

Skills and Tips for Relationship Building

Relationship building is thoughtful and deliberate communication with the long-term goal of solidifying positive and deep connections.

Building better relationships takes time and practice. Use the following skills, with tips on how to foster those skills, to start developing and maintaining better relationships.



Learn Everyone's Names

Although it may seem trivial, the simple act of greeting someone by name can brighten their day and show that you care.



Active Listening

Take the time to process and understand what a speaker is conveying. What are their needs? Do they feel heard? Listen to understand, not to respond.



Focus on Relationships

Highly value the relationship of the person you're speaking with. Interactions aren't just a way to accomplish a task; they are also an opportunity to gain trust and understanding.



Thoughtful Interaction

Team members have significant differences in the way they send and receive messages. Be aware that what you're trying to convey may not be received as you intend. Listen, be forthcoming and accept others' boundaries.



Reach Out

Departmental or team silos can make it hard to get to know people outside of your group. Turn your camera on in virtual meetings, socialize with coworkers in common areas, and be present and considerate in your interactions.



Find Commonalities

What do you want to achieve? How does the person you're interacting with fit into accomplishing that goal? Highlight the common points of interest you have with others.



Use this in conjunction with the other Relationship Building resources in the [Effective Communication for Aspiring Laboratory Leaders Toolkit](#), designed by Cohort 17 of the [APHL Emerging Leader Program](#) to empower public health laboratory professionals to be better leaders by improving communication skills.

The toolkit has three sections: **Relationship Building**, **Empowering Colleagues** and **Conflict Resolution**.



Seek Clarity

If you're not clear about the message that the other person is trying to communicate, ask about their intentions and be clear about your own.



Avoid Judgments and Assumptions

From time to time, everyone can jump to conclusions. Different experiences and perspectives allow us to have different views from each other. Give others the benefit of the doubt. Ask open ended questions to get clarity on others' perspectives and thought processes. Take the time to hear an entire idea, statement and perspective before delivering a response.



Check Your Ego

Go into situations with a humble mindset. We all have something to learn from each other. Approaching conversations with humility and an open mind may improve other's reactions towards you and allow you to be receptive to new ideas.



Perception Awareness

Recognize how you are perceived as a leader. Be proactive and act as an intermediary to improve understanding between team members. Actively recognize communication challenges and solicit suggestions for improvement.



Make Eye Contact

Paying attention to people's faces can be surprisingly rewarding and can create connections. For example, if say "thank you" to people holding the door for you but never looking at their face, you may miss out on connecting with them as individuals.

Helpful tip: If you are uncomfortable looking directly into someone's eyes, you can look at their nose or eyebrows instead.



Reflection

Reflect on someone that has positively impacted you. Emulate their action and pay it forward! Think about their behaviors and responses to difficult situations. How do they compare to your own? Consider how you may be able to adopt their approaches.



Be Proactive

Approach others who have positively impacted you and thank them for making a positive impact. Conversely, if there was a conversation that seemed contentious, reach out to the other person and check-in about their feelings. Whether or not they felt contention, you have an opportunity to clarify your intentions and offer them a chance to better understand you.