

Ambassadors of Hospitality Conversation Toolkit¹

Best practices:

- More listening and noticing, less talking.
- Take time to stand back, think, and breathe before responding. Don't just rush in to fill the space.
- Ask questions to clarify understanding. Don't assume.
- Try to determine your own motivations. Are you responding out of personal guilt, pride, anger, etc.?
- If you don't have a response, say, "Let me think about this and get back to you."
- Ask, "Who else knows about this?" to make sure you're not the only one the member is relying on.
- Don't put more energy into it than the member.
- Offer encouragement and support, but let the member make their own goals.
- Try to remember things the member has shared in order to build a stronger connection the next time you see them.
- Be cautious of getting drawn into drama.
- Respect the realities of mental illness.
- Remember that change is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Choose to see the good in people.
- Know when to ask for help from staff or seek information about an outside referral.
- Clarify on what you can and cannot do, and what the Recovery Café can and cannot do. Remember that simple encouragement goes a long way.
- Accept the fact that you may make a mistake, and that's okay.
- Have empathy, but be careful about being consumed. Know your own triggers and pay attention to your own stress levels. If you need to take a step back, do so.

Possible questions:

Establishing a connection:

- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Where are you from originally?
- What keeps you coming to the Café?
- What's your favorite time of year?
- If you could go anywhere in the whole world, where would it be?
- What are you going to do with the rest of your day?

Remember that most members really enjoy having someone to talk to. The best thing you can do is practice active listening, engaging deeper with topics that they're excited to talk about.

Building a deeper connection/helping someone problem-solve:

- What do you do for self-care? What's one thing you can do to take care of yourself today?
- What are some of your goals, long-term and short-term? What are some of the obstacles you're encountering? What resources have helped so far?
- What would make you feel like you were progressing towards your goals? What does progress look like for you?
- What advice would you give to a friend if they were feeling like this?
- What is bringing you hope or joy right now?
- What's one thing you wish people knew about addiction or mental illness?

¹ Adapted with gratitude from the Refuge Advocates Tool Box 2017