INTRODUCTION TO FRIENDS
Supporting Connections Between People with and without Disabilities
OBJECTIVES OF THIS TRAINING

This workshop has been developed to help people to:

- define “friendship”.

- be able to list specific benefits that friendships bring into everyone’s’ lives.

- be able to identify and explain obstacles to the development of friendships.

- develop a plan to support someone to establish/maintain a friendship.
INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY

1. Name of your partner
2. What town/city s/he’s from
3. What s/he likes to do for fun
What Does “Friend” Mean To You?

• Reciprocal
• Freely Given
• Honesty
• Grows over time
This is NOT What We Mean...

He had over 2000 Facebook friends.
I was expecting a bigger turnout.
And this is NOT what we mean either!
What are the Benefits of Friendships?

Friendships are *critical* to our quality of life!

People with Friends are:

- HAPPIER
- HEALTHIER
- SAFER
Who Benefits from these Friendships?

• **Who benefits from these friendships?**
  - The 2 individuals
  - Families
  - Neighborhoods
  - Communities
  - Everyone!!!

• **Friendships often can lead to:**
  - Jobs
  - New experiences & adventures
  - Intimate relationships:
    Partners/Spouses
What are Some Obstacles to Friendships?

• Poor social skills
• Lack of awareness by general public
• Real and perceived “rules” in the “system”
• Parental/Staff fear for the individual
• Not an expectation of staff
• Lack of self-confidence
• Lack of time
Maximizing Community Connections
Making the Most of Your Time and the Resources in Your Community

Instructions: First, identify each place listed below with a 1 - low, 2 - Medium, or 3 - high probability for increasing one’s network of relationships. Then, briefly write what, if anything, could be done in each situation to enhance the chances of developing relationships.

1. Working out at a local fitness center twice a week.
2. Volunteering to walk dogs at your local shelter.
3. Eating breakfast at a restaurant once a week.
4. Voting in elections.
“Preparing” People with Disabilities

Many organizations offer some sort of Social Skills Training to people with a variety of disabilities and at all ages.
“Everyone Needs Friends NOW!”

Tom Doody

No one should have to pass some sort of “test” before they are “eligible” to be supported to meet others and establish relationships.
“Preparing” People Without Disabilities
(dis)Ability Awareness Programs

Volunteer readers with age-appropriate books.
(Icare: www.thejamiefund.org)

Activities with puppets with disabilities
(Kids on the Block:
http://www.arcnbc.org/child-services/kids-on-the-block/)

Visitors with disabilities to classrooms.
(www.understandingourdifferences.org)
Support May be Needed for Relationships to Develop

Opportunities to Connect and Preparation Still May Not be Enough
SCENARIOS

• #1: John, 60, just moved to a 24-hour group home.
• #2: Sam, 11, is transitioning from elementary to middle school.
• #3: Joe, 48, has sustained a head injury but wants to get working.
• #4: Sally, 27, has her own apartment with a roommate but has a very small circle.
• #5: Carmen, 20, has just started college.
SCENARIO #1

John, 60, just moved into your 24-hour home (with 3 other roommates), 1½ hours away from where he used to live. He attends a Community Based Day Services program operated by another agency. John seems very friendly. He loves to fish. He can take care of his personal needs but needs reminders.

How can you help John meet people in his new community and make new friends?
SCENARIO #2

Sam is a 11 year old with autism who has enjoyed being in elementary school and is now going to middle school. His classmates have known him since kindergarten and have included him in their activities both in and out of school. He loves sports (especially basketball) but can be overbearing and even “pushy” in wanting to do sports over other things. There is great concern by his parents as to how their son will keep connected or will make new friends especially in these critical years. They fear he will be known more by his autism (preoccupation with sports) rather than by who he is.

Who are the people who can support Sam?
What resources do they have available to help?
SCENARIO #3

Joe, 48, had been an avid motorcycle rider before his accident when he was in his mid-twenties and still has a desire to ride again. Because of the accident he suffered a significant brain injury as well as some physical disabilities. For many years Joe and his family have struggled to help him become a productive citizen and to connect with people other than his family.

As a result of their advocacy Joe lives independently and can take care of his basic needs although staff do help with budgeting. His home is decorated with motorcycle posters. He works at a local grocery store loading and stocking but is pretty much of a loner. Because of his brain injury he can be impatient and shout when frustrated. Although he has never hurt anyone the yelling makes people who don’t know him nervous as he’s a big guy.

What can you do to support Joe?
SCENARIO #4

Sally is a 27 year old young lady who lives with her roommate in an apartment in the community. She has support from agency staff and family members who help her as needed with banking, shopping and learning to get around more independently. She currently volunteers at a day care three days a week, is part of a work enclave doing housekeeping two days a week at an area hotel. On weekends and evenings Sally makes jewelry, watches TV, hangs out with her roommate, visits family and attends the Friday night dances sponsored by the agency who provides her support.

Sally is very social but has no friends outside of family and the service system.

How can you help Sally to meet more people and develop new relationships?

Who else could help Sally?
Carmen, 20, has never lived away from home but is heading to college this Fall. She is very knowledgeable about technology and enjoys participating in activities that utilize technology. However, Carmen has social anxiety and has challenges related to social communication. This may make her appear uninterested in an activity, when the truth is exactly the opposite.

What can we do to help Carmen?
This Curriculum Prepared and Developed through

Widening the Circle

Expanding opportunities for friendships between people with and without disabilities

http://thearcofmass.org/programs/widening-the-circle/

The Arc
Massachusetts

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