

The Ten Essential Elements of Dignity

Acceptance of Identity: Approach people as being 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 the ways in which race, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability may be at the core of other people's identities. Assume that others have integrity.

Inclusion: Make others feel that they belong, whatever the relationship—whether they are in your family, community, organization or nation.

Safety: Put people at ease at two levels: physically, so they feel safe from bodily harm, and psychologically, so they feel safe from being humiliated. Help them to feel free to speak without fear of retribution.

Acknowledgement: Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating, and responding to their concerns, feelings and experiences.

Recognition: Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help. Be generous with praise, and show appreciation and gratitude to others for their contribution and ideas.

Fairness: Treat people justly, with equality, and in an even-handed way according to agreed-on laws and rules. People feel you have honored their dignity when you treat them without discrimination or injustice.

Benefit of the Doubt: Treat people as trustworthy. Start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

Understanding: Believe that what others think matters. Give them the chance to explain and express their points of view. Actively listen in order to understand them.

Independence: Encourage people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility.

Accountability: Take responsibility for your actions. If you have violated the dignity of another person, apologize. Make a commitment to change hurtful behaviors. (Hicks, 25-26).