

### Relationship Building

#### Tips and Tricks for Building a Relationship:

1. For any partnership to succeed, relationships must be established and built upon. Relationships in real life take time and effort to develop and keep. The same concept applies here. For some people, conversations come naturally, and others have to work on developing the skill. However, if you take the time to create these relationships, it will benefit your library and patrons with disabilities.
2. It is important to keep in mind that you are learning how to provide outreach, programs, and services for patrons with disabilities. This also involves unlearning previous assumptions you may or may not have had. It is important when interacting with an organization or individual that you acknowledge and be transparent. You will make mistakes. However, don't let that fear stop you from this work.
3. Don't rush into the relationship but, start small, with, for example, a conversation or an invitation to visit your library.
4. It is essential to be transparent with the organization and individual about why you want to partner with them and what you hope the partnership accomplishes. Get to know the person as the conversation develops.
5. When you first meet the organization representative or an individual with disabilities, always remember to ask if they prefer person-first or identity-first language. This simple question will tell the person that you are willing to make an effort to acknowledge their disability and learn from them. Remember, always talk to the patron with disabilities and not their assistant.
6. When in conversation, it is crucial to be an empathetic listener. Ask open-minded and neutral questions. Encourage storytelling. You can do this by asking, "tell me about ...." rather than asking, "do you like...." While the latter is a good question, it will only provide you with a short answer rather than a more extended conversation.
7. It is also important to set up limits and boundaries. While it is okay to develop close relationships with partners, it is also totally okay to set up personal and work boundaries.

#### Examples of Relationship Building:

1. Confidence - Your confidence will build as you get to know your partner better.

2. Self-Awareness - Think before you speak. Ask yourself, “Is this insensitive?” “Will this hurt someone?”
3. Listening - Acknowledge that your partner’s experience with the library is different from your own. Listen to their comments and don’t invalidate their lived experiences. Try to understand where their words are coming from.
4. Cultural Humility - Acknowledge that you are still learning and will make mistakes. Ask for clarification and learn from the experience. Don’t blame others for your mistakes, own up to it.
5. Be Proactive - Be sure to be actively involved in the relationship. Conversations about specific topics are good but show that you are interested in building a relationship by following tangible results.
6. Community Interest - People may not be immediately interested in partnering with you, that’s okay. Take time to develop a relationship and after some time, then ask. If they still aren't interested, drop it. Respect their decision not to work with you. Not every partnership will pan out.
7. Library Experience - Listen to what your partner says about their library experiences and make an effort to change.
8. Trust and Respect - By continually developing a relationship over time and showing tangible results, you can build trust and respect between your library and partner. Remember, it takes time.

Based on an article from: Working Together. (2004-2008). “Community Lead-Libraries Toolkit.” Working Together. <https://www.vpl.ca/working-together-community-led-libraries-toolkit>.