

A black and white photograph of two men smiling and talking. The man on the left is older, with grey hair, wearing a dark shirt. The man on the right is younger, with short hair, wearing a checkered shirt. A blue circle with the text 'Tip Sheet' is overlaid on the top left of the image.

Tip Sheet

Friendship!

- ✓ “A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick”. Brené Brown (2017)
- ✓ We cannot create relationship but we can recognise, encourage and design opportunities in which the miracle of relationship is more likely to occur. Janet Klees (2011).
- ✓ It's is not enough to just show up. “We're going to need to intentionally be with people different from us. We're going to have to sign up, join and take a seat at the table. We're going to have to learn how to listen, have conversations, look for joy, share pain and be more curious than defensive, all while seeking moments of togetherness” Brené Brown (2017, p37)
- ✓ Create a list or map the people you know well, people you know but not well and all those people you would like to get to know in your neighbourhood, work place, club etc
- ✓ Friendships often stems from sharing a common interest. To meet a diverse range of people, who are compatible, make a list of your interests, passions and gifts and join community groups or associations that are open to all members of the community.
- ✓ Friendship is freely given and mutual between to people. It is not paid but you could engage a person to assist you explore community places based on your interests and foster relationships e.g. they might come with you to a new community activity and stay until you feel comfortable and know other members.
- ✓ Our valued roles give us meaning and the opportunity to meet other people with a similar interest. Therefore, taking up new or extending our current roles may lead to meeting new and interesting people. Our roles also help us to shine!
- ✓ If you want to meet a diverse range of people then live, learn, work and play in community places e.g. schools, workplaces, clubs and associations rather than in segregated environments or activities specially designed for people with a disability.

- ✓ Get to know your local community. Where do people who share your interests gather and meet? Some community groups are hidden! Research local papers, noticeboards, libraries, the internet, local council resource guides or talk to others who know the community well.
- ✓ When you join a community group other people will get to know you if you attend frequently, predictably and reliably e.g. going to the gym at the time every week.
- ✓ Keep your age in mind when doing your research e.g. people in their 20's rarely frequent Neighbourhood Houses through the day as they're working.
- ✓ Look for ways that you can contribute your interests, passions and skills to community groups by offering to help out or take up roles. This will assist you spend extra time with people so they get to know you e.g. staying back after a yoga class to help out with the dishes.
- ✓ Friendship is about companionship, shared activities, mutuality, emotional support, closeness and enjoyment of each other's company. Look for ways that friendship bonds can be strengthened through other shared interests e.g. going to the footy together, inviting a work colleague to a movie, inviting a club member over for dinner, inviting school friends for a sleep over, going on a walk together or working on a project together.
- ✓ Friendships take time to develop and are not one way. Look for ways you can contribute to another person's life by offering practical assistance e.g. collecting the mail while your neighbour or friend is away, watering their garden, offering a lift, taking a cake to work for morning tea, purchasing a small thankyou gift, doing an extra job to help them at work etc.
- ✓ Be intentional ... in whatever way works for you, be conscious of the current relationships - close friends and those who you think are open to more relationship. Keep a list (mental or written!) and think of ways you can nurture those relationships (Lisa Bridle, 2019)
- ✓ Rather than use formal approaches that match volunteers e.g. buddy matching programs, use typical pathways and natural ways to meet and make friends. It will open many more opportunities than a sole matching service that is formally driven.
- ✓ All community groups and workplaces have a unique culture which includes unique customs and routines. When we're part of the culture we feel we belong. Often the culture is hidden! Carefully watch what people do, speak with members or find a mentor who can tell about the culture e.g. Friday night drinks after work, celebrating birthdays.
- ✓ If you need some assistance to foster relationships or join the community ensure your supports know your local community and are well matched to your interests and age e.g. someone who plays cricket will know how to play, the language, culture/rhythms of the club.
- ✓ It is worth taking risks and this means leaving space for others. Don't fill every moment with paid support and make sure paid supporters know to leave space so others can get to know the person (Lisa Bridle, 2019)
- ✓ Your support people should blend in like a chameleon, assist you to connect, and know when to stay out of the way! They're the bridge to relationship not the relationship.