

General Effects:

Neglect: Abandonment is considered a form of neglect and results in similar negative outcomes. Children abandoned by a guardian are put at risk of suffering physical effects, such as malnutrition, lack of adequate health care or substandard hygiene due to poverty or lack of guardian employment.

Low Self-Esteem: Long-term effects of abandonment can lower one's sense of self-worth. As a result, children may not learn coping mechanisms and struggle into adulthood. A person with a history of abandonment may have difficulty relating with a spouse or partner.

Anxiety: Children who were abandoned may later show signs of anxiety while relating to caregivers or important people in their lives. Despite someone taking the place of an absent guardian, children may still deal with anxiety as demonstrated by difficulty separating from guardians or loved ones, sleep issues and controlling behavior.

Attachment: An abandoned child may have difficulty forming lasting bonds with others, particularly new caregivers. A child being cared for after abandonment may not attach well to a new family. Children may lack trust in others, fearing the departure of someone else important. By not allowing close bonds with others, a child may try to avoid future abandonment.

Advice for Mentors:

- **Show consistency and commitment:**

- Express commitment to your Little in different ways. A Big may want to create a calendar with the activities a match plans and schedules. Allowing a Little to see this will illustrate that this is long-term, and show them that you are not leaving.
- Avoid cancelling hang outs as much as possible. It is important to show your Little that you will not break plans and leave. This will allow them to trust you and build *Connection*. If you do need to cancel, do so in advance and provide an alternative time to hang out. Emphasize that you WANT to hang out and prioritize rescheduling.

- **Show your Little that you care:**

- It is important to earn your Little's trust. A Little in this situation may be guarded when first meeting others. Let your Little know that they can trust you through actions rather than words. Be consistent and understand that building trust and forming a relationship will take time.
- Demonstrate vulnerability and show your Little that you are comfortable expressing your own emotions and feelings by confiding in them in appropriate ways. Accordingly, be sure to tell your Little that you are there for support and to provide reassurance when needed. Act as a support system when necessary and ask about your Little's feelings on various situations. Illustrate that you are interested in maintaining this friendship and demonstrate strong *Character*.

- **Boost self-esteem:**

- Provide a Little with compliments and positive reinforcement whenever possible. They may need that extra encouragement to really digest it.
- Do not point out negatives. While you may need to be assertive at times, it is important to avoid overly critical language. When pointing out an issue, also point out something positive. Let a Little know that everyone makes mistakes. Focus on the positives more so than the negatives.
- Encourage your Little to do things they really enjoy and are skilled at and promote *Confidence*.
- Be sensitive when introducing new ideas. If a Little is not successful or skilled in an area, they may feel worthless. Avoid winning/losing language and highlight the importance of learning a new skill rather than being an expert. Point out your own failures and attempts.

- **Provide positive closure:**

- When it is time for the relationship to end, be sure to work with your Match Advocate to provide a positive closure. An abrupt, negative closure may reinforce the abandonment a Little has experienced in the past.