

THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIPS

Celebrating the Ordinary

Making connections through

Pathways to Friendship

A Collaboration between DDS and The Arc of Massachusetts

AGENDA

- Purpose – Exploring What's Extraordinary about the Ordinary
- Essence of Friendships
- What Works for People
- What are Some Obstacles
- Ordinary places in the community
- Thinking Differently
- Helpful Strategies



DEFINITION OF FRIEND

What is a friend?

We have chemistry. We enjoy each other's company. We trust, understand and respect 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.



SOME ELEMENTS OF FRIENDSHIP

- Freely–Given/Unpaid*
 - Presence/Sufficient Contact
 - Flexible
 - Enduring
 - Caring/Heartfelt
 - Trusting
 - Help in Times of Need
 - Mutually Rewarding – Perhaps not Equal*
-

SOME BENEFITS TO FRIENDSHIPS

- People are Happier
 - People are Healthier
 - People are Safer
-

BELIEVE FRIENDSHIP IS POSSIBLE

- The biggest barrier to friendships are not the differences created by disability....some people can hold doubt that friendships between people with and without disability is possible.
- Look for the signs of friendship..... The spark, shared interests, and commonality.

WHAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE

What works best for people in general also works for people with disabilities. For example, it works best when people with disabilities:

- Live, work, volunteer, learn shop, contribute and play in the community
- Attend school, take classes, have a schedule, play sports
- Spend time with non-disabled people – family, friends and age peers
- Being ordinary*



CRITICAL BOUNDARY

- COMMUNITY



THE SYSTEM

-
-
-

A GOOD PLACE TO BE

Our Homes and Communities can Provide:

- A Positive Environment
 - A Place to Succeed
 - A Place to Fail and Try Again
 - Opportunities for New Experiences
 - Opportunities to Take Risks
 - A Place to Make Friends
 - A Place to Be Ordinary
-

STRATEGIES FOR GETTING CONNECTED

- I. Deepening existing relationships in places already frequented
- II. 1 to 1 matching
- III. Group matching (Club 21/Best Buddies)
- IV. Become a member of an organization/club/ association or group
 - > recreational, social or civic
 - > faith based
 - > needs based
- V. Start a group
- VI. Tap into existing programs
- VII. Learn new skills, seek new knowledge



STRATEGIES FOR GETTING CONNECTED

- VIII Connect with your neighbors
 - IX. Reconnect with people from the past
 - X. Use interns or volunteers
-

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

We recognize the different type of effort and energy to support relationships between people with and without disabilities.

If we are going to “cross the boundary” to build relationships with community members, it takes thinking and doing things differently.

MORE TO THINK ABOUT...

- High expectations! Expect Inclusion and Friendship!
 - Nurture roles that make contributions, within school, neighborhood, community.
 - Friendships deepen when we participate in area of interest along one another; think creatively for ways to share interests. (Clubs, classes, groups)
 - Pay attention to patterns of friendships at every age- help to understand social values of peer group.
 - Speak positively.
-

TIPS TO REMEMBER.....

- Seek opportunities that include alongside peers..
- Seek support/accept support that encourages connecting with others.
- Friendships require nurturing, we can't assume that friendships will happen on their own.
- Assure buddy systems are encouraging true friendship.
- Be a detective.
- Promote gifts and talents.
- Hang out with other families.
- Ask teachers.
- Host parties and Celebrations.
- Consider developing a “circle of support”

