

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS of DIGNITY¹

“Treat people as they want to be and you help them become what they are capable of being.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

- ***Acceptance of Identity***—Approach people as neither inferior nor superior to you; give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged; interact without prejudice or bias, accepting how race, religion, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. are at the core of their identities. Assume they have integrity.
- ***Recognition***—Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help; be generous with praise; give credit to others for their contributions, ideas and experience
- ***Acknowledgment***—Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating and responding to their concerns and what they have been through
- ***Inclusion***—Make others feel that they belong at all levels of relationship (family, community, organization, nation)
- ***Safety***—Put people at ease at two levels: physically, where they feel free of bodily harm; and psychologically, where they feel free of concern about being shamed or humiliated, that they feel free to speak without fear of retribution
- ***Fairness***—Treat people justly, with equality, and in an evenhanded way, according to agreed upon laws and rules
- ***Independence***—Empower people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility
- ***Understanding***—Believe that what others think matters; give them the chance to explain their perspectives, express their points of view; actively listen in order to understand them
- ***Benefit of the Doubt***—Treat people as trustworthy; start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.
- ***Accountability***—Take responsibility for your actions; if you have violated the dignity of another, apologize; make a commitment to change hurtful behaviors

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