

## Being a Book in the Human Library – Some Useful Tips

**Prepare yourself for being a Book** by going to an organiser's briefing and by reading through this handout. If you have any questions about the event, please contact Judy Schewe [jschewe@libraryweb.org](mailto:jschewe@libraryweb.org) or call (585)428-8384.

- ✓ Find a comfortable place for the borrowing discussion when someone borrows you.
- ✓ **Check your watch:** you have a limited amount of time together. If the borrowing situation requires more time you should turn to the librarians to extend the loan.
- ✓ **Be yourself.** Be honest and open; listen carefully to the reader.
- ✓ Do not play a role or overdramatize; the most important thing is just to be you.
- ✓ Be ready to share your personal experiences. If questions become too intimate, **you do not have to answer.**
- ✓ You should adjust yourself to the fact that your reader may have borrowed you only because they were interested in your Book title in general; additional information is mainly meant to illustrate things. This might give you the feeling that your life and personality are being simplified, but this is normal in the Human Library context.
- ✓ **Be prepared to repeat yourself again and again,** since different readers might ask the same questions. Try to treat each discussion as a unique chance for each reader to learn about you and your Book title. Try not to show that you are answering the same questions for the 4th time.
- ✓ Remember that you will spend approximately **30 minutes** with each reader and that you might never meet them again.
- ✓ Every reader is different, and the reasons for choosing specifically your Book can vary greatly. A good question to start the discussion with is **'Why did you choose me for a Book?'** This will give you an idea of the reader's interests.
- ✓ In general, the readers of the Human Library are prepared to talk, listen and learn. Their questions are not always very straightforward, so it is important to help them clarify their thoughts and make their point clear. **Find out some basic information about the readers** – have they met someone like you before? Have they had good or bad experiences with a person like you? These questions might make it easier for you to decide what kind of information they might find interesting.
- ✓ **If the reader begins to speak or act aggressively** or, for example, blames you for social problems or conditions, **always remain calm** and express your disagreement when

necessary. Try to redirect the conversation towards more neutral topics. If a reader insults you or makes you feel uneasy, remember the rules of the Human Library: **you have the right to end the discussion if you feel insulted or accused of something.**

- ✓ Although the librarians have encouraged the readers to choose a Book that represents their stereotypes and prejudices, the reasons for a reader to borrow you may be different; the readers may be curious or looking for personal advice. Remember that in the end, the **readers have to make their life decisions themselves**; you can share your own experiences of solving problems or tackling difficult situations, but **be careful in giving advice.**
- ✓ The discussions between a Book and a reader are, in principle, **confidential**. If you quote other readers, do not mention their names.
- ✓ **Ask for a break if you need to rest**, especially after a difficult borrowing situation. It is important to remain relaxed and open for discussion also with the rest of the readers.
- ✓ During the breaks you can discuss your experiences of being a Book with other Books of the Human Library.
- ✓ If your Book becomes a bestseller, remember to take short breaks and decide how many readers can participate in one borrowing situation.
- ✓ If your Book is not so popular, try to make the best use of the time in the Library by talking with the other Books.

**Enjoy being a Book! With the right approach, this can be an interesting and enriching experience for both you as a Book and all your readers!**