



Tip Sheet

Ways to foster belonging in the community!

- ✓ Our interests, strengths, passions and gifts form the foundations of belonging – share them with others and find others who share your interests.
- ✓ Our roles are an important part of our identity. There are many things that flow from our roles eg. gaining knowledge, skills, respect, connection with other community members and access to the good things in life. Explore valued roles based on your interests, strengths, passions and gifts.
- ✓ Foster roles that match your age eg. if you're 20 years of age and have a passion for singing you might like to join a youth choir. This way you will meet people your own age.
- ✓ Expand your roles and make them even bigger eg. if you're a footy fan you might become a member and help out on club days or organise the footy tipping competition at work.
- ✓ Avoid getting into negative roles and replace them with more positive roles eg. a service user becomes a citizen.
- ✓ Follow typical pathways and share ordinary community places where you will meet a diverse range of other community members eg. schools, workplaces, clubs, associations, neighbourhood.

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- ✓ Keep your eyes peeled for opportunities in your local community. Gems are often hidden so it's important to speak to people who know the community well, check out community notice boards, look at local newspapers, use the internet eg. investigate Meet Up Groups, brainstorm with friends.
- ✓ Be present in community places frequently, regularly and predictably – the same day and time every week.
- ✓ Don't limit your opportunities to community access, attending once off events, segregated/special programs or congregated groups.
- ✓ Although mastering a task or role in the community is important, look past the activity for opportunities to contribute and belong eg. take a cake for morning tea, wash up the dishes after a meeting.
- ✓ Find roles that bring a rich and varied social network. Intentionally develop and deepen relationships eg. invite a colleague for dinner or to the movies. Offer to walk a neighbour's dog, bring in the mail while they're away or host a street party.
- ✓ All community groups have a unique culture. When we're part of the culture we feel we belong. Often the culture is hidden, so we need to find out about the unique customs and routines of a workplace, club or association. Carefully watch what people do, speak with members or find a mentor who can tell about the culture eg. Friday night drinks after work, celebrating birthdays.
- ✓ If you need help to join the community make sure your supports know your local community and are well matched to your interests and age eg. someone who plays lawn bowls will know not only how to bowl but the language, dress codes, culture and rhythms of the club.
- ✓ Your supports should blend in like a chameleon, be there to assist you to connect, and know when to stay out of the way! Support people should be the bridge to relationship not the relationship.

Belonging Matters would like to acknowledge the community inclusion movement who have provided us with many tips over the years eg. Social Role Valorisation, John O'Brien, David Hager, Janet Klees, The National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations and the many individuals and families who have pushed the boundaries!