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Make a **BIG** Impact.

Become a Big Brother
or Big Sister.



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Niagara Falls



United Way



MENTORING 101

By volunteering for just a few hours a week, you can help a child succeed. All children need someone to look up to, to provide them with guidance and advice – and to have fun with! Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteer mentors are adult role models to talk to, learn from and share experiences with. There may be dozens, or even hundreds, of children and youth in your community right now who would like to welcome a caring role model into their lives.



“You helped me through some really tough times and were there to share some of the very best times of my life”.
– a Little Sister to her Big Sister

What is Mentoring All About?

Mentoring is about being a friend to a child or youth. Mentors affect the lives of their Little Brother or Little Sister by sharing experiences they may never have had, talking to them when they are dealing with difficult situations, supporting them and lifting them up when things don't go well, and of course helping them have fun and be a kid. Mentoring options are diverse and suit different interests and life situations. With a commitment of just a few hours per week, you can get a sense of personal fulfillment from contributing positively to a child's development and self-esteem.

Mentors Make a Difference

Mentoring is simple, yet powerful. You'd be amazed at what a little friendship, attention and gentle guidance can bring to the life of a child. Studies show that our mentoring services help kids stay in school, avoid risky behavior, reach more of their potential, and experience first-hand the importance of helping others in their community.

What You Might Not Know About Mentoring

- Mentoring is inexpensive. We encourage no-cost and low-cost activities.
- Mentoring is not time consuming. Traditional one-to-one mentoring requires 2-4 hours per week, with a minimum one-year commitment, but you can be a mentor in other programs with a commitment of just one hour per week.
- Mentors are not alone. Professional staff are there to work with you, the child and the family throughout the course of the relationship to provide training and support.
- Mentoring is diverse. In addition to one-to-one mentoring, volunteers can take part in group mentoring and in school mentoring. Ages from 18 to seniors are welcome to volunteer.
- Mentoring benefits mentors too by providing increased self-confidence, personal fulfillment and feelings of renewal.



“What might seem like a small benefit to most, but is a **huge benefit** for me, is seeing the happy faces my kids have after being out with their Bigs.”

– Anonymous Parent



IS MENTORING FOR ME?

If you can be a friend, you can be a Big Brothers Big Sisters mentor. Mentors are not expected to act as a substitute parent, guardian or teacher, to be a tutor, or to act as a babysitter, therapist or social worker. Mentors do not provide basic necessities like food or money, and are not expected to organize elaborate or expensive activities.



Q: What kind of activities do Mentors and Mentees do together?

A: We encourage Bigs and Littles to choose activities they both enjoy. Caseworkers do their best to match volunteers with a Little who has similar interests. BBBS organizes group activities for matches, and can often offer tickets to movies and sporting or cultural events.

Is Mentoring for Me? Take the Quiz.

To decide if mentoring might be right for you, use this checklist:

- I enjoy spending time with children and youth
- I have the desire to build a friendship with a child or youth
- I have time and am willing to commit to meeting regularly with my Little Sister or Little Brother
- I am willing to commit for up to one year
- I am a responsible, trustworthy and stable individual
- I am caring and compassionate
- I can be energetic
- I am a good listener
- I respect the values and beliefs of others, even if they are very different from my own
- I am comfortable with the idea of communicating openly with the child's parent or guardian and the Big Brothers Big Sisters agency caseworker
- I work well in a team
- I have strong interpersonal communication skills
- I have strong problem solving skills
- I am able to set realistic expectations and be prepared for unexpected changes
- I enjoy some or many of the activities that children and youth enjoy
- I take my own safety and the safety of others seriously
- I am comfortable with assuming responsibility for the safety and security of the child or youth during outings

Volunteering as a mentor is a fun and easy experience and also comes with certain important responsibilities. We seek volunteers who are committed and consistent, and who are willing to commit to at least a year.

Of course, most people will not answer 'yes' to all of the characteristics mentioned above. But if you answered 'no' to many of them, it may be worth re-considering whether mentoring with Big Brothers Big Sisters is something that is for you. Or, get in touch with us to get more information before making your decision.



Q: : I don't know much about children and youth. Is that okay?

A: Yes! It doesn't take much knowledge or experience to be a friend and positive role model, and a Caseworker is always there to support you.

Mentor Requirements and Responsibilities

To mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters, you must:

- Meet our agency's minimum age requirement (18 years old). There is no upper age limit.
- Provide a satisfactory vulnerable sector check
- Provide three or four satisfactory references
- Respect the confidential nature of our services and sign a confidentiality agreement

To mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters, you should also:

- Be interested in developing a positive relationship with a child or youth
- Be trustworthy, energetic, mature, stable, reliable, accepting, patient, caring and respectful of others
- Be supportive and non-judgmental in your interactions with children and youth
- Promote the welfare and safety of the child or youth
- Act with integrity
- Be comfortable with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara Falls' core values, policies and procedures

Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors will be expected to:

- Commit approximately one to four hours per week (this varies across programs - see Mentoring opportunities at BBBS for more information)
- Commit for up to one year (some programs encourage shorter or longer time commitments)

- Ensure the safety and security of the child(ren) or youth when they are together
- Communicate openly and regularly with the parent/guardian (for one-to-one community-based matches) or with the school liaisons (for in-school matches)
- Communicate openly and regularly with the Big Brothers Big Sisters Caseworker
- Keep everyone informed of life changes that may impact the match
- Emphasize friendship over changing the behaviour of the child or youth
- Be consistent and dependable and maintain a steady, positive presence in the Little Sister's or Little Brother's life
- Involve the child or youth in deciding how to spend time together
- Listen to and respect the thoughts and viewpoints of the child or youth, and focus on their strengths
- Have realistic expectations, and be prepared for any issues that may arise
- Use available resources, including the support and guidance of Big Brothers Big Sisters agency staff
- Work with their Big Brothers Big Sisters Caseworker to properly close the match when the match ends

The safety of the children and youth in our programs is our number one priority, and this should also be the number one priority for mentors. Before matches start, all mentors as well as the children and youth and their parents/guardians must complete mandatory child safety training, which provides important information on how to respond to safety concerns.



Q: I can't commit to one year or once a week. Can I still be a volunteer?

A: Yes! The commitment level varies depending on which program you are volunteering with. There are many other volunteer roles if mentoring doesn't fit into your schedule.

Ways to Get Involved

Have you been thinking that mentoring with Big Brothers Big Sisters only includes one-to-one, long-term matches? Think again! Big Brothers Big Sisters offers a wide range of mentoring opportunities to meet the varied needs of volunteers, children and families.

One-to-One Mentoring Program

- Matches children and youth with a volunteer Big Brother or Big Sister in a one-to-one mentoring relationship
- Generally requires a commitment of two to four hours a week for up to one year
- Activities can be as varied as one's imagination!
- Ideal for individuals who have the time to commit to a longer term friendship with a child or youth

In-School Mentoring

- Matches children and youth with a mentor who meets with them in school
- Generally requires a commitment of one hour a week
- The volunteer and youth meet at school and participate in a wide range of activities
- Ideal for individuals looking for a shorter term commitment who can give time during school hours
- Runs only during the academic school year, with summers off!

Teen Mentoring

- Matches high school students with a child in an in-school mentoring friendship
- Teen mentors generally spend one hour each week with a boy or girl at their neighbouring elementary school
- Ideal for teenagers looking to make a difference in the life of a child or youth



Q: Are mentors expected to help out with personal activities, such as appointments or helping with homework?

A: No, this is not a requirement. A mentor is a friend and a role model, not a babysitter.

Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds

- Group mentoring program where female mentors (ages 18-25 yrs) encourage physical activity, healthy eating and the development of a positive self-image among girls aged 12-14
- Structured around three themes: active living, balanced eating, and feeling good about oneself
- Fun, educational games and activities enhance the learning experience
- 7-10 weeks in duration, 3-4 hours per week
- Ideal for outgoing women looking to provide positive guidance to a group of young girls

Game On! Eat Smart, Play Smart, Live Smart!

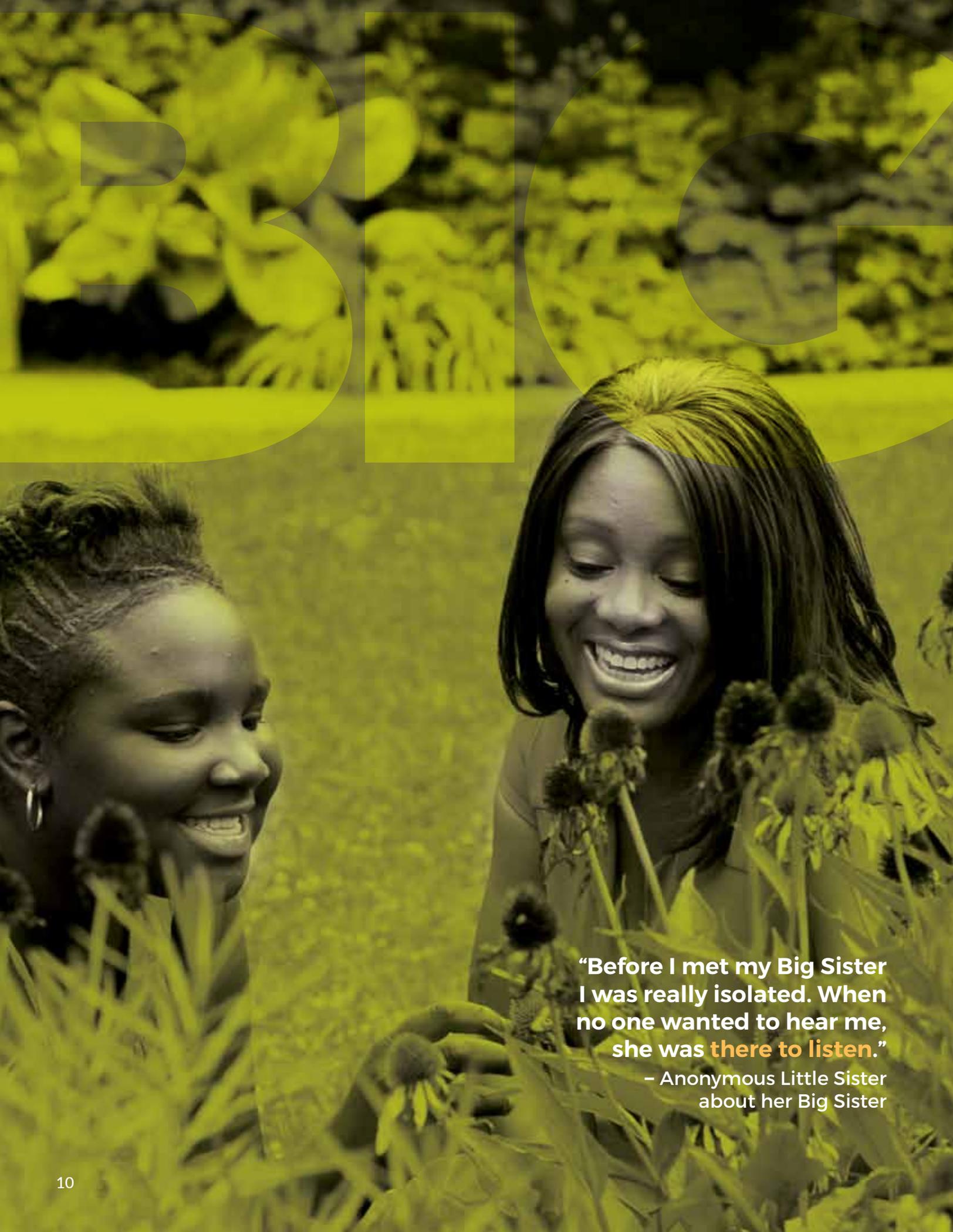
- Group mentoring program for boys, delivered by trained male mentors (ages 18-30 yrs), that is designed to provide boys with a positive male role model, and support boys and young men in choosing to maintain a healthy, active lifestyle
- Positively addresses physical activity, healthy eating, nutrition, self-esteem, leadership and communication skills
- 7-10 weeks in duration, 3-4 hours per week
- Ideal for energetic men looking to provide positive guidance to a group of youth

Wait List Program (Big Bunch)

- A program for children and youth who are waiting for a mentor
- Volunteer mentors are matched with 2-3 youth on our waiting list for monthly activities
- This can be an ideal introduction to mentoring!

Non-Mentoring Programs

Interested in other ways to help Big Brothers Big Sisters? We are always looking for volunteers for our special events and fundraising activities, (including our Nearly New Store gently used clothing store and bingo events), and our Board of Directors!



BIG

**“Before I met my Big Sister
I was really isolated. When
no one wanted to hear me,
she was **there to listen.**”**

**– Anonymous Little Sister
about her Big Sister**



READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Becoming a Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentor is as simple as 1-2-3:

Step 1

Ensure that you are comfortable with the Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentor Requirements and Responsibilities.

Step 2

See if mentoring is right for you by evaluating yourself using our Self-Assessment Checklist.

Step 3

Get in touch with us to get started with the application and assessment process



The Application and Assessment Process

The volunteer applicant:

- Submits an application to Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Submits a vulnerable sector check and the names and contact information of three or four references
- Participates in a one-to-one interview with a staff member at Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Successfully completes an orientation and child safety training
- Is notified of their acceptance/non-acceptance

The Matching Process

- The Caseworker, now familiar with the volunteer and the children and youth waiting to be matched, discusses a potential match with the volunteer, the child or youth, and, depending on the program, with the family
- The Caseworker arranges for a meeting between the child or youth, the volunteer mentor, and, depending on the program, the parent or guardian
- If everyone agrees, the match can begin!

If you have any questions, we are here to help!



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Niagara Falls

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