



Student Resource Guide

11. Life Quality

Life Quality

OUTCOMES

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

- 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.

KEY WORDS

Key Word	Meaning	In My Own Words
Friend	A person who you like to be with and who likes to be with you. A person 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 to and benefiting from community life.	
Individual Routines	Things that people do every day, every week, month, or year.	
Intimacy	Relationships that are very close and familiar, and may involve consensual sex.	
Leisure	Free time for relaxation, fun, and recreation.	
Life Quality/ Quality of Life	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.	

KEY WORDS (CONT.)

Key Word	Meaning	In My Own Words
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, coworkers, and associations of one kind or another, for example, churches, clubs, and community service organizations.	
Transition	The process of moving from one important life stage to another.	

A C T I V I T Y

What Do You Want to Know?

Directions: *Think about the topic of this training session. Answer the first two questions in the space provided below. You will come back to this page at the end of the session to answer the last question.*

What do you **already know** about life quality?

What do you **want to know** about life quality?

To be answered at the end of the session, during review:
What **have you learned** about life quality?

Life Quality

Throughout 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 a DSP 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 DSP 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 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 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

Directions: 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. Be very specific. You will be sharing this list with a partner; so don't include things that might embarrass you.

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16.

Why Friends Are Important

Everyone needs **friends** that they can talk to and with whom they can spend time and have fun. A **friend** is a person who you like to be with and who likes to be with you. A person with whom you have fun. Someone who supports you and offers a sympathetic ear when you have problems that you want to talk about. 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 IPP. 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 individuals and staff 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 individuals with disabilities 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 with disabilities 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 individuals with disabilities 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. People without disabilities typically list 5 to 10 people, while individuals with disabilities 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: *On the next page, you will see a series of circles. Follow the instructions below to identify types of friendships you have in your life.*

Center Circle - Most Important People

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, sibling, 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.

Second Circle - Good Friends

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.

Third Circle - Acquaintances

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.

Fourth Circle - Paid Support

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.

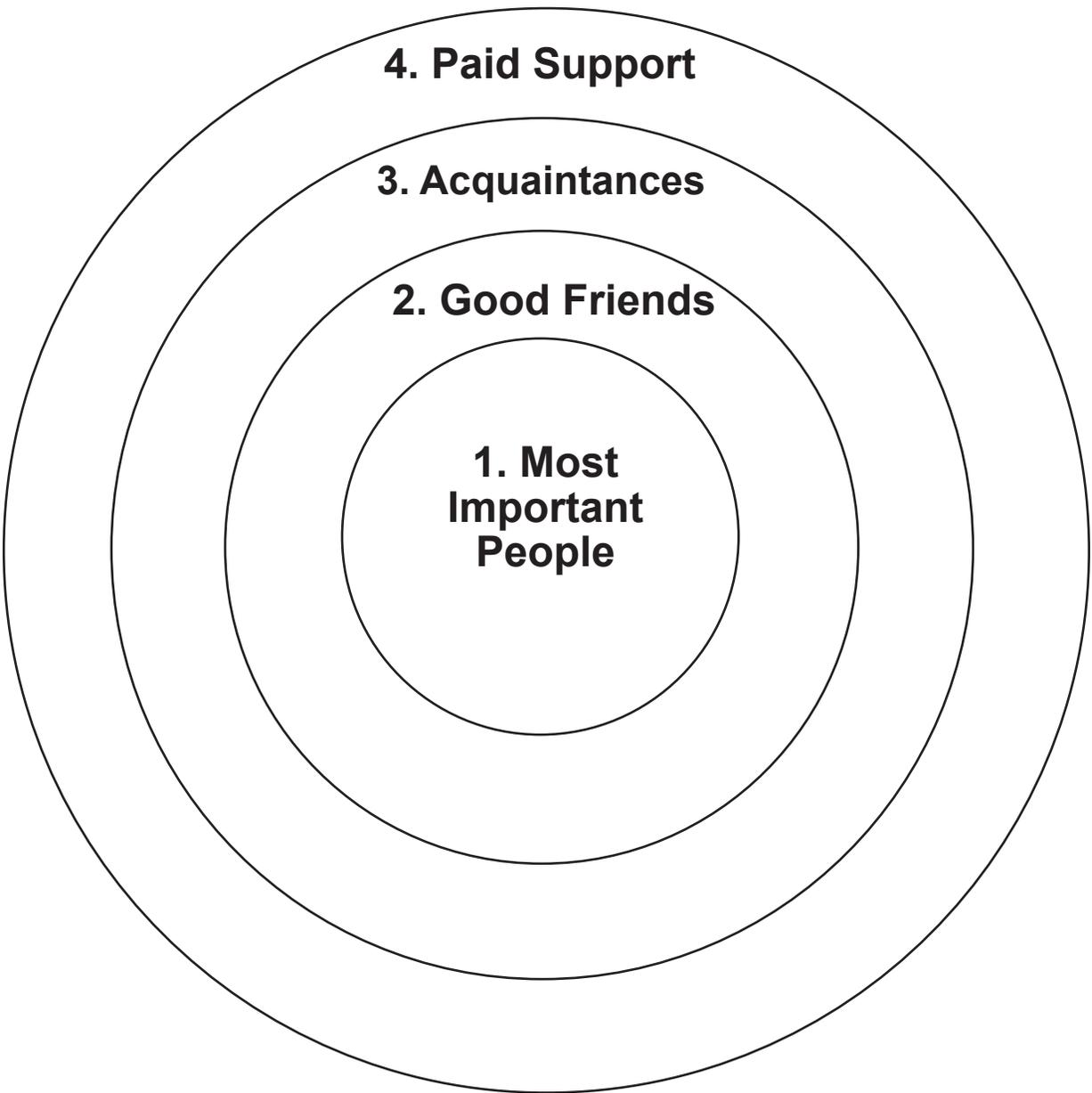
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES



For more information on making and keeping Friends, follow this link to the SafetyNet article on Friends: <http://www.ddssafety.net/everyday-life/community/friends>

For more information on Different Kinds of Friendship, follow this link to the SafetyNet article on Different Kinds of Friendships:
<http://www.ddssafety.net/everyday-life/community/healthy-friendships-and-relationships>

Circle of Friends



How to Make 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. DSPs 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

How Can the DSP Help?

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 talking to the individual 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 DSP 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 do not let this stop you from helping the individual to make friends. Many DSPs find that once the individual finds an activity that he or she can share with others, that activity becomes the basis for the friendship.

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 (cont.)

Children and Friendship

Being with and playing with non-disabled children both at school and in the neighborhood is often the best way for children with disabilities to form friendships. When children are given opportunities to be with and play with non-disabled children of their own age, it opens the door to the formation of friendships that often last through childhood.

Children are remarkably willing to include a child with a disability if they are encouraged and supported to do so. Often it can help to plan special events or parties in the neighborhood or provide treats to all the kids to help them 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

Activity: Developing Friendships

Directions: *Pair up with a classmate. Listen to Peter's story. List things the DSP did to support Peter in developing friendships.*

Peter's Story

Peter lives in a home with five other men. Several of the men go to church together each Sunday. The church choir director noticed that Peter had a wonderful voice and wanted to include him in the choir. The DSP 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 DSP 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 DSP 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.

Developing Friendships: A Tool for Beginning

This tool is designed to help individuals and the DSPs who support them create opportunities for individuals to make friends. A blank copy can be found in Appendix 11-A.

- *What are your strengths?*

- *Interests? (You may pick the most important interest and answer the rest of the questions.)*

- *Where are there people with similar interests?*

- *When do they get together?*

- *What support do you need to participate with them?*

- *Who else can help?*

- *My first step is...*

Friendship (cont.)

Intimate Relationships

Friendships can and do grow into intimate relationships. **Intimacy** is relationships that are very close and familiar, and may involve consensual sex. Most people have very strong personal beliefs about intimacy. These beliefs originate from religious, cultural, familial, and/or other experiences. Your job as a DSP is not to change the beliefs of others to yours, but to talk with the individuals you support about their beliefs and to provide accurate information about issues related to intimacy.

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 planning team should be involved to provide assistance in supporting the individual in their personal choices.

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

Leisure is free time for relaxation, fun, and recreation. 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 individuals with disabilities. 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.

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 when needed.
- Providing for or arranging transportation.
- Assisting and encouraging the development of natural supports.
- Mitigating risk.

Taking Risks

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, DSPs need to be aware of and be prepared for risks common to everyone and risks that are unique to an individual's circumstances.

As you learned in the Risk Management sessions, you can mitigate or reduce risk by discussing the potential risk with the individual, getting the help of the individual's planning team to assess the risk, and developing 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.

A C T I V I T Y

My Own Leisure/Recreation Style

Directions: Circle your answers below. Then divide into pairs and share your answers.

I prefer activities where I am:

Alone	With a couple of friends	In a big group
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When I have free time, I: (circle as many as you wish)

Watch TV	Go to the health club	Read a book
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Work on a hobby	Go out to dinner	Travel
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Go on a walk	Listen to music	Take a class
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Make something	Hang out with friends	Camp
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Take a nap	Play on a team	Go shopping
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Hike	Go to a concert	Play board games
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Think	Watch sports	Play with pets
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(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.
- Learn about the community's transportation, including bus schedules and any special transportation like "Dial-a-Ride."
- Find out about opportunities for classes and activities through Parks and Recreation, the local community college, and Adult Education.
- Contact 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 most people in community groups will be welcoming once they understand 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.

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.

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 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 with disabilities 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 a DSP's assistance, but often they require a jump start from the DSP. 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 DSP 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. There are people whose job is to be a coach for a worker with a disability. The job coach can provide training to coworkers if necessary, and assistance in connecting within the workplace.

Co-workers can contribute to the quality of an individual's work life and relationships may develop that extend to life after work such as bowling leagues and parties.

ACTIVITY

A Good Match!

Directions: Divide into groups of 3-4. Each group will be assigned to read one of the following scenarios. Circle the natural supports you identify in each scenario. If the individual has no natural support, write a suggestion for how to 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 8 and he is all boy! He likes to roughhouse with his dad and older brothers, 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 in school to help him stay focused on what the teacher is saying and to do the assignments. He can read a little and always chooses books or magazines about sports. He is very coordinated and can run quite fast. However, staff are 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 lives in a home with five other men. Sam 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.
- Sherril** is 17 and lives with a foster family. 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 regular high school, where she has an attendant support in her classes. She intends to transfer to a junior 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.
- Diego** is in his mid-30s. He has a great smile. People say his smile "lights up the room!" When he really likes something, he smiles and yells in delight. When he doesn't like something, he cries and screams. He eats without assistance, but needs assistance with toileting. He likes to walk and often takes walks with the staff. He likes going places in the car, especially to Dairy Queen. He goes to an adult day activity program, where he cries and screams 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 work table. On the days when the music therapist comes by, he is always happy and smiling. He loves hitting his hand on the table in time to the music.

A Good Match Worksheet

Directions: Draw a line between each name 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 to learn how to get college scholarships.

Susan

2. Taking a drumming class.

3. Fishing with one other person.

4. Joining a soccer team through the "Y."

Don

5. Learning to make ceramics.

6. Going on a "garden walk" with the garden club.

Sam

7. Joining Cub Scouts.

8. Join a photography class.

9. Taking a class about classical music.

Sherril

10. Going to a rock concert.

11. Joining the Computer Club.

Diego

12. Taking a class to learn to swim.

Life Quality

Transition is the process of moving from one important life stage to another. Changes related to each of these life stages are stressful for all people and may be more so for people with developmental disabilities.

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 with and without disabilities 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 DSP.** For example, when individuals move from their family home to a community care facility, they are experiencing an often difficult transition. The success of this transition is dependent upon the kind of emotional support an individual is given during this time, as well as careful planning for individual needs.

Infancy and Childhood

While not many infants move from their family home to a licensed community care home, it does happen. This is usually an extremely difficult and painful experience for parents. The infant may be so medically challenged that his or her parents feel unable to provide the support needed while, at the same time, meeting the needs of the rest of the family. Parents will often have conflicting feelings about turning over the responsibility of parenting to another person. This can result in considerable stress.

For DSPs who support infants, it is important to listen carefully to what parents are saying and to try to accommodate their needs as well as the needs of the infant. DSPs must be patient in developing a relationship with the parents. The infant's quality of life will be affected by how successfully you support both the infant and the parents in this transition.

The life of the toddler and preschooler with developmental disabilities often includes an array of "professional helpers," including the Regional Center Service Coordinator. Often it is difficult to distinguish who all the professionals are and the programs they represent. This frequently seems intrusive to the parent or provider caring for the young toddler or preschooler. It is sometimes easy for misunderstandings to happen if you or the parent lose sight of the fact that the child is the number one concern.

When working with children, you need to be familiar with what is happening at the child's school. Often a parent's major concern about their child during this stage is safety. You must be able to show a parent that the child is safe while he or she is experiencing the activities of children for a particular age. This works best when parents are involved in

Transitions (cont.)

planning and decision making. Again, the relationship with parents is important for both the parents and the child. Make sure the parent feels welcome in the home and know about important events. Invite them over for special celebrations. And always be available to talk to the parents and share information about their child.

Adolescents

DSPs who support adolescents must become knowledgeable about what typical teens are doing and figure out ways to support the young people they work with in as many of those things as possible. This can be quite challenging, but it is very important to continue to encourage and support the teenager to be a participant in school and community activities.

You can find out about school clubs, meeting dates and times, and can help arrange for transportation. You may also come up with good ideas about how to support a young person in other activities such as sports, music, and art. Also be on the lookout for ways an adolescent can make a contribution to the community. Volunteering can have many positive effects that last for years. Friendships and even job possibilities can come from volunteer experiences.

You may observe changes in the teenager or adolescent that need the support of the person-centered planning team or a professional. Identify talents and interests, and assist with making plans for transition from high school and follow up with whatever support services may be needed to assist the teenager or adolescent through this stage of development.

Considerations for Supporting Adolescents

- Gets enough sleep eats a well-balanced diet.
- Obtains information and materials for good grooming.
- Obtains accurate information about tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.
- Knows how to swim.
- Never swims alone .
- Wears sunscreen SPF 15 or higher outdoors.
- Wears a helmet when riding a bike or motorcycle.
- Avoids loud music, especially with headsets.
- Has accurate information about sex.
- Does homework and participates in regular school activities.
- Has open line of communication with adults.

Transition to Adulthood

When a teenager is transitioning to adulthood, you should support the individual in planning for his or her next steps. Careful planning is necessary for a successful transition. You can help the individual to explore the answers to questions about his or her future such as:

- What does the individual want to do?
- What are his or her interests and abilities?
- What work, learning, or training opportunities are available in the community?
- What are the family's hopes and desires for the individual?
- What services and supports are in place and what would be needed for these plans to be successful?

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 individual 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 work 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 individuals 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 with disabilities also experience grief and loss. This can occur during a life transition like when an individual moves from their family home to a residential facility, when a family member or friend dies, when a favorite roommate or a DSP 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, seeking 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.

ACTIVITY

Loss and Action

Directions: *Divide into groups of 3-4 people. Read the scenario that your group is assigned and write down at least two things you could do to help support the individual experiencing grief.*

Diego

Diego is a man in his late 40s. He lived with his mother until he was 35. 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 lives with are getting tired of this and almost no one wants to discuss it any longer. As a DSP, what could you do to support Diego?

Irene

Irene is 70 and has lived in the same group home for several years. Before that, she lived in a developmental center. 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 group 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 DSP 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?

Sarah

Sarah is a 9-year-old little girl who has been in three small family homes over the past year due to her numerous medical and behavioral challenges. She lived with her mother until she was 8. Due to her mother's own medical problems, and the fact that she had other children as well, Sarah's mother felt that she could no longer care for Sarah at home. Sarah had gotten heavier, and thus was less mobile and more difficult to move. She is incontinent of both bowel and bladder and has frequent accidents. Due to medical complications, Sarah has frequent visits to the physician's office and has been hospitalized twice during the past year. Her behavior has become increasingly more difficult. She has not made any friends at school and does not get along well with the other children in the home. Sarah is constantly acting out by hitting other children, refusing to participate in group activities, or refusing to do homework unless an adult is right with her to supervise. What kinds of things can the DSP do to support Sarah?

A Life Scrapbook

Think about the kinds of pictures and mementos that you keep in a box or a photo album. Do you have pictures of your parents and relatives? Your own baby pictures? Pictures of significant events in your childhood? Graduation pictures? Wedding pictures? Pictures of your children? Birthdays? These pictures or mementos mark the many milestones in your life so that you can remember. These memories are important to our quality of life.

As a DSP, you can help an individual with life transitions by gathering and taking pictures and other mementos to assist each individual to develop a Life Scrapbook. Life Scrapbooks are, very

simply, a scrapbook that an individual might put together that can help the individual stay connected with family and help the individual stay in touch with important memories.

Talk to the child or adult and think about things that are important, depending upon the age and interests of the child or adult. A Life Scrapbook gives an individual the opportunity to relive their memories many times and to share them with others in a meaningful way. If an individual does not have photos or mementos, you might help them create a scrapbook by clipping pictures from books or magazines that are similar to activities and places that the individual lived, worked, and played.

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 a DSP have a unique opportunity to make this vision a reality.

Session 11 Quiz**Life Quality**

- 1. What are some of the main functions of the DSP in supporting individuals quality of life?**
 - A) Help with job interviews and new careers
 - B) Provide choices, safety and new skill training
 - C) Teach them how to exercise, eat well, and take vitamins
 - D) Help with planting, shopping, and singing
- 2. How does the DSP support the individual through transitions from one life stage to another?**
 - A) By giving them a book about transitions
 - B) By taking them to a psychiatrist
 - C) By ignoring them until the transition is complete
 - D) By providing emotional support
- 3. How can a Life Scrapbook assist an individual with quality of life?**
 - A) It helps the individual remember to take their medication
 - B) It helps the individual learn the bus route to the store
 - C) It helps the individual stay connected with family and in touch with important memories
 - D) It helps the individual get involved in the community
- 4. What is a consideration in supporting quality of life for an adult individual?**
 - A) Listening carefully to what the individual's parents are saying
 - B) Doing homework and participating in school activities
 - C) Joining school clubs
 - D) Creating opportunities for community involvement
- 5. What is the DSP's responsibility in supporting an individual's daily routines?**
 - A) Ensure that preferred routines are respected and supported
 - B) Teach the individual daily routines that the DSP prefers
 - C) Ensure the individual brushes their teeth every night
 - D) Allow daily routines that are convenient for the staff
- 6. What activities provide opportunities for individuals to develop friendships?**
 - A) Taking a painting class
 - B) Reading a book
 - C) Using headphones to listen to music
 - D) Buying new clothes

- 7. Which skill would help the individual to be a good friend?**
- A) Listening and showing interest
 - B) Getting angry easily
 - C) Being disrespectful of the rights of others
 - D) Interrupting others
- 8. What are natural supports?**
- A) Assistance provided by family, friends, coworkers and associations
 - B) Assistance provided to help individuals make friends
 - C) Assistance provided by the DSP and medical personnel
 - D) Assistance that is provided during daily routines
- 9. How can the DSP help the individual identify leisure and recreational activities?**
- A) Providing financial support
 - B) Finding activities that are available in another city
 - C) Providing natural supports
 - D) Getting to know what is available in the community
- 10. What can the DSP do to support the inclusion of individuals in their community?**
- A) Encourage the individual's involvement in community groups for which they have genuine interest
 - B) Encourage the individual to take foreign language classes
 - C) Insist that the individual get involved in many activities, including those for which they have no interest
 - D) Enroll the individual in every class at the YMCA

Appendices



Developing Friendships: A Tool For Beginnings

This tool is designed to help individuals and the DSPs who support them create opportunities for individuals to make friends.

- *What are your strengths?*

- *Interests? (You may pick the most important interest and answer the rest of the questions.)*

- *Where are there people with similar interests?*

- *When do they get together?*

- *What support do you need to participate with them?*

- *Who else can help?*

- *My first step is...*