

Sponsor a refugee and Person Centred Planning

By Timothy Cox

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Introduction

Carl Rogers said, the good life is a direction not a destination. Person Centred Planning is a process which helps people to identify what direction the good life is for them. The following chapter is written to help someone new to person centred planning to:

- Understand what Person Centred Planning is
- Understand why using the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) framework can help people to plan towards complex long term goals?
- Prepare for holding a PATH meeting
- Understand what skills will be required to take part in a PATH meeting
- Consider what sort of environment would support the process

It will then discuss the purpose of each stage of the PATH Process, what to expect and suggest some questions which might stimulate helpful conversations and planning.

What is Person Centred Planning?

As the name suggests, Person Centred Planning tools are designed to put the person at the centre of the planning

process. It is therefore a process of constant learning and listening. Helen Sanderson (2000) identified key features of Person-Centred Planning as:

- 1) The person is at the centre
- 2) Family members and friends are partners in planning
- 3) The plan reflects what is important to the person, their capacities, and what support they require.
- 4) The plan results in actions that are about life, not just services, and reflect what is possible, not just what is available.
- 5) The plan results in ongoing listening, learning, and further action.

Person Centred Planning helps people or groups to set their own goals and plan how to achieve them. Person Centred Planning tools can help teams hoping to help refugees settle in their local area to set goals together with the families or individuals concerned and think creatively about how they can help them to try and achieve those goals.

Person-Centred Planning can be used at any point of the Community Refugees Sponsorship process whether you are just starting out or the family has arrived in your community. Using tools like this makes it less likely that organisers will make damaging and culturally insensitive assumptions about what the needs and goals of refugees would be when they reach your community. The aim, whichever point that you choose to use it, is to get everyone moving in the same direction.

This may help develop helping relationships between community volunteers as a team and refugee families. The three core values required in helping

relationships (as suggested by Carl Rogers (Rogers 2013)) are: congruence (honesty and being genuine with each other), empathy (being able to understand how another person feels) and respect (unconditional positive regard and acceptance). Developing relationships with these features is likely to encourage and strengthen social bridges, bonds and links between community organisers and refugee families.

Why would we use the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) framework?

The Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) framework (Forest and O'Brien 1993) is a person-centred planning tool that I use regularly in my psychological practice. There are lots of different types of person-centred planning tools and a significant literature which you can draw upon if you would like. I think that PATHs are well suited to the needs of communities looking to help refugees integrate into their community as;

- 1) Hope focused - It places the hopes, needs and goals of the family at the centre of a plan
- 2) Easy to review - It has three opportunities to review your progress towards goals built into the framework.
- 3) Promotes agency and cooperation - It is designed to help individuals/families to feel capable to make changes and helps to form teams, with clear roles.
- 4) Deepens understanding and prompts action - The framework helps communities to understand the family's current situation and the action that is required to better their experiences. It can

also help the team to avoid what could be intrusive or insensitive by guiding them to specific, helpful roles.

- 5) Accessible and Flexible - You can condense the plan to one visual accessible page which can be shared with family members, supportive professionals and new team members. This allows the family to check regularly on their progress, remember why goals were set and identify what has worked.

The aim of the framework is to make fulfilling the hopes of an individual or family a habit of the community rather than an obligation of an individual.

The PATH framework is a framework for helping individuals, families and teams to set and achieve goals, which are complex and require sustained effort over a long period of time. The framework has eight stages which help people to think about what they would like to achieve and how they can plan action to achieve this. It is by design not a 'quick fix' and shouldn't be treated as such. It will, however, help you to decide how to approach and break complex challenges into manageable chunks, whilst keeping the needs of the family at the centre of your thoughts and action.

The framework was developed by psychologists in New Zealand who have used it to promote psychological wellbeing within Maori communities. It is an approach which reflects the importance of the community in aiding individuals in achieving their goals and wellbeing. It draws upon the idea that 'it takes a village to raise a child'. This approach seems well suited to

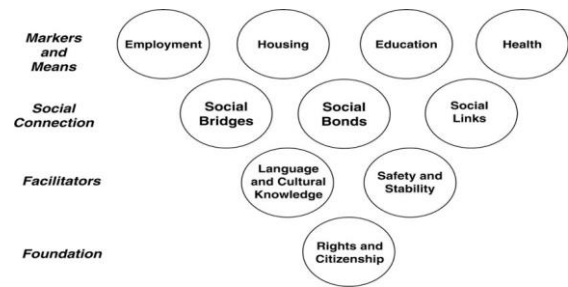
communities who are involved in sponsoring refugee families.

Understanding Integration

Refugees are often the subject of press coverage. This press coverage is widespread and is often not particularly positive. It can be a divisive issue and volunteers who are helping are unlikely to come to that role without having heard lots of stories about refugees and where they come from. The problem with this is that these stories often mean that we form assumptions about the needs and motivations of refugees.

A common narrative about refugees is that they come from war zones or natural disasters so must be traumatised. Therefore planning to help these people should focus on meeting their health needs first and foremost. This is well meaning but often misguided. Refugees are resilient people by definition and are looking to integrate in a new safer community.

Ager and Strang (2008) have proposed a framework which helps us to understand what refugees may need to help them integrate into a new community. Often people think that **Markers and Means** of integration, that is, **employment, housing, education and health** are the most important things to focus on. The framework (below) helps us to understand that there are things that may help integration before we focus solely on Markers and Means.



They argue that **Rights and Citizenship** are foundational to integration and should be sorted first. This should be sorted by the time a refugee arrives in your community but it's always useful to brush up on what rights and responsibilities go with this.

Ager and Strang argue that facilitators which help refugees to settle in their communities, these include **language and cultural knowledge**, and **safety and stability**. Do the family you are trying help have access to people who can help them understand UK culture and the English language? Do they feel safe and stable?

The next level of integration is proposed to be social connection. This includes **social bonds** – which are social connection to people who share a similar background to yourself. They may share ethnicity, faith, language, work place or experience with you. Social bridges are connection with people in your community who do not share a bond with you. They come from a different group. This could come through a shared interest like sport, religion, music or volunteering. This is most probably where Sponsor refugees volunteers would come in!

Social links are links between groups and individuals and institutions. This could be access to health, legal or welfare services.

This framework can help teams supporting to support refugees to integrate in a holistic manner and can

guide planning meetings if you are stuck with where to start!

I think it's good if you let the people who you think may benefit from the tool, that you have been thinking about their challenges and you have something that you think may help them to plan a clearer path to their goals. I would also point out that the tool will help the team around the family to know what to do to help.

Preparing for a PATH

Before using the framework, it is important to prepare for the session. The next section will discuss:

- For whom and when is PATH appropriate?
- Attendees: who it is useful to invite
- Time: how much time is required?
- Environment: what kind of space is best to hold a meeting?
- Roles: who needs to do what?

Identify who (and when) someone might find this helpful?

First of all, you have to have identified an individual, family or team who would like help in identifying goals and working towards them.

It is really important that this tool is not imposed on anyone before they are ready or before they understand how it could help them. Remember, people tend to be the experts in their own lives and don't tend to respond well to people telling them how, when and why they think they should change. Person Centred Planning is about the individual's goals and agency rather than what other people think they could or should be doing.

Who should we invite?

Lots of people may find the process of constructing a PATH really interesting and insightful. This doesn't mean you have to have everyone in your community or team present at a planning session. Think about who should be there, rather than who could be there.

It is important to ask the family who they would like there. This can give you a clear indication of who the family already has bonds with and is starting to develop a useful working relationship with. Remember, as Sanderson pointed out, family members and friends are partners in planning. These could be members of their religious community, friends, extended family members, community leaders or simply someone who understands their background and speaks their language. On that note, it is obviously important to have a translator present if required.

Do not over-ride or over-rule the invitation process. There will be an opportunity to discuss who else can help the family within the framework, so we don't need every man and his dog present, 'just in case'. Sensitive information or cultural differences may emerge during a person-centred planning meeting so it's important that the family always feel safe.

If you do feel strongly that certain people from outside the family's network need to be present at a planning meeting, I think it's good to have criteria as to why they would attend. The criteria could be as follows:

- 1) It is clear to the family why the person has been asked to attend the meeting
- 2) The person is going to be helpful in the meeting and beyond
- 3) The person has shown an interest in and understanding of the family's situation. This interest is clearly well meaning and genuine.

Be honest with yourself and the family about who invite and these criteria. You can always invite people in or show them the plan (with the family's permission) at a later date.

Now you have an idea of who the family would like to attend, it's time to organise a time and place.

How much time will we need?

You will require at least an hour and a half to work through the eight stages, so I would suggest that teams set aside two hours in their diary, to make sure things don't feel too rushed. Alternatively, you can complete a PATH over two sessions, but I find that it works more slickly if you get it done in one go.

What kind of space do we need?

Anywhere that is safe, comfortable, has tea and biscuits and can accommodate the family and the co-planners and ongoing discussions, should be okay. I have observed and facilitated PATHs in:

- Conference Centres

- School halls
- Church Halls
- Meeting rooms
- Cafes
- Living rooms

You need to consider how many people will be taking part and how you want to facilitate a PATH.

I have observed some amazing PATHs drawn on huge bits of wallpaper (not attached to the wall) which are beautifully drawn and illustrated as the plan is being constructed. This method is wonderfully person centred when everybody has a pen or pencil and can contribute to each section through writing or drawing. You can end up with a beautiful piece of art about the person or family **and** a plan they feel that they have been at the centre of. If you are going to follow this way of facilitating a PATH it can be incredibly powerful to take a picture of the family/person and their team in front of it. Of course, this approach is skill, time and space dependent. There are other ways which are more accessible, pragmatic and simple for people, like me, who never achieved more than a 'D' in Art at school.

I tend to arrive at meetings with an outline of the PATH that I, in the style of Blue Peter, made earlier on a piece of A3 or flipchart paper. I either put that on the wall, so that everyone can see or make a point of checking with the planners how the PATH looks at the end of each section. Whatever way that you decide to facilitate a PATH, it is the understanding, action and person centredness brought about by the plan that make it valuable, rather than what it looks like. Make sure you find a venue which supports and enables this venture.

Who needs to do what?

Planners

There are roles that everyone should be prepared to fulfil when they attend a person-centred planning meeting. It is a good idea to make these expectations explicit at the beginning of the meeting, rather than assume that everyone will be on the same page. Person centred planning requires people to think in a specific way which might be different from how they are used to thinking or problem solving. I tend to think about Helen Sanderson's key features of Person-Centred Planning (see page 1) to guide people and myself to thinking in a person-centred way. I introduce planning meetings by asking people to keep the following questions in mind throughout the meeting:

- 1) Is the person or family at the centre of our thinking and planning?
- 2) Are family members, friends and planners being respected as partners in this process?
- 3) Does the plan reflect what is important to the person/family, their capacities, and what support they require?
- 4) Does the plan results in actions that are about life? Does this reflect what is possible, not just what is available?
- 5) Are we committed to ongoing listening, learning, and further action should it be required?

It would be a good idea to take 5-10 minutes to explore these questions as a kind of ground rule. Once an understanding has been reached it would be a good idea to display these questions where everybody can see. It might be

powerful to get people to sign their name to these questions. This symbolises that everybody has come to lend their expertise to helping the family to work towards their goals and it is the family that is at the centre. They can be used as something to refer back to as planning develops to check the plan is person centred.

It is also use remembering that helpful relationships involve three key features;

- Being empathic - being able to understand how another person feels
- Being congruent - honesty and being genuine with each other
- Being respectful - Having unconditional positive regard and acceptance for the people you are working with

It is important that as planners you try to embody each of these traits during and after the meeting.

Active Listening

A key skill for anyone involved in Person Centred Planning is active listening (Rogers and Farson 1957). Active listening is skills that means you listen for what someone is actually saying. Active listening applies not only to the family that you are helping, but to each other too.

Active Listening requires five techniques:

1. Pay attention – be aware of their body language and ignore any distractions
2. Show that you're listening – this could mean nodding, saying uh-huh, yes or ok from time to time to encourage the speaker to continue.

3. Provide feedback – Ask for clarification on things that you don't understand.
4. Defer judgement – Let people finish and don't speak over them. Remember this is a discussion not a race!
5. Respond appropriately – Be honest, open and kind about someone else's opinion, even if you disagree – you are there to work towards a shared goal. Understanding someone's position is key to successful teamwork.

Facilitator and Scribe

There are specific roles that need to be fulfilled in order to facilitate the PATH process successfully.

A facilitator's role is to move the planning team between the 8 stages of the PATH process; giving each section enough time to evolve in a person-centred manner but not so much time that it impacts on other parts of the plan. The facilitator needs to know and trust the process and be able to ask questions which initiate discussion between the team. They also need to be aware and feel when the discussion could be moved on.

It may be helpful to think of a loose time schedule for each section of the PATH. Remember the plan can always be reviewed and amended at a later date. Remember the plan is to head in the direction of a better life rather than a prefixed destination.

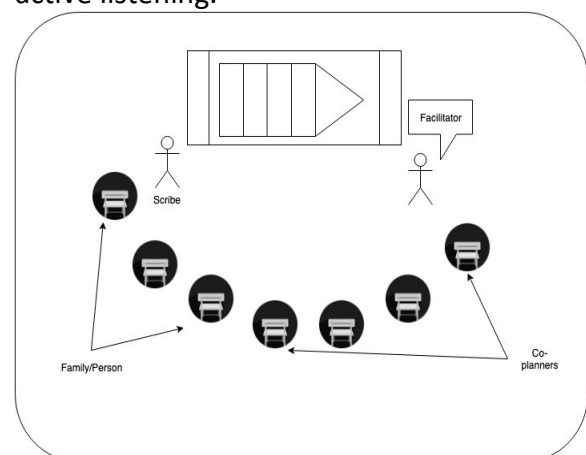
The scribe helps to capture the discussion by illustrating or writing directly into the PATH framework as the team discuss each section of the plan. It's important to keep checking with the team your understanding of what they have said and

what they should write down. The scribe's duties can be dispersed between the whole team of planners, with everyone given a pen to contribute their ideas with. This can be really powerful if everyone is on board with the process but can feel a bit daunting or chaotic if it's your first time. Person Centred Planning is a cyclical process and there may be an opportunity to try out different ways in the future.

Sometimes the facilitator and the scribe are the same person, but I think it's better to disperse the responsibilities between members of the group, unless you have someone in your team who is a veteran Person-centred planner. Active listening is a key feature of both roles

Setting up the room

When you are thinking of the best layout for a room there are a number of factors you could consider for optimal planning. It is important that everyone can see who is talking so that you don't end up with people speaking over each other. A semi-circle of chairs (as pictured below) allows everybody to see each other and helps everyone see who would like to contribute. This room set up encourages active listening.



Part of the facilitator's role is to stay attuned to who would like to contribute to the discussion and give everyone the

chance to contribute, a semi-circle helps the facilitator to achieve this.

The semi-circle formation of chairs with the plan being populated at the front allows people to speak to the plan. This can make difficult conversations easier as they are nested in a planning process rather than being a clash of personalities. It is natural for people to have different opinions in planning meetings. People will also certainly bring different skills and expertise to offer the family to help them reach their goals. Should a disagreement arise or you feel a meeting is going off track, remember the key features of person centred planning on page 1 and refer to them explicitly if needs be.

When I facilitate PATHs I tend to ask the subject of the plan (person or family) to choose where they might like to sit before the other planners come in. If I am using the semi-circle formation, they tend to choose somewhere near the edge of the semi-circle. I think this is because it allows them to see both the plan and the people who have been invited to help them plan, easily. It also means when they are talking that people don't have to crane their necks or turn around to see them. This can reduce the chance of feeling under pressure or anxious because everyone is looking at you. If someone doesn't feel comfortable making eye contact with the group they can always talk to the plan, scribe or facilitator.

The next section of this chapter will help you to understand which order to work through the PATH.

Working through the PATH Stages

When people come together to do planning, they often focus on what is

happening now or challenges first. This can lead to sense of hopelessness before a plan has fully got under way because the plan is not oriented towards something. Plans that start with first steps often miss out the bit where the team understand the person (their hopes and challenges) they are planning for. This type of planning can feel rushed and not connected to anything, other than what is practical at the time.

I have found that the PATH works powerfully with groups to construct a plan which leads to a meaningful understanding of a person's hopes, goals and experiences, and action which is well thought out and effective. PATH is an 8-staged approach to person centred planning. The stages are designed to be discussed in a certain sequence and it is essential that this sequence is adhered to. The staged sequence is as follows:

Stage 1 - Dream
Stage 2 - Goals
Stage 3 – What is happening now?
Stage 4 – Who can help?
Stage 5 – What challenges do we think might get in the way of achieving our goals?
Stage 6 – How do we keep strong in the face of these specific challenges?
Stage 7 – Bold Steps – What will have changed in 6 months?

Stage 8 – First steps –
What will have changed
in 1 month?

Stage 1- Dream

In a PATH process you start by getting an idea of what the team's dream would be for the people involved. This stage provides the meaning for the people involved and frames the meeting in what is possible rather than what is available.

This can be as blue sky as you like but I tend to limit this to what could be achieved in 5 years in a dream scenario. I do this because it encourages people to think about things which are positive and significantly better than they are currently. Where appropriate try and unpack what someone means by a dream statement, unless it's really obvious. For example, someone might say that their dream is that when they are older they would like to become a doctor, so you might want to know how they see themselves getting towards that dream. You could ask questions like:

Do you know how you could become a doctor?

Do you know what qualifications you would need for that?

As statements like this are unpicked you get a rich picture of what someone's dream might be. A rich picture is more likely to resonate with co planners and help them to be imaginative with how they might want to help with them.

It's a good idea to encourage co-planners to contribute to the dream to. This could help everybody feel that they are on the same page and how they can help each

other. For example, a community refugee sponsorship team may meet with a refugee family to help a plan to integrate in their local community. The family is likely to have specific dreams which relate to their personal circumstance. It could be by helping the family achieve their goals, that the sponsorship team can be helped to achieve its dream of learning about another culture, preparing to sponsor another family, inspiring another team etc.

It is a good idea to draw upon how things are currently, so that you get an idea of what priorities are. Sometimes, people can become fixated on what is happening now and start 'problem talk straight away. It is important in this instance that you keep people focussed on the dream and remind them there will be an opportunity to discuss this in stage 3 and 5.

Possible questions you could ask in the dream stage:

What would you like your life to be like in 'x' years?

In a dream scenario, what would you like to achieve in your life?

What would this look like?

In the dream scenario what would you like for work or school?

Where would you live?

How would you feel about your life?

What kind of friendship group would you have? What would you do for fun?

I don't tend to stick rigidly to these questions but they are a good guide. As a facilitator I would stay alert to changes in

body language and facial expressions which might tell me someone is excited or interested in something

Stage 2 – Setting goals for one year's time

The next stage is to think about goals to set for the long term. I think that you should probably aim for a maximum of 4 goals for the team to work towards. I would also suggest that the time period is set for a year's time, unless there is a good reason for it to be shorter.

These are different from what is discussed in the dream stage, in that these goals need to be SMART (Doran 1981). That is:

S: Specific – What precisely are you aiming to do?

M: Measurable - How will you know?

A: Achievable – It's realistic given the resources you have at your disposal?

R: Relevant – Is it relevant to the dream of the person or the family? (If not the goal isn't going to be meaningful)

T: Timed – Are you going to be able to achieve this in a set amount of time. I usually aim for a year.

In this section planners should focus on prioritising parts of the dream which they think are most pressing or desirable. You should allow space for thinking and dialogue around what these could be. Remember, person centred planning should reflect on what is possible rather than just what is available. Planners may want to score some quick and easy wins – and that's great but this particular section is about setting meaningful and challenging goals, which we take concerted effort to achieve. There will be time for pragmatism and practicality in sections 7 and 8.

Stage 3 – What is happening now (in relation to your goals)?

This stage needs careful facilitation. Having just spoken at length about the teams dream and goals the mood could be positive and hopeful. However, this can be the first time where you may confront discomfort and a sense of feeling stuck, as a team. It can be that planners are desperate to unload their anxieties about all the stress that's going on in their life, community, town, country or even the world. If conversation does go this way remember your active listening skills (see page 4). This will help you understand someone's position in life and have empathy with them. If the conversation becomes solely problem focussed its worth pointing out that you will have the opportunity to explore this more in stage 5.

Without dismissing people's concerns it is a good idea to ask what is happening right now in relation to each of the goals. Once each goal has been discussed it is a good idea to ask how confident they feel about they are feeling about achieving the goal over the next year. I tend to use scaling to do this. I ask:

'On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means you have no confidence/hope that you will achieve this goal in the next year and 10 means that you have as much hope as you can of achieving this goal in the next year' (and this next clause is really important) – '**as things stand**, how confident or hopeful to do you feel about this goal?'

The scaling exercise will give you an idea how a person perceives that goal and help you to identify where someone might need more help to achieve or make progress towards the goal. If it is unclear why they have scaled a goal in a particular

way it's worth taking sometime to understand why they feel that way.

It is important that the scribe records what is relevant at this stage, so it's well worth checking in with the scribe every so often to check if they've got everything they need and they can ask the family/person who is the focus of the planning to clarify what they would like recorded at this stage. This is one of the skills needed for active listening. It can be useful in helping to bring people back together and focusing on the task at hand.

Stage 4 – Who can help?

This stage and the discussion can be very powerful and can make people realise who is in their helping team and what specifically they can do to help them. Remember the PATH framework is designed to reflect and support the notion that 'it takes a village to raise a child'.

It's a good idea to start this stage by asking the family or individual what they think they could do for themselves to progress towards their goal. This allows the person or family to feel in control and agents and authors of their own success. This means you don't get well-meaning helpers being overbearing in their helpfulness. It frees up the helpers to do other specific jobs.

In this section I always record who can help, what their job/role is and how exactly that helps. Let's say a family's goal was to make sure that the family was healthy in a year's times. You could split the roles as such:

The family – monitoring their own health, making sure that their diet is healthy, exploring sport and leisure activities and

registering with a local GP and dentist, attending appointments.

Volunteers – Provide transport and support in medical appointments, supporting with childcare if appointments for adults, providing the family with information about health and transport services in the local area, Informal ESOL sessions to help family develop independence around making healthy decisions and arranging and attending appointments.

Doctor – a doctor will help to monitor the development of the children and prescribe treatment or medicine should someone become ill or injured.

Dentist – Dental check-ups at regular intervals for the children and adults.

This approach may seem rigorous but it does allow the team to think about the actions they can take towards the goal. If it is not obvious who could help it would be a useful action for the team to investigate it further (this would usually go in the first steps – stage 8). Knowing who could help is progress in itself. This is what positive psychologists call 'pathway thinking'.

Stage 5 – What challenges do we think might get in the way of achieving our goals?

So having considered who can help its time to think about what challenges you predict will inhibit your progress over the next year. Open the floor for this discussion and actively listen to people's point of view. The facilitator should listen for themes that keep coming up. Example of this could be:

- When communication breaks down

- Racism and discrimination
- Transport issues
- Budgeting

If a challenge comes up which you would need extra help with, identify together who you think could help and add them to your list for 'Who can help?'

Stage 6 – How do we keep strong in the face of these specific challenges?

This stage works in tandem with the previous 'challenges' stage. The idea is to confront the challenges head on with some group problem solving. Discuss as a group how you might tackle each problem. The scribe lists the ways in which the group plan to tackle each challenge. For example if the challenge was communication breaking down solutions could be:

- Setting up a WhatsApp group to keep in contact
- Having a regular meet up
- Keeping meeting minutes
- Informal English classes for the family.
- Investigate pay as you go mobile phones for the family
- Translators

Problem solving in this manner helps the team to have perspective about the potential size of a problem and the ways they can reduce the anxiety around tackling them over the course of the year.

Stage 7 – Bold Steps

In Stage 7 we return to setting goals. This time the goals are for the medium term. I tend to think about 6 months into the future. Ask the team to consider what they think they will have realistically changed in that time period in relation to the goals. I tend to ask teams that given

the planning they have already done how they think things will change or progress. Here are some questions that might be helpful:

How will you know that you getting closer to your goals?

What will have changed?

How will the family/team feel?

What action will have been taken?

Who will be involved working towards the goals?

Once the 'bold steps' I would arrange a time to meet in 6 months to review your progress and see if anything has been missed.

Stage 8 – First Steps

This stage is the final step and deals with what you need to do to get going in the next month. This shouldn't take too much thought as it's likely that practical first steps will have been discussed in the previous 7 steps. List all the things that need to be done to get things underway and who will take responsibility for these tasks.

Arrange to meet in a month to make sure these steps have been carried out and make adjustments if not. Celebrate your successes, spread the good news and help each other out if things get difficult.

Some useful reading and references

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