everyone gets to participate in. Always remember to be patient, kind, and have fun. You are going to make such a difference in a child's life". Big Sister Lexi truly understands one of the most important parts of being a Big. It's likely that you'll run into unexpected barriers with your Little that require being open minded and patience. Being patient and kind go hand in hand as your Little likely has experienced things you haven't. Making sure you enter every moment with an open mind will help create a meaningful relationship with your Little.

We get it! Being a Big is a big commitment which is why we offer many different resources from our discount card, Match Support Specialists, and REACH events. If you've made the commitment to be a Big, thank you!