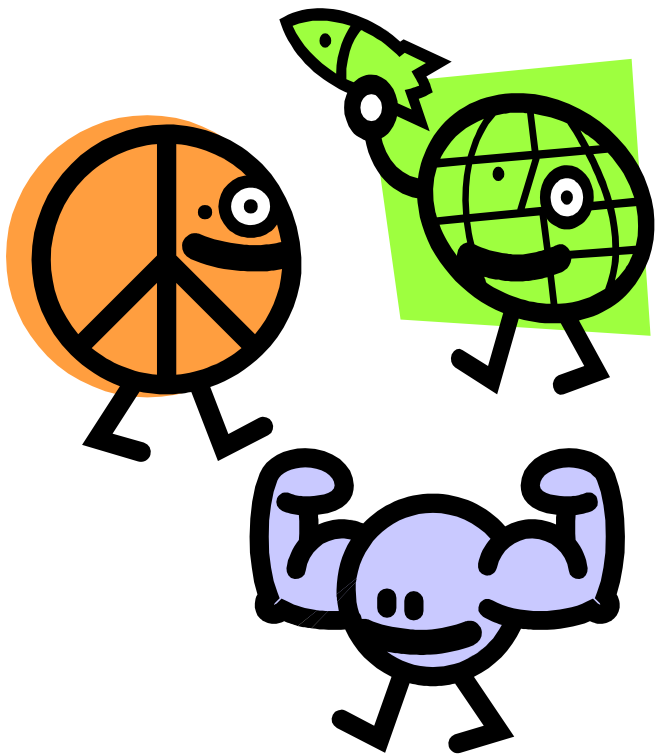


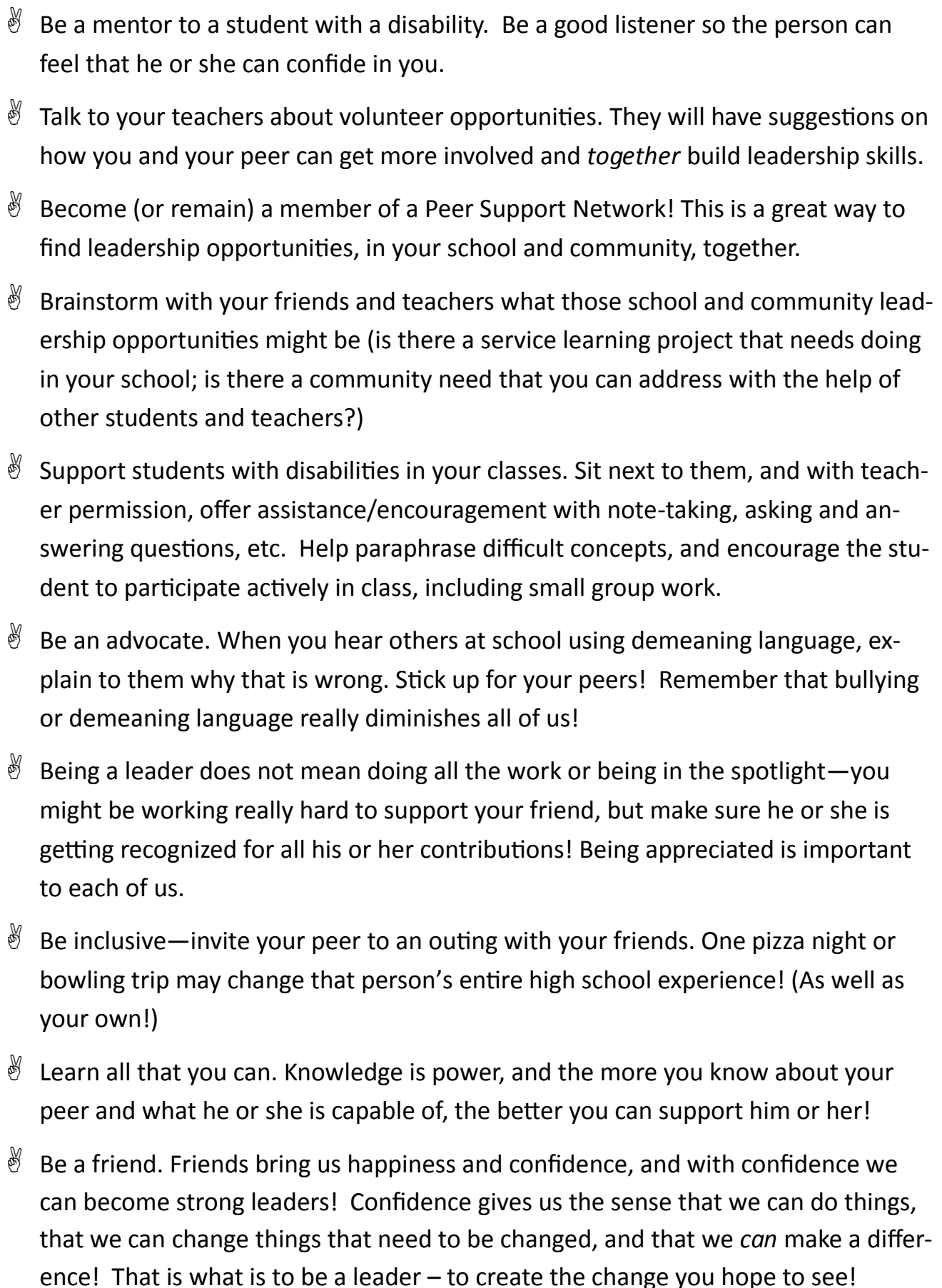










For Peers Providing Support!



As a member of a Peer Support Network, helping your partner with a disability develop his or her leadership skills is something you can do. Everyone wants to grow socially and become more self-determined, and leadership skills can play a big part in that! Helping your partner develop his or her leadership skills will also improve your *own* leadership. It can give you a sense of satisfaction that you helped someone gain a stronger voice in his or her own life.

You will learn more from your teachers about how to support your partner and help him or her make new friends beyond your own network. Here are some tips you can use to help your partner build leadership skills (Carter et al., 2010):



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-  Be a mentor to a student with a disability. Be a good listener so the person can feel that he or she can confide in you.
 -  Talk to your teachers about volunteer opportunities. They will have suggestions on how you and your peer can get more involved and *together* build leadership skills.
 -  Become (or remain) a member of a Peer Support Network! This is a great way to find leadership opportunities, in your school and community, together.
 -  Brainstorm with your friends and teachers what those school and community leadership opportunities might be (is there a service learning project that needs doing in your school; is there a community need that you can address with the help of other students and teachers?)
 -  Support students with disabilities in your classes. Sit next to them, and with teacher permission, offer assistance/encouragement with note-taking, asking and answering questions, etc. Help paraphrase difficult concepts, and encourage the student to participate actively in class, including small group work.
 -  Be an advocate. When you hear others at school using demeaning language, explain to them why that is wrong. Stick up for your peers! Remember that bullying or demeaning language really diminishes all of us!
 -  Being a leader does not mean doing all the work or being in the spotlight—you might be working really hard to support your friend, but make sure he or she is getting recognized for all his or her contributions! Being appreciated is important to each of us.
 -  Be inclusive—invite your peer to an outing with your friends. One pizza night or bowling trip may change that person’s entire high school experience! (As well as your own!)
 -  Learn all that you can. Knowledge is power, and the more you know about your peer and what he or she is capable of, the better you can support him or her!
 -  Be a friend. Friends bring us happiness and confidence, and with confidence we can become strong leaders! Confidence gives us the sense that we can do things, that we can change things that need to be changed, and that we *can* make a difference! That is what is to be a leader – to create the change you hope to see!

Here are some activities to help you and your peers build leadership skills!



Activity 1:

Think of your own leadership skills. What are you really good at that can make a difference for others? Now think of your partner with a disability - what he is or she really good at that could make a difference? How can you apply those skills *together*?

Discuss these questions with one another. Then write a short reflection about what you learned about each other and how you can use your strengths to help others. Each of you should write your own reflection (and you can also help each other write your own reflections)!

Activity 2:

If you are providing support, invite a peer in your network to attend a school event with you. You can go to a basketball game, a play, even just a meeting of a club you are involved in! If you invite your peer to a club meeting, encourage him or her to join the club after he or she has become more familiar with what the club does. If your friend seems uninterested in that club (and we all have things that interest us and don't interest us!), offer to attend some other club meeting together, so you both can figure out what fits best with your peer's interests. Involvement builds opportunities for leadership (like becoming a club officer!) and ultimately can help build self-determination, leading to a more fulfilling and independent life. Write a short reflection about your experience, and what you learned.



Want to Learn More about Supporting Leadership and Inclusion?

Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign: www.r-word.org

National Youth Leadership Council: <http://www.nylc.org>

National Inclusion Project: <http://www.inclusionproject.org>

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