

Eighteen hours of training to become a Best Buddy? Would someone really need to train for eighteen hours to be a buddy for a critically ill child? These were my questions before training in Duke's Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Best Buddy Program. Now that I have completed the training, I know success in this program is not possible without it. Not only will I draw upon the values, tools and advice gained in training when I step into the Best Buddy role but also in other experiences throughout my life.

Best Buddy training taught me a valuable lesson about true friendship. I learned better listening and communication techniques, especially in body language and the way words are spoken. The training also taught me to recognize all the varying types of grief a single loss can encompass and not to have any predetermined expectations for a person's reaction to that loss. Personal family issues and medically imposed restraints, that had never crossed my mind, surfaced when a mother spoke about her son's experiences as a Duke PBMT patient. I was introduced to the physical, mental and financial stress that affects patients, immediate caregivers, and beyond. All of these are crucial lessons that will guide me in my role as a Best Buddy. On the final night of training, I listened to those experiences of past Best Buddy volunteers. Their experiences opened my eyes, helping me see the impact I can have not only on the lives of patients and families in Duke's PBMT unit but also in knowing I will be a better person because I volunteered a little of my time.

Allison, Best Buddy Volunteer