



SUPPORTING FRIENDSHIP

A WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS, BY PARENTS

Created by Ingrid Flory & Brittany Antuna

as a part of

Creating Our Common Wealth

an initiative of the

Department of Developmental Services

in partnership with:



*“I WOULD RATHER WALK
WITH A FRIEND IN THE DARK
THAN ALONE IN THE LIGHT.”*

- HELEN KELLER

THINKING ABOUT FRIENDSHIP

Think about a good friend. On the paper provided, write down:

- Their Name

Then share with the group:

- Where You Met
- How Long You Have Been Friends
- One Quality or Characteristic That You Love About Your Friend

WHAT IS A FRIEND?

We have chemistry! We enjoy each other's company. We trust, understand, respect and appreciate each other. We like how we feel when we're together. We are close even when we are apart. We look forward to being together. We commit over some time. We give to each other. We may not give in the same way but what we give and what we receive is of great value to each of us.

LET'S BE INCLUSIVE IN OUR FRIENDSHIPS!

We all benefit from having friends who are like us, and friends who are different from us.

We want to bring that same diversity of choice and experience to our kids.

Kids with disabilities benefit from having friends with and without disabilities!

FRIENDSHIPS BENEFIT EVERYONE BY:

- Being HAPPIER!
- Being HEALTHIER!
- Being SAFER!
- Reducing isolation and loneliness.
- Increasing self-confidence.
- Being exposed to more perspectives.
- Being part of a larger circle that may lead to jobs, intimate relationships, and other opportunities.

FRIENDSHIPS PARTICULARLY BENEFIT OUR FAMILIES BY PROVIDING:

- Natural opportunities for respite.
- Opportunities for other family members to connect. Disability often isolates whole families.
- Peace of mind knowing that their family member truly BELONGS.
- Natural opportunities for your child to increase their social skills.

FRIENDSHIPS BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITIES BY:

- Enhancing perceptions about people with disabilities
- Creating more inclusive attitudes and opportunities in the community
- Teaching community members how to be friends with people who have differences

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Our goal is to help our children have friendships that are meaningful and freely given, between people with and without disabilities.

Because good relationships keep us happier and healthier, regardless of disability.

People who are more socially connected to their family, friends and community are happier, physically healthier, and they live longer than people who are less well connected.

And we know it can be done:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6Yp4MzNQMK>

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF FRIENDSHIP?

ATTITUDES:

- Lack of education of peers on how to be friends with kids who may be different
- General feelings of fear, misunderstanding and pity towards people with disabilities

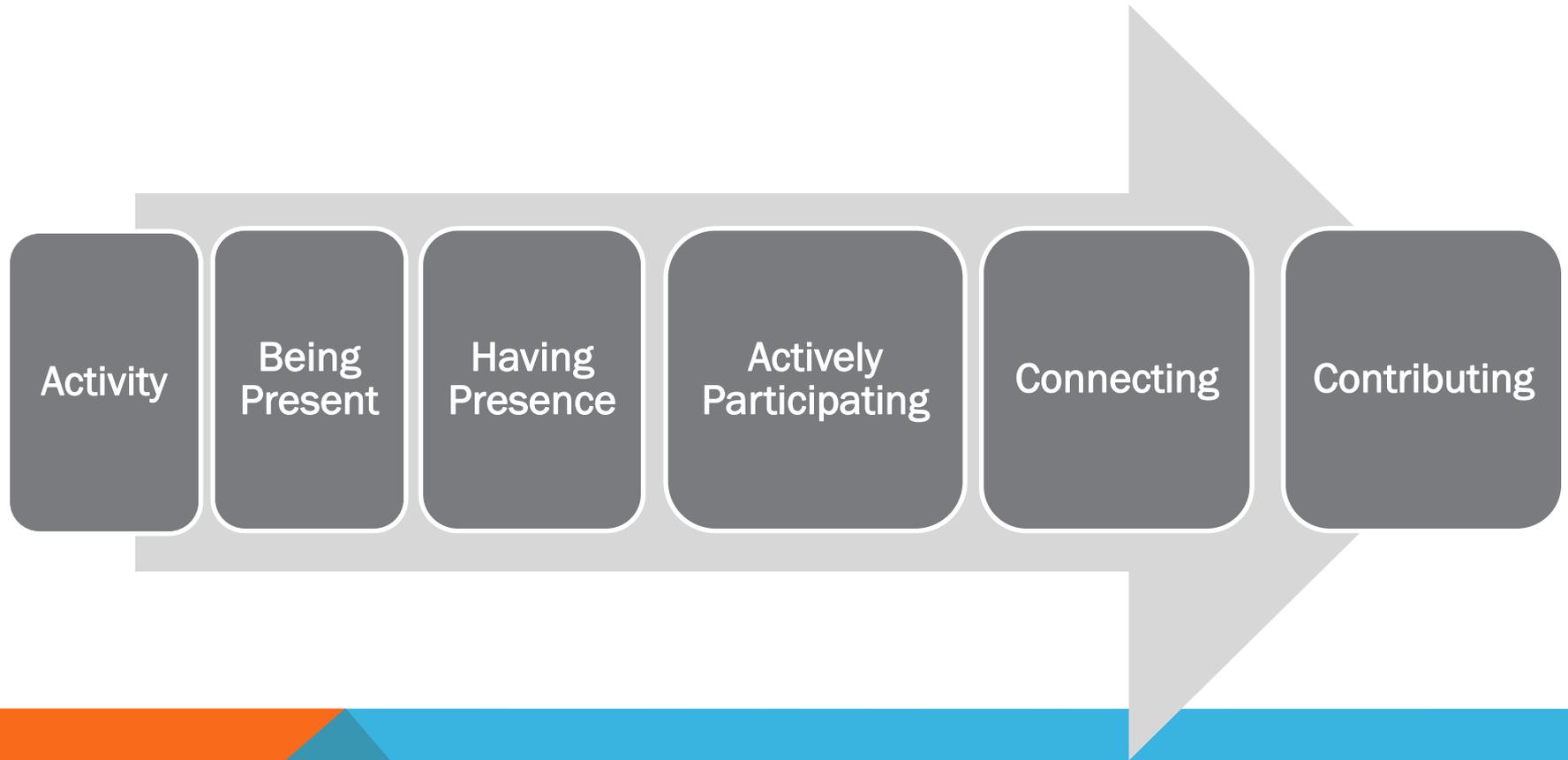
ENVIRONMENT:

- Fewer social opportunities than typical peers
- Inaccessible places
- Non-Inclusive Schools, Classrooms, Recreational Programs
- Separation of student from peers due to paraprofessionals or other support staff

*“INCLUSION IS JUST A STEP ALONG
THE WAY TO RELATIONSHIP.”*

- MICHAEL KENDRICK

GETTING TO FRIENDSHIP CAN BE A PROCESS!



TEN THINGS THAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP OUR KID MAKE FRIENDS

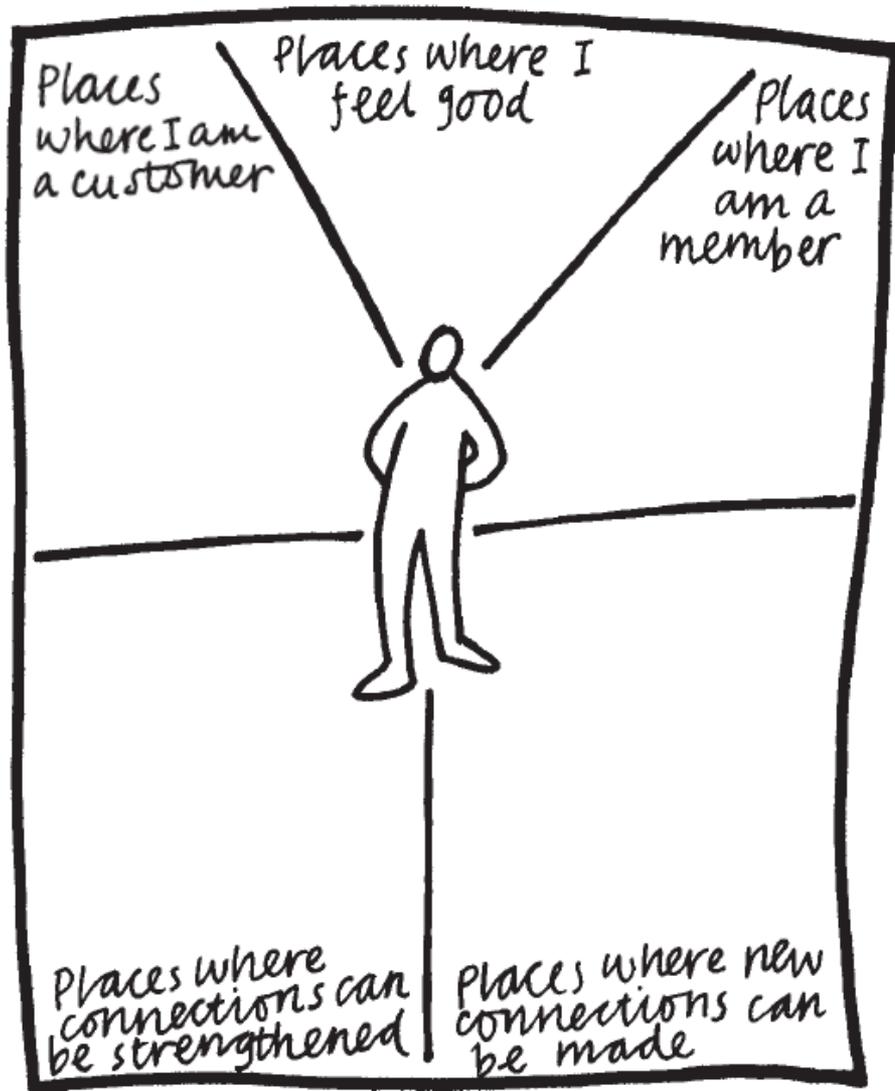
1. **Create Membership** – at school and in the community
2. **Identify Relationships You Already Have** that can be deepened or that can connect you to new people and activities
3. **Identify and Share Your Child’s Gifts and Interests**
4. **Identify Places** where people with similar interests regularly gather
5. **Identify Environments and Supports that Allow Your Child to *Shine***
6. **Find “Bridgemakers”** – people who can connect your child to others
7. **Teach Others What They Need to Know About Your Child**
8. **Emphasize Similarities and Gifts**
9. **Invite People Into your Life and Home**
10. **Use Your IEP**

1. CREATE MEMBERSHIP

People are most likely to make friends when they see each other often and have shared interests. Creating a sense of membership sets the stage for friendship.

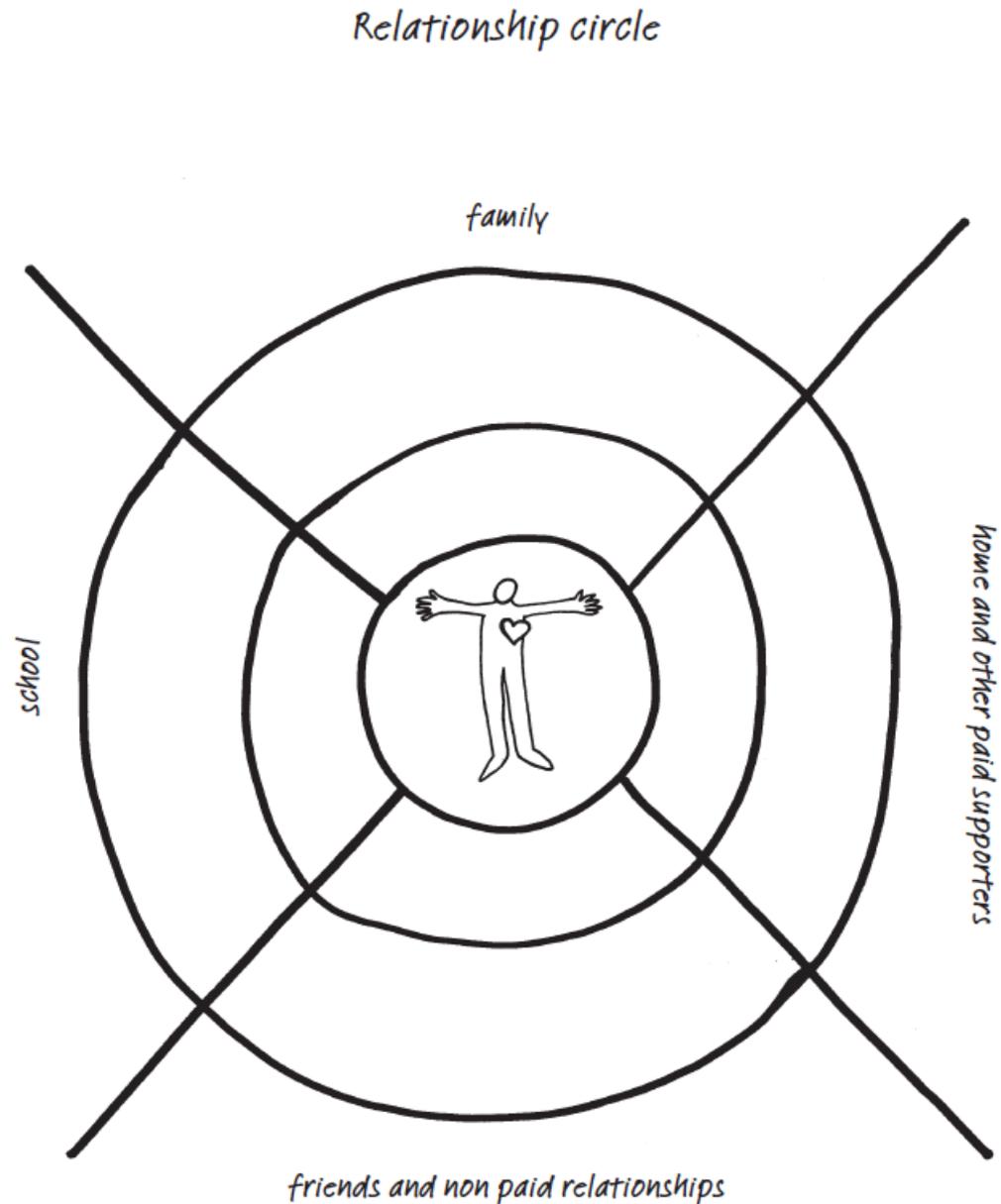
- **Find a Place to Belong:** an afterschool activity, place of worship, recreational sport or club, workplace through a job or volunteer work, etc.
- **At school, ensure that your child is an active participant in the classroom and all school environments. If your child's social opportunities are limited, make sure that they are meaningful!**

PLANNING FOR MEMBERSHIP



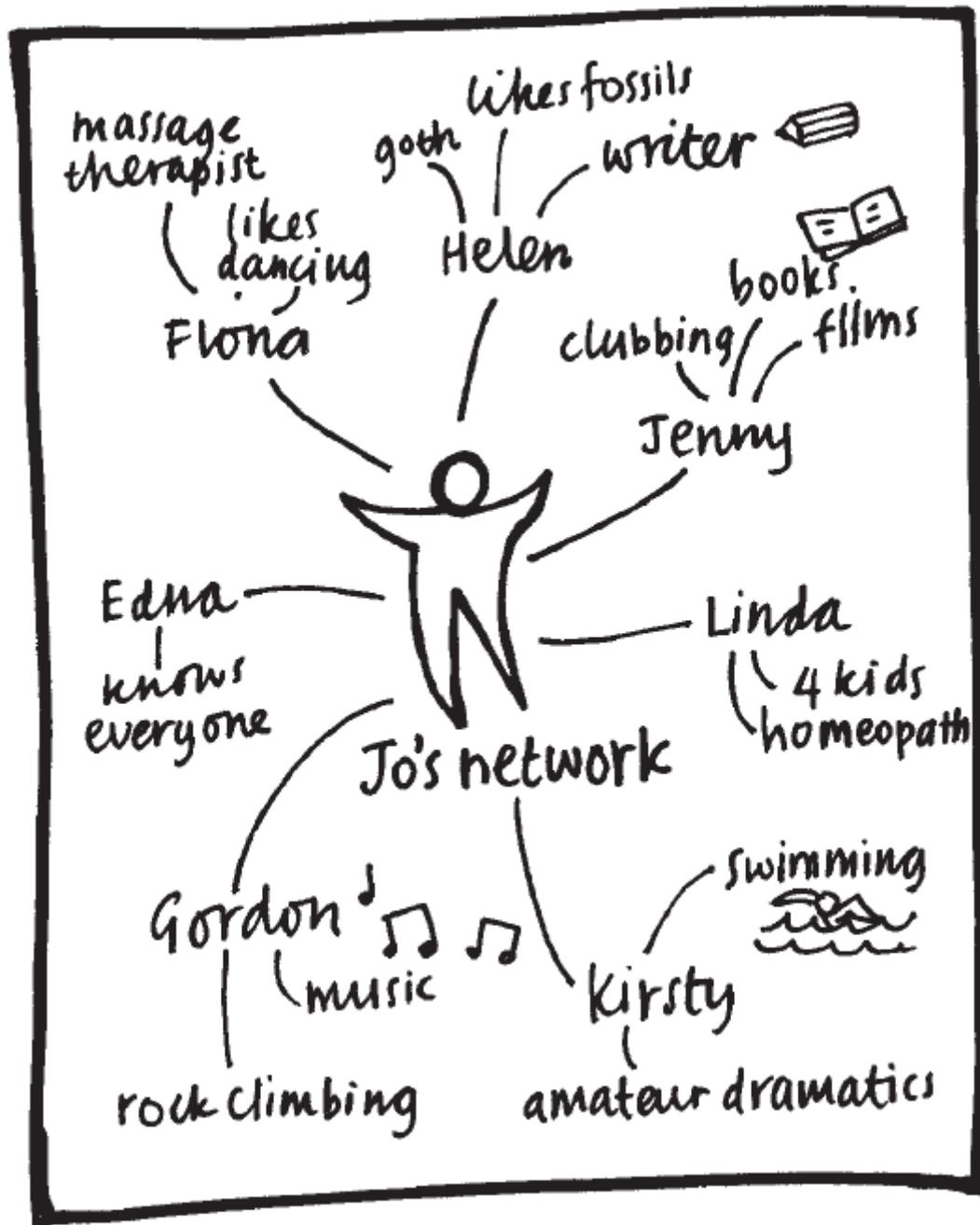
2. IDENTIFY THE SOCIAL NETWORKS YOU ALREADY HAVE

- Who is closest to your child (their inner circle)?
- Who is in the outer circle that might move inward?



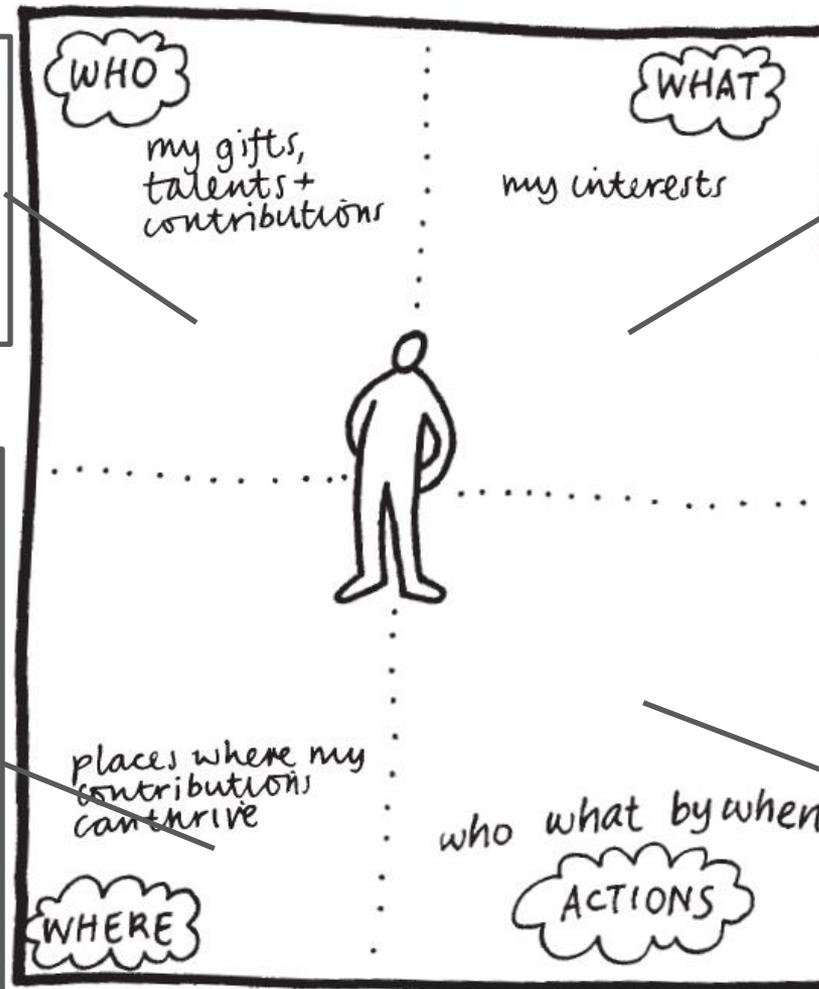
ANOTHER WAY TO IDENTIFY THE SOCIAL NETWORKS YOU ALREADY HAVE

- What networks do you already have?
- What are the common interests?
- Where do they explore these interests?
- Who might be a bridge builder?



3-6. IDENTIFY GIFTS AND INTERESTS, WHERE AND HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

- What are your child's gifts?
- What do others like and admire about your child?



- What are your child's interests and passions?

- In what environments does your child thrive?
- Where do kids regularly gather who share my kids interests?

- Who can help connect your child to others with shared interests?
- What supports will be needed?
- When can this happen?

7. BE PREPARED TO SHARE WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS

- What are the top 3 things kids and adults need to know about your kid in social situations?
- These strategies work for my child when...
- Prepare how you will explain some of your child's differences, in a way that is empowering and inviting

SOMETIMES WE NEED TO REMIND PEOPLE THAT WE ARE MORE SIMILAR THAN DIFFERENT



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THE MOST APPROPRIATE LABEL IS USUALLY THE ONE PEOPLE'S PARENTS HAVE GIVEN THEM.

8. HIGHLIGHT SIMILARITIES AND GIFTS

- **Let your child's glitter sparkle** – find ways to communicate their strengths and passions
- **Use fashion and pop culture strategically** – consider asking other kids what is popular so your child invites comments on their clothing, phone apps, etc.
- **Emphasize Roles that are Valued by others** – brother, volunteer, girl scout, team member, etc.
- **Empower your child with the same language their peers are using** (even if you have to program it into their AAC device)
- **Find opportunities for your child to take leadership and to help others, so they are not always seen on the receiving end**

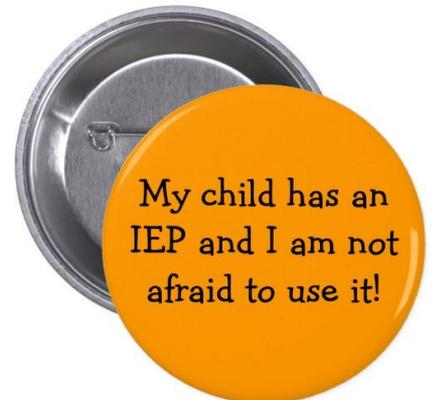
9. INVITE PEOPLE INTO YOUR LIFE AND HOME

- Make your home the place kids want to be; make it a fun place for them to get together!
- Sign your kid up for community groups and activities that involve other kids from your neighborhood or school.
- Invite kids to do fun activities with your child and family
- Get to know other families to strengthen your kids' connections -- Carpool, Volunteer with parents groups, host family dinners
- If you are too exhausted to do all of this, find someone else to step in – use home support staff, adult friends, family.

10. USE YOUR IEP

Remember, the school is responsible for your child's social and emotional progress, not only their academic progress!

- Have the school provide the supports and accommodations that your child needs to meaningfully participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities.
- Help organize a club or team at school on a topic of interest to your child
- Expand the reach of a “lunch bunch” or social group by having the teacher ask permission to share contact information so that friendships can expand beyond the school day.



USE YOUR IEP (continued)

- Ask for a disability awareness program to be provided at your school, or have them provide one specific to your child.
- Make sure that paraprofessional support is supportive, not intrusive, of friendships. Use them to structure activities that allow your child to fully participate socially.
- Consider asking other kids what would make it more enjoyable to be friends with your child so you can prioritize the social skills to work on in their IEP.
- Ask your school district to pay for inclusive camps or recreational opportunities as part of Extended School Year, particularly if your child's needs are primarily social

LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN!



THANK YOU!

WHAT IDEAS OR SUCCESSES
DO YOU WANT TO SHARE?