

Keys for a Healthy Goodbye

All matches come to an end at some point. Research suggests that when mentoring relationships end well, they have longer lasting effects and positive outcomes for youth. Mentoring relationships are different than other types of relationships, and though they may evolve to feel natural over time, Bigs have an obligation to end their commitment in a healthy way for their Little. Match Support staff understand that ending a match is often difficult and that is why we are dedicated to partnering with you through the process. Want to have a lasting impact? Here are the keys for a healthy goodbye with your Little.

1. When to Start the Conversation

Bringing up conversations about endings sooner rather than later will help your Little and their family be better prepared for the transition and will allow you time to celebrate and reflect on your friendship. While timing may vary based on your Little's individual needs and the circumstances surrounding the transition, we recommend that you introduce the idea at least **one to two months** prior to your final outing and continue the conversation as a part of your ongoing dialogue. During your **second or third to last outing**, you should emphasize to your Little **when** your final outing will be and discuss **what** your relationship will look like after saying goodbye. Having this conversation before the very end will allow you to spend your last day reflecting and celebrating your friendship together.

2. Who to Involve

Use your supports! Talk to your Match Advocate as soon as you think your match might be ending. All matches come to an end at some point and we are here to partner with you on your plan for a healthy goodbye. Your Little's parent or guardian is also a key partner for you and we encourage you to share the news with them first. They know their child best and may have insights into the best approach to prepare your Little, share the news, and in determining what your relationship with your Little will look like moving forward.

3. What to Say: Preparing Yourself and Your Little

Talking to your Little about your goodbye is an important part of the process and an opportunity to role model ending a relationship in a healthy way. There are no "right" or "wrong" feelings when saying goodbye and your Little may have a wide range of emotions through the process. Ask questions and role model verbalizing your own emotions. "We only have 3 outings left! Can you believe it? I'm really going to miss seeing you. How are you feeling?" It's important to make sure your Little understands why you're saying goodbye and hears the message: "it's not your fault."

Clear expectation setting about what your relationship will look like moving forward is key. You may be tempted to say "Let's keep in touch!" but it's vital that you don't make promises unless you are 100% sure you can keep them. For some Littles and families, *keeping in touch* without a clear plan can be more detrimental than a *clean goodbye*. If you decide to keep in touch with your Little, remember that you will be responsible for creating a healthy transition if/when something changes in the future. Take some time to really think about what is

sustainable for you and only agree to what you can commit to – and what both Match Support and your Little’s parent/guardian have given permission for. Remember, whatever you decide is OK and it is sometimes better to simply say, “I know this is hard, and I’m really going to miss you too. I’m excited to celebrate our friendship together in 2 weeks during our last outing.”

4. How to Celebrate your Match!

Your final outing should be a time to celebrate the positive memories you have made together and an opportunity to reflect on how both you and your Little have grown throughout your friendship. What were your favorite experiences together? How does your Little feel different now compared to when you first met? How do *you* feel different? What have you learned about each other and what have you learned *from* each other? What does your Little think he/she will take from this experience into the future? Create space to reflect and celebrate with your Little’s family too. Here are some ideas we recommend: Recreate a favorite outing or be brave and try something new. Make a scrapbook or comic book of your favorite memories together. Write goodbye or thank you cards to each other. Looking for more ways to make your goodbye memorable and impactful? Match Support is here to help you throughout the process.

Steps for a Healthy Goodbye with Your Site-Based Little

Research suggests that when mentoring relationships are ended well they have longer lasting effects and positive outcomes for youth. During your match, your Little has gained confidence and self-worth. The way you say goodbye plays an important role in how that self-worth continues to develop, even after the relationship ends. An unhealthy goodbye can negate the positive contributions you have worked hard to add to your Little's life, limiting the residual effects of your match. **Whether it's the end of your match or the end of the school-year, here are some steps for a positive ending with your Little...**

1. Who to Involve

Use your supports! Talk to your Match Advocate about your plan for a healthy goodbye. Connect with your Little's teacher and/or your site's contact so they can help prepare your Little. Depending on your unique match, you may have established a relationship with your Little's parent/guardian. If so, talk to your Match Advocate about including them in your conversations, too.

2. When to Start the Conversation

Bringing up conversations about endings sooner rather than later, will help your Little be prepared for the transition and will allow you both time to celebrate and reflect on your friendship. We recommend that you introduce the idea to your Little **six to eight weeks** prior to your last visit and continue the conversation as a part of your ongoing dialogue. During your **second or third to last visit** of the year, you should emphasize to your Little **when** your final visit will be and discuss **what** your relationship will look like after saying goodbye. Having this conversation before the very end will allow you to spend your last day reflecting and celebrating your friendship together.

3. What to Say: Preparing Yourself and Your Little

Talking to your Little about saying goodbye is an important part of the process and an opportunity to role model ending a relationship in a healthy way. Ask questions and share your feelings. Ex. "We only have 3 visits left! Can you believe it? I'm really going to miss seeing you. How are you feeling?" It's important to make sure your Little understands why you're saying goodbye and hears the message "It's not your fault." Even if you are confident that you will be able to continue with the program next year, it is still important to say goodbye to each other. In these cases, you can use language such as, "I hope we can see each other next year."

Clear expectation setting for what your relationship will look like moving forward is key. As you plan, remind yourself: DON'T make promises unless you are 100% sure you can keep them. Take some time before your last visit to really think about what is sustainable and realistic for you. *Only agree to what you can commit to – and what your Little's parent/guardian has*

given permission for. Remember, whatever you decide is OK and it is sometimes better to simply say, “I know this is hard, and I’m really going to miss you too. I’m excited to celebrate our friendship together next week during our last visit.”

4. How to Celebrate your Match!

Your final visit with your Little should be a time to celebrate all of the positive memories you have made together. It’s an opportunity to reflect on the changes that have occurred in both you and your Little since first meeting. What were your favorite experiences together? How does your Little feel different now compared to when you first met? How do YOU feel different? What have you learned about each other and what have you learned *from* each other? What does your Little think he/she can bring from this experience into his/her future? **Your final visit should be personal and we recommend spending it completely one-on-one, ideally in a quiet area of your school/site.** Some ideas on how to celebrate together include: trying a new activity you both have never done before, making a scrapbook/comic book of your favorite memories together or writing goodbye cards to each other. Looking for more ideas on how to celebrate in a fun way? Talk to your Match Advocate!