

Exploring Friendship

1. How do you feel when someone asks you to talk about your friendships? Thankful, shy, invaded, proud or what?
2. (a) Are friendships sometimes hidden, secret or unnoticed by others? (b) Can a friendship be very brief – a *flash in the pan*? (c) What about *chalk & cheese* friendships where opposites attract? (d) Is a *snow friend* a friend?
3. Formal roles (like working together) might lead to friendship. Do friendships start at the same time as the formal role or after it is over? How do we help people to move from the formal role to the friendship?
4. Do most friendships have a 'natural life' in which they are born, flourish and die? How do friendships end? Do we support their natural ending?
5. (a) Can helping someone strengthen a friendship or kill it? Where does *neither a borrower nor lender be* fit in? (b) Is touch important?
6. Should we organise training for people who want to learn how to behave with a friend? What would it look like?
7. How do we introduce people to others? Does this introduction suggest that they are worth getting to know? Have manners changed over recent years?
8. Where, with whom, and how do we start our friendships? Are the answers different for women? For Black people? When did you last make a new friend?
9. What impact does age, family and crisis (illness, divorce or death) have on friendships?
10. (a) Do you have any 'relationship vacancies' at present? (b) Can I make friends with one of your friends – 'piggy-back' friendships? What makes the difference here – when does the 'borrowed' friendship become a real one? When would you say that 'three is a crowd'?
11. (a) Would a friendship agency help (like a dating agency, but for friends)? (b) We are all sexual beings, so how does this influence our friendships?
12. Policies on user/user, user/staff and user/public relationships. Do policies support or stifle the development of relationships? Risk assessment and police checks. What are the boundaries and why?
13. What maintenance do friendships require? How can staff support this, for example, prompting a person to send a birthday card to their friend?
14. What would you learn if you wrote down a list of your friends and when you last saw them? What if you wrote down the names of your friends and how you spend time with each person?

With thanks to the many people who honed these ideas during NDTi training events.