

PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY WITH REFUGEES

“Give a man a fish and he can eat for a day... teach him to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.”

1. **Teach vs. Give-** Refugees were at one time very self-sufficient people in their own country. They have survived a great deal in their lives and are very capable people. Teach them skills to help them be independent in this new world, but don't do things for them that they can do for themselves. Although it might be easier for you to just give them a fish, in the long run it will help them if you take time to teach them how to do the fishing himself.
2. **Set boundaries-** It's okay to say no sometimes. It is not practical for you to visit every day or to meet every need that comes up. Do your refugee friends understand that you might have other priorities in your life besides them (your family, your work, etc.)? Help them learn how to plan ahead and if they do want to request your help on something they can call you several days before and ask if you have time. If you set boundaries early it will help you have a more healthy relationship.
3. **Realistic expectations-** Refugees often come to America with high expectations because they have heard rumors all their life about what life would be like in America. Here are some things that you could help them understand--
 - **Resettlement will not be easy**
 - economic assistance from the government is short-term
 - low-paying, entry-level, service or factory jobs expected
 - college education in the US is not free... very expensive
 - automobiles are very expensive to buy and maintain
 - homes are very expensive to purchase and require good credit history
 - **What does it take to make it?**
 - drive, persistence, determination
 - cannot wait on case manager
 - start at the bottom and work your way up
 - learning English is key to success

You can attain the American dream, but it takes A LOT of hard work to get there!

4. **Needs vs. Wants**- There are many things that refugees want and expect to have when they arrive, and they may need help sorting out what is a “need” and what is a “want”. Assist them in locating resources that will meet emergency needs, and communicate that not all their needs will be met at once. Walk them through the steps that will help them attain some of their “wants” later as they get a job and receive a regular paycheck.

5. **Time vs. Money**- Time is far more valuable to your refugee friends than money. Using your financial resources to meet needs is a deep hole and it will most likely change the dynamics of your relationship. Instead, offer them your faithful friendship and help them come up with other practical solutions to their money problems.

6. **Empower them**- Often times refugees learn to look to volunteers as “power brokers” who can get things done for them, but you are not always going to be there. Don’t attempt to be their hero and meet every need, but instead empower them with the boldness and self-confidence they will need to find their own solutions. Teaching them to be independent and self-sufficient is the best tool you can give them for the road ahead.

Resources given to people without empowerment is poison! It will make them flourish for a season, but you have ultimately robbed them. -City Signals