

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.
- 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.



WHAT IF...

What if we don't hit it off right away?

It's not easy to trust a stranger, especially if you're a young person who's had a lot of bad experiences with adults in the past. It may take a while to build up trust. Don't interpret caution as a rejection. A young person may not show it, and he or she may not even know it fully, but your help is definitely wanted. Think of the child's feelings first and your feelings second. Be patient, be kind, be consistent. It will pay off in the long run.

What if something serious comes up?

While most mentoring relationships develop and flourish without serious problems, things do happen. Mentors have an important role, but that role does not include medical or psychological treatment, or family counseling. There are support systems in place for real emergencies. Contact your mentoring program coordinator for information. The most you are expected to do—or should do—is to help guide your mentee to the appropriate source of professional help.

What if we don't have anything in common?

Many first-time mentors worry that differences in age, race, religion, education, or gender will be insurmountable barriers. Actually, most experienced mentors report that mentoring a young person from a different background broadened their own horizons and deepened their understanding of other people and cultures. So get curious. Ask lots of questions. Listen hard. Learn about the differences you have and the commonalities you share.

What if for some reason I can't mentor anymore?

This is a very serious concern. Mentoring is a deep commitment. It will do far more harm than good to enter a young person's life, build up trust, and then abandon the relationship. Revisit the commitment you made when you decided to be a mentor—you should have made a commitment for *at least* one year. Please do your very best to honor your commitment. However, things do happen. Be honest and open about the reason and work together with your mentoring program coordinator to make the transition for your mentee as smooth as possible.

What if I do something wrong?

If you are there for your young friend no matter what; if you listen and really hear what's being said; and if you do your best to counsel and not to judge, you will have done everything right. Some young people are more ready than others for a mentor. Some young people may test their mentor's commitment. Try not to take such behavior personally. Just keep trying your best and keep doing the right things. Gauge your success by your actions, not your mentee's.