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**Encourage Personal Sharing**

Encourage sharing by being open about feelings and what’s going on in your own life. If you are overwhelmed or tired, you don’t have to hide that from your volunteers. If you’re happy or thrilled, don’t hide that either. The goal is to truly be yourself and create an environment for your volunteers to do the same.

**Prioritize Praise**

Coaches catch people doing something right. Be ready to celebrate each step toward a goal, and to notice incremental progress. Praise and appreciative speech isn’t just for the awards ceremony. It is woven into every interaction.

• Maintain a ratio of no less than 4:1 for praise to negative feedback, and when people are just starting out and learning, make it an 8:1 ratio.

• When you need to deliver critique, use the compliment sandwich for best results [praise] + [what needs changing] + [praise]

**Reframe “NO” Language**

A coach is always open to potential – their own, and the organization's, as well as their volunteers’. Reframing language when saying no can keep possibilities open and keep enthusiasm high. For example:

• Instead of “Sorry, but we don’t have resources for that,” try “We don’t now, but we hope to in the future. Would you like to help look for resources?”

• Instead of “I’m too busy to talk right now,” try, “I look forward to talking when my schedule opens up on Tuesday.”

• Instead of “He doesn’t have the skills to do that,” say “He’s getting closer, but he’s not there quite yet.”

• Instead of “You’re not good at that task,” try “You’ve developed other strengths. But this one could use some attention right now.”

• Instead of “We can’t,” try “We choose not to right now.”

Volunteers will pick up on your potential-based word choices and approach their cases with more positivity based on your example.

**Critical Points for Relationship Building**

As a coach-supervisor, you guide the calendar and hold the big picture. When a volunteer is sworn in, mark the date. Then fast forward in your calendar or datebook and make a note to recognize, check in with and celebrate your volunteers at each of these milestones:

• Supervision

• 1st week

• 60 days

• 90 days

• 6 months

• 1 year anniversary

• 2 year anniversary

• All annual anniversaries

Each of these moments represents a time when a volunteer might consider leaving service. Use the opportunity to express your gratitude and reflect on their impact. It can make all the difference.