

LifeMaking Guide: Easy Read Companion

Simple ways to build connection and belonging

Why We Created This Guide

We learned something important from people with developmental disabilities and their families:

Having a disability is not the only thing that can make life hard.

Life is also harder when people are left out, treated differently, or do not have the same opportunities as others.

This guide began with what we learned from people with disabilities, but it is for everyone.

We all need relationships, connection, and a sense that we belong.

And we can all help create places where more people belong—in our families, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, faith communities, clubs, and everyday lives.

We are grateful to people with disabilities and their families for helping show us the way.

LifeMaking is about bringing people together.

We all need to belong.

We need people who:

- know us
- welcome us
- care about us
- notice what we are good at
- want to spend time with us

LifeMaking is about taking small steps to build those connections.

You do not have to do something big.

Start small. Try something. See what happens.

1. Be Together

Belonging starts when people spend time together.

We build relationships by doing things together.

You could:

- share a meal
- take a walk
- work on a project
- play a game
- listen to music
- go somewhere together
- invite someone to join you

Sometimes it can feel hard to invite someone.

They may say no.

That is okay.

You can try again or invite someone else.

Try this

Think of one person you would like to know better.

What is one thing you could invite them to do with you?

2. Turn Toward Gifts

Everyone has something to offer.

Sometimes people focus on what someone needs help with.

LifeMaking asks us to also notice their gifts.

A gift can be something you are good at.

It can also be something you know, love, or care about.

Your gifts might include:

- cooking
- fixing things
- making people laugh
- knowing about music
- caring for animals
- telling stories
- helping others
- knowing your neighborhood

You do not have to be the best at something for it to be a gift.

Your gifts are part of who you are.

When people share their gifts, everyone benefits.

Try this

Think of someone you know.

What is one gift you see in them?

Tell them.

Then ask yourself:

What is one gift I can share with other people?

3. Invest in Rhythms

Relationships grow when we keep showing up.

Doing something once can be fun.

Doing it again and again can help people become closer.

LifeMaking calls these repeated moments **rhythms**.

A rhythm could be:

- coffee every Friday
- a monthly dinner
- a weekly walk
- an annual block party
- a regular game night
- meeting at the park
- a holiday tradition

Rhythms do not have to be fancy.

They just need to happen again.

People begin to know what to expect.

They see the same people.

They share stories.

They build trust.

Try this

Think of something you already enjoy doing.

Could you do it regularly with other people?

Keep it easy.

Keep showing up.

Let connection grow.

4. Create Sensory-Rich Memories

Some moments stay with us.

We remember how they looked, sounded, smelled, tasted, or felt.

Think about:

- the smell of food cooking
- a favorite song
- holiday lights
- laughing with friends
- a warm hug
- popcorn at a movie
- flowers in spring

Our senses can help turn an ordinary moment into a special memory.

You do not need to plan a big event.

Small details matter.

Add:

- music
- food
- lights
- flowers
- decorations
- something to touch or make

Try this

Think about something you are doing with other people this week.

What could you add to make the moment special?

Start Making Life

LifeMaking is not a program.

It is something **all of us can do**.

Remember these four ideas:

Be Together

Spend time with people.

Turn Toward Gifts

Notice what people have to offer.

Invest in Rhythms

Do things together again and again.

Create Sensory-Rich Memories

Make moments people will remember.

You do not have to do all four today.

Choose **one small thing**.

Do it with someone else.

Then do another.

Small moments can grow into relationships.

Relationships can grow into belonging.

And belonging can change a life.

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