



Welcome to our Virtual Mentoring Toolkit!

We hope this finds you and your family doing well. These are truly extraordinary times.

As our mentoring community continues adjust to the realities of social distancing, one thing has become clear: **our Littles need us now more than ever.**

Recognizing this, we wanted to be sure we are providing each of our Bigs with the tools, resources, and guidance they need to continue being the exceptional mentor that they have always been.

Below you will find a Virtual Mentoring Toolkit, adapted from Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters (Connecticut).

- Tips for Staying Connected
- Virtual Match Activities
- Education Resources
- Meeting Basic Needs
- Coping with COVID-19

Though we hope it provides a helping hand as you continue to navigate these challenges, but we also know that this Toolkit does not replace regular contact with your Match Support Specialist. So, please - reach out and let us know how you're doing. We'd love to provide assistance and help you provide exceptional mentoring for your Little at such a critical time.



Not being able to see your Little face-to-face will present some new challenges to your relationship, but following the tips below will help you navigate through these difficulties while continuing to help your Little reach their highest potential.

- Rely on regular phone calls and text messages, or video chats via [FaceTime](#) or [WhatsApp](#) to stay connected with your Little. Use [this resource](#) or [this resource](#) for great conversation starters for kids and check out [this resource](#) or [this resource](#) to get chatting with teens!
- As many of us know from adjusting to virtual work meetings, [Zoom](#) is a great resource for video conferencing. Accounts are free to set up and offer unlimited one-to-one meetings, which is absolutely perfect for Bigs and Littles! [Here's a link to sign up](#) and [another link for online resources](#) that can help get your up to speed on everything Zoom has to offer.
- [Messenger Kids](#) (from Facebook) is a great way to safely connect with your Little via a social media platform, while keeping their parent looped in. [Here's more on how it works](#).
- Snail mail - *still a thing!* Write letters to your Little (become pen pals!), send postcards, a homemade card, pass along some print-at-home games (like these [puzzles](#) or these [coloring pages](#)), or send them a homemade craft (like these [bracelets](#), or one of [these quick/easy kids crafts](#))
- **STAY CONSISTENT! However you choose to connect, your consistency is more important to your Little now more than ever.** Find

days, times, and methods that work best for both of you, create a plan, set a schedule, and stick to it! This will make it easier on you both, while giving you each something to look forward to and depend on.

- **ASK QUESTIONS!** It's no surprise that everyone's day-to-day schedule is experiencing incredible upheaval. Reaching out and chatting with your Little and their parent/guardian about when is best to reach out, what days and time are easiest, and how you can help are questions that will be enormously helpful for you (and your Little!) in staying connected.
- There are a few resources from Greater Good Magazine that we absolutely adore, especially [this article on Active Listening](#) and [this article detailing the 36 questions you need to increase closeness!](#)
- We absolutely love [this quick one-pager](#) from our friends at The Search Institute that outline the keys to building a supportive relationship during crisis. Sneak peek: focus on expressing care, challenging growth, and providing support!



There will be a many more of these to come over the coming days and weeks, but we wanted to get you started with a few Match Activity ideas that you can dive into this weekend with your Little!

- Develop a talent, skill, or passion together! There is a ton of experts creating exceptional online content right now that can help you and your Little [learn to draw](#) or [doodle](#), perfect an [in-home workout](#), [practice ballet](#), [become a scientist](#), [explore the world](#), [become a great cook](#), [learn a second \(or third!\) language](#), [become a yogi](#), or [learn how to dance](#)!
- Don't hesitate to day-dream! Plan future activity ideas you two might do together once it's safer to move about in the community. Check out [this website](#), [this website](#), and [this one too](#) for great activities and attractions to check out locally.
- Have a Movie night! Plan to watch the same movie ([here are some ideas](#) and [here are some more](#)) and discuss via phone or text message either during or after. Make sure to get movie selection approved by parent/guardian and [here are some great questions](#) (though you'll have to swap the word 'book' for 'movie) to get you going.
 - Looking for an educational movie or documentary? There are thousands available on [Kanopy](#) or [Hoopla](#) that are free with a library card!
 - Did someone say movie night? [Netflix Party](#) is a new way to watch Netflix with your friends online by synchronizing video playback and adding group chat to your favorite Netflix shows!
- Watch a virtual concert together! There are a ton of artists who are hopping on the bandwagon and hosting virtual and free concerts for their fans! [Here's a list from NPR that might be helpful](#).
- Start a cooperative journal by using a platform like [Story Bird](#) or [Google Docs](#) to document the day-to-day. [This example](#) provides a great format for this.
- Have a virtual book club! You can read to your Little via FaceTime, WhatsApp Skype, or Zoom, or plan to read the same book and discuss with each other. Here are [some great book ideas](#) to get started and [here's some tips on how to get the conversation going](#).
 - Have a library card? [Libby](#) is a great resource for accessing downloadable free e-books!

- Schedule an activity to virtually [check out a museum](#) or [visit a zoo \(or two!\)](#) together! Check out [Zoom](#) for an easy way to share your screen and explore together!
 - Does your Little like to build? Purchase duplicate [Lego sets](#) or [jigsaw puzzles](#) and send one to both you and your Little. Share your progress by sending photos via text message and see who can complete their project first!
 - Schedule game time! Using app-based games like [Words with Friends](#), [Draw Something](#), [Chess](#) ([click here for the web version](#)), [Checkers](#), [Battleship](#), or [Bowling](#) can be great ways to engage and connect with your Little, while enjoying some down time. [Check out this website](#) ([and this one too!](#)) for great games you and your Little can play on laptops or desktops.
 - Does your Little have virtual homework assignments they're trying to tackle? Offer to lend a helping hand! Whether it's a book report, an algebra lesson, or anything else you can be incredibly helpful in assisting your Little in transitioning to digital learning.
 - Our friends at the Boys and Girls Club have opened up a number of online activities and curriculum through their **MyFuture** program. [Check out this website to access](#) a mobile-friendly social platform you and your Little can gain access to over 185 Boys & Girls Club program activities in areas such as STEM, leadership and the arts.
 - Looking for indoor activities that share over video chat, or just want to lend a helping hand to a parent looking for the same? [Here are 50 easy/cheap indoor activities to keep kids busy.](#)
 - Our friends at Playworks have created a [Play at Home Guide](#) that includes a variety of different games that kids and families can play while home. This Play at Home guide is accompanied by resources available online which includes interactive games with video.
 - [Oxford Owl provides free e-books](#) for children age 3-11! You can use these to read to your Little, or start a book club!
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With schools closed across the area, we know many Bigs will be focused on helping stem the tide of learning loss while their Littles are spending time at home. Check out the resources below to help your Little stay sharp and continue to focus on their academics from home.

- [Khan Academy](#) offers a FREE library of trusted, standards-aligned practice and lessons covers math K-12 through early college, grammar, science, history, AP, SAT, and more. They are also offering [daily learning schedules](#) for kids throughout the crisis.
- Common Sense has a bunch of great (and free!) education websites and apps that kids can access (with parent permission!) to help stem the tide of learning loss. [Check them out here for more info](#) and find what resource might be best for your Little!
- Check out [Class Central](#) for a free list of online classes that range from computer science and business, to arts/designs and engineering. This is best for middle/high-school age Littles.
 - Feeling ambitious and want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the class alongside your Little!
- Is your Little interested in coding? [Scratch](#) was designed for children ages 8-16 and uses easy-to-use programming language to let kids build almost anything they can dream. There are no obscure lines of code here. Instead, arrange and snap together Scratch blocks as if they are virtual Legos!

- Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Use Scratch right alongside your Little and venture through their online lessons together!
- Has there ever been a better time for podcasts? [Check out this website](#) to access funny, smart, and scientific podcasts that keep kids engaged.
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Pick a podcast you both enjoy and listen along together! Then, after each episode, connect and discuss using slightly revised, [book-club style questions](#).
- Do you have a teenager interested in public health or psychology? [Here is a laundry list of resources](#) that they can explore!
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Pick a resource and explore it together. Or, have your Little review a specific resource they might be excited about and teach you about what they learned!
- Looking for a virtual lesson your Little (and your!) might find interesting? Check out the [TakeLessons YouTube channel](#) for lessons on singing, learning Spanish, learning sign language, playing piano, and much more!
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the lesson right alongside your Little and learn together!
- Looking for online lessons that mirror what your Little might be missing in school? [PBS SoCal](#) has prepared [broadcast programming and online lessons](#) that adhere to California's K12 state curriculum, which - though definitely not New York - still might be helpful, informative, and fun!
 - Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the lesson right alongside your Little and learn together!
- Our friends at Scholastic offer [day-by-day projects to keep kids in grades K-9 reading, thinking, and growing](#). These are updated each day and present four separate learning experiences, each built around a thrilling, meaningful story or video. Kids can do them on their own, with their families, or with their teachers. Just find your grade level and let the learning begin!
- Is your Little interested in writing? [BoomWriter](#) inspires children to write and develop important literacy skills, and our parent app will keep you 'In the loop' with your child's progress.
- Can't find something you like on the list above? [Check out this website for a full list of educational companies offering free subscriptions](#).
- Looking for content-specific activity ideas? Check out the following

- [Discovery](#) for science activities!
- [National Geographic](#) and [Switch Zoo](#) for animal activities!
- [ABCya!](#) for activities and games related to creative writing and much, much more.



We know many of our parents will be feeling the stress of supporting and providing for their children over the weeks and months to come. We wanted to be sure every Big had specific resources that might be helpful to pass along to parents who may turn to you for support:

- [United Way's 2-1-1](#) service is an incredible resource and a great place to start if you're searching for specific program and resources in a specific location or municipality. The site allows you to search by city or zip code for specific, local services (e.g., food pantry, crisis intervention, healthcare) that can benefit families in-need.
 - *Not sure where to start?* Just dial 2-1-1 from any phone to be connected with a 2-1-1 community navigator who can provide recommendations and point you in the right direction.
- Internet access

- Spectrum/Charter is offering two free months [broadband and Wi-Fi](#) to support vulnerable families. This can be a great way for families to stay connect with loved ones (including you!).
 - Xfinity is also offering free hotspots around the country. [Check out their website](#) to help locate one that's close by.
 - Food assistance
 - For a list of food pantries and soup kitchens we recommend checking out [the Regional Food Bank's partner locator](#).
 - For fresh produce delivered to locations around the area, check out [Capital Roots' Veggie Mobile](#)
 - Also, many school districts and communities are also providing meals to students and families. Capital Region BOCES has a [list of local school districts pick up sites](#)
 - Employment/unemployment & benefits:
 - The [Department of Labor](#) has information about how to file for unemployment
 - [Paid Sick Leave/Paid Family leave](#) is required for some employers – check if yours is one of them
 - [NY State of Health](#) is providing a special enrollment period for newly uninsured due to COVID - 19
 - Rent/Mortgage: here is a [helpful article from NBC](#) with links to a number of resources
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We know this is a time of great stress and anxiety for everybody - Bigs, Littles, and Families included! Here are a list of tools and resources you can use to help your Little (or yourself!) better cope with the the crisis:

- NPR coming through in the clutch (as always!) with [this helpful, interactive guide](#) for how to chat with kids about COVID-19.
- Our friends over at [Common Sense](#) have some great videos and other resources that can help families to better understand what's going in the news and how to react to it, as well as stay calm and learn at home.
- Harvard Health put together a [great article on how to talk to teenagers](#) about COVID-19.
- The Child Mind Institute outline [some great resources and approaches](#) on how to talk with younger kids about COVID-19. Here's another [great article too from PBS](#).
- Need some family mindfulness amidst all the disruption? Ten Percent Happier has [a bevy of resources and daily updates](#) for families struggling to cope.
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) offers an incredible COVID-19 Coping Guide with specific strategies and recommendations for each age group.

- [This article from Greater Good Magazine](#) can help you learn more about helping teens cope with sheltering in place.
- Our friends over at Greater Good Magazine also have a few different at-home practices and activities that you and your Little can use to help battle stress and anxiety. These include [how to gain perspective on negative events](#), [how to practice mindful breathing](#), and [the benefits of expressive writing](#).
- How do we help someone who is suffering with anxiety? [This article](#) details seven tired and true ways to be sure we're lending a helping hand.
- [This podcast](#) from author Raina Telgemeier introduces a practice that can help calm nerves and reduce anxiety.
- [This podcast](#) from comedian and radio host Luke Burbank sheds light on how focusing on eating a single raisin can help break free of the burdens presented by stress and anxiety.
- MENTOR and the Mental Health Association of New York City put together [this incredibly helpful primer](#) on how we can best support young people in the wake of trauma.
- The World Health Organization has two nifty little one-pagers on how you can [help your Little](#) and [help yourself](#) better cope with COVID-19.