



## ***Relationships Across Difference***

***When we create relationships with people who are different from us  
we change our lives and strengthen our communities.***

**Respect.** Respect is an attitude toward another person that says “I see you”; “you are a person to me.” We can communicate respect with or without words.

**Intentionality.** Each of us has the capacity to choose how we are going to approach and interact with other people. Even subtle actions and attitudes send messages to others. We can pay attention to how we want to be with others and let our intent guide what we do.

**Stories.** Personal stories are a quick and effective way to build relationships. Telling your own story and listening to another person’s makes you real to them and them real to you.

**Authenticity.** The goal in reaching out to someone who is different is not to be BFF or even to become friends. The goal is to be genuine, which allows for an authentic interaction and relationship to develop even in a relatively short period of time.

**Listening.** When we truly listen with interest and attention to another person, we create the space for that person to open up and to share his or her story. Listening in this way is a great gift. When someone responds to our listening by telling us his or her story, they are offering a gift in return.

**Vulnerability.** It can feel risky to reach out to someone who is different. We are all familiar with putting up barriers so that people won’t get too close, with viewing people who are different as Other, with being fearful that we will make a mistake and end up hurting someone else or getting hurt ourselves. Acknowledging that there is a risk makes taking that risk easier.

**Trustworthiness.** Relationships with people who are different helps to build trust. The best way to elicit trust from other people is to be trustworthy ourselves.

**Difference as a source of resilience.** Creativity happens at the boundaries of difference. Fusion cuisines, great jazz, brilliant innovation – they all arise from the interplay of different ways of doing or thinking. When we approach people who are different with the mindset that great things might happen, great things can happen!