

Making New Friends

Moving people from outside your circles of support closer to the center is what you need to become more skilled at. Relationships move from “people you just happened to meet” to “people you care about the most” over time. Relationships build more quickly as we identify common interests with others. Strike up a casual conversation!

There are four topics you can use to strike up a conversation with almost any stranger.

Family – You might ask about their children, if they grew up here in town, where their family’s from, etc.

Occupation – What does he/she do for a living? Does he/she like his/her job?

Recreation - What is there to do for fun around here? What does your family enjoy doing together? Perhaps you have a common recreational interest.

Message – Since you have a loved one with special needs and still have dreams for his/her future, you might be looking for some connections or resources for them. Ask if they know anyone or anything that might help you in your quest. Phrase your need as a request for information, such as: “I’m looking for a math tutor for my kid. I can’t help him/her much because I can barely understand it myself. Do you know anyone who is good with algebra?” Remember everyone you meet knows approximately 250 people you don’t know – tapping into their network of friends saves you time and effort!

What kinds of people would take a role in the life of your loved one? Are you a person who has to be asked or do you volunteer? If you struggle with the concept of people with disabilities or special health care needs truly being cared about by others in the community, consider research from 1988 where a few “ordinary” people during the Holocaust took a role in saving individual Jews at the risk of their own lives. Why did they do it? In the study of 600 people who helped, 67% percent did it **because someone asked them to**. Of these who were asked, fully 70% were asked by intermediaries (someone speaking on their behalf).

What kinds of people would take on this role at such great personal risk? The researchers found that these rescuers had a sense of attachment to others and a feeling of responsibility for the welfare of others, including those outside their immediate family or community circles.

The question we want to discover answers to is this: Would ordinary citizens here in Nevada support people with disabilities and special health care needs into their lives, their families, their communities, and share their associations in life with them if someone asked them? Are you speaking up on their behalf?