

Developing Relationships with the People with Intellectual Disabilities



Why Develop Relationships?

- People with profound disabilities understand when someone cares about them.
- People tend to be drawn to others who seem interested in them and like them; people who make them feel accepted and valued.

(Maslow1970)

- When we feel others care about us we are more likely to cooperate with them and do what pleases them.
- Human dignity.



No Respect?

You Get What You Give!

- Do I really listen to what the person tells me? Do I look them in the eye and not interrupt?
- Am I always fair? Do I always look at all sides before drawing conclusions? Do I apply rules differently for different people without a clear rationale?
- Do I display common courtesy to all persons? Do I say, “Excuse me, thank you, and please?”



No Respect?

- Do I give people a choices? Do they help decide program activities, schedule and set up?
- Do I solicit person's opinion and try not to impose mine?
- Do I talk openly and honestly with the person?
Do I share my feelings and welcome new views?
- Do I take person's problems seriously? Do I answer their questions and ask them questions to help them find solutions?



No Respect?

- Do I criticize or talk about persons in front of their peers or other staff or compare one person to another?
- Do I attack the person's character and personality rather than attacking the problem in a solution oriented matter?
- Do I waste the person's time? Do I come to program prepared to teach and actively work with them during the day?

(Adapted from, *No respect? You get what you give. Curriculum Review, January 1997.*



What You Can Do to Develop Relationships?

- Focus on what the person think and feel and monitor this from activity to activity
- Try to provide some one-on-one time for each individual. Use this time to provide the person with at least one positive or affirming comment in your conversation. (Remember your tone!!!)
- Meet the person; not the file.
- Take heed, but be cautious of what others tell you. Just because someone did not have a good relationship with a particular person does not mean you won't. Remember, you have „chemistry” with some and not with other.



- Talk with person about a shared interests or engage in an activity of shared interest (share your talents!!!).
- Use active listening (reflect, probe, support, advise).
- Be willing to make the extra effort and sometimes take the extra time.
- Remember developing relationships does not happen overnight.
- Sometimes it can take time, blood, sweat and tears! But it is worth it in the end!



Developing Relationships: Task Related Strategies

- Avoid distracting and confusing elements in activities.
- Allow person to complete one task before beginning another.
- Display only the materials needed for a given task to avoid distraction.
- Ignore inappropriate behaviors.



Developing Relationships: Behavioral Strategies

- Avoid over-responding to inappropriate behaviors.
- Stimulate socially appropriate behaviors.
- Use hand shakes, smiles and verbal praise to reinforce persons.
- Only speak in the positive around the person



Developing Relationships: Communication

- Explain in a clear and simple manner all activities to be carried out.
- Assign a visual symbol or photo to each person to identify themselves.
- Speak to the person using his/her names.
- Speak to the person in a personal way.
- Associate gestures with verbal communication.
- Attempt to establish and maintain eye contact when speaking.



Thank you!
Any questions?

