

## BIGS HELPING BIGS – HOW TO KEEP YOUR LITTLE ENGAGED DURING COVID-19

In the past week we hosted two Virtual Big Get Togethers. These events allowed Bigs to come together and share their best successes in connecting with their Littles during this time of social distancing, as well as their biggest struggles. This resource summarizes some of the best tips & tricks that we learned from Bigs that you can take and try with your own Little if you have been struggling to connect. If you have more ideas that you think would be helpful for your fellow Bigs, please email [activities@bbbsci.org](mailto:activities@bbbsci.org).

### CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR PHONE CONVERSATIONS

- **15-minute Phone Call Once a Week** – one Big has found that she will look up some simple jokes before their call and tell her Little jokes each week on their call. It's a simple and fun way to engage her Little and keep the conversation flowing, as well as getting her Little to open up.
- **iMessage Games During the Call** – one Big quickly realized his Little is not good at talking on the phone and it can be hard to keep the conversation flowing. He started challenging his Little to iMessage games (i.e. pool) during their calls and they stay on the phone while they play. This helps give them something to talk about and also an activity to do together while chatting.
- **Weekly Discussion Over TV Show or Movie** – one Big and her Little have decided that every Thursday at 5:00 pm they will have a phone call to discuss a TV show or movie they decided to watch for the week. They rotate who gets to pick what they're watching, and this gives them easy conversation starters for their weekly call.
- **Simple Conversation Starters** – Other simple ideas for conversation starters over the phone that were shared are:
  - Mad Libs (you can Google simple Mad Libs to complete over the phone)
  - 2 Truths and 1 Lie
  - [20 Questions](#)
  - [101 Riddles](#)
  - [Spore Quizzes](#)

### MY LITTLE HAS MINIMAL TECHNOLOGY ACCESS – WHAT DO I DO?

- **Simply Make the Effort** – If you are finding yourself in this spot, you are NOT alone! The most important thing we learned from our Mentoring Relationship Specialists and fellow Bigs is that the most important thing is that your **Little knows you are trying – regardless if you are able to connect**. When your Little looks back on this time, the most important thing they remember is that you were there, and you tried – not how many jokes you told them over the phone. Here are some examples of how you can be present without connecting via technology:
  - **Drop off a goodie bag at your Little's house** – one Big dropped off a baggie with coloring books, stickers, books, magazines, etc!
  - **Drop off an activity your Little and their family can do together** – one example a Big provided was she dropped off a cookie decorating kit that her Little and whole family could do together.

- **Send your Little mail** – Some Bigs have been writing their Little letters and including the return mail and stamps to make it easy for them to reply. This way technology won't create an issue for you and it's a fun project for your Little to work on their letter back to you!
- **Drop in for a surprise (socially distanced) visit** – One Big surprised her Little on her birthday by baking her a cake and decorating her Little's front door. She dropped off the cake and was able to wish her Little a Happy Birthday, even if they couldn't have a birthday hug!

The key takeaway for your Little will be that you tried and created a presence, even if you weren't talking on the phone or video chatting. Any small activities and gifts go a long way these days, you just have to think outside the box!

## **GENERAL TIPS & TRICKS**

- **Decide on a Day & Time to Talk to Your Little** – Communicating with your Little during this time is tough and consistency is even tougher. Many Bigs shared that they decided on a certain time & day of the week that they call / FaceTime / Zoom with their Little and this makes it easier to get ahold of them. Also, be sure to reach out to your Little's parent/guardian to decide on a good time & day as often times the Little needs to borrow their technology in order to communicate.
- **Figure Out Your Little's "language"** – If you are struggling to get your Little to open up, figure out their "language" or one topic they love. For example, if your Little loves baseball, research some online baseball games you can play together or buy them some books about baseball and drop them off at their house.
- **Any Communication is Key** – At this point, the main thing to remember is that any communication is key. There are not set standards or best practices - this is an unprecedented time, so be easy on yourself! Even if your communication is 1-sided and you feel like you and your Little aren't connecting, they will remember that you are making an effort and that is what is the most important thing.