

Strategies for Common Problems (FAQ's)

Over the years we have seen some common challenges that can occur in any match. 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. If you experience 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.

"My Little doesn't show appreciation?"

Situation: 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. Remember that your ideas about how a Little "should" appreciate you can set you up for a big let down.

Strategy: While it's normal to want some feedback and feel appreciated, concentrate on getting that from the parent/guardian and your Match Support Specialist. The most important piece here is that you role model good behavior for your Little. "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?"

Situation: 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.

Strategy: Be patient. Eventually your Little may 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.

"My Little never calls me?"

Situation: 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 specific times to call may help, as can enlisting the parent's/guardian's help in encouraging your Little to call.

Strategy: DO NOT stop calling with hopes that they will start calling you. This often backfires and then you will have risked compromising your consistency and possibly your Little's trust. 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?"

Situation: Your Little may come from a family with a very different value system. 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 at a theater.

Strategy: Try to be content with the understanding that, through your example, your Little may come to respect values that you are able to introduce. Recognize this may be a long process.

“My Little doesn’t seem to need me?”

Situation: Every child should have someone to bring positive attention 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.

Strategy: 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?”

Situation: Your Little may not seem to have a lot time for you, but be assured that although other activities and family issues may appear to take up time, 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.

Strategy: 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 and his/her family does not seem to value education?”

Situation: You may be frustrated that your Little is regularly late or absent from school, does not spend much time on homework/preparing for exams, or is indifferent about their grades.

Strategy: As with anything, your Little and their parent/guardian may see school in a different way than you do. While you may not be able to change their attitude about school, you can talk with your Little about your educational experiences, the difficulties that you faced, your future goals, and the ways that your education has shaped your life. Don’t forget that even though it is important to discuss school and education with your Little, your focus should still be to build a relationship and have fun together.

“My Little doesn’t seem interested?”

Situation: 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.

Strategy: 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?”

Situation: Your Little may have many adults eager to tell what she/he is doing wrong.

Strategy: Your Little will respond to someone who points out and praises his/her 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, complimentary, give encouragement, and appreciate the unique person that he/she is, change will happen in very positive ways. Your Little will grow in confidence, competence and caring.

“I don’t feel like I’m making a difference?”

Situation: The impact your relationship will have on your Little might not be seen or felt for years.

Strategy: Remember those who made an impact on you in your life – sometimes it’s not until much later that we recognize those who were responsible. Know that just by being a positive role model and being there for your Little, those little moments you share together WILL lead to big impact.

“My Little’s parent/guardian does not seem to be supportive of BBBS or me?”

Situation: Your Little’s parent/guardian does not return your calls regularly, does not seem interested in talking with you, and/or does not seem to appreciate the effort that you make for their child.

Strategy: If this situation arises, it is important to talk with your Match Support Specialist to determine the best plan of action. As the situation gets worked out, remain consistent with phone calls and outings with your Little. Keep in mind that their parent/guardian may be supportive and appreciative of your efforts, even though they don’t express it to you. The most important thing to remember is that you will need to be patient, consistent 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. By talking with your Match Support Specialist regularly, they will help you identify and address common challenges.