

Topic: Housing

Activity: Asking a Neighbor for Help: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Objective

- ✓ Participants will become more comfortable asking for help for small favors
- ✓ Participants will consider who they could ask for help

Lesson Time

25 minutes

Materials

- Critical incident (included)
- Optional: Flipchart paper, markers, tape

Introduction

In general, Americans respect people who ask questions. They believe asking questions shows that you are trying to learn and understand, and most people are happy to give advice and do small favors for those who ask. Newcomers, however, may be reluctant to ask strangers for assistance due to language or cultural barriers. They may also be unsure who to ask or be overly trusting of strangers.

Practice

(Note: Feel free to change names to reflect your participants.)

1. Put participants into small groups of 2-4 and ask each group to choose a spokesperson.
2. Read “Asking a Neighbor for Help: A Critical Incident for Refugees” aloud, pausing after each set of reflection questions.
3. In small groups, participants discuss the reflection questions. Listen in on the discussions to check for understanding.
4. After the last set of reflection questions, bring the large group together and ask the spokesperson from each group to summarize the main ideas from their group discussions. Discuss as necessary.

Reflection Questions

- What happened in this critical incident?
- Who helped Indra?
- Would you prefer to ask a male or female neighbor for help? Why?
- How do you feel about asking a neighbor for help?
- Who could you ask for help?

Variations

- Give flipchart paper to each small group and have groups draw and present the highlights of their discussion.
- If literacy levels allow, prepare flipchart paper with reflection questions for each small group and have groups write and present their answers.

Asking a Neighbor for Help: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Indra* is a woman who arrived in the United States two months ago. One day the front burner on her gas stove stops working and she cannot use it to cook. No matter what she does, she cannot make the burner hot. Indra calls her landlord for help, but he does not answer his phone. After one day, he still has not called back.

Stop and reflect:

- What is the problem?
- What are Indra's options?
- Who can Indra ask for help?

Indra knows a woman lives in the apartment next door, so Indra decides to ask her for help. When Indra knocks on her neighbor's door, however, a young man answers the door. He says he is the son of the female neighbor. Indra is not sure if it is a good idea to let him into her apartment while she is alone.

Stop and reflect:

- Why is Indra unsure about asking the young man for help?
- What would you do if you were Indra?

Indra decides to go back to her apartment and wait for her teenage son to come home from school. When he arrives, they go to the neighbor's apartment together and point to the stove, asking for help. The young man comes to Indra's apartment and sees that the pilot light has gone out on that burner on her gas stove. He brings a match from his apartment and shows Indra how to re-light the pilot light on the burner. He seems happy to help Indra.

The next day, Indra cooks food and brings it to her neighbor's apartment to say thank you. Her female neighbor and her son are both there, and they are very friendly. Now Indra knows she can ask them for help in the future and hopefully become friends.

Stop and reflect:

- Why did Indra wait for her son to come home?
- Who helped Indra?
- Would you prefer to ask a male or female neighbor for help? Why?
- How do you feel about asking a neighbor for help?
- Who could you ask for help?