



HOW TO BE THE BRIDGE TO NEIGHBOURHOOD

A Workbook to help you work
through 'how' to do bridge
building in neighbourhoods



inclusiveneighbourhoods.org.au

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CONTENTS

PART 1

WHO THIS IS FOR AND HOW TO COMPLETE IT

In this section we provide some information and suggestions about how to get the most out of this workbook.

PART 2

STEP 1: PERSONAL PROFILE

This first step is identifying your skills, strengths, and interests. This is important for your bridge builder to support you well!

PART 3

STEP 2: NEIGHBOURHOOD MAPPING

This step helps you to explore different things and opportunities that exist in local neighbourhoods.

PART 4

STEP 3: PLAN, PLAN, PLAN

This final step is full of things to think about when you are acting as the bridge to neighbourhood, including some bridge 'do's' and 'don'ts'.

PART 5

HELPFUL RESOURCES AND STORIES

In this section you will find lots of helpful extra information to support your bridge building into the future.

WHO IS THIS WORKBOOK FOR?

This workbook is for you if....

- You are a person who identifies as living with a disability or mental health issue and you want to build your confidence to connect to groups or people in your neighbourhood.
- You are a loved one, family member, friend, or neighbour and you want to support someone you know to connect with their neighbourhood.
- You are a support worker, community worker or coordinator who wants to help more people be included in their neighbourhood.

In the Guidebook we talked about why bridge building is so important. This Workbook is about helping you with your friend, family member, support team or neighbour work together to connect to things happening in your local neighbourhood.



Who?

HOW DO WE COMPLETE THIS WORKBOOK?

When completing this workbook please try to take the following steps:

- Complete this workbook **with your supportive bridge-builder(s)**. They can be friends and neighbours or members of your family, circle of support or support team.
- Take a **supportive decision making and strengths based** approach (see the next page).
- Complete the workbook **in order of Steps 1-3**. You don't have to answer all the questions, but try to do a few.
- **Take your time, relax, and enjoy the process.**
- Work on this workbook in a **place** where you **feel safe and comfortable**.
- **Let go** of previous fears or assumptions that can hold you back and instead **explore what is possible**.

Working on this over a cup of tea or coffee is a great way to get to know each other better and make this a positive and valuable experience.

SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING

Supported decision making means **helping a person to make their own decisions** so that they can work towards their own goals, make decisions about their life, and have more control over the things that are important to them. This recognises your right to be in charge of your own life.

Supported decision making means working through things together.

When working through this workbook, remember that this is about your desire to connect to neighbourhood. The role of your supportive bridge builder is to help you work through this workbook and towards your goal for increased neighbourhood connection.



If you want to learn more about supported decision making, there are lots of helpful links and resources on page 38.

**“The role of bridge builder is a supporting role, instead of taking over”
-Thanh, lived experience with disability**

“I’m a planner...I think about all my shifts before I go. I like to leave something after I go.”

-Keri, Support Worker

“A person with a disability has to trust a support worker... we have to work as a team to build that trust”

-Kym, lived experience with disability

“A good support worker- they get to know me. They help me do things that I want to do. They respect me”

-Sarah, lived experience with disability

STEP 1: PERSONAL PROFILE

A personal profile is an activity that you and your neighbourhood bridge builder do together to explore **who you are**. If you have already done a personal profile, then you don't need a new one, but make sure you share and go through what you have with your bridge builder!

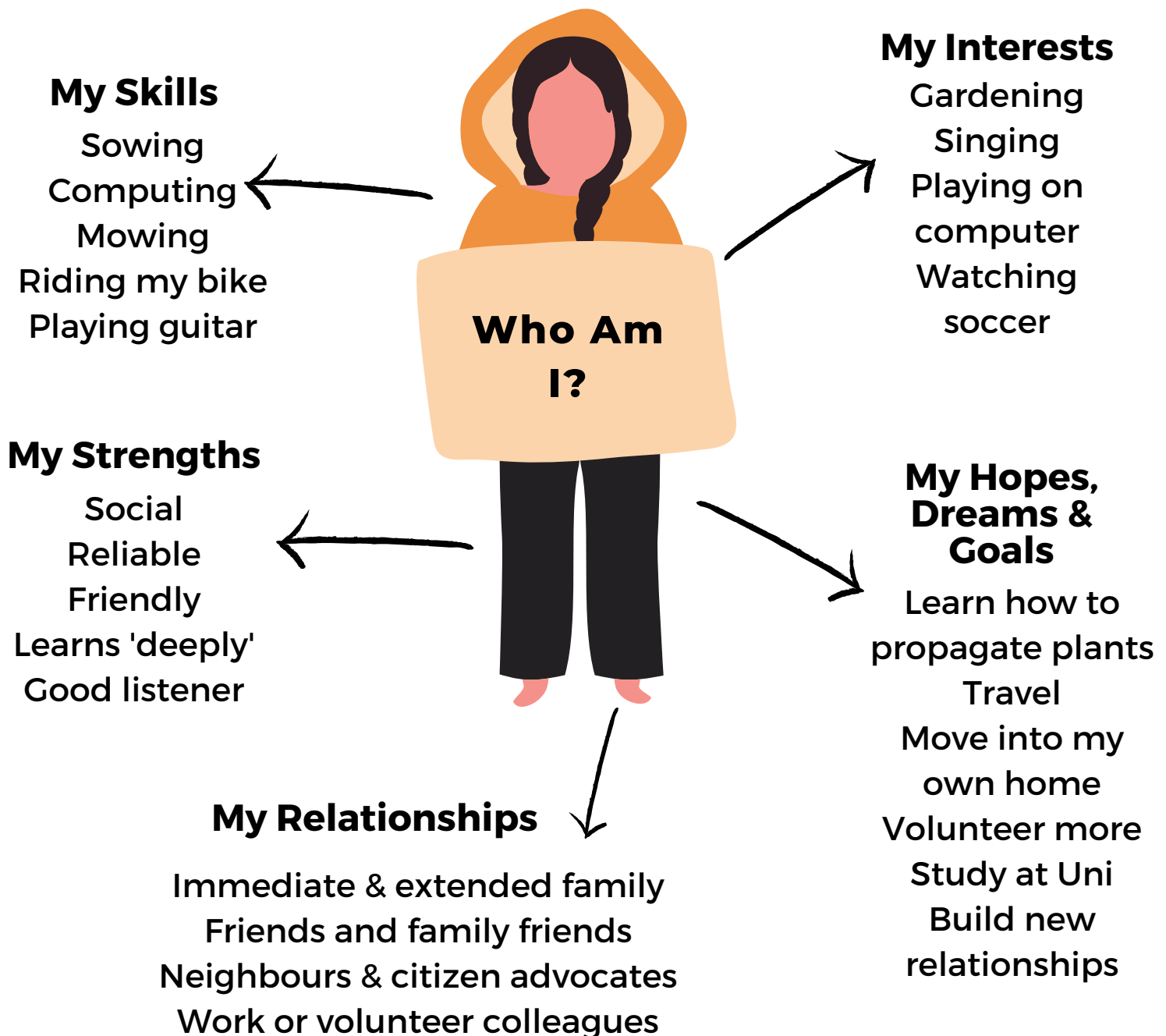
This is where you are supported to write down or just talk about all of your different interests, skills, and strengths. This is important to learn more about **who you are**, what you like or dislike, what you are good at, and who is in your life- try to mainly think about your **unpaid relationships**.

This will help you think about the right places to explore, the different roles that can be filled, and the meaningful contributions that you can make to your neighbourhood.

“It’s important to get to know me, to get to know my disability and that things are hard, but that I want to learn things. I want to learn to travel and to cook. You need to trust who I am.”

-Ruby, lived experience with disability

A personal profile could look like this...



“Not starting with difficulties or what gets in the way, but who people are... what makes them shine”

–Janet Kleese, Building a context for a right relationship

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLORE..

Question 1

What are you good at?

Question 2

What do you like doing?

Question 3

What do people say they like about you?

Question 4

Is there anything you would like to learn or try?

SOME OTHER (MORE FUN) QUESTIONS YOU CAN EXPLORE...

Question 1

If you could bring one person with you to a desert island, who would they be?

Question 2

If you could travel anywhere tomorrow, where would you go?

Question 3

What are five things that make you happy?

Question 4

Would you rather speak all the languages in the world or know how to talk to animals?

MAPPING RELATIONSHIPS...

When getting to know someone, it is important that you also know **who** is in their life and the relationships that matter to them. You might like to help invite some of these people in to help explore options out there, brainstorm ideas, or support you on your journey to engage in neighbourhood. While you might note who is in a paid relationship, try to think more about the people who are **not paid** to be in your life and what they mean to you.

My unpaid relationships- people who are not paid to spend time with me.



People who are paid to work with me.

Gardening Inclusion, the Brompton Community Garden

The Brompton Community Garden has been running for many years. but when member Amy joined she was determined to make the place more inclusive and accessible for people from a range of backgrounds and abilities. Having a disability herself she was seeking volunteer roles that suited her skills and abilities. Alongside their newly appointed Chair Belle, who identifies as disabled, the committee strove to not only make the space more physically accessible, but also improve the nature of ways that people could contribute.

By making the place physically accessible and recognising everyone's diverse skills, the garden can harness the range of strengths and contributions that their members bring. Doing so helped improve the garden in a variety of ways, which inevitably benefited all its members.



A photo of a raised garden bed at the Brompton garden

TIP #1: Think about strengths and contribution

When completing the personal profile pay very close attention to what you do well and think about how you might be able to **share those strengths with others.**

When thinking about what you are interested in, think about different roles that you can be in, which give you the **opportunity to contribute** in a way that is both meaningful to you and appreciated by others.

Doing a 'role stock-take'

Doing a role stock-take means identifying the roles you are in and new roles that you want to explore. In this exercise we want you to think about the **positive roles, big or small**, that you are proud to hold and that you might want to make stronger. We also want you to think about how an interest you have might turn into a **new role** in your neighbourhood.

Examples of some family and friend roles are:

sister, brother, cousin, aunt, uncle, mother, father, listener, birthday remember, brunch host, Christmas party organiser, footy club tipper, household shopper, gardener, cook.

Examples of some community or work roles are:

community gardener, good neighbour, bin or mail bringer-inner, morning tea baker, neighbourhood association secretary, little librarian, small business owner, artist, actor.

Examples of some roles based on interest are:

book club member or host, painter, sculptor, footy club member, choir singer, theatre performer, gardener, wood worker, bird watcher, coin collector, movie critic, foodie.

TIP #2: Moving from activities to roles

When thinking about what your interests are try to think about **who you might be** when doing it. For example, if you like painting, then how might you be in the role of painter or artist?

THE ROLES I HOLD...

Question 1

What are some of my family or friend roles?

Question 2

What are some of my community or work roles?

Question 3

What roles would I like to make stronger?

Question 4

What new roles would I like to try?

STEP 2: NEIGHBOURHOOD MAPPING


Now that you have explored your interests, skills, strengths, and roles, it is time to think about finding the places where you can connect to and make valuable contributions in your neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood mapping means **exploring** regular things that are already happening in your neighbourhood. These are place(s) where **everyone**, regardless of their background or disability, are included.

Think back to your personal profile and your role stock-take.

- What roles and interests in your neighbourhood do you want to strengthen?
- What new roles and interests would you like to explore?

Make sure you think about your skills, strengths, interests and roles when exploring opportunities that might already exist in your neighbourhood.



"We need to discover just what is actually available to us in our own neighbourhood"

-Miriam, parent;
SACID Conference 2023

WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD?

Neighbourhoods can include the street and area where you live, but it can also include your wider community. **We define neighbourhoods as places that you can easily get to by walking, riding your bike, taking a bus, or driving a short distance.** These spaces can also be online, like a local neighbourhood Facebook page or 'Buy Nothing' group.

When thinking about neighbourhood we want you to try and keep things as close as you can. **The closer** they are and the **easier** it is to get to, the **more likely** that **you will continue to go** and maintain the relationships with people who live nearby.



Neighbourhoods include your immediate neighbours, but also places that are close and easy to get to. A neighbourhood can include your local suburb, city council, or community.

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLORE..

Question 1

Where do people who are interested in ___ meet?

Question 2

Do people who share my interest meet online?

Question 3

Where are some physical places we can explore?

Question 4

What are some online place(s) that I can search?

TIPS ON EXPLORING YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Some people have asked, but is there really that much out there? Our answer is, yes! You will be amazed how much you find once you start looking. Here are some tips to help you think about **how and where to search** for things in person and online.

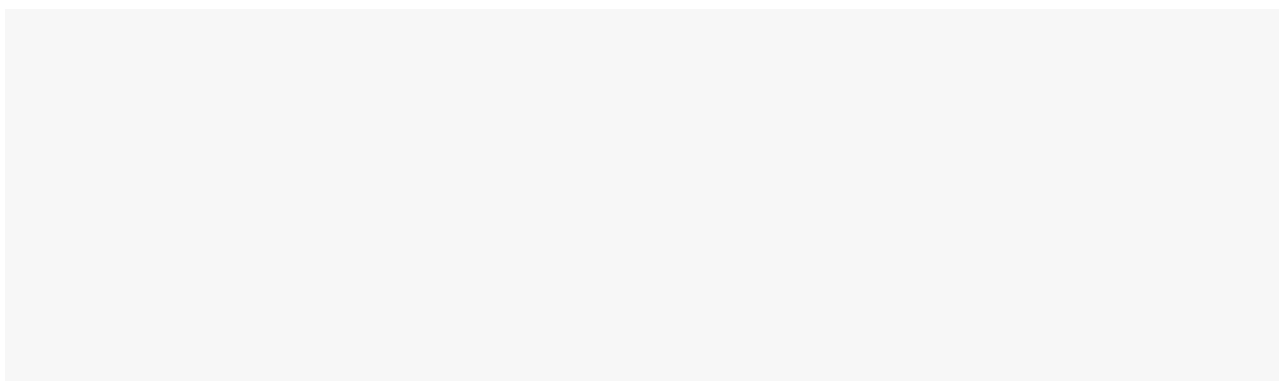
Physical places

Go for a walk!
Community centers & library notice boards,
shopping centers,
local newspapers,
local café's,
Sporting clubs,
Churches,
Parks,
Ovals,
local parks, streets and neighbours' houses

Online

Google Search,
Facebook,
Instagram,
NextDoor app,
local council website,
library and community center websites,
Humanitix,
Eventbrite,
Volunteering SA/NT,
Volunteering Australia,
neighbourseveryday.org

What 'explorer' methods are you going to try?



The art of belonging, Sudhashree's Story

Sudhashree has a passion for art and drawing, so with the help of her Support Coordinator she became connected to a local art group that met once a week. For the first two years Sudhashree went with her support worker, but after finding a community of like-minded friends and art enthusiasts she became confident enough to go on her own. Her positive experience with this group strengthened her own confidence to step out and join more things, and now she runs her own small card-making business, is an active member of her neighbourhood action group, and runs sewing and drawing classes at her local neighbourhood center.



A picture of Sudhashree's hands drawing

TIP #3: Think about 'bumping places'

Bumping places are places where we might 'bump' in to other people in our neighbourhood, get to know them, and build a relationship. Bumping place(s) can be a neighbourhood house, local cafe, and even the bus stop or post-box. These are small and big place(s) where you might intentionally go or casually meet other people who live near you. The more bumps the stronger the bonds!

Someone to look out for me; Rachel's story

Rachel lived in the Eastern suburbs with her parents, but it wasn't until a newspaper wrote a story about her desires to have a network of friends to look out for her when some of her neighbours developed the confidence to step in and introduce themselves. These neighbours always wanted to get to know Rachel and so being given the opportunity to take a role in Rachel's life offered the chance for them to step in and create a network of support and friendship around her.



The relationships Rachel has built with her neighbours has lasted over twenty years and has encouraged everyone on the street to share, care, and look out for one another; making Rachel's street a safer and more inclusive place for everyone.

TIP #4: Think about 'nodding relationships'


Nodding relationships are small gestures of 'hello', smiles, waves, and nice greetings that you might give your neighbour or a person you walk past in your local street. There is a lot of research out there that shows that simple acts of saying hello increases peoples sense of safety, welcome, and belonging. While it might not seem like much, starting with a simple 'hello' is a great way to build neighbourhood connection!

STEP 3: PLAN, PLAN, PLAN

By now you should have completed your personal profile and explored potential opportunities to connect and contribute to your neighbourhood.

We are now in the 'plan stage'. The plan stage includes things that you and your 'bridge' should think about to make sure that your connection to neighbourhood is a positive experience. This is what helps people to build a sense of trust, inclusion and belonging in their neighbourhoods.

There are a few things that people have told us that are important when connecting to their neighbourhood. Some of these things include thinking about the where, when and how you will get there, the roles you'll take and contributions you'll make, going frequently and regularly, and how much time you need to commit to your goal. Have a read and think through the tips below to help you plan ahead!



"Supports need to be aware
what they can do to
support young people with
a disability to connect"

-Grace, lived experience with
disability

My support bridges, Tom's walking group

When Tom moved into his first home, an apartment in the Eastern suburbs, his mum knew how important it was for Tom to get to know his neighbours and for them to get to know him. It started with Tom hosting a morning tea in his new place for all his surrounding neighbours. With the help of one of Tom's support workers, Tom then decided to host an evening walking group for people who lived in his apartment who might not feel comfortable walking alone. Posters were put up in all the apartment lifts and the walking group would meet at the same time, in the same place every week. They had the mindset that the worst case scenario was no one would show, but they would still enjoy a nice evening walk. Within a few weeks the number of walkers started to grow and neighbours began spreading the word. Walking with neighbours became a great way for Tom's neighbours to meet one another, get to know Tom a bit better, and stay active!

Tuesday Night Walking Group

Want to walk but feel safer with others?
Like to be distracted with friendly chats?
Join Tom and Alex for a 40 minute walk!



WHEN

Every Tuesday, meeting in the lobby
at 7.10pm for a 7:15pm departure

See you there!

One thing at a time, think quality over quantity

When thinking about the neighbourhood group, role, or relationship that you would like to connect to, don't feel pressured to do a lot of new things all at once. Instead, try to focus on **one new role, relationship, group or thing at a time**. If you try to add too much, too soon, then it might not become a positive experience. Here are some things to think about before you do your neighbourhood bridge building.

- Don't rush it.
- Take the time to make sure the place(s) or people you want to connect to are welcoming and inclusive.
- Take lots of time to let things unfold and grow naturally.
- If its a new group, perhaps you might like to start by attending first and then later find ways to contribute or strengthen the relationships that you have or build.
- Don't be afraid to share what your skills and strengths are, but also what access needs you have.

TIP #5: Do a 'first' visit

If you plan to try something new, it sometimes helps to have a trusted friend or support worker visit that group or place(s) first to check its accessibility, inclusivity, and welcome. They might even help you get the name and number of a key contact in the group that can act as your go-to person for questions in the future. Having someone you trust visit the place and its people can help alleviate some fears when going for the first time.

Where, when and how, setting up for success

Thinking about the where, when, and how you will do your neighbourhood connecting helps you identify everything that you might need to feel safe and confident. This is also important to spot any potential challenges and how you will overcome them.

Before you continue your neighbourhood connecting try to think of some important **safeguards** that will help you feel safer and more comfortable when doing your neighbourhood connecting. Some things that you might want to think about are:

- Whether the activity is at night or during the day.
- How long the group might meet for and if you are able to stay the whole time.
- How far away the group is and how you will get there.
- If you have an access needs to be accommodated.

TIP #6: Close is best

When thinking about things out there, try to stay as close to home as you can. The further away you go the easier it will be to find excuses not to go or the more barriers you might face in getting there. If you can get to the place by walking, catching a short bus, or grabbing a lift a short distance the more likely it is that you will keep going and meet more people who might live nearby as well!

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLORE..

Question 1

What times and days am I free?

Question 2

How will I get there?

Question 3

Who will go with me?

Question 4

What do I need to bring?

SOME MORE QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLORE..

Question 1

What are my access needs?

Question 2

How long will I stay for?

Question 3

Do I need someone to go first to check things out for me?

Question 4

What do I need to feel safe going?

Roles vs. activities

think purpose and contribution

Many people enjoy having activities in their lives, but a life full of activities that are at different times, in different places, and with different people make it hard for you to build relationships with other people or to feel a sense of belonging. In your neighbourhood there may be an activity that you want to do, but try to also think whether this activity can become a role in the future and if there are ways you can share your skills, strengths, and talents with others.

When thinking about potential roles you can build on or strengthen remember:

- Your skills, strengths, and talents listed in your personal profile.
- Your roles in your 'role stock take' chart on page 13.

TIP #7: Think about 'big little roles'

When thinking about roles that you might want to strengthen or new roles you might want to take on perhaps start with 'big little roles', like being a better neighbour. There are lots of small, but important, acts of kindness you can do for neighbours and people who live nearby, like watering plants, sharing fruit, or fetching people's mail when away. These are great easy ways to build neighbourhood connection!

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLORE..

Question 1

What roles might be possible or present?

Question 2

Are there any roles that I can share with another person?

Question 3

What contributions can I make?

Question 4

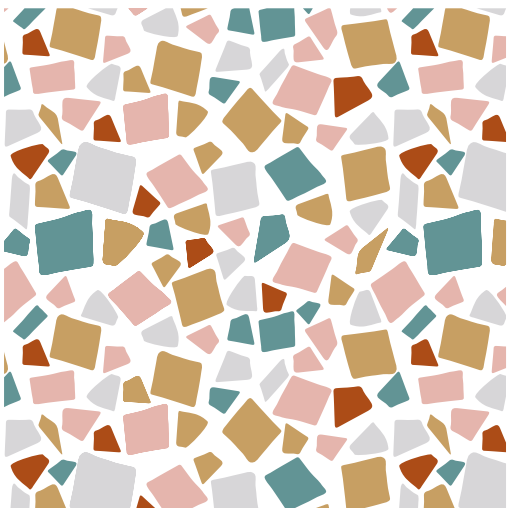
What skills can I share?

Sharing welcome and inclusion, Sarah's Story

Sarah recently moved to an apartment in the Adelaide CBD and started to attend a new church. While the church was very nice, it was an old building and not very physically accessible. Sarah persisted in going and began to actively introduce herself to members of her congregation. Eventually she decided to take on the role of greeter in the church and help with the morning tea, which helped her get to know more people to attend. This then encouraged her share her knowledge and perspective with members of the congregation on how they can be more inclusive and accessible for people living with a disability. They are now learning and sharing how to be more welcoming together!

Crafting contribution, Angie's mosaics

Angie is a member of her local community gardening group and would actively turn up to every planting bee to help out. Over time members of the group also found out that Angie had a skill for mosaics, among many other things.



Over time Angie was encouraged to run mosaic workshops for her local gardening group, further beautifying the area and providing a fun way for neighbours to interact. Angie now also sits on the gardening groups organising committee and runs mosaic workshops for other gardening groups in her city area!

Being in the role

Acting and looking the part

When taking on a new role make sure you also think about what's involved in being in that role, like having the right equipment, and looking and acting the part. For example, if you are volunteering in a community garden you might want to wear closed shoes, gardening clothes, and a hat. You might also want to bring your own pruning sheers or a baked good to contribute to the morning tea. Simple things like looking the part, and bringing the right equipment will help you feel more strongly in the role and will help share that message with others.

Some things you might want to think about are:

- Wearing the same uniform or clothing as others in the group or initiative.
- Being seen doing tasks related the role, like watering the garden or sending newsletters.
- Having the same title that is typical of others in the group, like being the 'secretary', 'key holder' or 'waterer'.

TIP #8: Dress the part

It is ok, even great, to go to the gym in your sneakers and active wear, but you might not want to wear gym clothes when attending church or a neighbourhood committee meeting. Make sure you think about what the right clothes and right equipment will be for the role that you are in or the group that you are attending.

SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLORE..

Question 1

Do I need to wear any particular clothes? Like a uniform?

Question 2

What are some things that I might be expected to do in this role?

Question 3

Does this role come with a special title?

Question 4

Do I need to bring any special equipment with me?

Frequent and regular time, time, time

It can take a long time for people to build relationships. If you are going to build connections with people in your neighbourhood then you also need to be present regularly enough that you start to get recognised by others. Building relationships in your neighbourhood relies on you going to **the same place, at the same time, and for a long time** so that you people can eventually 'miss you' if you are not there.

If you are always going to different place(s) with different people then it will become harder for you to get to know people. So when connecting with neighbourhood remember:

- Go to the same place, at the same time, with the same people.
- Be regular, routine, and consistent.
- Give long periods of time to build relationships and trust.

TIP #9: Give time for friendship to grow.

Some research shows that it take more than 50 hours for someone to move from being an **acquaintance** to a **casual** friend, over 150 hours for them to become a **friend**, over 200 hours for them to become a **good** friend, and over 300 hours for them to become a **best** friend. Making friendships takes a lot of time, so don't give up after a few weeks!

An excerpt from We Come Bearing Gifts by Janet Kleese

Among many others, here are some of the gifts that we bring...

Presence...when I am with you, I am totally focused on you. I am not distracted by other things that I 'must do', other ways I 'should' behave, other people that I would rather be with.

Peace...in this chatty world, I bring a way of being together which is not dependent on words, and my quiet way of being will endure through your talk until you, too, fall silent to appreciate our world in another way.

Welcome...in a world of false rejoicing, you will know welcome when you are with me. When I am glad to see you, you will know and bathe in the warmth of my welcome.

Courage...And I have stood within groups who would not welcome my gifts, and I have entered rooms where people would not recognise my presence, and I have shared dreams with those who would not let me dream. And still, I love and I believe and I rejoice in this life...until I bring them along.

....and I ask you, are these not gifts needed, required, welcomed by any thoughtful growing community?

- p.iv-v, Janet Kleese 1996

"I feel a sense of empowerment through my sense of belonging...I enjoy doing activities embedded with social connection"

-Caitlin, lived experience with disability

Being a good role model

blurring into background or stepping away

This section is for the neighbourhood bridge builder. How you speak with and interact with the person you are supporting to connect to neighbourhood is very important. This shows others in the neighbourhood how they might also speak to and treat the person into the future. You have a very important role in that you are there to support the person connect to neighbourhood and not take over or get in the way of other important relationships. You also have the important role of being a positive role model for how to treat others while in neighbourhood.

There are lots of important tips that people who identify as living with a disability or mental illness have said that they want paid support workers and other bridge builders to know. We have listed these on the next page.

Suggested activity:

Watch the two videos by JFA Purple Orange on diverse communication and language, and reflect on why language is important and what you can do to support more people to feel included.

Demystifying Diverse Communication:

<https://vimeo.com/369237672>

Language Matters:

<https://vimeo.com/477057789>

Tips for bridge builders

- Make sure to remain friendly, but don't get in the way of real friends or other new friendships that are possible.
- Encourage conversation with others and help the person to share their interests, skills and strengths.
- Be a positive role-model in how you speak and act, as well as the mindset you hold about the person.
- Help them to put their best foot forward and be conscious of situations that could make them anxious or uncomfortable.
- Always keep your eye out for opportunities for social connection and meaningful contribution.
- Never just drop off and leave the person unless your role is just to provide transport or this is what the person has specifically asked you to do.
- Know when you are needed and when you are not.



So, you've finished the workbook

If you've made it here then congratulations on finishing this workbook and for thinking about your future as a neighbourhood connector! There are lots of other resources in the back of this workbook that can help you think about connecting, taking on valued roles, and contributing to your neighbourhood. Before you do, let's take a minute to write down some of our next steps...

An interest I am going to explore is....

My neighbourhood bridge-builder is named...

A role I am going to strengthen or explore is....

Our next steps are...

HELPFUL RESOURCES



- **neighbourseveryday.org** (Relationships Australia) – National Neighbour Day stories, resources and toolkits to foster inclusiveness and belonging.
- **inclusiveneighbourhoods.org.au** (JFA Purple Orange)– Neighbourhood Circles Project Reports, recordings, and local stories of inclusion.
- **befriend.org.au** (Befriend WA)– Focuses on building stronger, more inclusive communities built on contribution.



- **imaginemore.org.au** (in ACT)– An organisation with lots of free training and supports to help you think about building social connections and belonging.
- **belongingmatters.org.au** (in NSW)– Lots of stories, videos and examples of what it takes to build genuine inclusion and belonging.



- **neighbourhoodconnect.org.au** (national)– Helpful resources, stories, and templates to build neighbourhood connection. Check out their ‘80 great ideas to build neighbourly connections’.
- **volunteerability.org.au** (Orana)– Lots of resources to support people with a disability and their supports to do mainstream volunteering.
- **villageinthecity.net** (UK)– Resources, handbooks and podcasts to support increased local neighbourhood connection and support

MORE HELPFUL RESOURCES



- **cru.org.au/resources** (in QLD)- the Community Resource Unit (CRU) provides resources to help you think about valued roles and community.
- **jeder.com.au** (Vic)- An organisation that advocates principles of asset based community development (ABCD) in their community work.
- **purpleorange.org.au** (SA)- An organisation that provides advocacy, resources, and peer support. Check out their #OneSmallThing campaign.



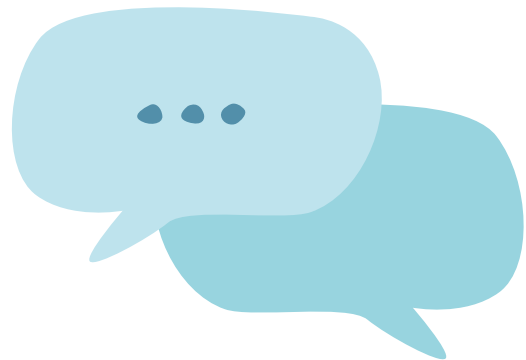
- **Two Peas in a Podcast** by Mandy Hose and Kate Jones
- **For the Love of Community Engagement Podcast** with Becky Hurst
- **Connected Us** Podcast by Befriend
- ***The Connected Community: Discovering the Health, Wealth, and Power of Neighborhoods*** (2022) by John McKnight and Cormac Russell



- ***The Kindness Revolution*** (2021) by Hugh Mackay
- ***Say Hello*** (2019) by Carly Findlay
- ***Finding People to be there: Rebuilding a sense of belonging*** (2002) by Neil and Penny Barringham
- ***We Come Bearing Gifts*** (1996) by Janet Kleese

SUPPORTIVE DECISION MAKING RESOURCES

- **supporteddecisions.org** by the Center for Public Representation (CPR)
- **cid.org.au/resource-category/supported-decision-making** by the Council for Intellectual Disability (CID)
- **supporteddecisionmaking.com.au** by Western Australia's Individualised Services (WAIS)
- **www.inclusionaustralia.org.au/topic/supported-decisions-making** by Inclusion Australia
- **www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/policies/supported-decision-making-policy** by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- **www.opa.sa.gov.au/guardianship/supported-decision-making/supported-decision-making-video-resources** by the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA), Government of South Australia



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INCLUSIVENEIGHBOURHOODS.ORG.AU