

Skills in building relationships

Body Language

Your body language helps engage others in conversation. Facing their general direction, relaxing your body, and uncrossing your arms is welcoming and sends the message that you are happy to talk with them and you have time to offer.

Smile

Smiling can help to put people at ease. It shows warmth, care, friendliness, and makes you more approachable. Smiling at someone gives the message that you are pleased to see them, you may be open to talking, or that you are willing to help them. People are more drawn to a smiling face.

Eye Contact

Looking softly (not staring) at someone shows you are focused and paying attention. It gives the message that you are listening to what the person has to say. Eye contact can also indicate that you are trustworthy and warm-hearted. As a general rule 5 seconds eye contact and then glance away is appropriate.

Small Talk

Small talk is where we talk about factual things that do not hold any particular emotion linked to it. Small talk is about 'breaking the ice' and warming up the conversation. Topics may include your surroundings/environment, weather, sports/hobbies, TV/film, music, holidays, school / work.

Rapport

Building rapport is about developing a connection with someone based on shared values, experiences or interests. To build rapport you try and find common ground / similarities between you and them and then build on these things as a way to get closer and build an alliance. Rapport sends the message of 'we are similar' & 'we understand each other'.

Listening

It is important to show that you are listening to what is being said which shows respect, validation and understanding. Make 'I'm listening noises' 'uh-huh', 'really', 'oh yes' etc. Feed back what you've heard / comment on what was said 'so he didn't go to the dentist?' Refer back to what they were saying later on 'you know when you were saying earlier...'

Curiosity

Asking questions about someone can show that you are interested in them and what they have to say. Asking follow up questions to the original question can help the other person to feel valued and that you are keen to get to know them more. Using 'Open' questions (starting with 'What, where, why, which, when, who, how), can help conversations continue.

Compliment

Offering an appropriate compliment to someone can show kindness and appreciation. Complimenting someone about their achievements and character, indicates you value/like something about them. Compliments about someone's appearance should be used sensitively if you don't know them well, as it may be taken the wrong way or be awkward.

Assertiveness

Expressing your point of view in a way that is clear and direct, while still respecting others. It's about being honest, speaking clearly, and having confidence in what you are saying. It's also about expressing your needs and what you would like from others in a way that shows the importance.

Create Balance

Although it is important to listen and find out about others rather than just talking about yourself, it is also important for the conversation to have balance. At an appropriate time you may guide a conversation to something relevant to you by saying 'That reminds me, I remember when...' 'that was similar when I...'. This also builds rapport!

Self-disclosure

Sharing more personal information about yourself should be considered carefully – to the right person at the right time. However, sharing views/opinions, thoughts, feelings, your history, relationships etc. can help to develop a feeling of really getting to know each other on a deeper level.

Silence is ok!

Don't be afraid of silence. Silence can show that you are happy enough in someone's company to be quiet for a short time. Trying to fill every moment with conversation may become overwhelming and feel forced. Use silence to think and reflect about what you have been talking about and how you feel. Breathe & Relax!

Non-judgemental

Being non-judgemental is about not judging what someone says as either good or bad. It's about giving someone compassion and care regarding what they say, remembering that their experiences are different to your own. It's not about agreeing with someone's perspective, but it's also not about condemning it. By being non-judgemental, you are giving the message that you respect someone and they are safe in your presence.

Empathise

Empathising is when we try to think about things from the other person's perspective and may be reflect our understanding to them (it's not about pity). It is also about considering why someone may be responding / saying what they are saying. Empathy is not about solving people's problems, it's about 'walking in their shoes' and help them to feel heard and understood. This is a very powerful tool to develop closeness with someone.

Vulnerability

Letting your guard down and expressing your feelings to someone you are beginning to trust can be a way of really connecting with them. Sharing how you feel with someone is a strength that gives the message that you value and trust them enough to share sensitive information. A long lasting meaningful relationship is built on the ability to be vulnerable and willingness to let someone become close.

Self-deprecation

Self-deprecation is about showing that you don't take yourself too seriously and that you are up for a laugh. It's the ability of laughing off some of your small mishaps and being able to poke fun at yourself a little. This can help bring other's guards down and help them to feel more comfortable. It is an endearing/likeable quality that people often connect with.