



FRONTLINE GUIDE

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Version 3



Here at Daily Bread, every member of our community deserves to be treated with respect. In order to make Daily Bread a welcoming, safe and positive space for everyone, we approach this work from the following three principles:

1) We see the big picture

It is our duty to recognize the power inherent in giving/controlling access to food and resources, and actively look for ways to give power and control back to our community members.

We recognize that in a city where monthly income is substantially lower than the most basic expenses, people will find creative ways to resist and survive.

Everyone who walks through the door is a valued member of our community, and will be treated with respect and dignity, like an honoured guest.

2) We support self-determination

Self-determination means that people have the power to make decisions for themselves about what is right for them. It acknowledges that we are the experts of our own experience. Feedback from our community members is highly valued.

To be an effective frontline volunteer at Daily Bread, you need to be a good listener. Don't assume things about people, or about what they need – ask. Our community members are experts on their own experience.

3) We will all work to make this a safe community space for everyone

Behaviour is an issue only if:

- *It is posing a risk to the safety of others.*
- *If someone is making insensitive or offensive comments that are hurtful to an entire group of people (E.g., racist, homophobic, etc.).*

Address the person calmly. Let the individual know that these types of comments might be hurtful and we need to try to keep this a safe space for everyone. Do not engage in a dialogue or debate. The important thing is that others in the space see that hateful comments are not accepted here.

Dealing With Conflict & Setting Limits

At Daily Bread Food Bank we acknowledge that there is a major power imbalance between the act of giving food and the act of receiving it. We aim to be a space that works to close this power gap, and one way is through providing support to vulnerable community members without judgement. That means we are committed to working with people as they are. When in a vulnerable situation (E.g. Not having enough money to buy food), a person's ability to manage their emotions is often limited and frustration can easily arise.

We aim to create a safe space with equitable food distribution practices. In order to help us accomplish this we have the following process for dealing with conflict in the Food Bank.



- **Blame the community member**

When a community member becomes upset because they are having trouble getting what they need or want, recognize that their behaviour is a result of their situation...it is not who they are. Rarely is a person difficult just for the fun of it.

When we have run out of an item in the food bank **DO NOT** tell the community member "*you should have come earlier*" or "*try to come earlier next time*". The reality is we do not have guaranteed items in the food bank and that we run out of things. It is also not accurate to suggest that coming earlier will result in people getting what they want.

Instead, apologize to them and offer empathy by saying things like:

- "It makes sense that you're frustrated."
- "I'm so sorry you didn't get what you needed today."
- "I agree with you – we need to fix the problem so we have consistent amounts of food throughout the day."

• Double-team community members

When you see a fellow volunteer dealing with a community member **DO NOT INTERJECT**. Allow your teammates to learn their own style through experience. Only help if the volunteer is clearly looking to you for help or asking you directly to help or intervene.

• Take it personally

Conflict is messy and is made messier when we allow ourselves to believe things we cannot possibly know. It's common to assume when someone is upset at us that it means they don't like us, they don't recognize how hard we are trying, or they don't respect us as people.

The truth is even though it may feel this way, these motivations are things we can **NEVER KNOW**. Try to keep in mind that many community members attending our food bank are facing numerous barriers and struggles in their lives (including having to use a food bank in the first place) and because of that frustrations will arise. It's not about you, it's about their challenging life circumstance.



• Extend compassion and empathy

Remember that you already have incredible power over someone who is having their power taken away from them day after day. Controlling someone's access to food – a basic human right – is not something to be taken lightly. Do communicate that there are limits that help us distribute food fairly, but do not feel you must force them to "abide by the rules".

• Always be gentle

Strive to be understanding. Ask questions. Listen to their concerns and take them seriously. Provide information.

• Maintain Food Access

Let the person know that they will receive food. In some situations a community member may not be able to access the space that day but can still be served food outside the program.

• Work as a team

Support each other. Ask another volunteer to take over for you if a situation has become too difficult, or get your supervisor. Appreciate that, among our diverse volunteer team, everyone has different strengths, capacities, and abilities. Our skills are varied, and that's what makes us strong!

- **Be willing to back down**

When a community member has become insistent about what they want and are creating disharmony in the food bank, the first thing you want to accomplish is to de-escalate the situation and have the person leave with some satisfaction. That could mean that you have to change your mind about something you have already said (*E.g., no, I am sorry I cannot give you an extra peanut butter*). In this case you could say:

"Normally we ask people to take only one peanut butter, but in this one case it sounds like you really need an extra one".

- **Take a break after a difficult exchange**

Debrief with another volunteer or your supervisor after a difficult exchange. This can help us all to manage our own feelings as well as reflect on how we responded to a situation. What worked? What could we do differently? This will not only increase our individual learning but also help us grow as a team.

Conflict Procedure

When a community member is upset or communication is difficult, **DO NOT FORCE THE RULE**. Instead show empathy for their frustration. Apologize for the misunderstanding. Let them know they are free to leave. Often trying to have a rational discussion with someone who is upset is simply impossible so we have to get smart about how we talk to community members about "the rules".



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Food Bank

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