

OUT OF THE TOOLBOX

Organizing Basics

Building power requires people to be active. Our goal is to get people in motion in a variety of ways, and building relationships is the foundation of our work, whether you're going door-to-door, starting a new organization in your community, or making phone calls. Relationships make us feel connected and remind us we are not alone. Relationships are the basis of community and accountability. We can often see in others what we cannot see in ourselves, so relationships are like mirrors that allow us to learn and grow.

A basic tool in organizing for reaching out to new people is called a *rap*. Here are my tips for that first conversation:

BEFORE YOU BEGIN. Take a breath to settle yourself.

INTRODUCTION. Tell people who you are and why you want to talk with them. Ask if it's a good time and if they have a few minutes.

QUESTIONS. Ask questions to learn what they care about and their interests. Ask if they know about the issue at hand, and whether their family has been affected. Ask what they think and feel about it. What do they want or need? Mirror back what you hear.

DISCUSSION. People's responses offer openings to go more deeply into the topic, bringing up points you want to make and relating them to what people care about to fit their concerns. You can share your experiences and why you care.

COMMITMENT. Ask people to do something concrete. Include several options for what they can do. See if they need support in carrying out the action.

CLOSE. Clarify the next steps and what you will do to follow up. Express appreciation and gratitude.

Each conversation is an opportunity to assess the person you're talking with and whether they're someone you think will become active. You might also find you have a lot in common and find yourself at the beginning stages of a new and lasting friendship.