

Quality of Life

OUTCOMES

When you finish this session, you will be able to:

- Identify ways to support quality of life.
- Identify individual routines.
- Identify opportunities for individuals to develop friendships.
- Identify ways to support meaningful participation in social, recreational, educational and vocational activities.
- Identify ways to support the inclusion of individuals in their community.

KEYWORDS

Friend: A person that you like to be with and who likes to be with you, with whom you have fun; someone who supports you and offers a sympathetic ear when you have problems that you want to talk about.

Inclusion: Being a valued full participant in the community both giving and benefiting from community life.

Individual Routines: Things that people do every day, or every week, month, and year. Everyone's routine is different, depending upon his or her needs and preferences.

Intimacy: Relationships that are very close and familiar and that may involve consensual sex.

Leisure: Free time for relaxation, fun, and recreation.

Life Quality: Characteristics of a person's life that include those things that the person feels are most important, like good friends, good health, and a safe and comfortable place to live.

Life Stages: A portion of a person's life related to age and having certain "milestones" that are common events, such as starting school in early childhood or retiring when one reaches older age.

Natural Support: Services and supports, freely available, from family members, friends, co-workers, and associations of one kind or another; for example, churches, clubs, and community service organizations.

Social Skills: The skills it takes to develop and maintain friendships such as listening to another person, communicating well, or doing thoughtful deeds.

Transition: The process of moving from one important life stage to another.

Life Quality

In this training, you have learned that having choices, the best possible health, being safe, and learning new skills all contribute to having a good quality of life. As an IP you have learned ways to provide support to individuals in many areas that will increase their **quality of life**. But there are still some very important concepts we haven't discussed yet.

These are events that to some, seem to make life worth living. What are these things? They are your routines, friends, and how you have fun!

Individual Routines

The IP needs to consider the role that individual routines play in each person's life and ensure that preferred routines are respected and supported. Most of us don't think about our daily routines, but they help us get through the day.

We all have routines for each day, the week, month and year that are a part of our lives. Our individual routines begin each morning. We all have a pattern of activities that we are used to and that are familiar to us. For example, we wake up

to an alarm clock, doze for an extra 10 minutes, get out of bed, and take a shower. We all have favorite things that we do that are very important to us.

Many people say that they simply have to have a cup of coffee in the morning to "get started" and would be very upset if they didn't get it. It might be a favorite activity, food, something you like to wear, someone you like to be with, and so on. If you had to live without these things, it would decrease the quality of your life. The same is true for the people you support. It is your job to learn each individual's routines and support them.

In addition, everyone has "comfort" routines that help them get through life's rough spots. When you have a bad day at work, you might need to go home and lay down. Others might need to take a walk or talk with someone. Most of us are familiar with the urge to eat ice cream or have a cup of hot chocolate when we are feeling down. These are also important routines that help us feel good about ourselves and have a quality life.

ACTIVITY

Daily Routines

Write down, in as much detail as possible, everything you do from the minute you wake up in the morning until you arrive at work, school, or your first activity outside the home. Be very specific. You will be sharing this list; so don't include things that might embarrass you.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.

Dignity and Respect During Daily Routines

Your role as an IP is a crucial one because your assistance ensures your employer has the opportunity to participate fully in their own community. In many ways, your work directly affects the health, safety and well-being of your employer. While working as an IP, you will learn more about your employer’s private life than you would in most other types of jobs. You may even lose a sense of what is considered “work” and what is considered an individual’s “personal life.” It is important you remember that even though you will develop a very close relationship with your employer, you are still doing a job.

The work you will do is very personal in nature and will require a high degree of respect and professionalism. Below are common tasks or issues IPs need to exercise caution:

Tasks with a high degree of INTIMACY

- Dressing and undressing
- Toileting
- Bladder and bowel care
- Personal hygiene
- Bathing
- Self-medication

Issues requiring a high degree of PRIVACY

- Knowledge of physical, emotional or behavioral condition (s)
- Knowledge of Medicaid services or benefits received
- Knowledge of prescriptions used or currently using
- Knowledge of health care visits, treatment, therapy, billing

Tasks requiring CAUTION

- Body care (exercises, skin care)
- Positioning
- Shopping for or preparing meals
- Transfer
- Eating
- Walking from one area to another
- Shopping for health care needs

ACTIVITY

Directions: Students will break into three separate groups. Each group will review the tasks or issues in one of the groups above (intimacy, privacy, caution). Each group will come up with one way per task or issue to ensure their employer’s dignity, respect and safety. Each group will share their ideas with the rest of the class.

ASSIGNED TASK/ISSUE GROUP:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Why Friends Are Important

Everyone needs friends that they can talk to and with whom they can spend time and have fun. Having friends makes us happy and gives us a good feeling about our place in the world. Without friends, we would feel lonely, sad, depressed, maybe angry, and would most likely be bored. Friendships have an energy that can't be otherwise created. Friends accept us as we are. Friends don't care what's in a person's Individual Service Plan (ISP). They like the person "just because."

**Real friends
don't come with
"FRAGILE" stickers
and are not easily
scared off,
turned off,
or ticked off.**

**Real friends
help you out
whenever they can,
make time for you
even when they
don't have any,
and trust your friendship
enough to say "No".**

Many of the people in the lives of the individuals you support are paid to be there. While friendships between employers and employees may arise and may be very meaningful friendships, the fact remains that you and others are paid to be with the individual. If the individuals you support have no one else in their life, you are that individual's family, friend, and their total source of all those things that are part of a friendship. This is a big responsibility. If individuals have other friends in their lives, they benefit and you benefit.

Most of us have a significant other in our life, be that a husband, wife, partner, parent, sister, or other relative. These are the people with whom you have the most intimate relationships. If any of these people were not in your life, it would be very different. Most of us have at least one person, and sometimes more, with whom we are this close. This is true for your employer as well.

You have people in your life that are good friends and people you spend time with. When asked to list friends, most people without a disability list five or more people. Individuals you support often list no one or only paid staff.

You also have people who are acquaintances, people you see at work, you take classes with, you go to church with. Again, when asked to list acquaintances, people without disabilities usually name 5 to 10 people, while your employer may name no one.

Finally we have people that know you because they perform a service for you, such as a doctor, a dentist, a hairdresser, or manicurist. In this situation, the reverse is true. Most people typically list 5 to 10 people, while your employer may list 10 or more names.

Having friends is critical to everyone's quality of life. Having a balance between the number of people who are paid to be in a person's life and the number of people who are friends "just because" adds to that quality of life.

ACTIVITY

Recognizing Different Kinds of Friendships

Directions: Using the attached "Circle of Friends" Activity Sheet, fill out the circles according to the descriptions below.

Center Circle

Directions: Write the initials or first names of people in your life with whom you are closest. These names might include a husband, wife, partner, parent, sister, or other relative. These are the people you have the most intimate relationships with. If any of these people were not in your life, your entire life would be different.

Third circle

Directions: Write the names or initials of acquaintances. That could include people you work with, people you take classes with, people on your bowling team, or people in your bicycle club. These are people you see regularly. If any of these people moved, you'd probably still send holiday cards.

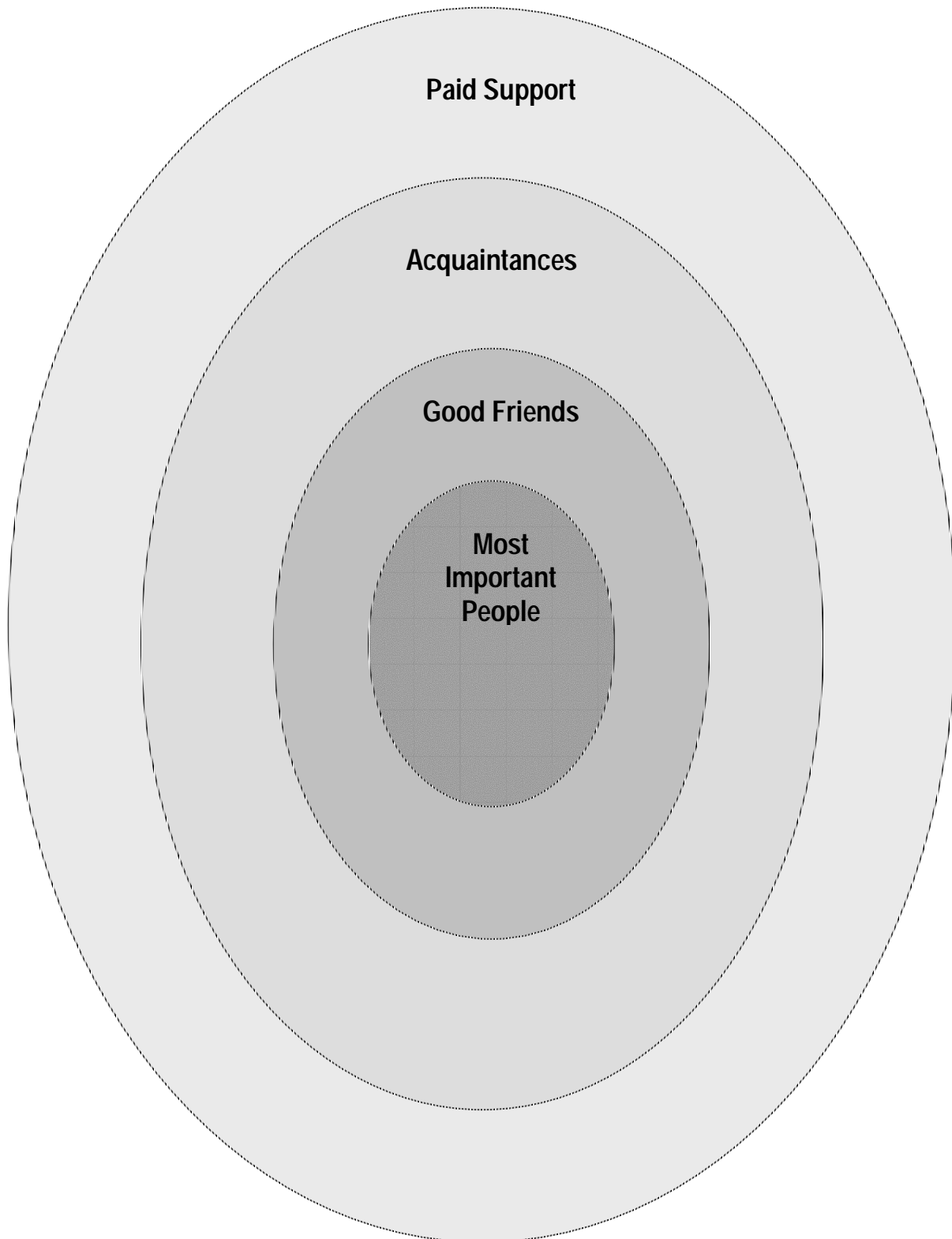
Second circle

Directions: Write down the names or initials of people you call friends. These are people who would remain in your life if they moved. You would still be in touch.

Fourth circle

Directions: Write the names or initials of people who know you well, but when you get together you have to pay. That could include your doctor, a dentist, a psychologist or social worker, a manicurist, a hair stylist, or a barber.

Circle of Friends



Friendship

How to Make Friends

There is no program for starting a friendship. There are no data to maintain. But part of your job is to support individuals to make and have friends. Friendships typically grow out of shared activities and interests. This is true for all of us, whether we have a disability or not.

In order to make friends, it is critical to be a friend. Sometimes the individuals you support lack the social skills to be a friend. IPs can support individuals in learning those skills.

Being a good friend includes:

- Being available
- Sharing of yourself
- Listening and showing interest
- Being kind and understanding
- Respecting the rights of others
- Being able to set appropriate boundaries

It is not always easy for any of us to make friends. Making friends and keeping them takes work. People often feel uncertain and fearful that others may not want to be their friend. You and other members of the individual's planning team can help by sitting down with the individual and talking to them about their strengths and the positive things they would bring to a friendship. What are their interests? Do they have a good sense of humor? Do they laugh at other people's jokes? What things do they have to share? The more severely disabled an individual is, the more challenging the task. The planning team can be particularly helpful.

Once the individual has identified an interest, the IP can assist the individual with the important next steps. For example, the individual expresses an interest in gardening. Are there gardening clubs? Does the local Agricultural Extension Office provide classes or volunteer opportunities? Does the local nursery have "How To Garden" classes? Is there a neighbor who is an avid gardener?

Next, you can assist the individual to attend the activity. You may need to provide or arrange for transportation to the event. In addition, the individual may need support to attend the activity, especially for the first few times. You can provide encouragement, support, and assist the individual to learn social skills in this real-life situation.

Some of you might be concerned that people will make fun of the individual or take advantage of him or her, or that the individual may be rejected because of his or her unusual behavior. It is good to be aware of these concerns, but to not let them stop you from helping the individual to make friends. Many IPs find that once the individual finds an activity that he or she can share with others, that activity becomes the basis for the friendship.

And, people don't necessarily need to be especially talented to share activities together. For example, throwing a Super Bowl party takes a television, couch and chairs, chips, dip, drinks, and people who share an interest in football! You don't have to play football to enjoy watching it. The talent is on the screen, yet there is a chance for people to talk to one another and share their interest in the game.

Friendship

Being with other people at school, work and in the neighborhood is often the best way for individuals to form friendships. When individuals are given opportunities to be with others of their own age, it opens the door to the formation of friendships that often last through life.

People are willing to include an individual with a disability if they are encouraged and supported to do so.

Often it can help to plan special events or outings to help individuals to get to know each other.

People deserve to have the chance to get to know individuals regardless of the severity of their disability. This is not easy work to do. As we all know from our own lives, developing friendships does not typically happen quickly, but rather is usually the result of a lot of effort over time.

ACTIVITY

Developing Friendships

Directions: Read "Peter's Story" about developing friendships. Pair up with another person and make a list of things the IP did to support Peter in developing friendships. When finished, share your results with the rest of the class.

Peter's Story

Peter lives at home and goes to church each Sunday. The church choir director noticed that Peter had a wonderful voice and wanted to include him in the choir. The IP who supported Peter was very concerned about Peter being away from her and being with people who didn't know him well. He had occasional behavior outbursts that she didn't feel she could explain. The IP talked to Peter to clarify his interest and he told her that he really wanted to sing in the choir. It was his chance to do something he enjoyed and that would make him very happy. For the first four rehearsals, the IP took Peter to and from the church. Peter wanted her to stay until he felt more comfortable. She stayed for the first couple of rehearsals. On the night of Peter's fifth rehearsal, one of the choir members commented that she drove right near the home on her way to church. She wondered if she could pick Peter up for practice and return him home. That worked for the next five rehearsals. At the 10th rehearsal, another choir member said that many of the choir members go out for coffee after rehearsal. They wondered if Peter could join them for coffee. Now he is one of the "Choir to Coffee" bunch.

Friendship

Intimate Relationships

Friendships can and do grow into intimate relationships. The need for closeness and physical intimacy continues unchanged into very old age. Most people have very strong personal beliefs about intimacy. These beliefs originate from religious, cultural, familial, and/or other experiences. Your job as an IP is not to change the beliefs of others to yours.

Many people feel uncomfortable talking about relationships and intimacy. If so, you are encouraged to look for resources so that you can learn more and feel comfortable and confident talking with individuals about these close relationships. This is another area where the family or case manager should be involved to provide assistance if needed in supporting the individual in their personal choices.

Participating in Leisure and Recreational Activities—Making Friends and Having Fun

Leisure is time free from work and other responsibilities when you can have fun and enjoy the company of friends. Leisure and recreational activities help people to relax, reduce stress, improve health and fitness, learn new skills, and have an outlet for creativity and, most importantly, fun. A good indicator of people having fun is laughter. People relax and get to know each other better when they are laughing together.

We all need time to just relax and “unwind” at home, but if this is all we

do, we are missing out on many opportunities to enrich our lives in ways that make us happier and healthier. The same is true for people you support. Part of your job is to help individuals get out into the community and participate in leisure and recreational activities that will add to the quality of their life.

IPs may be authorized to do the following tasks:

- Ambulation and transfers
- Lifting and positioning
- Meal preparation and assistance with eating
- Help with personal care and toileting
- Necessary supervision
- Housekeeping and laundry
- Essential shopping and transportation
- Minor home repair and modification
- Wood supply in some cases
- Respite care

The *skills* taught in this course are not included in this list of *tasks*. As a professional individual provider, you could be developing communication or using some of the methods described in this course to improve quality of life while you are performing your official duties.

For instance, you could learn about your employer’s likes and dislikes during everyday conversation, while preparing a meal, or, folding laundry—this means that while you are developing communication skills, you are also working towards improving life quality for your employer.

We believe that the *skills* taught here are what makes you stand out from your colleagues—by practicing these skills, you are a *professional* individual provider.

Scenario: Leisure Time

Featuring



Lisa

A 30 year-old woman



Michelle

Lisa's individual provider



Kate

Lisa's individual provider

Lisa and a friend are sitting on the couch watching television. They appear restless.

FIRST SCENARIO – First Individual Provider

Lisa: “Can I change the channel?”

Michelle: “No, we watch this every Thursday night. Let’s go ahead and watch this.”

Lisa: “Well, can I go outside and watch the kids play ball?”

Michelle: “No, let’s just sit here and watch television.”

Lisa: “Can I rent a video?”

Michelle: “You don’t have much money and I don’t want to take my car out, so let’s just watch television.”

Lisa: “Well, what can I do then?”

END OF FIRST SCENARIO

SECOND SCENARIO – Second Individual Provider

Lisa and a friend are sitting on the couch watching television. They appear restless.

Lisa: “Can I change the channel?”

Kate: “Sure—we can see what else is on.” (asking Lisa’s friend) “Do you want the channel changed?” (Lisa’s friend says No.)

Kate: “Lisa, if you want to watch something different than your friend, you might want to watch the tv in your room, but you don’t want to leave your guest alone, right?”

Lisa: “Can we rent a video?”

Kate: “Sure...do you have any money left over from shopping today?”

Lisa: “I’ll go check. (Lisa comes back into the room) No, I’m broke.”

Kate: “Oh, that’s too bad. What movie did you want to rent?”

Lisa: “Princess Diaries 2.”

Kate: “That sounds like a good movie. Did you still want to watch the kids play ball outside?”

Lisa and her friend nod their heads “yes” and go outside.

1. How do the two individual providers behave differently?
2. How does it affect Lisa’s quality of life?
3. What are the ethical issues?

Additional discussion questions:

- What kind of environment do you think each IP helped create?
- What may be the causes of the first IP’s behavior?
- What could prevent or reduce the likelihood the behavior will happen again?

A Word About Taking Risks

Risk or danger is often used as a reason to limit opportunities for participation, both at home and in the community, for individuals with disabilities. There is some risk to almost everything you do. Babies fall down. Children get into arguments. Teenagers wreck cars. People are fired from jobs. Sometimes people take the wrong bus.

When supporting someone toward greater participation in the community, IPs need to be aware of and be prepared for risks common to everyone and risks that are unique to an individual's circumstances.

You can mitigate or reduce risk by discussing the potential risk with the individual, getting the help of the individual's care team to assess the risk, and develop a plan that will ensure maximum protection and safety for the individual. Learning and growing is critical to life quality. You need to find ways to support individuals to participate in their communities and at the same time, to the maximum extent possible, ensure their personal safety.

The steps for you to follow when developing leisure and recreation opportunities for individuals are similar to those for making friends:

- Talking to the individual and identifying their strengths and interests.
- Providing information about community activities and organizations.
- Arranging for and encouraging participation in leisure and recreational activities.
- Connecting people with common interests with each other or with groups who share their interest.
- Accompanying someone to an activity or arranging transportation when needed.
- Assisting and encouraging the development of natural supports.
- Mitigating risk.

Balancing Your Employer's Rights of Choice and Safety

If your employer's choice places their safety or well-being at risk or could somehow cause harm to others, use the following guidelines:

- Explain to your employer why you are concerned. Offer alternatives that would come close to meeting what your employer wants, yet allows the choice to remain theirs.
- Discuss your concerns with the appropriate person on the care team (i.e., case manager, family member).
- Document your concerns and what you did.

SOURCE: Adapted from Department of Social and Health Services *Revised Fundamentals of Caregiving Learner's Guide*, First Edition, January 2003

ACTIVITY

My Own Leisure/Recreation Style

Directions: Fill out the Activity Checklist below. Then, divide into pairs and share your results.

I prefer activities where I am:

Alone

With a couple of friends

In a big group

When I have free time, I: (circle as many as you wish)

Watch TV

Go to the health club

Read a book

Work on a hobby

Go out to dinner

Travel

Go on a walk

Listen to music

Take a class

Make something

Hang out with friends

Camp

Take a nap

Play on a team

Go shopping

Hike

Go to a concert

Play

Think

Watch sports

Play with pets

_____ other

_____ other

_____ other

_____ other

_____ other

_____ other

Knowing the Community

In order to support people to participate in leisure and recreational activities outside the home, it is necessary for you to get to know their community. The following are a few suggestions of things to do that will help you get started:

- Identify the local newspaper and know the sections of the paper that contain information about recreation opportunities and special events.
- Locate places where people in the community often get together.
- Identify and locate senior centers.
- Know about the community's transportation, including bus schedules and any special transportation like "Dial-a-Lift."
- Find out about opportunities for classes and activities through Parks and Recreation, the local community college, and Adult Education through four-year colleges.
- Contact people for groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Boys & Girls Club, the YW/YMCAs, Special Olympics, and People First.

It is helpful to keep a calendar of activities and events so that you can talk with individuals about and plan for their participation. As we have said many times in this training, you need to know the likes and dislikes, or interests, of each individual you support to do a good job of "connecting" them with community leisure and recreational opportunities.

You will find that most people in community groups will be welcoming once they understand that the individual you support has a genuine desire to be a part of the group and that you will be available to help, if needed. Once again, learning about an individual's strengths, knowing and appreciating them, and finding out what their interests are is the first step in deciding what activities to "connect" them to. An individual's quality of life is increased when he or she is able to participate in social, recreational, educational, and vocational activities that are meaningful to them.

Scenario: Inclusion

Featuring



Jarred

A 23 year-old man



Mike

Jarred's individual
provider



Lois

Health club manager

Jason and Mike are in Lois' office at the health club. It has been several weeks since Jarred was allowed to come back to the gym.

Mike: "We've been coming to the gym about two weeks and Jarred's having a really good time and we wanted to see how he was doing."

Lois: "Okay, I guess. Lucky for you so far..."

Mike: "Like I said, Jarred has really enjoyed himself and we were hoping he could join your league team."

Lois: "Jarred join one of our teams? I doubt that! He can keep practicing, though."

Mike: "Well, we will. Thank you very much, and have a good day."

Mike and Jarred turn to leave

1. How could Mike advocate for Jarred?
2. How would inclusion improve Jarred's quality of life?
3. How does Jason feel?

Additional Discussion Questions (if there are students in class who are already an IP):

- What kinds of barriers have you encountered while supporting individuals in participating in community activities?
- What have you done to overcome them?

Natural Support

Natural support is assistance provided by a family member, friend, co-worker, or other person involved in some way in the individual's life. We have all benefited at some time in our life from the informal support of another person; for example, your mom took you to school on the first day and stayed with you until you felt comfortable. Your best friend stood by you when you got a divorce. Your neighbor brought you food when you were sick.

Natural supports are experienced by all of us, but may be less so by individuals who are receiving Medicaid services because they typically have fewer friends and acquaintances. So assisting individuals to make friends and to maintain close family ties ensures that they benefit from natural supports in the same way we all do. Maintaining natural supports often takes extra effort on your part. You should be available to answer questions, provide information or training, and offer plenty of encouragement.

A family member or friend can assist the individual to participate in leisure and recreation activities, help them make friends, help problem solve if there are barriers, and just help them to feel good and have fun. Natural supports may develop with or without an IP's assistance, but often they require a jump start from the IP. Although the most common natural support is the family, sometimes family isn't available. Parents may be too ill to be supportive or, in some cases, there may be no family at all.

The IP must be sensitive to the individual's needs and preferences. Sometimes natural support is not appropriate for the person. For instance, an adult with personal care needs may prefer or need a paid staff to help with toileting instead of a friend or family member. Individuals may need support connecting on the job. Coworkers can contribute a great deal to the quality of an individual's work life and that they will develop relationships that extend to life after work (such as bowling leagues and parties).

Inclusion

Every society adopts a vision of a good world, of how things should be. Our vision grows out of a deep belief that all people are created equal. This does not mean that people are alike in their abilities, talents, or intelligence. In fact, we all know that every person is a unique individual. Our society, instead believes that the differences among us do not entitle any group of people with a more legitimate claim to the benefits of society than any other group. So, while we are certainly not all equal in our abilities, talent, or intelligence, we still insist in our vision that we are all absolutely equal in the opportunities open for us to share in society's benefits. The benefits of society assure each individual a chance to have the best quality life possible. What does this mean for individuals with disabilities? It means individuals with disabilities enjoy rights that cannot be taken away, or even given away: rights to belong as full members of the community, with rights to participate in all aspects of life, private and public, to the limits of their abilities and interests. It means also a right, even a responsibility, to contribute to the community, to give back something so that the quality of others' lives also have a chance to be the best that is possible. When all individuals, with and without disabilities, are gathered together and are fully included in this vision of how things ought to be, we will have taken a giant step toward a better life, and a better world, for everyone. **You as an IP have a unique opportunity to make this vision a reality.**

ACTIVITY

A Good Match!

Directions: Divide into small groups of 3-4 people (or pairs) and read the following five scenarios. Identify the natural supports in each scenario and underline them. If the person in the scenario has no natural support, write a suggestion for how to help develop them.

Susan is a young woman in her mid-20s. She has many important strengths or gifts. She loves being around people and is usually happy and outgoing. She smiles often and people respond to her quickly. She works part time for a computer chip company putting together very small pieces of equipment with tweezers. She is able to understand simple directions. At work, she uses a picture book to remind her of how to do the different steps in her job. She has difficulty speaking and uses a wheelchair for long distances. She likes music and pictures in magazines. She also likes to be well-groomed and have her clothes match. Her mother is very supportive and visits Susan once a week in the home.

Don is 18 and he is an energetic young man! He likes to roughhouse with his friends, wrestling around on the floor with them. However, he is pretty timid around strangers. Don has a hard time staying with any activity for long and he requires a 1:1 aide at work to help him stay focused. He can read a little and always chooses magazines about sports. He is very coordinated and can run quite fast. However, his family is concerned because Don will run away from them when they are out walking and has run into the street a few times without looking.

Sam is in his early 50s. He stays in his room a lot and refuses to go into the living room when the TV is on. Loud noises of any kind bother him. Sam enjoys soft music. He likes to spend time outdoors where it is quiet. He often will pick flowers from the yard and put them in a vase for the dining room table. Sam likes everything to be organized and in its place. Having something moved or being prevented from following his daily routine can result in Sam becoming very angry and upset. When this happens he sometimes hits himself. Sam likes to go out for coffee when there aren't many people in the coffee shop.

Diego is in his mid-70s. He has difficulty expressing himself due to a stroke, but he has a great smile. People say his smile "lights up the room!" When he really likes something, he smiles and waves in delight. When he doesn't like something, he pounds his fists. He eats without assistance, and he likes to walk. He likes going places in the car, especially to Dairy Queen. He goes to an adult day activity program, where he pounds his fists a lot more than he smiles. He doesn't have a lot to do and he sits alone for long periods of time. On at least one occasion he got so upset that he knocked over a worktable. On the days when he is home, he is always happy and smiling. He loves hitting his hand on the table in time to music.

Sherril is 27. She has cerebral palsy and uses a motorized wheelchair to get around. She is able to move her right hand and arm well enough to use an adapted computer to communicate. She eats with a lot of assistance. She goes to a community college, where she has attendant support in her classes. She intends to transfer to a four-year college program when she graduates. She hopes to be able to learn to get more experience with adapted computer equipment so she can get a good job when she graduates from college. Sherril is quite shy. She feels most comfortable with just one other person or in a small group.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

A Good Match! WORKSHEET

Directions: Draw a line between each name on the right and at least two activities that seem like a good match based on the information you just read about each individual.

1. Taking a class about getting college scholarships

Susan

2. Taking a drumming class

3. Fishing with one other person

Don

4. Joining a soccer team

5. Learning to make ceramics

Sam

6. Going on a garden walk with the garden club

7. Joining the Cub Scouts

8. Learning to play bridge

Diego

9. Taking a class in watercolor painting

10. Going to a rock concert

11. Joining the computer club

Sherril

12. Taking a class to learn to swim

Transitions

Life Quality

Transitions from one life stage to another naturally occur throughout life. Changes related to each of these life stages are stressful for all people and may be more so for people you support.

Through each transition, you will be working with the individual and his or her team in developing ways to improve life quality by taking into consideration individual choice, interests, abilities, and needs.

Although the way each person moves through the stages of life is different, these stages can be defined in general terms. Some of these stages are easily defined by age (for example, infancy, childhood, adolescence), while others are defined by important events (for example, the first day of school, graduation from school, moving away from home, getting married, or having children). Individuals pass from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, and finally, into older age and retirement. **You have an important role to play in providing individuals support during periods of transition.** That is, to ensure that individuals maintain and/or improve their quality of life.

An individual may require different kinds of support during different life stages. **The one thing that is common to all life stages is the individual's need for meaningful, supportive relationships, family, friends, and you the IP.**

Adulthood

You have a challenge and a great opportunity for supporting a person through his or her adult years. Remember, a quality life is the same for all of us and includes: having opportunities for choice; developing relationships; being a member of the community; having fun; advocating for one's rights; being treated with dignity and respect; being safe and healthy; and being satisfied with one's life in general.

You can provide invaluable support during this time of transition by talking to the person about what they want to do; helping the person to explore his or her interests or abilities by finding out about possible job or learning opportunities in the community; and supporting the individual to communicate his or her wants and needs to the planning team and family members.

Considerations for Supporting Adults

- Present choice-making opportunities.
- Provide information to make decisions.
- Advocate for rights.
- Treat with dignity and respect.
- Create opportunities for community involvement.
- Create opportunities to make friends and develop relationships.

Older Age

It may be you who notices that a person is “slowing down” or doesn’t seem to go to activities with the same enthusiasm. It may be you who realizes a person’s hearing or eyesight is getting worse. You must be prepared to bring these issues up with the individual and the team and to help plan for and support people through retirement and older age.

Some individuals with disabilities, although certainly not all, may age prematurely. Such changes may affect an individual’s vision, hearing, taste, touch, smell, physical appearance, and musculoskeletal (muscle and bone) system. The challenges of aging and retiring are common to us all—having enough money to pay for basic necessities, having a comfortable place to live, staying as physically fit and active as possible, continuing to have meaningful leisure activities, and having opportunities to have friends and be connected to the community.

Grief and Loss

The grief process is a natural and normal reaction to loss that may occur at any time in an individual’s life. Individuals you support will also experience grief and loss. This can occur during a life transition like when a family member or friend dies, when a favorite roommate or an IP leaves the home, or even when a pet dies.

Because grief can be so painful and sometimes overwhelming, it can cause people to feel frightened and confused, and can result in reactions that can be alarming. Many people worry that they are acting in the “wrong way” and wonder if there is a “right” way to grieve. There is no “right” way to grieve.

Many different expressions of grief are considered normal.

If the individual can’t talk, it may take a support person to realize that what is happening is due to grief. You can help by recognizing that the individual is experiencing grief and by helping the individual work through the grieving process by talking, encouraging counseling for the individual, or helping them remember the object of grief in a unique way; for example, making a tape of favorite music of the person who died.

Loss and Action

What are at least two things you would do to help the following individuals experiencing grief?

Diego

Diego is a man in his mid-30s. He lived with his mother until he was 30. She went into a nursing home about five years ago and he visited her once a month. However, about three months ago she died. He went to the funeral, saw her in the casket and then saw the casket being buried. He understands she has died. He is still very unhappy though, and wants to spend hours everyday talking about her. People he works with are getting tired of this and almost no one wants to discuss it any longer. As an IP, what could you do to support Diego?

Irene

Irene is 70 and has lived in the same home for several years. For the past 25 years, her roommate has been a woman named Alice. Alice is still alive, but her medical care needs have become so difficult that she has to leave the home. How will you support Irene to cope with the move of this friend?

John

John is 25 and has autism. He doesn’t speak much and only seems to like a few people. One of them is Paul, a quiet IP who has supported John for the past three years. Paul is moving away and will be leaving his job in two weeks. What can you do to prepare John for Paul’s move?

SESSION 2 – QUALITY OF LIFE: QUIZ

1. One way the IP can help an individual enjoy a good quality of life is by:

- A) Making sure they work only at jobs that pay good wages.
- B) Supporting the individual in the routines of daily living that give them feelings of comfort.
- C) Encouraging them to spend lots of private time away from others in the home.
- D) Starting off the morning with a hot cup of coffee and a donut.

2. A good example of a routine activity that the IP should honor and respect because it makes individuals more comfortable in their daily lives is:

- A) Setting small fires in the bedrooms of the home.
- B) Refusing to take medications when they are offered.
- C) Paying other people to be their friends.
- D) Taking a shower in the evening instead of the morning.

3. One effective way of helping individuals become friends with other people is to:

- A) Place an advertisement in the personal columns of the local newspaper.
- B) Offer to pay someone to be a friend of the individual.
- C) Encourage the individual to take part in activities they like outside the home.
- D) Insist that the individual join the choir at church.

4. Friendships are important because when individuals have good friends:

- A) Their health and sense of wellbeing often improves.
- B) The IP's job is made easier and less stressful.
- C) Individuals feel they have more power and control in their lives.
- D) All of the above.

5. Leisure and recreational activities are:

- A) Good ways for individuals to learn new skills.
- B) Important because they provide opportunities for earning small amounts of extra money.
- C) Not as important to an individual's quality of life as once was thought.
- D) None of the above.

6. One way the IP can help an individual enjoy leisure and recreational activities is by:

- A) Learning about the community's public transportation system.
- B) Helping them find a decent paying job in the community.
- C) Making sure the individual is away from the home during daylight hours.
- D) Having the individual get involved in the recreational activities that the IP likes to do.

7. The IP can help the individual pick out social or recreational activities to try out by:

- A) Appreciating the “gifts” and abilities of the individual rather than focusing on the individual’s limitations.
- B) Making a list of the individual’s limitations, so as to avoid activities that would be too difficult to do.
- C) Offering to try out the activities first, and then tell the individual about whether they are suitable.
- D) Making sure the individual takes their daily shower when they want to.

8. Support from family members for an individual is similar to support from an unpaid friend because both are examples of:

- A) Natural supports.
- B) Generic supports.
- C) Peer supports.
- D) Developmental supports.

9. When assisting an individual to take advantage of opportunities to do things out in the community, the IP should try to:

- A) Avoid any activity that can be broken down into small steps.
- B) Eliminate all risk of harm and danger in the community.
- C) Respect and honor the individual’s right to put himself or herself in danger, if that is what they really want to do.
- D) Reduce the risk of harm by breaking down the activity into small steps.

10. An example of what is meant by a “community connector” is:

- A) An IP who knows about recreational opportunities in the local community.
- B) The public transportation system in the community.
- C) Members of the third ring of the circle of support.
- D) An IP who respects and supports the individual in their important daily comfort routines.