Big Brothers Big Sisters OF TORONTO

# THE BIG NEWS EDITION

STORIES OF CONNECTION. STORIES OF POSSIBILITY. STORIES THAT SHAPE FUTURES




"**Mentorship has become a part of my everyday life.**"
- Brayden Laporte

# ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE STORY

**BRAYDEN'S STORY**

When Brayden first became connected with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto, he could not have known just how much mentorship would become part of his life. What started as a relationship between a young person and a caring adult became something much bigger: a source of encouragement, perspective, confidence and possibility.

Today, Brayden describes mentorship as something that has become part of his everyday life.

**And that may be the greatest measure of impact, not simply where a young person goes, but what they carry with them along the way.**

When Brayden was 12, his mom suggested he join Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto.

Her reason was simple: Brayden didn't have a strong male influence in his life. His dad wasn't part of his life, and she believed having a positive male role model could make a meaningful difference. Brayden wasn't immediately sure as
starting something new came with questions, and a little intimidation. He didn't know what to expect or what having a Big Brother would actually mean.

His first match was positive, but after about a year, the relationship came to an end. His mentor was a lawyer with a demanding career and a new baby, making it difficult to maintain the relationship. Then, in 2021, Brayden met Adrian Leckie. And everything changed.

**"I went from having no male mentor in my life to having the best."**

Over the years that followed, Adrian became much more than a mentor. He became someone Brayden could count on.

Their weekly conversations covered far more than what was happening at school or work. They talked about personal development, confidence and taking care of his physical health. They went to the gym together, where Adrian helped Brayden learn proper exercise techniques and encouraged him to take care of himself.  Brayden described it as a holistic relationship, one that focused not only on who he was, but on who he could become.

**❝ FOR SOME, MENTORSHIP IS A CHAPTER, FOR OTHERS, IT BECOMES PART OF THE STORY THEY CARRY FORWARD.**



"**Mentorship has become a part of my everyday life.**"
- Brayden Laporte

## WHO BRAYDEN IS TODAY ?

Today, mentorship continues to influence the way he moves through the world. Because the most powerful part of mentorship may be what happens after the formal relationship ends. The lessons stay. The confidence stays. The belief that someone saw something in you stays. And eventually, you may find yourself becoming that person for someone else.

Brayden shared that confidence began to show up in other areas of his life. Adrian encouraged him to step outside of what felt familiar, including developing his public speaking skills. Together, they had opportunities to speak at and host a Big Brothers Big Sisters event. They also co-facilitated a public speaking program for youth at a community centre in East York.

For Brayden, these weren't simply activities. They were opportunities to discover a side of himself he hadn't fully recognized.

**"Before I met my Big, I didn't realize my full potential. He helped me discover myself."**

Today, Brayden describes himself as more outgoing and charismatic, someone who isn't afraid to step outside his comfort zone. Public speaking, once an area of growth, has now become part of his life.

Recently, Brayden achieved something that might have seemed far outside his comfort zone when he was 12: he successfully secured a role as a **Sports Commentator at Humber Polytechnic.** The young person who once felt intimidated by something new is now stepping confidently into opportunities that put his voice and his personality, front and centre. And through it all, Adrian has remained in his corner.




**"Having someone in your corner means everything to me."**

For Brayden, Adrian has become much more than a mentor. He describes him as his "cheerleader", someone who checks in on him, his family and even his pet bird. Over the years, their relationship has grown into a genuine connection built on encouragement, laughter, shared experiences and simply being there.

> **MY BIG TAUGHT ME HOW TO GAIN CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF IN THE REAL WORLD AND STEP OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE.**

# THE PRESSURES YOUNG PEOPLE CARRY

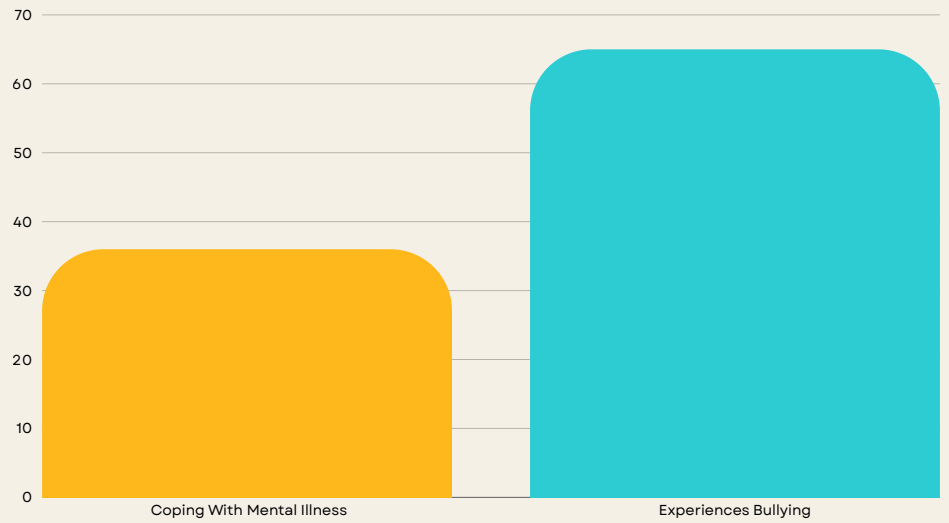
**"Growing up in Toronto means navigating more than the classroom."**

Brayden's story is one example of what can happen when a young person has someone in their corner. But across Toronto, many young people are navigating challenges that extend far beyond what we see on a report card.

Academic pressure, family circumstances, financial stress, social isolation, questions about identity and belonging, and mental health can all shape how a young person experiences school, relationships and their future.

The connection between these challenges and student success is becoming increasingly clear. The Toronto District School Board's Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) ranks schools according to external challenges that can affect student success, including measures related to income, education and family circumstances. The higher a school ranks, the greater the level of external challenge its students are facing. The majority of the schools that we work in, rank high on the LOI list.

For young people carrying those challenges outside the classroom, succeeding inside it can become harder, too. And the pressure is not only academic.




# 36% OF LITTLES ON STAFF CASELOADS ARE COPING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

**36% of the Littles** on staff's caseloads are **coping with Mental Illness** while **65% of our Littles** have **experienced bullying**. These statistics came to life when in the span of one month, we had an instance of a youth explicitly displaying cutting marks while visiting our office. There were also phone calls received from a mentor (BIG) stating that their former little reached out expressing thoughts of suicide.

These numbers are difficult to read. But behind every statistic is a young person trying to find their way.

# THAT IS WHY CONNECTION MATTERS

A trusted adult can offer something that statistics cannot measure: someone to talk to, someone who notices when things are difficult, someone who encourages a young person to keep going, and someone who helps them see possibilities that may be difficult to see on their own.

At Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto, mentorship is not a substitute for professional mental health care, education or family support. It is one part of a broader network of relationships and resources that can help young people navigate the challenges they face and build the confidence, resilience and sense of possibility they need to move forward.

Because sometimes, the most important thing a young person can have is not another program, another expectation or another number to meet.

**It is someone who believes in them.**

> **CONNECTION REMINDS A YOUNG PERSON THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TO FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT ALONE.**

# THERE IS A STORY WAITING TO BE WRITTEN.

**"And across Toronto, there are over 450 young people waiting for someone to help them discover what's possible."**

Brayden's experience reminds us that mentorship isn't about creating a path for a young person. It's about helping them see that they have the ability to create one.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto carefully recruits, screens, trains and supports mentors, creating structured relationships designed to help young people develop the confidence, skills and connections they need to thrive.

There is a cost to do this work. For more than 100 years, BBBST has invested in the potential of young people across our city.

Today, you have an opportunity to be part of that investment.




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## FIND THE WORDS THAT MATTER

Mentorship
Investing
Youth
Opportunity
Relationship
Future
Big Brother
Big Sister

# YOU COULD HELP WRITE THE NEXT STORY

Brayden's relationship with his mentor started with a simple decision: someone chose to show up. Today, more than 450 young people across Toronto are waiting for someone to do the same.

**You can help write the next story.** Make a donation to help Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto create and support more life-changing mentoring relationships. **Your investment in a young person today can help shape the life they lead tomorrow.**

**Invest in connection. Invest in potential. Invest in the next generation.**

Scan the QR code, visit **bbbstoronto.com/donate** or **call (416) 925-8981 to get started.**

**INVEST IN WHAT'S POSSIBLE**

SCAN HERE

**GIVE TODAY AND HELP CREATE THE NEXT STORY**