



Be A Big Sister Ever wanted to play big sis to someone in need? Now you can with Beautiful People, a volunteer project that connects "Big Sisters" with teen girls aged 11-18 who are considered at risk. The project was started last year by founder and volunteer Melissa Kwee (left). *Shape* chats with her to find out more about the programme and how you can sign up as a positive role model.

● **why did you start Beautiful People?**

I believe that everyone needs someone to champion them in life. These girls need people who believe they can make it and who give them the opportunity to make their dreams and ideas happen. Beautiful People is about teaching skills and having fun, but more so about changing attitudes. We can teach skills, but it's your attitude that really makes the difference. We need to say to them, "Look, it's your life. You've got one shot on this planet, so make it good. Be someone. If you choose to do that, I'm here to walk with you."

● **how do you go about doing this?** There are two parts to the programme. "Big Sisters" is a team mentoring environment where volunteers share life lessons, listen to, and support their Little

Sisters. The other part consists of Saturday Workshops, where professionals give three hours of their time to teach life-skills or host fun activities. We've had a beauty workshop, a dance class and a Friendship Day. The aim is to communicate a message of internal worth and beauty, and to affirm that they can be their best selves.

● **what sort of qualities should a Big Sister have?** It's all about attitude. Big Sisters should be women who have faith in the seeds they plant in these young girls' lives.

It is about investing time and love in a person who may not reciprocate immediately. We don't condone bad or criminal behaviour, but it's important to separate bad behaviour from the value of the person and to

believe that they are good people who have done bad things - just like all of us at some point. We want to teach them self-respect, not dependency. We're looking for women in their 20s and 30s or those who are young at heart and who have time, commitment and an open heart.

● **how will you help Big Sisters prepare for their role?** We're planning a team mentoring approach where a Big Sister will be paired with another Big Sister, and they will be matched with 2-3 girls. The Big Sisters will also have training and orientation workshops.

To find out more about being a Big Sister, email melissa@good-company.com