

INTRODUCTION TO FRIENDS:

Supporting
FRIENDSHIPS Between
People with and
without Disabilities





OBJECTIVES OF THIS TRAINING

- Define “friendship”.
- Understand specific benefits of friendships.
- Be able to identify and explore common challenges in making friends.
- Understand the importance and impact of “belonging”.
- Discuss strategies to support someone to establish/maintain a friendship.

Best Friends!



- Who is your best friend? (not a relative)
- How long have you been friends?
- Where/how did you meet?
- How do you keep your friendship going?



Characteristics of a Friend

HELPFUL

HONEST

FUNNY

CARING

BRAVE

LOYAL

GENEROUS

CREATIVE

What are benefits of Friendship?

- Freely Given
- Reciprocal
- Grows Over Time
- Enduring
- Mutual Understanding
- Mutual Acceptance
- Respect





What Are Acts of Friendship?

- Sharing
- Supporting
- Teaching
- Sharing
- Advocating

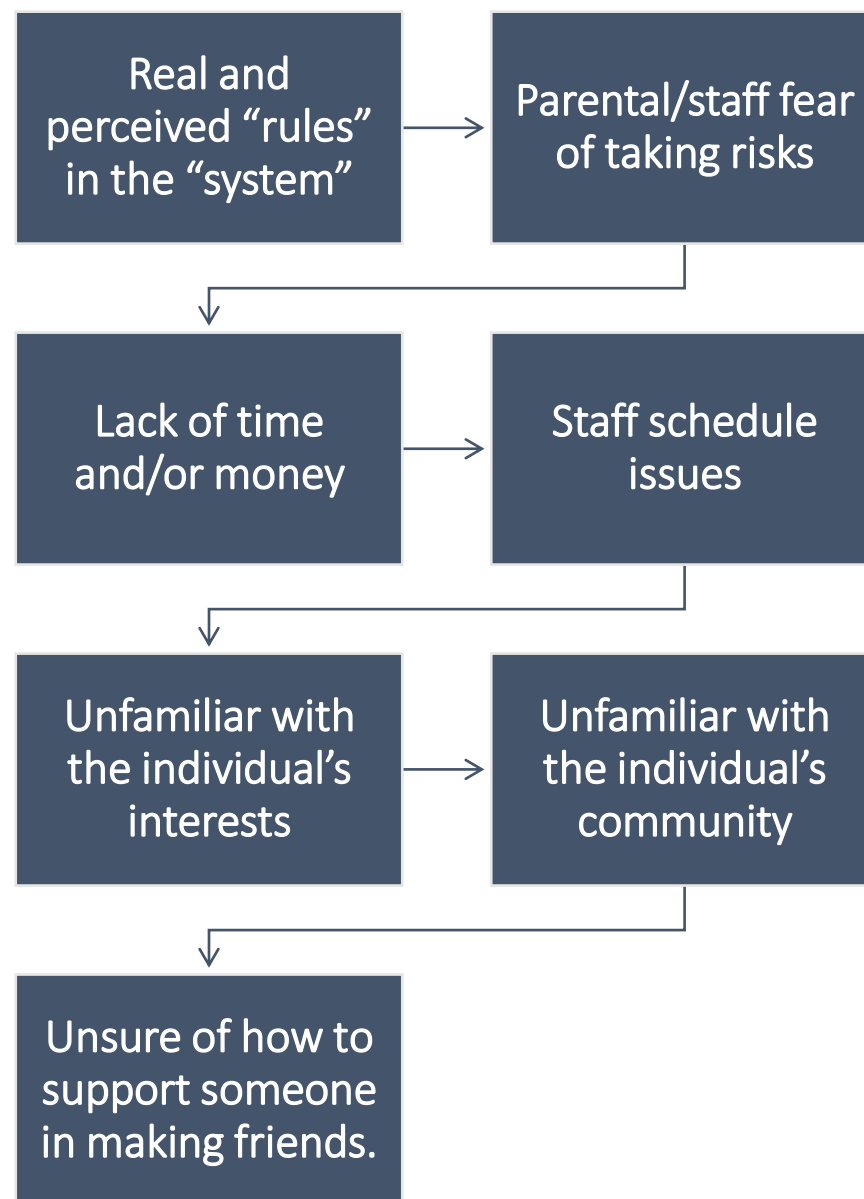


Friendships
are critical to
our Quality of
Life.

People with Friends are:

- HAPPIER
- HEALTHIER
- SAFER

Challenges Faced by Support Staff and/or Family Members



Friends

Friendship

Community Inclusion





What is a "Community"?

A group of people living in the same place having a feeling of fellowship and sharing common attitudes, interests and goals.

Examples include:

- Neighborhood,
- Retirement community
- Faith community
- Sports fans
- Medical community

What is the meaning of “*Inclusion*”?

Accepted

Wanted

Valued

Recognized

**Feeling
secure**

Included

Belonging

**Being
Engaged**

You know
you're NOT
being
included if...

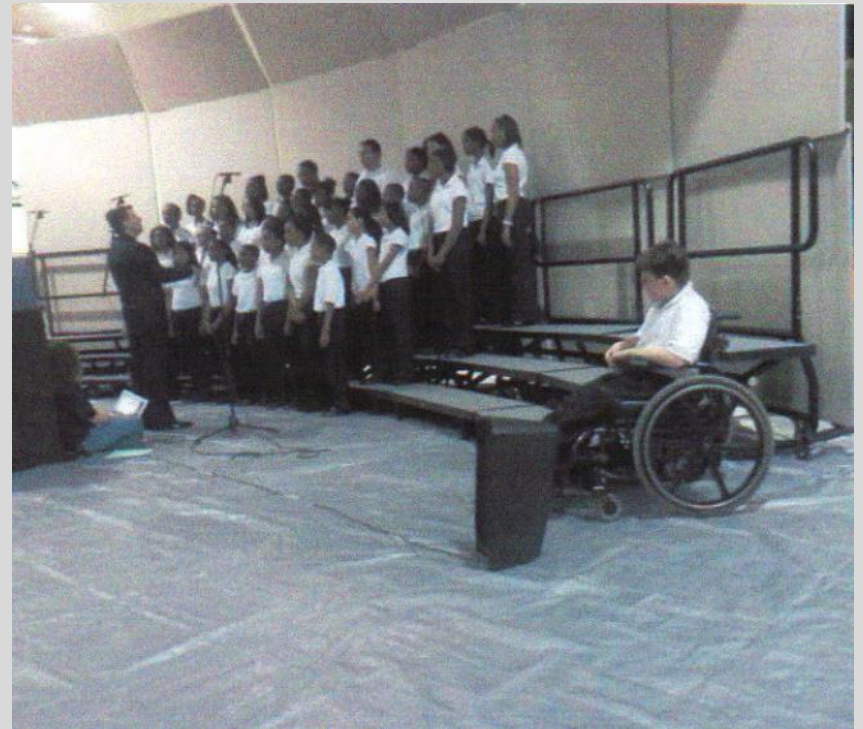
If you are set apart

If you are isolated

If you're not invited

If you're ignored

If you are patronized



INCLUSION OR ILLUSION ?

Maximizing Community Connections using local resources



RATE each of the following:

- Working out at a local fitness center twice a week.
- Eating breakfast at a restaurant once a week.
- Volunteering to walk dogs at your local shelter.

1 – Low probability to increase relationships

2 – Medium probability

3 – High probability

What could be done to enhance the chances of developing relationships?

Successful Strategies for Developing Friendship & Belonging





Strategy #1: Deepen Existing Relationships in Places Already Frequentated

- Consider where people already spend their time in their community.
- Look where people are already comfortable, confident, and known.
- Acquaintances could deepen their connection and develop their relationship into a friendship.

Strategy #2: 1-to-1 Matchmaking

Begin with the
person with the
disability

Look for a
friend/advocate who
matches their needs,
interests and desires

Relevant background
information is
provided about their
potential friend

The two potential
friends meet as an
introduction

Staff take a
background role to
allow the friendship to
blossom

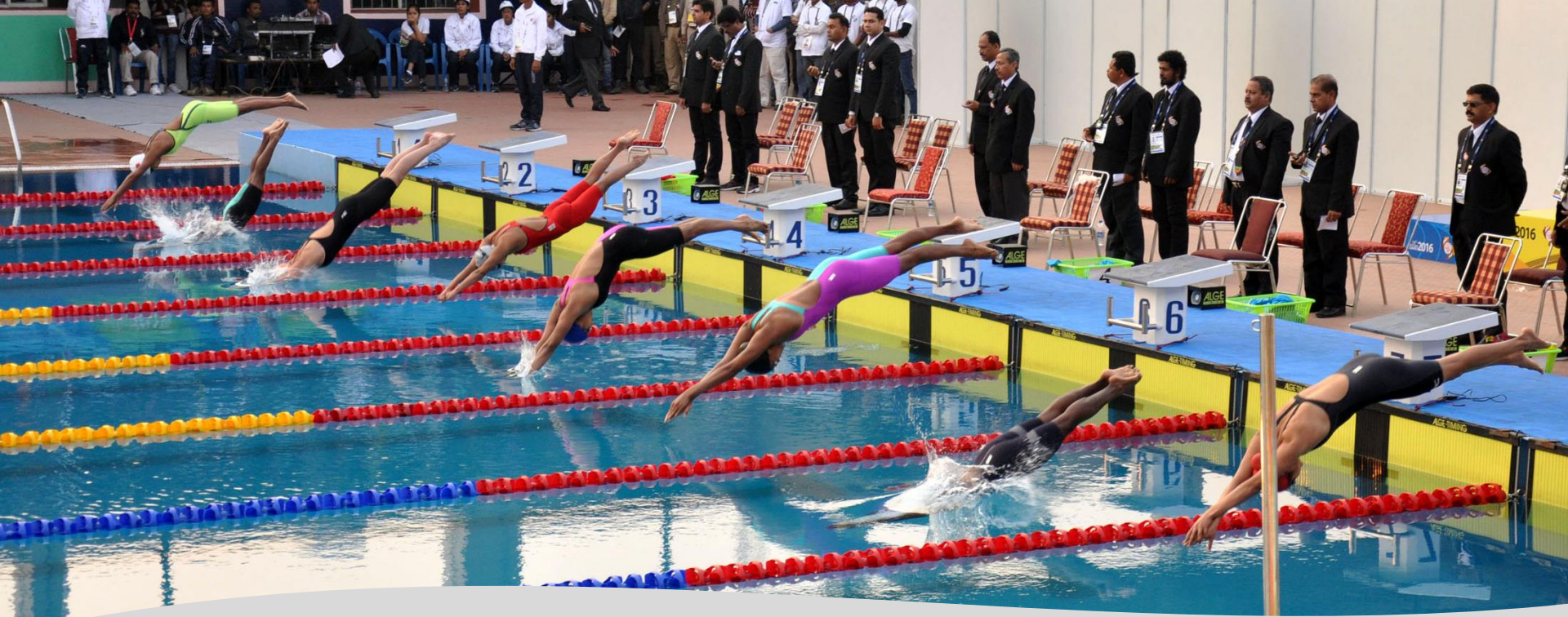


Strategy #3:

Connect with People from the Past

- *Family Friends*
- Former Neighbors*
- School mates*
- Former staff members





Strategy #4: Become a member of an existing group

Recreational groups in the community open to everyone

Social groups that are integrated

Faith-based groups where all people are welcome

Civic organizations in the community

Strategy #5: Learn new skills or seek new knowledge in Community settings

- Improve skills in an adult-education class at the local HS or Community College.
- Ensure the location is integrated in the community where all people are welcome.



Strategy #6: Connect with your neighbors

- *Host neighborhood events
- *Welcome new neighbors with cookies
- *Volunteer to shovel snow or mow lawns
- *Do errands for elderly neighbors
- *Share your garden flowers or vegetables
- *Just sit and chat!



Tools To Get Started

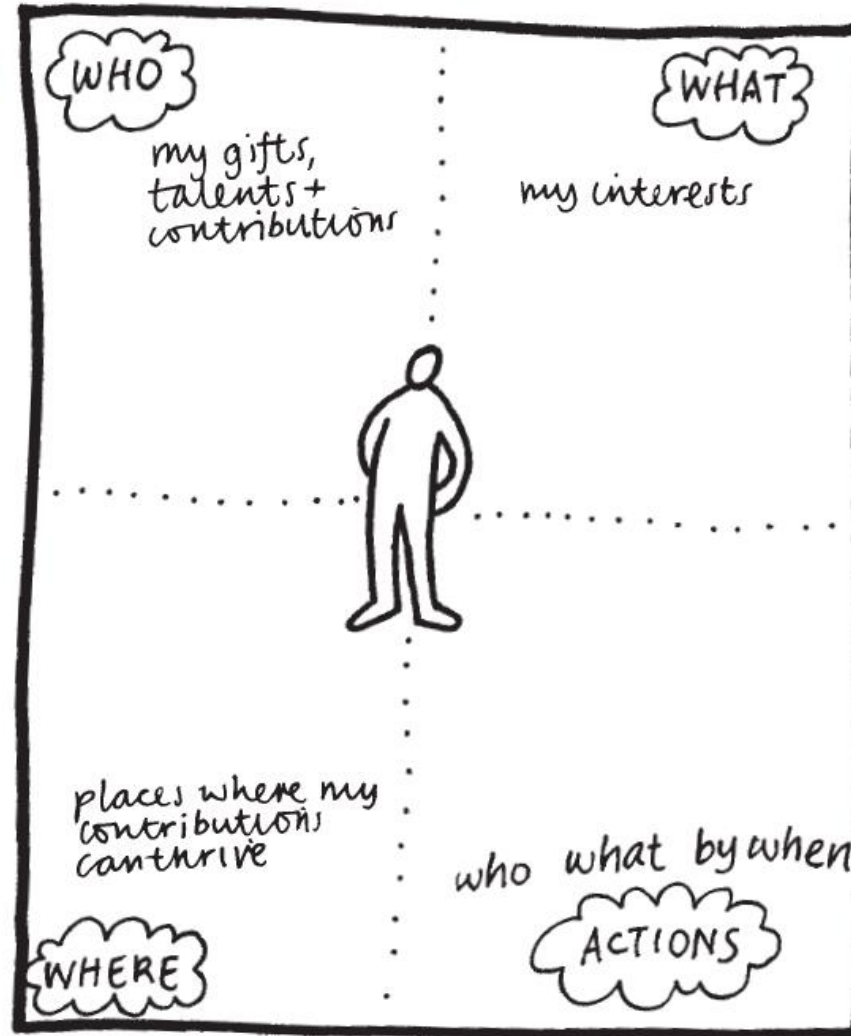


Shared Interests Planning Tool

- ☐ What are your gifts?
- ☐ What do others like and admire about you?

- ☐ In what environments do you thrive?
- ☐ Where do people regularly gather who share your interests?
- ☐ Where can you be a member?

☐



- ☐ What are your interests and passions?

- ☐ Who can help connect you to others with shared interests and passions?

- ☐ What supports will be needed?
- ☐ When can this happen?

CHARTING the LifeCourse



Supporting Friendships

Personal Strengths & Assets

- What skills do you want to learn so you can become an even better friend?
- What interests or hobbies do you want to try that would connect you with others?
- What are your current interests?
- What environments do you prefer?
- What do others appreciate about you?
- What makes you a good friend?

Relationships

- Who are your friends now?
- Who do you know who could become a closer friend?
- Where are you already a member of a group? What relationships can be deepened in that group?
- Who do you know who can introduce you to other people with similar interests?
- Where can you become a member of a group that meets regularly and shares interests?

Eligibility

- Do you have staff who can connect you with other people, or who can help you participate?
- Do you have support to help with transportation, membership fees, etc?
- Do support staff need training in how to facilitate and promote friendships?
- Can services can be changed so they better promote relationship building?

Community

- Are there relationships that can be deepened in current places or activities?
- Where do people regularly meet in your community who share your interests?
- Where in your community do you like to go?
- What community activities, clubs, places of worship do you participate in?

Technology

- What technology do you use to connect to other people and regularly occurring activities in your community?
- What technology could you use in the future to connect to other people and regularly occurring activities in your community?

Who Will Be the Focus of Your Invitation?

Use this chart to identify someone to be the focus of your invitation



**FRIENDS ARE THE
PEOPLE WHO MAKE
YOU SMILE BRIGHTER,
LAUGH LOUDER
AND LIVE BETTER.**

Additional Resources

- “Friends: Connecting People with Disabilities and Community Members”, by Angela Amado at https://ici.umn.edu/products/docs/Friends_manual.pdf.
- “How to Build Relationships” by Al Condeluci listed on Widening the Circle’s “How To...” webpage at <http://thearcofmass.org/programs/widening-the-circle/how-tos/>.
- 150 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL: Social capital is built through hundreds of little and big actions we take every day. We've gotten you started with a list of nearly 150 ideas, drawn from suggestions made by many people and groups. Try some of these or try your own. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/whatyoucando.htm>
- Widening the Circle’s website at <http://thearcofmass.org/programs/widening-the-circle>
- Meetup (<https://www.meetup.com/>
- Bridges to Faith/New Bedford (www.bridgestofaith.org)
- Spiritual Connections/Fall River (<http://peopleinc-fr.org/programs/spiritual-connections/>)
- Club 21 (<https://alternativesnet.org/ways-to-help/be-an-ambassador/club-21/>)
- Citizen Advocacy (<https://www.nqcitizenadvocacy.org/>)
- Community of Friends (www.betacomm.org). Beta community Partnerships has been matching adults they support with volunteer members of their communities, based on shared interests
- Big Brother/Big Sister (<https://www.bbbs.org>)
- Joining a group resource: <https://Onlyinyourstate.com>

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/>

A partnership between the
Arc of Massachusetts &
the Massachusetts
Department of
Developmental Services

