



the
BIG book



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Washtenaw County



INTRODUCTION :

What's the "Big Book" all about?

The Big Book is here to help you confidently, comfortably, and realistically talk about about your part to those who will listen and also potentially make great Bigs.

You are a Big because you are thoughtful, compassionate, engaged, and fun. You have a big heart and big hopes for the world around you.

There is no such thing as "too many Bigs," and there are no better people to talk about what it's like to be a Big than Bigs like you.

You know better than anyone mentoring isn't rocket science; it's just about being yourself and being there. You are first-hand proof that real connections between Bigs and Littles make life-changing impacts.

As a Big, you are one of our greatest assets. Our community is full of young people who are waiting to meet their Big Brother or Sister.

You have something special to give -- and you're taking the time to give it, which is the biggest piece of it all. Because you do what you do, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Washtenaw County thinks you're a pretty big deal.

BIG VOICES CARRY



Q.1 How do you know a great potential Big when you meet one?

It might feel like looking in the mirror. Think about yourself, your friends, family, colleagues, and the other Bigs you know.

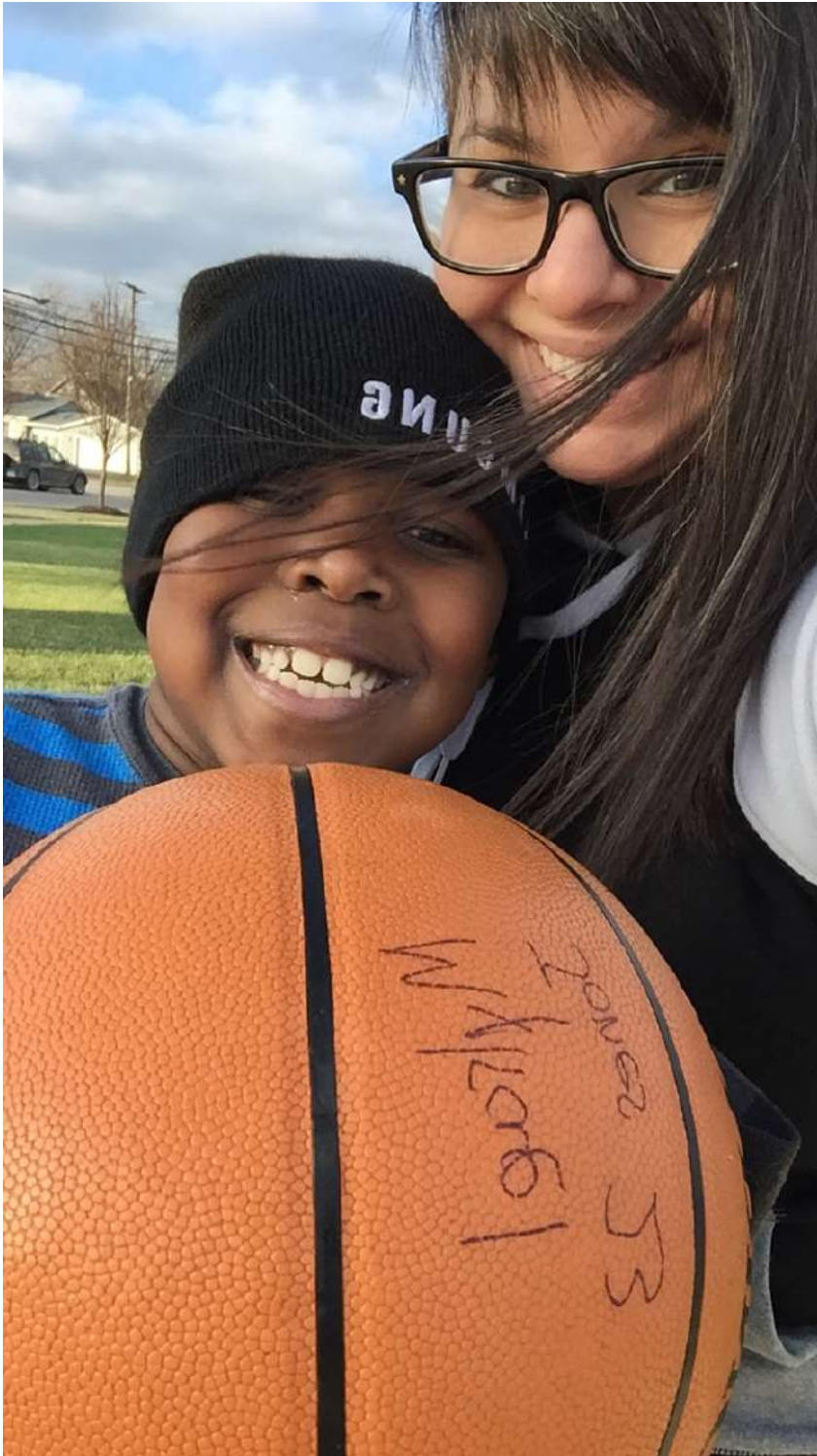
There's no cookie-cutter age, ethnicity, education level, lifestyle, or background for a Big; but some things are pretty consistent, across the board:

- Friendly, personable, and fun-loving
- Eager to give something back
- Safety-minded
- Supportive, nurturing, and positive
- Actively interested in things -- whatever those things may be
- Willing to share skills, experiences, and conversation
- Social and proactive in relationship-building
- Dedicated and true to one's word
- Capable of seeing things from someone else's perspective
- Reasonable and adult, while still a kid at heart

Trust your gut. When you meet someone with a clear passion to live fully, work hard, have fun, and give back, you'll know it.

Q. 2

How do I bring being a Big up in conversation? (No soapbox required).



Nobody wants to feel pushy or preachy. You shouldn't have to be and Big Brothers Big Sisters doesn't want you to be. Still, your experience is powerful and first impressions are important.

Think back to the time before you became a Big. Do you remember the little voice in your head telling you to do something bigger than yourself? Remember those little worries you had at the time? Everyone has similar qualms! And what helps people understand, feel better, and excited about the process is hearing real experiences from real people.

Mention something you recently did with your Little when you're talking with family or friends. Talk about activities with your colleagues around the water cooler, in passing chit-chat, in one-on-one conversations, and on social media. See if your peers latch on and ask more questions. If not, that's okay. If they do ask more, keep it going.

Direct them to the BBBS website or have them call to learn more. Pass along the name of your Match Support Specialist so they have a specific person to contact.

Q. 3 What should I say about being a Big and BBBS?

Be yourself and say what feels right.

Explain that program, describe the process of becoming a Big, tell your unique story, and dispel myths about mentoring.

You know what BBBS does, but here are some basic bullet-points to keep in mind:

- BBBS of Washtenaw County is a local affiliate of a nationwide mentoring organization that has been around for over 100 years.
- Our goal is to help develop meaningful one-on-one matches between adult "Bigs" and youth "Littles," ages 7-18.
- Most Littles are facing adversity -- living in single-parent homes, receiving free/reduced lunch, and lack access to resources -- and are in need of someone to spend positive, consistent, and fun time with. That can make all the difference.
- We are a results-drive program. National research shows that mentoring helps youth succeed -- building confidence, avoiding risky behaviors, and achieving academic success.
- BBBS supports Bigs, Littles, and families. We are with you every step of the way, from enrollment to matching and beyond. We provide you with activity ideas, feedback on relationship development, communication assistance, and navigate/mitigate any conflicts/issues that may arise.

Be ready for common misconceptions. Here are some myths to bust:

- Time: Some people think they "just don't have time" to be mentors. Two outings a month isn't that time consuming.
- Parenthood: As a Big, you are not a surrogate parent or babysitter; you are a friend who happens to be an adult role model and BBBS works hard to maintain that boundary.
- Money: Bigs are not asked to spend a lot on their Littles. We promote free/low cost activities and will provide will all kinds of ideas so you are never at a loss for how to spend your time.
- The "Coolness" Factor: Being a great Big is about being yourself. What our Littles need is stability from someone they can trust. It's pretty easy to be that kind of "cool."
- Compatibility: We make matches that make sense. We take into account interests, personality traits, life experiences, and logistics when making matches.



CONCLUSION :

What else should I say or know?

- Big Brothers Big Sisters isn't about chasing people to volunteer. There are a lot of people out there who are interested in the program but not be ready to volunteer. Don't push anyone to get involved. Rather, let them know BBBS will be here if/when they are ready to be a Big.
- Highlight the supports BBBS provides. We are a unique program for many reasons, the most important being our Match Support. Make sure whoever you are speaking to knows that they will be fully supported by a BBBS professional throughout their match. Don't forget to mention activity emails, group events, and BBBS community partners who provide discounts.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, that's okay! Don't make something up, just let them know you are unsure of the answer but will help them find it.

What's Next?

Start thinking of people to ask!
Look for the Double Your Impact and Engaging
Your Network one-pagers in your folder!

Other Questions?

**Write them down below then and
call a BBBS staff member!**

734-975-0933