

BEING A "BOOK" IN THE LIVING LIBRARY – SOME USEFUL HINTS

- Prepare yourself for your role of being a Book. It can help to have some factual information on hand, such as statistics or research data relative to your "title," in order to answer some of your readers' questions. Or a list of stories that you might want to tell at some point in the conversation. You may wish to bring some small props that relate to your "title."
- Check your watch: you have a limited amount of time together. If the reader wants to spend more time with you, and if you also want to, you should contact a librarian about extending the loan.
- Be yourself; be honest and open to talk and listen carefully. Keep a sense of humor.
- Be ready to share your reflected personal experience. If questions become too intimate, feel free to say that you are uncomfortable with a particular question or line of questioning.
- Accept that your reader borrowed your book title and is interested in that dimension of your personality. This might give you the feeling that you are somewhat limited, but this is normal in the context of the Living Library. Resist the temptation to become an "activist" for your viewpoint or lifestyle choice.
- Be prepared to repeat yourself again and again, as different readers might pose the same questions. Try to treat your reader as if they are the first person you are giving this information to. Try not to show that you are answering the same question for the 4th time.
- Every reader borrowing you will be different, and the reason for choosing your book can vary greatly. A good question to start the discussion is 'Why did you choose my book?' This will give you a first impression of the reader's interest.
- Readers of the Living Library are, in general, ready to talk, to listen and to learn. However, their questions may not always be very clear, so it's important to help readers formulate their interest in your book. Try to get some basic information about the reader – Have they met someone like you before? Did they have good or bad experiences with a person like you? – as this will help you to decide on the kind of information they might find interesting.
- If you do not quite understand a question you are being asked, be sure and ask the reader to repeat or rephrase it. If closed questions are asked (that can just be answered "yes" or "no"), try to expand your answer with an example or story.
- It may turn out that a reader for some reason becomes argumentative and/or attempts to hold you responsible for a variety of social problems. Try to remain calm and show understanding, while expressing your disagreement where necessary. Try to move the discussion on to an area in which you feel safe. If you need help, contact a librarian.
- A reader may select your title in order to obtain personal advice. Remember 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 content of the discussion with your readers is, in principle, confidential. If you quote from other readers, do not mention their names.
- It may happen that you are borrowed by two or more people. This can be interesting, as the discussion is more varied. However, be aware not to let yourself be used for sorting out problems between different members of a group.
- Ask for a break if you feel you need a rest, particularly after a difficult discussion with a reader. It is important for you and the next reader that you are a relaxed discussion partner.
- Use your breaks to exchange your experiences as a Book with other Books in the Living Library.
- If you feel uneasy with by a reader, remember that you have the right to end the discussion. Contact a librarian if you need help.
- Most importantly - Enjoy being a Book! It can be a very interesting and enriching experience for both you and your readers.