



"We rise
by lifting
others."

-Robert Ingersoll

What an 8-Year-Old Taught Me About Life

This post was written as part of the #Mentor series, which is tied to LinkedIn's student editorial calendar. Follow the stories or write your own.

I had the pleasure of mentoring an 8 year old girl from the South Bronx with Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City. I watched her grow and mature into a teenager. It proved to be such a valuable experience for both of us, and I was often surprised about how much you can learn from a child. I learned from her that there is a child that still lives in all of us no matter what the age. Together, we experienced all New York City had to offer. We played tennis, went to baseball games, played in softball tournaments, played at Coney Island and visited practically every museum on 5th Ave. I even brought her along with me to the grocery store to teach her about healthy eating. I challenged her to try new foods and to pay attention to sugar.

For once, I was able to see life through a child's eyes. She was just as curious and excited as I was about experiencing something for the first time. The most challenging part of the relationship was not our outings. It was that I listened to her experiences outside of our relationship and learned that she did not have an advocate. I recall calling her school to vouch for her and even attend her graduation.

She needed someone like that EVERYDAY. So I did my best to make the most of the time we spent together.

From this experience I grew individually and it helped me to be more appreciative of my own childhood. I also

felt more tied to the community and it helped me to understand the many challenges that our future generations will face. As adults we have the ability to make a difference in their lives and I think we should all take that power very seriously. I enjoyed the experience so much that I recommend it to people who are moving to a new city and want to get active, ESPECIALLY in New York City!

Here are the top reasons why mentoring makes an individual more successful:

1. Improves interpersonal and relationship skills
2. Increases confidence
3. Provides insights regarding childhood and adolescence and young adulthood
4. Increases patience and supervisory skills (US Department of Labor)
5. Provides a sense of accomplishment

Here are reasons why children can benefit from having a mentor:

1. Enhances self esteem
2. Promotes healthier relationships and lifestyle choices
3. Improves behavior at home and at school
4. Helps them to set career goals
5. Improves the high school graduation rates
6. Decreases the likelihood of them initiating in drugs and alcohol ((2009). Elements of effective practice in mentoring. Third Edition. Retrieved from http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1222.pdf)

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