

Section One
Self- Direction
Training Manual

*Relating to People with
Disabilities*

How to Relate to People with Disabilities

1. Are we really different?
2. What makes disabled people disabled?
3. Watch your language
4. The road you take is yours
5. Steps to life planning
6. Circles of Support
7. My life goals

ARE WE REALLY DIFFERENT?

By Satarra Alexander, Redemption Christian Academy

Do you have legs, eyes, and a mouth?

Can you walk, see, and loudly shout?

Do you have a nose in order to breathe?

And do you have teeth in order to eat?

Do you have hands and fingers to touch?

All of the things that you love so much.

If you have all of the above are we really different?

I can feel pain and hurt and can even have fun.

I have emotions, feelings, ideas.

It might take me longer to process, but what others say I can hear.

It may take me longer to understand.

Yet I have problems just like other humans.

Are we really different?

I sometimes can't see my way.

It's as dark as night when it has just turned day.

Sometimes I can't hear, although you are next to me.

And I might not look the way you expect I should be.

Some days I can't walk, I ride in a wheelchair.

I often wear a wig so my head is not bare.

I go to a special person who helps heal my pains.

Everyone needs help, everyone's the same.

Are we really different?

Do you cry when someone hurts you inside? And when someone praises you, don't you feel pride?

Don't you laugh at jokes and have fun with friends?

And don't you wish good times would never end?

Don't you like doing things that others do?

And don't you smile when others compliment you?

Maybe I'm not all the same, but does it really show?

Are we really different?

I don't think so!

What Makes Disabled People Disabled?

Introduction

In recent years, much attention has been given to the rights of people with disabilities. Legislation and efforts of many consumer groups have spurred facilities modifications to ease access for people with physical impairments, affirmative action to increase employment opportunities and television programming to include realistic role portrayals for people with disabilities.

These developments - resulting from the recognition that people with disabilities are indeed valuable and equal members of society - have helped people who have disabilities lead happier, more productive lives.

For the most part, however, many non-disabled people still view individuals with disabilities as lesser people - to be pitied, feared or ignored. These attitudes may arise from fear of someone who is different in any way or simply from a lack of knowledge about disabilities. Despite good intentions and educational programs, negative stereotypes and callous behavior remain.

This brochure gives suggestions on how to relate to people with disabilities, how to look beyond the disabilities, and look at the ability and personality - the things that make each one of us unique and worthwhile.

Attitudes and Barriers

A person with a disability is - first and foremost - a person. While a particular disability may limit certain types of activities, it does not make the individual any less a person. Ten to fifteen percent of the population has a disability such as blindness, deafness, paralysis, cerebral palsy, neurological disorder, arthritis, mental illness, arthritis and mental retardation.

An attitude is a feeling or emotion which a person has towards a fact, situation or person. Awareness is the knowledge or perception about a situation, object or person. Attitudinal barriers are a way of thinking or feeling that blocks or limits people's perception of the potential of people who have disabilities to be capable, independent individuals. Attitudinal barriers include prejudice, ignorance, fear, insensitivity, bigotry, stereotyping, misconception, discrimination, dislike, insecurity, discomfort, tension and intolerance.

Positive attitudes and awareness help non-disabled people in their contacts and relationships with people who have disabilities. Attitudes which are insensitive and prejudicial produce poor relationships. A person may not be aware of biases or negative attitudes and may express them in words or actions. Use sign language only if you are qualified. Otherwise, incorrect information may be conveyed. If all else fails, use a pad and pencil to communicate.

Blind or Visually Impaired

Blind or visually-impaired people rely on their other senses to perceive the world round them.

When you are with a person who is blind or visually impaired:

- Let the individual know of your presence by introducing yourself.
- Orient the individual upon arrival concerning the surroundings and indicate possible guideposts.
- Always speak directly to the person who is blind. Never shout! Just because the person who is visually- impaired or blind can't see you, doesn't mean that he/she can't hear you.

- Don't be afraid to use terms such as "see you soon". Everyday words relating to vision are used by blind people themselves.
- Offer assistance, but be guided by the individual's response. If assistance is needed, offer your arm rather than pulling them along behind you or pushing them ahead of you.
- Be specific in giving directions. It is useless to point or give visual landmarks. If the individual must take a turn, state whether it should be left or right.
- Walk alongside and slightly ahead of the blind or visually impaired person you are assisting.
- Avoid escalators or revolving doors if possible. These can be disconcerting and dangerous.
- Assist the individual on stairs by guiding a hand to a banister.
- When guiding an individual who is blind to a chair, place his/her hand on the back or arm of the chair.
- Never leave an individual who is blind in an open area. Lead the person to the side of a room or to a landmark from which he/she can obtain a direction for travel.
- Under no circumstances should you leave an individual who is blind without saying so! Otherwise, the blind person may be talking when no one is listening or even present.
- Remember: One should never pet, feed, talk to or call the dog guide without the permission from the owner. The dog is "on duty" and this may disrupt the dog's concentration.

When communicating with a person with cerebral palsy, here are a few tips:

- Be yourself.
- Speak directly to the individual, not to a friend or companion.
- Try to give your whole, unhurried attention if the person has difficulty speaking.
- Do not complete the speaker's sentences. Let the person finish.
- Do not be afraid to ask the person to repeat something if you do not understand their speech.

Mental Illness

Mentally ill people are people whose emotional or mental abilities to cope with life are impaired, usually only for a short time. Mental illness is not the same as mental retardation. Most people recover from a physical illness or disease. Usually, you will not know that a person was ever mentally ill.

However, if you come in contact with someone who is having a mental or emotional crisis:

- Ask if anything is the matter and offer to talk.
- Offer to get the help of a friend, relative or clergy.
- Offer to obtain the services of a psychiatrist, psychologist or trained counselor.
- Do not call the police or an ambulance unless there is a clear indication that the person is potentially harmful to others or to themselves.

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a hidden disability and is a disorder of the central nervous system. Seizures are a primary characteristic of epilepsy, but they often can be controlled or prevented by the use of medication.

Most seizures last only a few minutes and many individuals receive enough of a warning to avoid falling or other injury.

If an individual has a seizure:

- Keep calm. Once a seizure has started, it cannot be stopped.
- Never restrain the person. Lay the person on his/her side.
- Clear the area of hard, sharp or hot objects which could injure the individual.
- Place a pillow or rolled-up coat under the person's head.

RETARD, RETARDATE OR RETARDED – Because some disabled people are at times considered awkward, this does not mean that they are retarded. Individuals who are mentally retarded prefer to be called by their own names.

SPASTIC - Some people who are disabled lack coordination, but only a product of the physical disability and should not be ridiculed.

UNFORTUNATE - This implies unlucky, unsuccessful or social outcast. Whether or not luck had anything to do with a person becoming disabled, he or she wants to be regarded as a real, likeable person.

VICTIM - Victims are people who are adversely affected by an uncontrollable force or agent. Persons who are disabled do not want to be considered as helpless victims but as people - with many worthwhile attributes.

Watch Your Language!

By Karen Spencer, MA, OTR

Language is powerful. It not only conveys information, but it reflects personal values and benefits. Americans have learned over the years how words can be used to convey racism, sexism and other stereotypes. Most people take pains to avoid language that directly degrades or misrepresents others. Despite the growing sensitivity, there is still insufficient awareness of terms and expressions that perpetuate a negative image of individuals with disabilities. Likewise, health care practitioners do not always recognize how language can be a positive goal to promote favorable attitudes toward those who use these services. Here are some suggestions:

Focus on the individual; don't let the disability become an identifying label.

<u>Don't Say</u>	<u>Do Say</u>
Jim is a quad	Jim has quadriplegia
My retarded daughter	My daughter, who has a developmental disability
He's spastic	He has spasticity
She's crazy	She has mental illness
He is an arthritic	He has arthritis
The disabled	People with disabilities
The deaf	People with deafness or hearing impairments

Avoid pitying and pejorative phrases

<u>Don't Say</u>	<u>Do Say</u>
She was stricken with MS	She had multiple sclerosis
He is a Polio victim	He has polio
My brother suffers from MD, he is crippled	My brother has muscular dystrophy John walks with crutches
Sue is confined to a wheelchair	She uses a wheelchair
David had a fit	David had a seizure

Use caution. Do not use labels that are uninformative and that trivialize an important part of a person's identity.

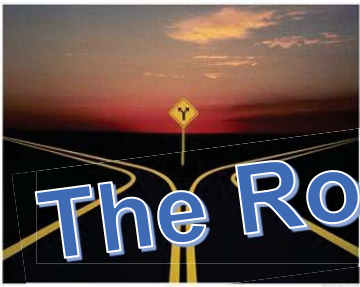
Examples:

She is so courageous

He is really brave

You're a special little lady

How wonderful that you have overcome your disability!



The Road You Take is Yours!



7 Reasons Why You Should Set Goals:

- 1. SUCCESS comes from goals.**
- 2. The main cause of LONG LIFE is having a life purpose.**
- 3. HAPPINESS requires goals.**
- 4. Goals give you ENERGY (motivation).**
- 5. Goals make you UNIQUE.**
- 6. Goal setting is FUN.**
- 7. Goals give your LIFE MEANING.**

Steps to Life Planning

Re-Evaluation

Look at your Planning

- Re-establish Career/Life planning
- What worked, or did not work?

Living/Working Independently

Successful Planning

- Community Involvement
- Lifelong career
- Have an apartment

Action Plan

Act on your plan

- Apartment search
- Fill out job applications

Decision Making

Create a Plan

- Set personal goals
- Connect with community Agencies

Research

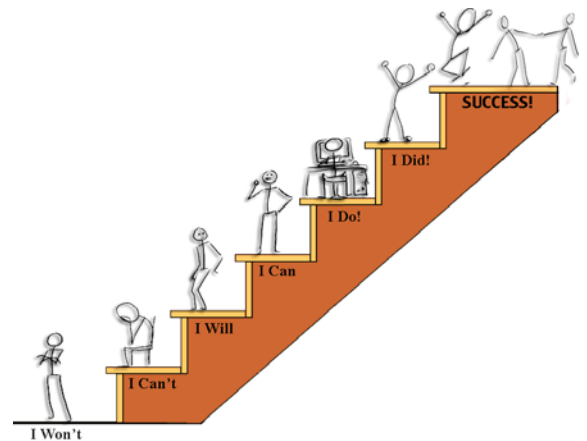
Examine your options

- Hands on experience
- Information search
- Visit Agencies

Self-Assessment

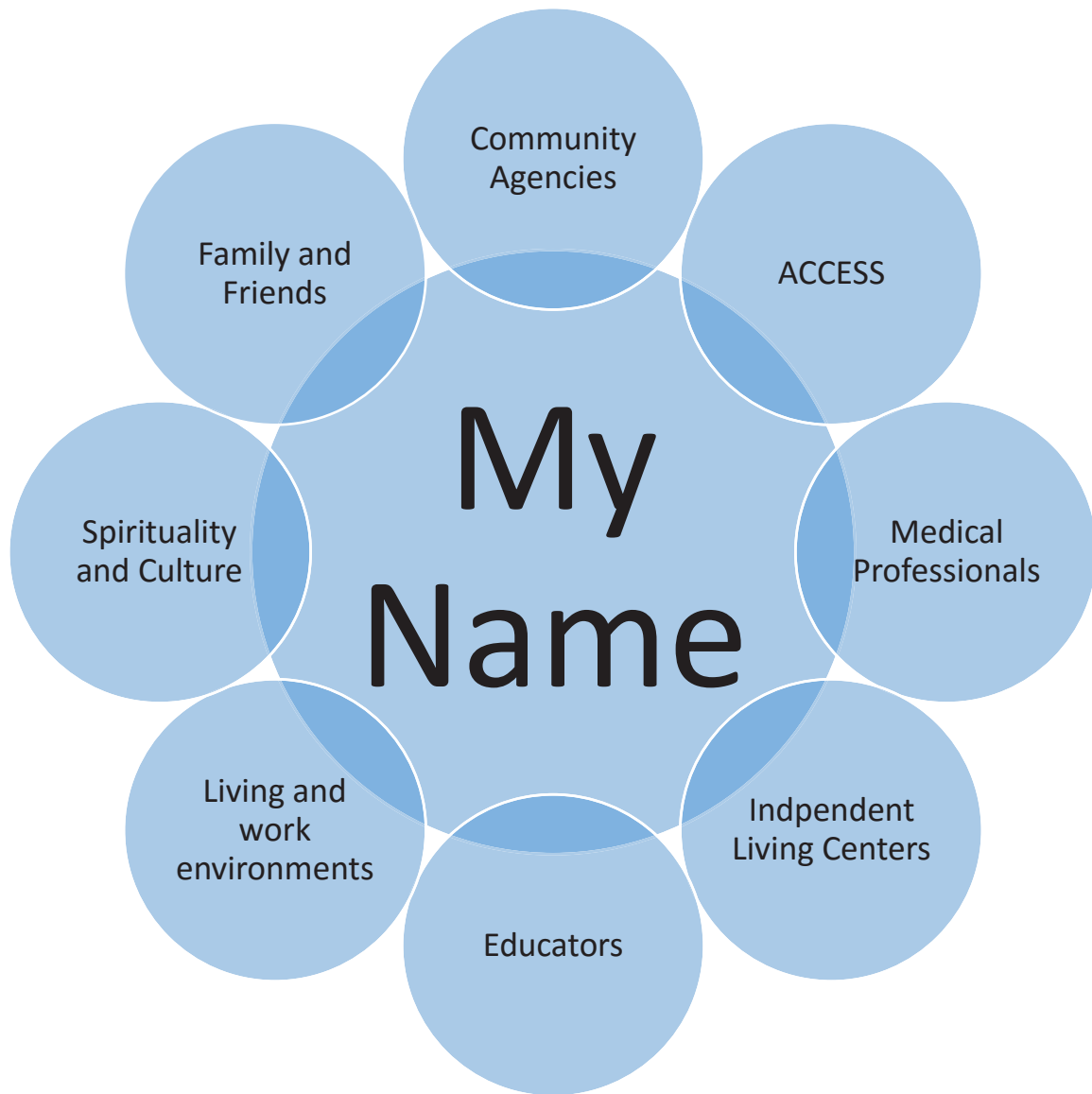
What would it take to make you happy?

- What dreams do you have?
- Attitudes/Personality
- Skills towards success



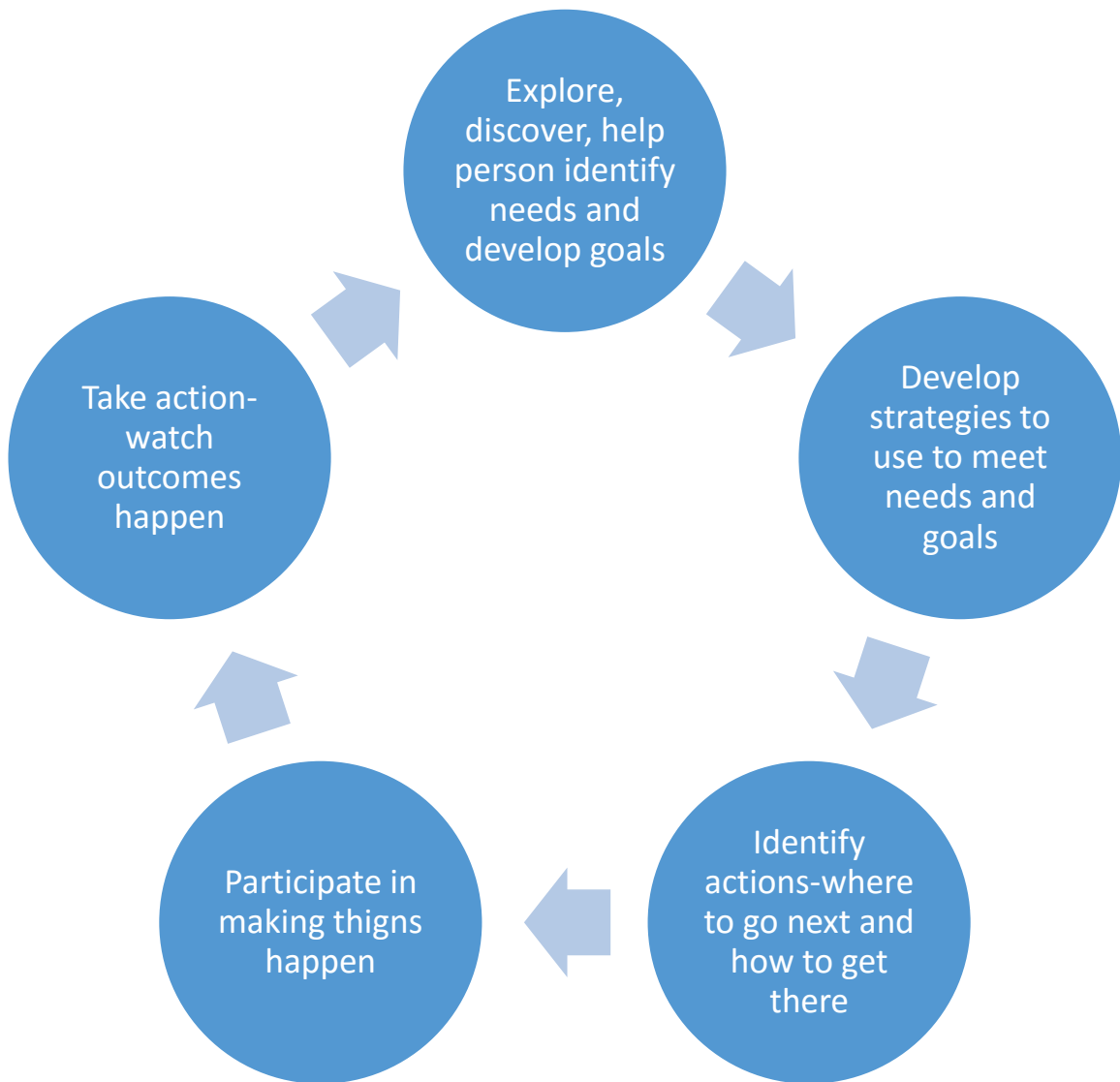
“Think about priorities! Think about the things you are happy with and the things you would like to change”.

Circles of Support



You inherit a Life Model from your parents and you spend a lifetime making it yours!

Once a Circle is Formed, then What?



READY, SET...GO!

Name: _____

My Life: An Exciting Adventure

My Life Goal(s) are:

My personal goals provide a sense of purpose toward my future. My goals are something I can achieve; I am motivated by my goals. I will continue to be persistent, hopeful, optimistic and connected with my goals.

What will I need to reach my goal(s)?