

6c2

Introductions

Do

Agree the details of the introduction – how problems might be described, if at all, why the worker is involved and so on.

Story

‘This may range from an introduction in the literal sense (hello, have you met Mr. Winter?), to a much more subtle process of helping to facilitate two people in getting to know each other. This is of course the kind of role which a good host or hostess will play in many social situations ... What is meant by this role is

as follows ...presenting the person with the disability in as valued a manner as possible; ... preparing for the introduction, for example, by telling each of the parties a little bit about the other before they meet; ...unobtrusive prompts such as ‘You were telling me yesterday about what you did at the weekend ...’.’ (*Firth & Rapley 1987, p32*).

Hints & Hazards

Introductions can be formal or informal. The supporter might speak privately to one or more representatives of the host organisation before arranging a meeting with the person. Consider confidentiality and negotiate this with the person beforehand. Some people feel obliged to keep a part of their story private and find this stressful. Community hosts could invite newcomers to contact them in confidence if they have any problems that might affect their participation. One person did not disclose his mental health history as he feared that the tutor would be 'too helpful' and make matters worse. The supporter may know the person better than the agency.

If the person wanted to arrive alone, a supporter could, with permission, show one or more people a photo of the newcomer so that they could recognise and greet them. Wear the right clothes for the photo. Test the approach with a staff photo first.

Thornicroft (2006) reports on a study that found college students who did not disclose their mental health difficulties achieve better grades – so it is sometimes important to manage other people's expectations too.