



## What I Learned From a Child Whose Life Was Cut Short

*In this series, professionals thank those who helped them reach where they are today.*

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I have made several life-changing decisions over the course of my 25 short years, the greatest of which was becoming a mentor in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City program (BBBSNYC).

I began my adventures with Ervi in the summer of 2012. I remember our first outing together like it was just yesterday--I took him to Uno's Pizzeria on the Upper West Side. He was a petite eight year old with the appetite of a teenager; I remember watching him make a mess of himself with pizza and a sundae. I still laugh at the memory.

Throughout our years together Ervi became more than my little brother—he became my best friend. As life

around me in this amazing city changed so much, Ervi was my constant; he was my comfort; he was my family.

Ervi and I explored New York City together. We did everything: the row boats in Central Park, a race in Prospect Park, the Lego exhibit at the Discovery Museum, a day at the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of the Moving Image, the Children's Museum, the Museum of Mathematics, the New York City Fire Museum, the New York Public Library, superhero movies, lots of ice cream, too much pizza, Dave & Buster's, Chelsea Market, and even Chuck E. Cheese. We saw New York City just the way two kids should: starry-eyed and amazed.

We shared laughs, inside jokes, and even thoughtful discussion about life. Ervi and I didn't always have a perfect relationship though; we had our moments of grief and stress, too. Sometimes it was hard. At one point, I considered giving up on our relationship—this thought was one of my biggest regrets. Fortunately, Ervi and I worked through our difficulties and we fought to stay together, and as a consequence I experienced so much happiness.

Over the years I watched Ervi grow into a beautiful, kind-hearted young man. I still remember our second Christmas together. I took Ervi to the Lego store and I told him to pick whatever he wanted and as I stood before the register to pay he pulled out a little bag of coins, to which I curiously asked "What are you doing, buddy?" In his small voice he softly replied, "I want to help."

I almost cried.

On May 7th, 2015 I lost my best friend to a reckless driver. Ervi was 11 years old. No set of words in the universe can explain the pain and sorrow I have felt since his mother told me the news--I have never known such torment.

But even after all of that pain, I would do it all over again. Ervi gave me such beautiful memories, ones that I will hold close to my heart for the rest of my life. While losing my beloved Ervi has been the most haunting experience I have ever been through, his life brought me the greatest joy I have even known; I will love and miss him everyday for the rest of my life.

You see, I was inspired to become a mentor because of the astonishing people who mentored me throughout my life. Not only did they shape me as a working professional but they also shaped me as a human being. These titans gave me the greatest gifts one human can give to another: guidance, leadership, support, and love.

I discovered shortly after Ervi was taken from us that he was on the honor roll and that he had begun to love reading. I learned that he had become more patient and loving. Ervi grew into a beautiful human being, and I like to think I played a role in that.

Being a mentor and a mentee is what has shaped me into who I am today, and there simply isn't any way I could describe to you how powerful your impact can be on someone's life. I can only encourage you and invite you to find out for yourself what an amazing gift it is to be a mentor. So, please, consider joining BBBSNYC in their mission to help provide support to children in need all throughout New York City.

After three years, I finally understand how profound their motto is. I invite you to find out, too.

***Francisco is a Big Brother at Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City. To become a volunteer mentor or to learn more about Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC, log onto [www.bigsny.org/BeABig](http://www.bigsny.org/BeABig) or call 212-686-2042.***

**"The Power to Change Lives"**

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City