



## 7 Practices for Exceptional Relationship Building

- Make relationship building a priority
- Believe in the other person
- Be a giver
- Be appreciative
- Be real
- Engage in deeper conversations
- Go beyond politeness to helpfulness

### 1. Make Relationship Building a Priority

Pre-Covid we could get away with less relationship building with more focus on the tasks of faith formation. But not now. Now we have to make the hard work of relationship building a priority so that we do not find ourselves with a disengaged faith community. Great leaders focus on relationship building. They believe in the power of partnership and critical importance of relationship capital or what Stephen Covey calls “the relationship bank account.”

What about you? Do you tend to focus more on the tasks that have to be completed so that faith formation for your parish will happen or do all of the tasks flow out of the strong relationships you’ve built with staff and parishioners?

### 2. Believe in the Other Person

When you truly admire people, not only do they like you more, but they’re also motivated to do their very best.

*'At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel.'*  
– Maya Angelou

When it comes to relationship building, your belief in another person may be the very catalyst he or she needs to become one of your best teammates/volunteers/family catechists.

### 3. Be a Giver

Be kind without expecting kindness. Be a giver because it’s the right thing to do, not necessarily the easy thing to do. And one of the best things you can give is **time**.

Exceptional relationship building takes time. It takes time to have a real conversation and listen intently.

Do other people see you as a generous giver? It will make all the difference in your relationships.

### 4. Be Appreciative

Exceptional relationship building means recognizing that everyone has qualities that can be appreciated. An old Arabic saying states that a real partner is one who blows the chaff away and nourishes the seed which remains.

Everyone has some chaff or some unlikable qualities. They’re not hard to see. But when you are appreciative, you overlook the unlikable qualities — if possible and if appropriate — and recognize the good things about the person.

## 5. Be Real

Say what you mean and mean what you say. Be yourself. Be authentic. Nothing gets in the way of relationship building quicker than phoniness.

You've got to walk your talk. Before we can load others up with everything they need to do to be a faithful person, we have to be people of prayer and meditation, have opened ourselves to encounters with Jesus, become aware of our own sinfulness and goodness, received the Sacraments, and be working toward becoming a humble servant leader.

## 6. Engage in Deeper Conversations

Go beyond superficial talk to occasional disclosure.

Humorist Robert Orben learned that when his son came home from college for the holidays. He asked his son, *"How are things going?"* His son said, *"Good."* Robert said, *"How's the food?"* He said, *"Good."* Robert asked, *"And the dormitory?"* Again he said, *"Good."*

Robert commented, *"They've always had a strong basketball team. How do you think they'll do this year?"* He said, *"Good."* Robert asked, *"How are your studies going?"* He said, *"Good."* Robert said, *"Have you decided on a major yet?"* He said, *"Yes."* Robert said, *"What is it?"* He said, *"Communications."*

It's certainly okay to talk on a factual level, to talk about the weather, the football game, the faith formation program. And it's okay to talk on an opinion level, telling your catechists, *"I think that is a good idea,"* or telling your parents, *"I believe we have a good plan for the fall that won't be too taxing for you."*

Here are some examples:

- Share the story of your faith journey (stories help express our desires)
- Take the time to listen to others' faith stories
- Ask people where they are on their faith journey and how you can help them move forward?

When you share your feelings, people can identify with you. They think, *"Yes, I've been there. I know what that feels like. You're like me."* And people are more inclined to cooperate with and fully participate with those who feel some of the same things they do.

## 7. Go Beyond Politeness to Helpfulness

It's polite when you send a note of thanks to your catechists and praise your coworkers. It's polite when send flowers and cards that recognize special occasions, such as a ten-year work anniversary or ten years of a parishioner serving as a catechist. It's polite when you take a few minutes to listen to your coworker. All those things help you build a spirit of teamwork.

But if you really want to build stronger partnerships, go beyond politeness to helpfulness. Think about what you can do to really help the other person, and then do it.

Here are some examples:

- Offer genuine and concrete ways in which you can be of assistance.
- Express five (5) things that you appreciate about the other.
- Offer encouragement to the other
  - Send an email, text message, phone call of words of affirmation, or offer a spiritual resource that can help the other grow. Express how each person valued, especially where they are on their journey.