

7b1

Join

Do

Move from merely attending the activity to become a full and active member.

Story

Astrid had attended church for some years, but then wanted to be confirmed as a full member. The vicar needed to be reassured that this would be a valid and meaningful rite for her, since she was known to have mental health difficulties.

A man with learning disabilities wanted to join the library. He completed the application form and handed it in, whereupon the library worker said that the form would need to be countersigned by a parent.

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Hints & Hazards

An individual may need support or encouragement to join local groups, organisations and clubs. The process of joining or being invited to join is a critical aspect of deeper inclusion in a community, and if the person and their support do this together that can strengthen the bond between them.

Sometimes the group is unclear itself what constitutes joining. For example, the cricket club didn't know if their annual subscription would be waived for volunteer ground staff and how they were able to sell beer to 'non-members' on summer evenings.

This could be undermined later if the supporter then withdraws, and the group may feel that by joining in this way, the supporter was being dishonest. Watch out for people in power using the 'right to join' as a privilege for people that

they like. Who pays the registration fee for the supporter? Negotiating these things must be done without marking the person out as different. Most of us like to feel that we belong in specific settings within the community. A shared interest or cause can provide a common bond and strengthen the sense of belonging. Some groups have very formal ways to join, while in other groups the transition from merely attending to becoming a full member is hard to define. Look out for subtle ways to join. Some of us don't feel in the centre of things and need others to tell us that we are valued as full members. Others prefer to stay on the edge of things. For example, a person with severe anxiety may need to sit near the door in case they need to leave the room suddenly.