

Family Compass: Guiding Care and Connection

Building Relationships & Creating Connections Workshop Resources

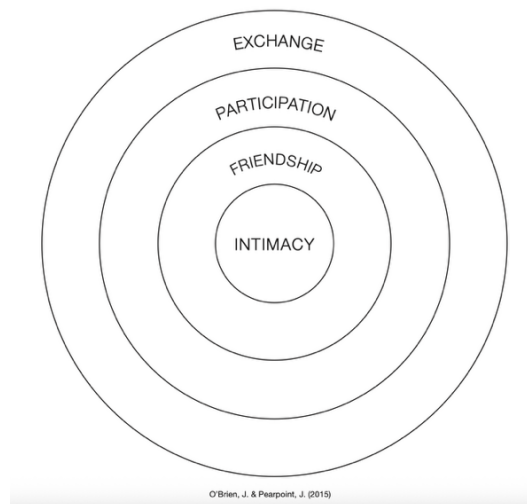


A “Connection Map”

An activity to help create a concrete, visual map of who is already in your family member’s life and where there are opportunities to grow.

You can include:

- Family members
- Friends and peers
- Neighbours
- Coworkers, volunteers, teammates
- Regulars at community places
- Support workers, professionals, service providers
- Online contacts or communities
- Animals or places they care about (if relevant)



- **Circle of Intimacy:** People the person is closest to (family, best friends, partner).
- **Circle of Friendship:** People who know and like the person, spend time together, and care about their life.
- **Circle of Participation:** People the person interacts with regularly in community settings (neighbours, classmates, teammates, regulars at a café or gym).

Family Compass: Guiding Care and Connection

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- **Circle of Exchange:** People who provide services or transactions (support workers, doctors, shopkeepers).
- **Places your family member is known.**
- **Ways your family member contributes.**

Questions to Consider:

Who are the people in their everyday world they enjoy connecting with outside of family and staff?

Who knows their name and greets them by name (even briefly)?

Who do they seem more relaxed, happy, or engaged around?

Where do they go regularly where people notice them? (e.g., store, park, café, class, team, faith community, online group)

Who do they help, support, or contribute to in any way (people, animals, places, causes)?

Where or with whom do they have a routine where their presence is missed if they aren't there?

3 Stages of a Circle of Support

1

EXPLORATION



2

DEVELOPMENT



3

MAINTENANCE



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Building Relationships & Creating Connections Workshop Resources



Stage 1 - Exploration: Discover what the person is interested in, what they want for their life, and who they might connect with. It's about getting out into the community and finding possibilities.

Stage 2 - Development: Start making connections, inviting people to be part of the circle, and building relationships. The group begins to figure out how they will work together and support the person.

Stage 3 - Maintenance: The circle becomes an ongoing source of friendship and support. Relationships grow stronger, the group settles into a rhythm, and new people or connections can be added as the person's interests and needs change.

Connection Experiments

Choose 1-2 scenarios to explore. This experiment will:

This experiment is:

- Small enough to try in the next 2–4 weeks.
- Specific enough that you'll know if it happened.
- Linked to your family member's interests, strengths, or valued roles.
- Designed with the person and support in mind (who can help, what accommodations might be needed).

Choose one relationship or setting to explore.

Why might it fit? Link to vision, purpose, interest, or valued role.

Who could help?

What support might be needed?

When will we do it?

What will we notice?

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Building Relationships & Creating Connections Workshop Resources



Who Could Help?

Even small experiments often need support. Who could help make this possible, and how?

Identify specific people and supports that could make these experiments more possible and sustainable. Technology can be used to help too.

Family members (siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts/uncles).

Friends or neighbours who know the family.

Support workers or agency staff.

Community connectors (teachers, employers, faith leaders, coaches, librarians).

Online moderators or group leaders (for online communities).

Professionals (therapists, SLPs, OTs – to help with communication strategies, support, skill-building).

For each person, note:

What could this person realistically do?

- Make an introduction
- Go somewhere with your family member once
- Help with transport
- Create a visual schedule
- Model a greeting
- Support online participation



When could you ask them?

- Today!
- This week
- Before the end of the year
- After a specific event

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Additional Activities

Refine Your Connection Map

Re-read your map and make it:

- More concrete (add names, places, and how often you see each person).
- Honest but hopeful: aim for “realistic now,” not “ideal fantasy.”

Share it with at least one trusted person (friend, sibling, support worker) and ask:

- Who else might belong in this circle?
- What ordinary places could we use more?

Notice Clues in Everyday Life

For 1–2 weeks, look for moments when your family member seems most connected, engaged, or “themselves,” or when they light up!

Jot down:

What are they doing?

With whom?

Where?

At what time of day?

These clues will help refine your relationship goals and future plans.

Conversation Starters

If your family member can participate directly, set aside a short, calm time to ask (in whatever communication works best):

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- Who do you like spending time with?
- Who makes you feel happy or safe?
- Is there someone new you'd like to meet?
- Where do you like to go?

Capture their words or gestures using text, symbols, or whichever format feels most comfortable for your family member.