



Tools to Succeed – Networking

The premise of networking is to recognize that meeting our needs, whether at work or in our personal lives, is a lot easier when we realize that we don't have to go it alone. A student that is struggling with a class might do well to discuss her/his concerns with the teacher, form a study group, or ask for help from others (parents, other teachers, guidance counselor or dean, siblings etc.) The more people that we ask, the more likely we are to find someone who can truly help and give us the support that we need. The person who never asks will suffer in silence, alone.

The same is true in other areas of our lives. If I want to get a job, I know that filling out an application is only one option--and it often won't get me the best jobs. If I want to work at the best place in town, I need to find out what my "connections" are--who already works there, who knows the boss, who can give me leads on the openings before they've been posted, etc. To make those connections, I need to ask my contacts if they have contacts--the idea that we're all connected to one another if we just find the right route.

A couple of exercises to demonstrate--

1. Ask if anyone would like to get to know Michael Jordan (Tiger Woods, Brittany Spears, or some other famous person). Does anyone in the room know them? Does anyone have a connection to someone who works in the sports or music industry? Does anyone know anyone who is "famous" or "connected?" If not, how would we start to establish those relationships?
2. Ask about a current problem (job, school, whatever). How can relationships with other people help you to overcome that problem (or meet any life goal)?
3. I buy a spider web at Halloween time. Have everyone in the room grab a corner of it and see how far they can stretch it. Pull the web until every person is somehow touching it. This demonstrates that we are all connected, all a part of the same "web." We may not always be in a direct line, but if we work with the maze, we can find our way to the person on the other side.