

The 10 Elements of Dignity

ACCEPTANCE OF IDENTITY

Approach people as being neither inferior nor superior to you. Give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged. Interact without prejudice or bias, accepting the ways in which race, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, age, and disability may be at the core of other people's identities. Assume that others have integrity.

INCLUSION

Make others feel that they belong, whatever the relationship – whether they are in your family, community, organization, or nation.

SAFETY

Put people at ease at two levels: physically, so they feel safe from bodily harm, and psychologically, so they feel safe from being humiliated. Help them to feel free to speak without fear of retribution.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating, and responding to their concerns, feelings, and experiences.

INDEPENDENCE

Encourage people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility.

RECOGNITION

Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help. Be generous with praise, and show appreciation and gratitude to others for their contributions and ideas.

FAIRNESS

Treat people justly, with equality, and in an even-handed way according to agreed-on laws and rules. People feel that you have honored their dignity when you treat them without discrimination or injustice.

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Treat people as trustworthy. Start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

UNDERSTANDING

Believe that what others think matters. Give them the chance to explain and express their points of view. Actively listen in order to understand them.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Take responsibility for your actions. If you have violated the dignity of another person, apologize. Make a commitment to change your hurtful behaviors.