

## **The importance of *a safe environment* when working with people**

When you want to work with a group of (vulnerable) people, you have to make sure you create *a safe environment*. Only then can you make the participants feel welcome. Your goal is always to motivate them and give them the feeling that they are taken well care of. Mind you: *a safe environment* does not merely refer to the physical environment, like tables without sharp corners for example.

Below are a number of factors that will influence the way people feel during activities that are guided by a tutor/coach/educator/instructor... They are the result of a brainstorming session the BIG DEAL partners had, based on these questions:

- How do you create a safe environment?
- How can you motivate your participants?
- What is 'a good educator'?

### **Things to think about... (in random order)**

- Adapt a positive and enthusiastic attitude
- Always be friendly
- Be authentic
- Be engaged and motivated
- Be focused and focus on your goals
- Be full of energy
- Be non-judgmental
- Be open and honest, say it when you don't know something
- Be prepared to adapt to any situation
- Be sensitive
- Be transparent and clear
- Do you have a role model?
- Don't exaggerate
- Don't get too personal
- Give people a personal approach, give them attention, take the time to listen to them...
- Have a balanced approach
- Have a flexible approach
- Have a non-offensive attitude
- Have a purpose, clear goals
- Have eye contact
- Have the right knowledge
- Help people connect with each other
- Know people's background, like their cultural or religious background, so you can take that into account
- Know the context and setting: is it a formal setting or not?

- Know the group/audience
- Make sure it's fun for everyone (but sometimes not too much 😊)
- Make sure that everyone respects each other
- Make sure there is no alcohol involved
- Make sure what you say is easily understood, use clear language and vocabulary
- Personal details should stay in the group and not be shared with the outside world (agree on that)
- Protect yourself: think about how far you go in sharing personal details for example
- Show empathy
- Show some vulnerability
- Sometimes you need to 'destroy' your authority to become the authority, e.g. when the people you work with might not accept your authority, make sure you place yourself on their level and act like you are equals.
- Speak loud and clear
- Think about how you can visualize your presentation (e.g. do you need a PowerPoint?)
- Time management is of the utmost importance
- Trust in yourself, in what you do...
- Try to have no prejudices
- Try to influence the group dynamics in a positive way
- Use clear body language and watch the participants body language
- Use humour
- Use or show your authority (when needed)
- Work in a good space/room/setting
- You need to be prepared

**Can you think of anything else?**

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