

Find Meaning in the Work



**Exercises to Encourage Reflection on
The Contribution of Direct Support Workers
To the Lives of People with Developmental Disabilities**

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Version 2.5

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CD-ROM Contents

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Meaning_of_Direct_Spt.ppt
 Beneficial_activities.ppt
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 Dilemmas.ppt
 Engagement.ppt
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 Next_step.ppt
 Positives.ppt
 Quilt.ppt
 Short_intro.ppt
 Worklife_line.ppt
 Workshop_example.ppt

Handouts Folder

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 Engagement_tally.pdf
 Positive_contrib.pdf
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Resources Folder

Common_understanding.pdf
 DS_meaning.pdf
 Holding_details.pdf
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 Good_work.pdf
 Good_work_guide.pdf
 Ground_rules.pdf
 Next_step.pdf
 Positives.pdf
 Quilt.pdf
 Worklife_line.pdf

About the Manual


Using the Manual

This manual includes a CD-ROM which contains:

- Powerpoint slides to support each activity. You will need a copy of Powerpoint and a suitable projector and screen. You can also print out each slide from Powerpoint as a transparency and use an overhead projector to show them.
- Adobe Acrobat files containing handouts and resource materials. You will need a copy of the most recent version of Acrobat Reader, which you can download free from www.adobe.com.

Throughout the manual...

 points to a file on the CD-ROM.

 points to a book or other resource with ordering information

[www](#) points to a website

The slides and handouts contain most of the content for presentations and instructions for the exercises. You may want to print out some or all of these

materials and add them to this notebook.

You have permission to reproduce any of the material on the CD-ROM for use in the reflections that you lead. The manual assumes that you are familiar with adding, rearranging, and transferring Powerpoint slides and printing handouts from Powerpoint and Acrobat Reader.

Please make these exercises and brief presentations your own. Modify the instructions to suit the group and your own style. Use your own examples and edit or add to slides to reflect your own experience or to present an important idea. Once you have selected the slides you want to use, you may want to print handouts from Powerpoint.

Supplies

If people work in small groups, you will need 3 different colors of cardstock to print instruction cards.

Most of the exercises invite people to make posters of their key ideas or to construct a record of their discussion.

Each group needs waterbased, chisel tip markers in different colors, big sheets of paper, and tape to stick their posters up on the wall where others can see them. A medium sized box of crayons for each group is a nice extra.

Demco (www.demco.com) is a reliable supplier of markers and rolls of art paper in quantities that make sense if you are doing these exercises with large groups or repeatedly. We like big rolls of 36" wide art paper –heavy to carry but a bigger work area and much cheaper to use than flip chart pads– Demco item number WS17139500 and "Classroom packs" of markers (25 each of 8 colors) Demco item number WS16480770.

We would be glad to hear about your experiences with these exercises and to have copies of the revisions and additions that you make. Contact us at rsa770@earthlink.net.

Beliefs, Purpose, and the Role of Reflection Leaders

We believe that ...

- ... direct support workers can make an important positive contribution to the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families.
- ... positive contributions result from good relationships between the direct support worker, the person they assist and the person's allies, and the other people with whom they share responsibility for providing assistance. Relationships form the context for the skilled performance of tasks necessary for a person to live a good quality life. Good relationships are also a key factor in attracting and retaining workers (see [Staff_Retention.pdf](#)). When people are at their best, these important relationships can be described as embodying care, competence, commitment to positive values, and continuity.
- ... opportunities to reflect on what is meaningful in direct service work are one important source of the learning that underpins good rela-

tionships. People who do direct support work can benefit from reflection on its meaning; so can people who manage or coordinate services; so can people with disabilities and their families.

- ... opportunities for reflection do not replace instruction in relevant skills and knowledge; and instruction does not replace structured opportunities for reflection.
- ... a sense of meaning cannot be poured into people. People construct meaning for themselves in focused conversation about important questions.

The purpose of these activities is to encourage and focus conversation about the meaning of direct support work so that participants can form a richer and more meaningful picture of the work of providing direct support to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

This purpose shapes the **role of the leaders** of these activities. Their task is to create an environment that sup-


ports discussion, to frame questions, to introduce tasks, and perhaps to facilitate discussion. It is not their role to teach specific content or to grade participant's answers. Listening to what people say about the work often provides good ideas for improving knowledge and skill or changing the work environment. Leave this important work for follow-up activities.

We have found that some people are initially uncomfortable with the responsibility for constructing their own account of meaning. Maybe this is because they are used to training where the person at the front of the room transmits information or teaches skills and checks for correctness. This way of teaching works well for many purposes, but it gets in the way of the work people need to do if they are going to learn from these activities. What counts is the leader's confidence that nearly everyone who is willing to think and speak about these questions will learn and will contribute to others' learning by doing so.



Resources

www The image above is slide 1 in both the short and the long introductions to the workshop. It was created by Beth Mount. Order a poster of this quilt, made with direct support workers, from www.capacityworks.com.

 *Common_Understanding.pdf* analyzes the workforce crisis and outlines the background for this manual.

www Current materials on Wisconsin's workforce initiative can be found at www.wcdd.org

Common Issues

Timing

Each of these exercises is designed to take between one and two hours for a small group.

Exercises can be extended or combined if there is more time for reflection. Some ideas about composing a workshop are on page 31.

Grouping

These exercises are intended for group discussion. Groups of five or six, comfortably seated in a circle, can usually gain from an exercise by exploring their different points of view.

A larger group can divide into groups of five or six, work on the tasks, and then share some of their discoveries. Sharing discoveries among groups can be done by...

... moving into a few minutes of large group discussion by asking a few people to contribute a thought that seemed especially important in their small group discussion

... putting key ideas from their work on a small group poster and either re-

porting them back or doing a gallery walk: giving people a few minutes to walk around, look at, and discuss the posters.

... writing each key idea on one post-it note and then clustering the post-its by themes on a whole group poster.

Setting

An exercise can be done in a team meeting or staff meeting. Several exercises can be done as an in-service day or a retreat.

When people do an exercise as part of a regular meeting, it is worth thinking about a way to set the activity apart from routine business. You might invite people to take a ten minute walk outdoors and come back to the reflection. You might play a few minutes of music or read a poem to shift people's attention from everyday work to a more reflective place. You might shift the seating arrangements into a different pattern.

Ground Rules

- Listen carefully, especially to people who have different ideas. The point is exploration, not a single answer.
- Think carefully about the question & say what is true for you - keep coming back to the question
- Make time and space to encourage others to talk about the question
- Think about how different ideas connect together, even if they seem to conflict or come from very different places
- Take care of yourself & each other

Resources

📖 For “how to’s” and practice exercises about making graphic records of a group’s thinking see *Hints for Graphic Facilitators*. Order from www.inclusion.com

📖 *Remembering the Soul of Our Work* is a collection of stories by direct support staff about the nature of their jobs. Order from www.options-madison.com/pages/publicat.html

📖 Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* offers a good discussion on the importance of reflection in relationship based work.

Leadership

If the group size and the number of skilled facilitators allows, guided discussion helps people move into deeper reflection. However, breaking larger groups into small leaderless teams with the primary responsibility for managing and recording their own discussion has also worked. In this format, the leader’s role is to manage the overall process rather than facilitate or record the discussion.

Ground Rules

The overall ground rules are the same for each exercise. Their aim is to encourage people both to express what is true for them and to connect their thoughts to those of others in the group. This helps people form a richer picture of whichever dimension of direct support work the exercise brings into focus.

Some people find these ground rules challenging. They don’t find it easy to listen to others, especially when others express different ideas. We have noticed that most groups get better at listening and connecting ideas with practice. Even a small step in the di-

rection of deeper listening and better ability to find patterns in diverse ideas and beliefs is a valuable result of doing the exercise.

A group that finds itself deeply stuck can sometimes benefit if the reflection leader joins in for a short while to model listening and responding in a way that highlights connections.

Posters


We have found that the task of summarizing key points in a poster can help people consolidate their reflections.

Lists of words or phrases are fine, and drawings often communicate even more powerfully. We make different colored markers and crayons and big sheets of paper available on the table tops and encourage people to draw images and key word phrases and to actually draw the connections among key ideas. We emphasize that the reason for drawing is to support thinking together, not to create art. We ask people to think of it as doodling creatively. We have noticed that once one person begins to draw, other people will follow suit.

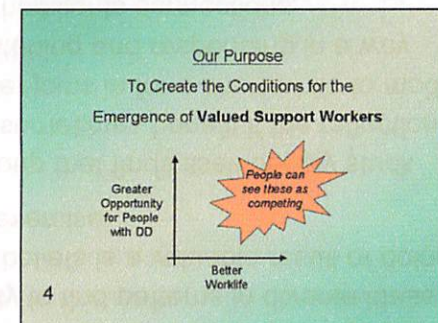
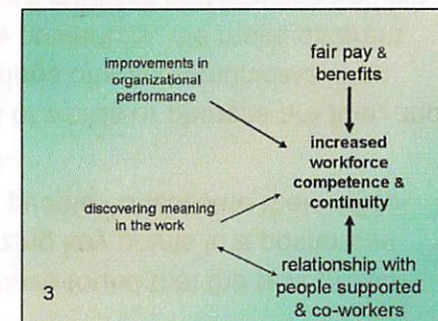
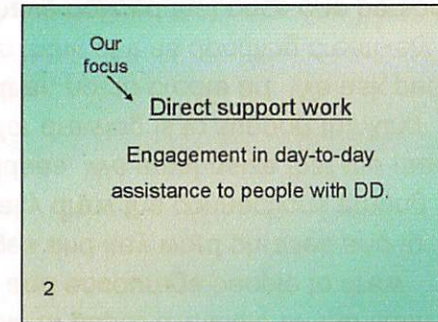
Setting the Scene

Direct support work is much more than doing a list of tasks. It's about making a positive difference in people's lives. There are real rewards as well as difficulties in this work. Sometimes we get so busy doing the work that we can lose sight of what it really means. This next couple of hours will give us a chance to step back from the busy-ness of our days and reflect on what our work means.

Setting the exercises in context helps people to do them well. The context can be set simply, as the word bubble above suggests. Or, if people are meeting for a longer period and will do several exercises, it can be more extensive.

 **Short_Intro.ppt** Both introductions include the title slide, "Finding Meaning in the Work" as the first slide and "Ground Rules" as the last slide.

2. Defines direct support as engagement in day-to-day assistance rather than identifying it with a particular job title. On this definition, many managers provide some direct support.
3. Connects finding meaning in the work with improving pay and promoting good relationships as necessary, complementary paths to increasing workforce competence and continuity.
4. Defines the overall purpose of workforce improvement as creating conditions for the emergence of valued support workers: conditions that offer workers the chance to have a better worklife AND support people with disabilities to experience greater opportunities. Some people think that it's not possible to go for better opportunities for people with disabilities before improving pay. Our experience says this is not necessarily so. Even poorly paid staff can make a positive difference to the people they assist and find satisfaction in doing so. The term "emer-



gence” means that good workers develop over time, through their relationships, and that the job of managers and policy makers is to figure out what working conditions will support this development. Policies, training, structures and systems are ways to organize. They can support the emergence of good workers by respecting and promoting good relationships or they can get in the way by treating workers as if they were part of a machine to produce prescribed tasks. This way of understanding things makes people with disabilities, family members and friends, and the staff person’s co-workers important teachers. It also highlights the importance of organizational culture, including the importance of taking regular time-out for reflection.

📄 **Long_Intro.ppt** includes the slides in the Short Introduction and expands the presentation of the dimensions of valued support work.

5. Defines the “up arrow” –Greater Opportunity for People– in terms of valued outcomes. These values come

from many discussions with people with disabilities, their families, and their allies. They reflect the principles adopted by the Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities. While most people would agree with the words here, there is much disagreement in practice about what the words mean. For example, some people would see a secure home as a bed in a group home, while others would see it as a home that a person rents or owns, with roommates the person chooses. It isn’t necessary to settle these differences here, simply acknowledge that they exist and that the differences leave plenty of room for increasing opportunity.

6. Identifies some of the influences on staff ability to make a difference by increasing opportunities. “Design of services” refers to the way services are structured: an agency contracted to offer individualized supports probably will find it easier to offer people control of their lives than one that is contracted to serve groups.

7. Defines the measures of a better worklife. These come from a series

Greater opportunity

- Contribution to community life
- Control of own life
- Secure home
- Support to learn
- Work & income
-

5

Greater opportunity depends on...

- ...relationships –ability to collaborate
- ...how staff see people
- ...staff competence & connections
- ...commitment to changing community to increase inclusion
- ...level of control people have over \$
- ...flexibility of services
- ...design of services

6

Better worklife

- Fair wages & benefits
- A sense that communication is good
- Respect for good work -sense of meaning
- Learning opportunities
- Rewards for increased knowledge & skills
- Job security

7

The “...” and “*” on these slides are not typos, they stand for “others you can think of”.


of discussions with direct support workers. “A sense that communication is good” includes the ideas that staff feel informed about what their organization is doing; staff feel involved in decisions that affect them and the people they support, and staff feel that they can talk openly about their concerns and get an honest response. “Respect for good work” includes both the respect of people they work with and the status the work has with the public.

8. Describes some of the influences on the measures of worklife quality.


[Optional activity: Have the group spend five minutes expanding this list. Keep track of their ideas on a wall chart.]


9. Identifies five types of environments for direct support in terms of the sort of worker that each environment is likely to produce. Keep in mind that this is not a way to classify people. It is a description of the probable consequences of different environments. The diagram argues that an environment that provides very little practical support to increase oppor-

tunity and offers poor working conditions is likely to produce staff who see themselves and act as “devalued keepers”.

10. Summarizes the five types of direct support environments. This is the place to emphasize that we aim for positive improvement in **both** working conditions and the capacity to increase opportunity: “We want to move into the upper right hand corner.” The following page is a copy of a summary handout ( Valued_Workers.pdf).

Resources

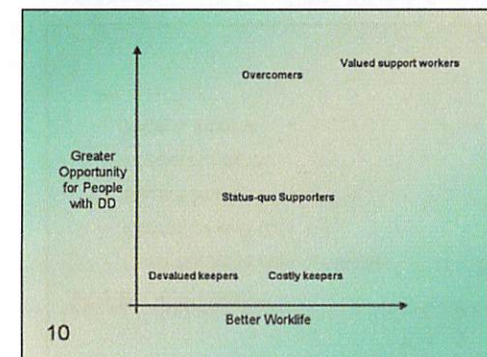
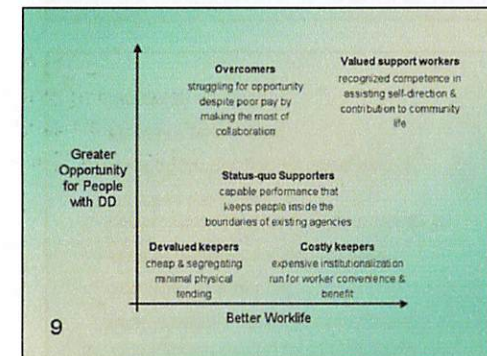
 *Common_Understanding.pdf* discusses the connections among the influences on job quality.

 *DS_meaning.pdf* summarizes a discussion with one agency’s direct support staff about the rewards of their work and what it takes to experience them.

Better worklife depends on...

- ...respect for contribution & high expectations
- ...level of rates for services
- ...agency policy on how much available \$ is invested in direct support
- ...how rigidly regulations & agency policies dictate staff activities
- ...level of investment in learning for direct support workers in agency & community

8...



Opportunity depends on...

- ...relationships – ability to collaborate
- ...how staff see people
- ...staff competencies & connections
- ...commitment to changing community to increase inclusion
- ...level of control people have over how service \$ is spent
- ...flexibility in use of resources
- ...design of services (e.g. support for people in own home vs group living)

Greater Opportunity for People with DD

- Contribution to community life
- Control of own life
- Secure home
- Support to learn
- Work & income

Working conditions depend on...

- ...respect for direct service workers contribution & high expectations for performance
- ...level of rates for services
- ...agency policy on how much of available \$ will go to direct support pay
- ...how rigidly regulations & agency policies dictate staff activities
- ...level of investment in learning for direct support workers in agency & community

Workforce Sectors
defined by balance of potentially competing values of better working conditions and greater opportunity for people with DD

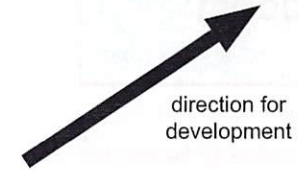
Overcomers
struggling for opportunity despite poor pay by making the most of collaboration

Valued support workers
competently assisting self-direction & contribution to community life

Status-quo Supporters
capable performance that keeps people inside the boundaries of existing agencies

Devalued keepers
cheap & segregating
minimal physical tending

Costly keepers
expensive institution-
alization run for worker
convenience & benefit



Better Working Conditions

- Fair wages & benefits
- Respect for good work
- Learning opportunities
- Rewards for increased knowledge & skills
- Job security

John O'Brien

Good Work

Purpose

To consider one or more of three questions that professionals should be able to answer, according to the GoodWork research project.

Preparation

- ✓ Review all three questions and decide which question or questions best suit the group and the time available.
- ✓ Allow 10-20 minutes to introduce the process and at least an hour to consider and debrief each question.
- ✓ Make sure the space is comfortably arranged to allow small groups of 6 to talk with each other.
- ✓ For each group, provide a copy of these guides on cardstock (it is easier to refer to the different guides if each is on a different colored cardstock).
 - 📄 Good_work.pdf (includes all three questions, print only those you need.)
 - 📄 Ground_rules.pdf

Resources

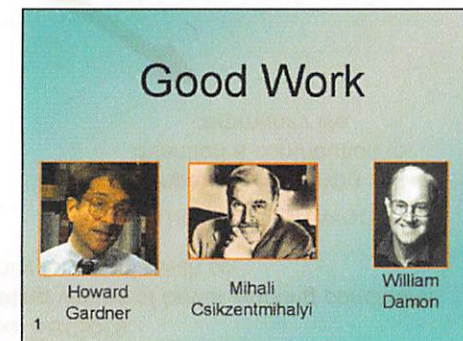
- 📄 For a detailed guide to the process –written for use in a facilitated small group but useful for leading any group working on this exercise– see Good_work_guide.pdf
- www The GoodWork™ Project website includes information about the project and some of its publications.
www.goodworkproject.org
- 📖 Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon (2001). *Good work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*. New York: Basic Books. This book discusses the approach we have taken in this exercise in detail.
- 📖 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2003). *Good business: Leadership, flow, and the making of meaning*. New York: Viking. Discusses how organizations can create the conditions for good work.

📄 Good_work.ppt

Add any introductory slides you have chosen to the slideshow (be sure to include Ground Rules).

1. Introduces the researchers and allows a brief overview of the project.

*Since 1995, three psychologists have studied the ways that professionals define and do work of high quality that benefits our whole society in times of rapid economic, political, and social change. Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (mi-hi chick-sent-me-hi) and William Damon have studied scientists, lawyers and journalists, but their framework for understanding professional work can help direct support workers build their own tradition. This framework identifies **three basic questions that capable professionals should be able to answer.***



2. Defines what the project means by good work: both competent performance and social benefit are necessary to good work. In order for our work to benefit society we need both skills and values to sustain us. Our organizations need to pay attention to the ways direct support workers become proficient in the tasks they do and to the ways that workers learn and practice the values that make their work a contribution to community life.

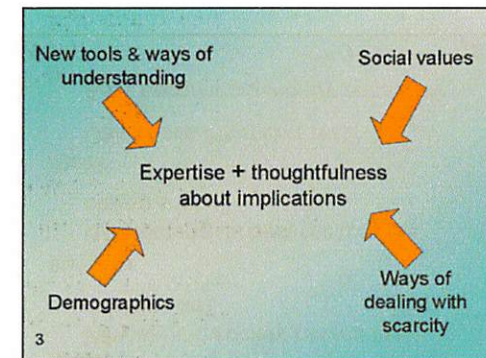
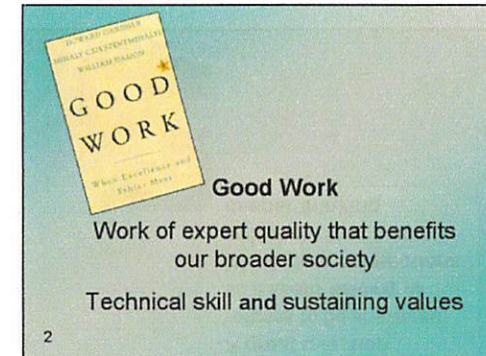
Review the next three slides and decide how much of their content will be helpful to the group you are working with. See [Good_work_guide.pdf](#) for a minimal introduction.

3. Identifies some of the forces that press on all of the professional work in our society and make our work environment dynamic and constantly changing. These forces include:

- **Demographics:** a bigger population, more diverse cultures and languages in more places, a growing number of people becoming disabled as they become elders, much longer lives for most

people with disabilities. This adds up to a rapidly growing need for personal assistance workers and rising long term support costs.

- **Ways of dealing with scarcity:** more attempts to deal with budget shortfalls by implementing more ways to increase efficiency through such means as managed care; more rationing; more use of markets as a way to manage. This adds up to greater uncertainty for agencies and more pressures to see the work as mechanical.
- * **Changing social values:** more legally defined rights; more use of the courts; some evidence of a trend for people to trust professionals and strangers less and less; more regulations; greater tolerance of diversity.
- **New tools and ways of understanding:** Recognition of the rights of people with developmental disabilities and of their potential to contribute to community life. Greater emphasis on choice and individualization of assistance. New possibilities in assistive tech-



nology and in different ways to organize services (supported employment, supported living, inclusive education). Conflicts about how these apply.

4. Many think that people who do direct support work should be seen and treated as direct support professionals. If this is to mean something more than a different job title, those who do the work and those who value the work have to identify what it is that makes direct support a profession. The *Good Work* book identifies three core issues and three questions that all professions need to answer.
 - Professionals have a socially recognized **mission**. One way to define the mission in direct support work is to ask, **“Why should society reward the work that we do?”** [This has been a very difficult question for many groups to answer.]
 - Professionals define their own **standards**. One way of discover professional standards is to ask, **“Who among us best realizes the calling and why?”** [This

question has been the easiest for groups to answer.]

- Professions shape a person’s sense of who they are. They are not just matters of the kind of tasks a person does, they are matters of **identity**. Membership in a profession provides an important frame for making ethical judgments. (The mirror test: “If I do this will I be able to look at myself in the mirror and see a person who upholds the values of my profession.”) They are also a frame for self-evaluation (Am I becoming a worthy ancestor?). **“Am I becoming a worthy ancestor?”** is an important question because many of this generation of direct support workers are among the first to assist people to contribute to community life in individualized ways.

If you decide to omit the last three slides, pick up the slideshow here.

5. Judith Snow, a disabled philosopher and activist, has an important point about the kind of question we will have a conversation about today. By reflecting on one or more of these


Mission
Why should society reward the work we do?

Standards
Who among us best realizes the calling & why?

Identity
Can I pass the mirror test?
Am I becoming a worthy ancestor?

4 Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001

A great question refuses to be answered; so it keeps leading us into deeper connections with each other & into deeper thinking.



5 Judith Snow

questions we will come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work we do. Even if you are not sure about whether it is a good idea to consider direct support work a profession, these are great questions. Our job now is to discover what we believe by saying what we think and listening to others and then seeing how our ideas connect.

6. Review the ground rules and get agreement on them. Refer people to the card or poster that includes the ground rules.

Pick the slide that includes the question you have chosen and refer people to the cards or the poster that contains the question.

Remind people that brief, carefully chosen stories can say a great deal. "She really listens to the people she supports" is a good start, but everyone will learn more if the next couple of minutes provide particular examples of her listening and its effects: "For example, I remember the time that she..."

- 7a. "Who among us best realizes the calling and why?"

- 7b. "Why should society reward the work that we do?"

- 7c. "Am I becoming a worthy ancestor?"

8. Reviews the process people will follow. This process is also on a card on each group's table or on a poster.

After collecting some of the key ideas, either close the session or move into a break and on to the next question.

Ground Rules

- Listen carefully, especially to people who have different ideas. The point is exploration, not a single answer.
- Think carefully about the question & say what is true for you - keep coming back to the question
- Make time and space to encourage others to talk about the question
- Think about how different ideas connect together, even if they seem to conflict or come from very different places
- Take care of yourself & each other

6

Which workers best realize the calling & why?

Think of someone whose actions help set the standard you use to identify the best in direct support work.

Then tell a story about something specific that shows something important about why this person best realizes the calling of offering direct support.

7a

Why should society reward the kind of work we do?

Tell a story of a specific moment in your experience of direct support that says something important about the real value that the work contributes to our society.

7b

What makes me a worthy ancestor for future generations of practitioners?

How do I now manage dilemmas & contribute to exemplary practice & how do I help to develop a next generation of capable & committed direct support workers?

7c

Think of a specific event in your experience of direct support that says something about the question.

Each team member takes 2-3 minutes to tell the story of that event.

After each story, pause briefly, ask yourself silently, "What did I hear? What did I learn?"

Team makes a poster: "What do we learn about the answer to our question from thinking about our stories?"

When discussion slows down: "What else is important to answer our question?"

What key ideas do we want to share? Put them on a poster & hang it up on the wall.

8



Beneficial Activities

Purpose

To reflect on the forces that affect direct support workers ability to engage in activities that increase the chances of good outcomes for people with disabilities.

Preparation

If the group is large...

- ✓ Print  Ground_rules.pdf and  Beneficial_activities.pdf on card-stock. Printing in different colors makes reference easier.
 - ✓ Arrange comfortable places for groups of 6 to sit and work. The groups will be making posters, so they will need either wall space that they can tape their paper on and see, or a table top they can work on comfortably, or an easel.
 - ✓ Each group needs a set of markers and at least three big sheets of paper.
- If you are facilitating a small group...
- ✓ Copy the ground rules onto a poster.
 - ✓ Copy the diagram on slide 3 onto a poster.

Beneficial_activities.ppt

Add any introductory slides you have chosen to the slideshow (be sure to include Ground Rules).

1. “Leaders are people who frequently provide the environment for seeking ideals.” Merryelyn Emery (an Australian social scientist) wrote this in a study of the ways that women in rural Australia build community. It reminds us that our work has the potential to move things at least a little way toward a stronger community. This means figuring out how to provide the environment for seeking ideals like inclusion and opportunity for people who might be shifted to the edges of society. Leaders aren’t only the people who have titles like “Director” or “Manager”. Direct support workers and the people they assist exercise leadership when they learn how to involve people in new ways. Directors and managers exercise leadership when they find ways to create the conditions for direct support workers to contribute in this way.

*Making a positive difference in someone’s life is a big source of satisfaction. There are at least five **activities that can create new opportunities** when direct support workers do them in collaboration with people with DD and their families and friends. An effective organization finds ways to increase the chances that these activities happen consistently.*



2. Identifies five activities that we label “beneficial” because –when they are done together– the chances that people will experience greater opportunity increase.

- **Discovering capacity** means identifying gifts, interests, talents, skills, and connections in people with DD and among their families and friends and in their community. Capacity is not vague, it is the potential for real action.
- **Creating vision** means creatively imagining the ways identified capacities can come together to result in a better life for the person with DD and those around them. Vision will be very specific to each particular person.
- **Sharing resources** means seeing the ways that people’s interests overlap and negotiating ways that people can jointly use what they have to benefit one another and the community. It is not so much a matter of agreements to coordinate efforts among service agencies as it is a set of person specific agreements that have the

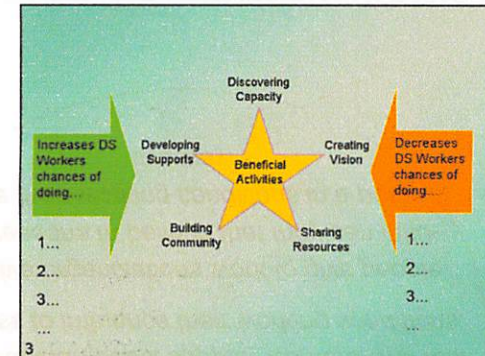
potential to leave everyone involved better off.

- **Building Community** means actively reaching outside familiar boundaries and inviting new people to join in. It is not passively visiting places in the community; it is joining in positively.
- **Developing Supports** means figuring out the best way to provide the assistance that a particular person needs to be successful by combining the time and talent of direct support workers and other service workers with assistive technology and naturally available support. It is not about designing a program and placing someone in it; it is about tailoring assistance to individual circumstances.

3. Shows the logic for the group’s thinking: some realities move workers toward the beneficial activities; some push against workers’ investment in them .

Review the Ground Rules and get agreement.

4. Presents the instructions.



Draw a line down the middle of a sheet of poster paper. Put a red arrow at the top of the right hand column and label it “Decreases DS workers’ chances of doing”. Put a green arrow at the top of the left hand column and label it “Increases DS worker’s chances of doing”.

In the right column -“Decreases...”- use a red marker to identify the current realities that make it harder for DS workers to invest time in the beneficial activities with the people they assist.

In the left column -“Increases...”- use a green marker to identify the current realities that encourage DS workers to invest time in the beneficial activities with the people they assist.

Review each list & circle the 3-5 most influential current realities.




Ask yourselves “What could we change that would lessen the influence of our top three in the red column, even a little bit?”


Influencing Your Work

Purpose

To encourage reflection on some organizational practices that promote satisfaction and longevity by giving staff reasons to believe that they can positively influence their working conditions.

Preparation

- ✓ A copy of  How_much_can_you.pdf for each person.
- ✓ A copy of  Ground_rules.pdf and a copy of  How_much_can_you_tally.pdf printed on cardstock for each group. Different colors make easier reference.
- ✓ Paper and markers to record the brainstorming

 This questionnaire is based on the self-efficacy research of Albert Bandura. To learn more, start with this website: www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/self-efficacy.html

How_much_can_you.ppt

Select whatever introductory slides you plan to use. There is only one slide in this file: a summary of the process

Orient people to the questions on their questionnaire (there is a copy of How_much_can_you.pdf on the next page). The questions are straightforward and most people find them easy to answer.

Give people a few minutes to respond to the questions individually.

Tally the responses.

Discuss, "What do our responses say about our organization?"

Brainstorm: "How could we increase our score' and make the high scores even higher' we now get even stronger?"

Circle the three ideas most worth following-up.

Direct support workers who believe that they can take actions that will make them more effective at a more meaningful job are more likely to be successful than direct support workers who feel powerless to influence their working conditions.

Effective organizations work to give people good reasons to believe that they can influence their working conditions in a positive way.

1. Fill in the "How much can I do?" questions based on your own experience of your organization.
2. Share your perceptions.
3. Brainstorm the question: "How could we increase the number of high ratings /How can we get even higher ratings from direct support workers?"

How Much Can I Do?

1. How much can you influence the decisions that are made in your organization?
2. How much can you express your ideas and views freely on matters important to the organization?
3. How much can you do to get what you need in order to do your best work?
4. How much can you do to get new ideas, information and skills when you need them?
5. How much can you do to get the support you need from your supervisors?
6. How much can you do to build a strong and effective team?
7. How much can you influence your work schedule?
8. How much can do to form an effective partnership with the people you support?
9. How much can you do to get the cooperation you need from family members and guardians?
10. How much can you do to make your work meaningful and satisfying to you?



Why Do Many People Think Direct Service Has Little Worth? A Cause Web

Purpose

To map participant's ideas about the reasons society assigns a low value to direct support work. This exercise assumes that naming the sources of disadvantage is an important step in resisting some of their negative effects on worker's self-evaluation.

Preparation

If the group is large...

- ✓ Print  Ground-rules.pdf and  Cause_web.pdf on cardstock. Printing in different colors makes reference easier.
- ✓ Arrange comfortable places for groups of 6 to sit and work. The groups will be making a posters, so they will need either wall space that they can tape their paper on and see, or a table top they can work on comfortably, or an easel.
- ✓ Each group needs a set of markers, at least two big sheets of paper, and some large post-its.
- ✓ Hang up a big poster for the whole group report. Put the question on slide 1 in the center of the poster.

The group's will stick their "top three causes" post-its in clusters on this big poster.

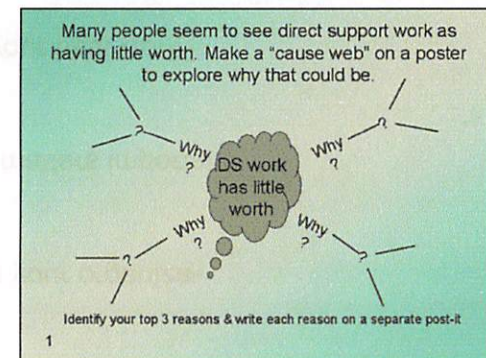
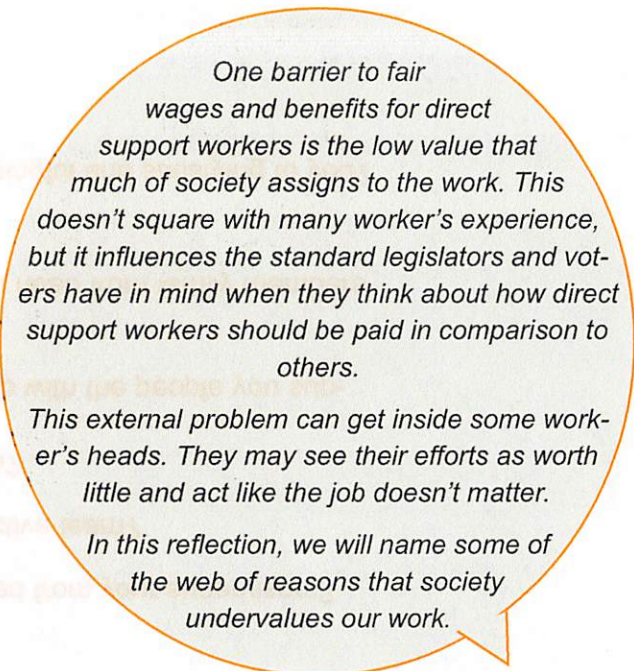
If you are facilitating a small group...

- ✓ Copy the ground rules onto a poster.
- ✓ Copy the question on slide 1 into the center of a big sheet of paper. Leave plenty of room for the web to grow.

Cause_web.ppt

Add any introductory slides you have chosen to the slide show (be sure to include Ground Rules).

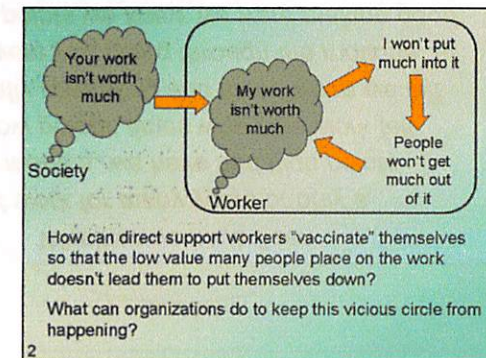
1. The task is for the group to develop possible reasons that people might think that direct support work has little worth. The group doesn't have to debate the extent of this problem. It is enough to accept that people could think that the work isn't worth very much.



The web grows like this:

- Identify a possible reason and write it on a line that leads out from the question.
- Identify a different reason and write it on another line.
- After writing 3-7 different reasons in the first ring of the web, build a second ring. Pick one of the reasons and ask “What causes [the reason written on the line] and write that on a line branching off the first ring line. Repeat 2-4 times for each of the first ring reasons.
- As a group, pick the top three reasons for assigning little worth to direct support work. Highlight these three causes on the group’s web.
- If more than one group has made a cause web, each group transfers its top three reasons, one each to three post-its.
- Each group reads out its three post its. Cluster similar reasons together on the whole group display.

2. The low value society places on the work can create a vicious circle if workers let this belief inside their heads. Workers who don’t value their jobs don’t put much energy or creativity into their relationships with the people they assist. The people don’t get much out of the relationship and neither does the worker. This confirms the belief that the job isn’t worth much.
 - List some of the ways direct service workers can keep these negative judgments from influencing the way they see their jobs.
 - List some of the ways a service organization can protect workers from internalizing negative assessments of their work.
 - Take a few minutes as a whole group to identify some of the lessons from creating the cause web and describing ways workers can protect themselves from undervaluing their own work.





Worklife Lines

Purpose

To reflect on the variety of rewards in direct support work and to describe strategies for restoring commitment to the work when it is threatened.

Preparation

If the group is large...

- ✓ Print  Ground-rules.pdf and  Worklife_line.pdf on cardstock. Printing in different colors makes reference easier.
- ✓ Arrange comfortable places for groups of 6 to sit and work. The groups will be making posters, so they will need either wall space that they can tape their paper on and see, or a table top they can work on comfortably, or an easel.
- ✓ Each group needs a set of markers, a big sheet of paper, and a sheet or two of ordinary 8.5" x 11" paper for each person.

If you are facilitating a small group...

- ✓ Copy the ground rules onto a poster.
- ✓ Copy the questions on slide 2 on a poster.

Worklife_line.ppt

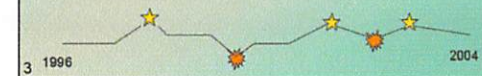
Add any introductory slides you have chosen to the slide show (be sure to include Ground Rules).

1. People work by themselves to make a worklife line.
 - Put this month/year on the right hand edge of the page and the month/year you began work with people with dd on the left hand edge.
 - Think about important moments in your work: times that stand out as high points and low points. (Important moments are not necessarily dramatic events. They can be times when a person realized something important about the work.) Mark the approximate point in time on the page and write a headline that identifies the time for you.
 - Draw a line that connects these important moments and shows

Whether we have been at work for many years or only a few months, we have had high points and low points: times when the work felt especially rewarding and times when we felt like we were just going through the motions. At the high points we knew we were making good use of our abilities; at the low points we may have thought seriously about finding another kind of work.

After making a worklife line that identifies some of the high points and low points, we can reflect on the ways the job rewards us and on the ways we lift ourselves back up when we hit low points.

- Think back over the high points. What exactly made these times especially rewarding?
- Think back to the times that you moved out of the low points. How did you lift yourself back up?
- Share some of your worklife line with your team. Make a poster that shows the different rewards team members have experienced & the different ways you have lifted yourselves out of the low points.



how high the high points felt and how low the low points felt.

2. People reflect on their worklife line with their team.
 - One person volunteers to record key words and images on a poster.
 - Each person takes a turn to describe exactly what it was that made the high point rewarding. The recorder clusters key words and images in the top half of the poster.
 - Each person takes a turn to describe the ways they have learned to make it through and out of the low points. The recorder clusters key words and images in the bottom half of the poster.

Draw a **worklife line**, starting just before you began work with people with DD & coming up to the present. Include:

- Some of the high points –times you remember as especially rewarding.
- Some of the low points –times you seriously questioned whether the work was for you; times you may have thought about finding another kind of work.



Difficulties and Dilemmas

Purpose

To reflect on the difficulties and dilemmas that seem to be built-in to the work of providing high quality direct support by naming some of the difficulties and dilemmas that “come with the territory”, thinking about their sources, identifying some of the consequences of coping poorly with them, and describing usually effective strategies for coping with them

Preparation

If the group is large...

- ✓ Print 📄 Ground-rules.pdf and 📄 Dilemmas.pdf on cardstock. Printing in different colors makes reference easier.
- ✓ Arrange comfortable places for groups of 6 to sit and work. The groups will be making posters, so they will need either wall space that they can tape their paper on and see, or a table top they can work on comfortably, or an easel.
- ✓ Each group needs a set of markers, and several big sheets of paper.

If you are facilitating a small group...

- ✓ Copy the ground rules onto a poster.
- ✓ Copy the questions on slide 1 on a poster.
- ✓ Prepare a poster with the form on slide 2.

📄 Dilemmas.ppt

Add any introductory slides you have chosen to the slide show (be sure to include the Ground Rules).

1. Work as a group to identify some of the common difficulties and dilemmas that face most direct support workers. Look past things that are specific to

difficulty n: a thing hard to do or to understand; that which occasions labor or perplexity, and requires skill and perseverance to overcome, solve, or achieve

dilemma n: state of uncertainty or perplexity especially as requiring a choice between unfavorable options

Because it is about more than simply performing a list of defined tasks, direct support work can be complex. The quality of the work depends on worker's ability to make and keep positive relationships, not just with the people they assist, but with other key people in the person's life –family members, friends, professionals who provide clinical services, people who coordinate and oversee services, and others.

There are dilemmas and difficulties built-in to the work. They may not happen in a particular relationship, but it is no surprise when they show up. Workers can be better or worse at coping with them, but they “come with the territory.”

"Built-in" Difficulties & Dilemmas

Some difficulties & dilemmas are specific to particular worker's habits or skills or to particular relationships. Look past these difficulties to...

... difficulties or dilemmas that come up regularly. Workers with different personalities & skills commonly face some version of these difficulties –they seem to “come with the territory.” Workers can cope in better or worse ways, but they can't avoid them entirely.

List some of the common difficulties & dilemmas that face most direct support workers. Then pick 3 to discuss further.

1

a particular worker's habit or skills to focus on things that may come up for workers with very different personalities and skills. These difficulties and dilemmas seem to be built-in to the job. They may not show up in every relationship with every person, but their arrival is as familiar as that of a difficult cousin at a family celebration.


- Make a list on a poster of as many of these difficulties and dilemmas as you can in a few minutes.
 - Pick three of these to discuss further and write a short phrase or sentence that names each one.
2. Work as a group to get a deeper understanding of the difficulties and dilemmas you have named.
- Copy the form and headings on slide 2 onto a poster.
 - Write the name of the first difficulty or dilemma in the left hand column.
 - Discuss the sources of this difficulty or dilemma. What is it about direct support work that generates

this difficulty? What brings it up even when the assistance provided is of high quality? Write a summary of your ideas about the sources of this difficulty or dilemma in the second column.

- These difficulties may “come with the territory”, but workers can cope with them well or poorly. Discuss the consequences of poor coping for the people we support, for staff, and for the organization providing services. Write a summary of your ideas in the third column. Use different colors for the consequences to people, staff, and organization.
- Discuss strategies for coping well with these difficulties or dilemmas. These ways to cope probably won't work every time, but they represent our wisdom about how to engage them. Write a summary of your ideas in the fourth column.
- Go on to the next difficulty or dilemma and repeat.

cope v: to deal successfully with a difficult problem or situation

Difficulty/ Dilemma	Sources	Consequences of Poor Coping	Usually Effective Strategies
		<p>To staff</p> <p>To the people we support</p> <p>To the organization</p>	

 *Holding_details.pdf* discusses some of the difficulties that come up regularly in the relationship between support staff and family members.



Quilt Squares

Purpose

To express important themes in direct support work by sketching quilt squares and telling the story of each square.


Preparation


If the group is large...


- ✓ Print  Ground-rules.pdf and  Quilt.pdf on cardstock. Printing in different colors makes reference easier.
- ✓ Arrange places for groups of 6 to sit and work comfortably.
- ✓ Each group needs a set of markers, crayons, and a supply of ordinary 8.5" X 11" paper.

If you are facilitating a small group...

- ✓ Copy the ground rules onto a poster.

 Beth Mount and John O'Brien collaborated with a group of direct support workers to create a quilt, a poster, a foldover, and a slide show that express 12 themes in person-centered direct support work.

 Themes-quilt.pdf describes these

resources in more detail. The themes are presented in the Powerpoint file  Pers Cntrd Direct Supt or in the Quick-time Movie Pers Cntrd Direct Supt.mov (Download Quick-time for Mac or Windows free from www.apple.com)

You can order full color copies of the foldover from www.inclusion.com.

Quilt.ppt

Add any introductory slides you have chosen to the slide show (be sure to include the Ground Rules).

Show the *Person-Centered Direct Support* slide show and if you have the booklets, let people see them now. This provides a finished example of using a quilt to discover and communicate important themes in the work. The finished work you see here began with the same process that we will use now.

There are themes in direct support work: important topics that guide and organize the ways we think and act. In this time together, we will each sketch the design for a quilt square that captures one important theme in direct support work.

Our brains give us more than words to help us with our reflections. Some us have artistic gifts, but all of us can generate images, shapes, and colors that allow us to explore and communicate themes that matter to us in our work.

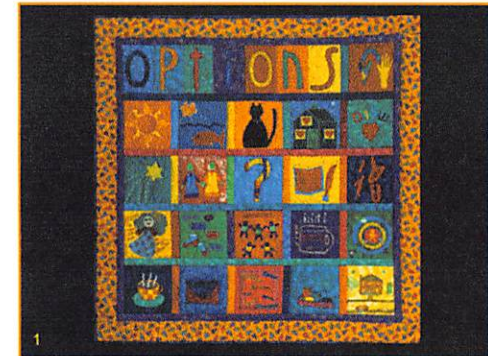
Quilts made from squares contributed by different people can express diverse understandings and common elements among them.



1. The first slide shows a quilt created by the staff of Options in Community Living. Each square was designed by a different staff person to communicate something important about Options. Some people are experienced quilters or good at art; they helped others to refine and produce their squares. But each square began with a staff person sketching an image that captures something important.
2. The images on this slide come from *Make Your Mark*, the quilt Beth Mount made with direct support workers in New York City (You can order a poster of the quilt at www.capacityworks.com). Each square expresses one theme – the upper left hand square expresses the unity of heart, hand, and mind; the lower right hand square expresses the importance of discovering and encouraging each person's beauty. A quilt is a fine way to tell a story. Each square says something in itself, but each square also provides the occasion for telling its story in words.
 - Take paper, crayons, and markers

and work by yourself to sketch the design of a quilt square that says something important to you about direct support work. If there is a judge in your head telling you that you are not artistic or creative and you can't do this, ask the judge to be quiet for a little while. What matters is the thinking you do while you are sketching; you are not trying for a finished piece of art.

- When everyone has a preliminary sketch, take turns showing and telling the design for each square.
- Lay all of the squares out on the floor or tape them to the wall. See if you can find a pattern of squares that brings out the ways the different themes relate to one another.
- If you have a camera, take pictures of the squares and he lay-outs.



Sketch a first draft of a quilt square that captures an important theme in direct support work

Don't worry about how well you draw, it's the thinking that counts.

Positive Contributions

Purpose

To identify positive contributions that workers experience from their work with people with developmental disabilities and to consider ways to support staff in increasing them.

Preparation

- ✓ Each person needs a copy of the *Staff Positive Contributions Questionnaire (SPCQ)* (📄 Pos_contrib.pdf).
- ✓ Each group needs a copy of *Staff Positive Contributions Questionnaire Summary* (📄 Pos_contrib_sum.pdf)

If the group is large...

- ✓ Print 📄 Ground-rules.pdf and 📄 Positives.pdf on cardstock. Printing in different colors makes reference easier.
- ✓ Arrange places for groups of 6 to sit and work comfortably.
- ✓ Each group needs a set of markers, and sheets of big paper.

If you are facilitating a small group...

- ✓ Copy the ground rules and 📄 Positives.pdf onto posters.

📄 Positives.ppt

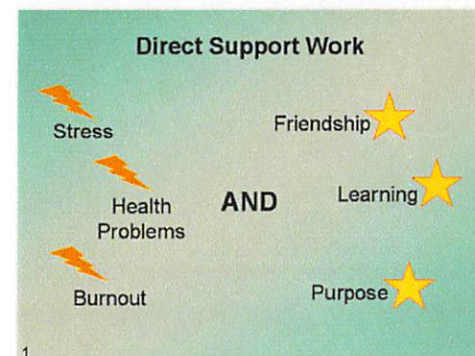
Add any introductory slides you have chosen to the slide show (be sure to include the Ground Rules).

1. Improving the quality of direct support and increasing the number of people who stay with the work calls for attention to two different realities in the work. 1) Workers are at some risk from their jobs and this risk needs to be managed as well as possible. The work can be stressful and stress can lead to health problems and burnout. 2) The work can make a variety of positive contributions to those who do it and jobs must be structured and supported to enhance these contributions. Workers can experience: friendship and social support with people with disabilities and with coworkers; learning; and a sense of purpose in their lives.

*Direct support work can be **stressful**. **AND** direct support work makes **positive** contributions to the lives of many of the people who do it.*

Good organizations reduce job stress as much as possible. They also take steps to increase the positive contributions workers experience.

Many positive contributions come from relationships with people with disabilities. Sometimes this reality can be hidden behind negative beliefs about people with disabilities. The questionnaire in this exercise brings to light more than 40 positive contributions that staff report receiving from their work with people with DD.



2. Research suggests that it is important both to take action to reduce stress and to increase the positive contributions workers experience. Reducing stress doesn't necessarily increase positive contributions and increasing positive contributions doesn't necessarily reduce stress. An organization will make the greatest impact on staff continuity by attending to both promoting wellness and promoting the experience of positive contributions. 📖 Find a summary of this research and references in Horne, S., & Hastings, R. P. (2004). Positive perceptions held by support staff in community mental retardation services. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 109, 53-62, from which the SPCQ is taken.
3. Some discussions of staff turnover blame people with DD. People may talk as if such stressors as low pay, anxiety about health insurance, difficult work hours, low investment in building mutual support and staff teams, and uncertainty about the future were unimportant sources of stress and dissatisfaction. People

may also overlook the effects of poor environmental conditions and lack of powerful assistance on the people with DD that they talk about as if they were the inevitable cause of burn-out. Recently, some researchers have awoken to the positive contributions that close relationships with people with DD can bring and have developed ways to measure these positives. We will try out one of these measures now.

3. We will work with the *Staff Positive Contributions Questionnaire (SPCQ)*.
- Each person completes the *SPCQ* individually.
 - Make a group summary by tallying your answers on the *SPCQ Summary*. (This page includes the responses of some people who have previously answered the questions.)
 - Take a few minutes to discuss what the *SPCQ* says about our work.
 - Make a poster by listing as many ideas as you can about how to increase the experience of positive contributions. Circle the top 3.

Research with direct support workers says...

- ...reducing stress & promoting wellness are important but may not increase the positive contributions workers get from their jobs.
- ...supporting positive contributions is important but may not reduce stress.
- ...so a good organization will work on both decreasing stress and increasing positives.

2

Historically, people have underestimated the positive contributions that come from close relationships with people with DD.

Sometimes, this has led to blaming people with DD for staff stress. This takes attention away from the stress created by the way services are organized and funded.

Recently, researchers have developed ways to measure positive contributions from close relationships with people with DD.

3

- Each person completes the *Staff Positive Contributions Questionnaire (SPCQ)*
- Make a team summary by tallying your answers on the *SPCQ Summary Sheet*
- Discuss: What does this tell us about our work?
- On a poster, list as many ways as you can think of to increase the positive contributions staff experience from their work. Circle the top 3 ideas.

4


Next Steps

Purpose


To identify actions that participants want to take based on their reflections.

Preparation

If the group is large...

- ✓ Print  Next_steps.pdf on card-stock. Printing in different colors makes reference easier.
- ✓ Arrange comfortable places for groups of 6 to sit and work.

If you are facilitating a small group...

- ✓ Copy slide 1 of  Next_steps.pdf onto a poster.

Next_steps.ppt

Add this slide at the end of the final exercise. Allow 10-20 minutes.

1. **Next Steps** gives people a chance to identify opportunities and agree on who will take responsibility for moving them into action. It does not ask –or allow time – to make a complete action plan. This limitation on detailed action planning makes a point: making time to reflect is a worthwhile thing to do. Getting a deeper un-

derstanding of the nature of the work prepares the ground for new seeds to sprout. Some of these new possibilities are already apparent –and this exercise lets people identify them and take responsibility for their development. Other valuable ideas will come up in the days and weeks ahead. The focus is on increasing the chances that direct support workers will find meaning in their work.

- Some actions to improve the direct support experience will have come up in conversation.
- People may want to invest in offering more staff the chance to reflect.
- For each of these opportunities, it is enough for now that someone adds an item to their “to-do” list and agrees to check-in on their progress (“Put ‘x’ on the management team agenda.” “Ask ‘y’ about...”, “Try the ___ exercise at the next staff meeting.”)

Our main purpose today has been to take time to step back and reflect. That is important in itself and we won't notice all of the results from taking time to go deeper into our understanding of our work for some time.

Maybe there are some things you have already thought of that will be worth doing when we get back to the busy-ness of doing the everyday work.

We will take a few minutes to add whatever seems important to our to-do lists.

How can we increase the opportunities for direct service workers to find meaning in their work?

1. Opportunities for action
2. Opportunities to stop & reflect (maybe with some of the methods from this workshop)
3. Who will plan the next step? When will they check in next?

Designing a Workshop

Each of these exercises can be done singly, at a staff meeting or as a contribution to another activity like a staff retreat or a training session. Some people have used several exercises, one at a time over the course of several months. You can also combine the exercises to create a workshop.

Which exercises you choose depends on the total amount of time you have available and your judgement about what will be most useful to the group.

Here are some things to think about:

- At least one question from the Good Work Exercise seems to give most groups the chance for an important conversation. This works fine as a single exercise, and usually works even better when engaged after one or more other exercises.
- The “Worthy ancestor” question from the Good Work exercise

makes a good last exercise if you have time for several others. You can frame the question with specific discoveries from the other exercises (e.g. “How do I model positive responses to the dilemmas and difficulties we identified?” or “How do I discover the hidden capacities in the people I support?”)

📄 [Workshop_example.ppt](#) shows the sequence of exercises from a two day workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to prepare teams of people from a number of agencies to use the exercises in their work. The slide below summarizes the workshop.

