

There's Always Something that Works

Helping People to Live a Life of Meaning and Purpose



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BASIC ASSUMPTIONS TO GUIDE DAY-TO-DAY WORK

We never give up.

We are always hopeful.

**We work with difficult people, we know that
the work is difficult, and it's OK.**

**We expect we'll get to the 2nd (and 3rd and 4th) ideas
before we'll have sustainable success.**

We know that *there's always something that works.*

Figuring out What Works

The Importance of Meaning and Context in the Development of Supports:

- **In the absence of meaningful engagement in chosen life activities all interventions will fail. *(Mark Ylvisaker)***
- **The focus of all interventions must be on the development of meaningful life roles and activities. This is an iterative process that requires patience and long-range thinking.**
- **Everything we do must be developed in the context of the person's life, wherever that life may be. And conceived with the realities of that person's life.**

The Importance of Meaning in the Development of Any Successful Contextual Supports:

- **Effective supports are person *driven*.**
- **Family, friends, and the actual person who is receiving supports are the experts and are critical contributors to any success.**
- **Acute and any other inpatient rehabilitation is ‘table setting’!**

Good Intervention is All About:

Helping the people we support to answer
this question:

Why am I getting up in the morning?

Core Needs

(From Deci & Ryan; Pink; Goldstein, etc.):

Competence, Relatedness, Autonomy, Meaning, Agency

Am I a Producer or a Consumer?

Producers make active choices in life.

Producers have agency in life.

Producers live meaningful lives

Consumers live more fraught lives.

Consumers passively respond to events.

Consumers live lives of quiet desperation.

Consumers Have Little Social Capital with Little Social Capital it's Hard to Have a Meaningful Life

Three indicators that are characteristic of Positive Social Capital:

- **Informal associations with friends, family, and neighbors**
- **Formal participation in a number of different types of voluntary organization (i.e. civic participation) – [for many, this does NOT include joining a brain injury support group].**
- **Generalized trust.**

From Consumer to Producer

Producers create and provide resources for themselves and others.

We help the people we work with to become producers who actively choose actions and have control of their lives.

“What’s your plan?”

“What’s your theory?”

“I could sure use your help.”

“What does help look like?”

From Consumer to Producer

Consumers take and use resources provided by others.

Much of the world sees people with disabilities as *consumers* who need to *respond* to the direction of others.

“Non-Compliant”

“This is your plan”

“You need to . . .”

“You need my help. This is what help looks like.”

Creating Social Capital Through Social Competence

From the moment that we meet the person, it is our collective responsibility to behave in ways that are sensitive to the reality of the loss of self, the loss of connection, the loss of equality and to alter our behaviors so we don't contribute to those losses and make them inevitable.

Oh, and social *skills* groups SUCK. They SUCK. Just look at the literature reviews. They suck.

“The curious dissociation between knowing and doing.”

– Teuber (1938)

SOCIAL COMPETENCE:

We often teach a skill or set of skills independent of the realities of life that each person faces. While people might learn the skills and demonstrate mastery of skills these are meaningless unless we help them achieve competency in the use of the skills. In absence of competence use, skills are useless.

Social Competence and Context Relevancy in Teaching and Learning:

How does this stuff apply to the bigger world?

adapted from Sailor, 1999

- **Useful:** Do the outcomes that we're targeting produce something useful to the individual in long run?
- **Desirable:** Does the individual choose the outcomes for him/herself when given the choice? Is the individual given the choice of outcome?
- **Social:** Do the outcomes result in behaviors that will increase interactions with persons other than paid staff?
- **Practical:** Will the behavior be used in real contexts without staff support?
- **Adaptable:** Is there a focus on developing competencies that can/will be used in a number of situations and without staff?

Social Capital and Meaningful Supports

- **Collective action.** I belong to something bigger than me and it helps me to define myself in a positive way.
- **Common purpose.** We have something to work towards that is important to all of us. A good outcome positively affects us all!
- **Reciprocity.** We work collaboratively and adjust leadership roles as they are needed – and based on feedback from valued others.
- **Equality.** We all belong as much as we want to belong. We accept when people choose not to belong. We all have a voice. We listen to each other.



Preparing Learners
for Life

non agere culus

How are We Bringing a Sense of Humor and a Sense of Joy to Our Work?

We spend our lives with interesting people doing interesting things!

Mr. Fuckster is a funny name.

What's the big deal?

Embrace the chaos!

With meaning comes the opportunity to have fun, and fun is therapeutic. With fun comes optimism, and optimism is therapeutic. With optimism comes hope, and hope is essential to pushing through the difficulties. With hope comes meaning . . .

The Fundamentals of Success in Life

(this applies to us all)

- **Show up on time**
- **Delay gratification**
- **Listen and follow directions**
- **Get along with others**
- **Embrace some risk – and recognize “good” and “bad” risks**
- **Understand that just because you can, doesn’t mean you should**
- **Recognize what you can and what you cannot control**

**A Framework for Inquiry:
Approaching Difficult Situations
from a Perspective of Structured Flexibility**

- **What's the meaning? Where's the meaning?**
- **Is this a can't do? A don't do? A won't do?**
- **What's the valued outcome – a life defined as a “good life”?
*Then what are the goals?***
- **How can we best define what help will look like? In the short-term? In the long-term?**
- **Is this a me problem? A you problem? A we problem?**
- **How do we help an individual create a positive identity?**
- **What do we want? What can we actually do?**

A Framework for Intervention: General Approaches to Difficult Situations

Can't do challenges

- **Identify what the “can’t”(s) is/are – and what the “cans” are. Focus on the “cans” that are related to the tasks and goals – try errorless learning and scaffolding**
- **Create specific approaches to skill development (e.g., increasing time to delay gratification; task analyze the whole into parts; modify methods)**
- **Direct instruction with scripted language (e.g., ready/not ready; big deal/little deal, etc.)**
- **Adapt the environment and work on learning how to recognize a need and ask for help.**

A Framework for Intervention: General Approaches to Difficult Situations

Don't do challenges

- Focus on contextual coaching by all involved.
- Identify what is motivating and focus your efforts there.
- Reduce questioning, increase collaborative and elaborative communication.
- Co-construct actions, activities, plans and projects.

Won't do challenges

- Wait. And wait some more.
- Consider stimulus change.
- Start at the base of the hierarchy of choice
- Avoid turning interactions into winning and losing.
- Control what you can (your own behavior) and what you cannot (everything else).

**Success supporting people with complicated needs
requires movement away from a diagnostic (e.g.,
disability/impairment) approach to intervention to a
functional approach to intervention and support**

Effective Support is About Creating Meaning.

MEANINGFUL THINGS WORK

***We may never know what something worked,
and that's OK***

The Daily Creation of Meaning

Routines

become

Rituals

and create

Predictability

that facilitates

Meaning

which generates

Belonging

Expect to Be Wrong

Being wrong is not a bad thing – it's actually a really good thing.

It's an opportunity to gain a better understanding, to give permission to try stuff out and learn. The willingness to try stuff out is an essential element of creative and meaningful interventions

The dangerous reality is that many clinicians, family members and individuals believe that there is some well-defined, evidence-based (often prescriptive) approach that can be applied to most situations.

This is wrong!

Embrace Being Wrong

- We are wrong most of the time.
- The intensity of the conviction that a hypothesis is true has no bearing on whether it is true or not. (Peter Medawar).
- Our whole problem is to make the mistakes as fast as possible. (John Wheeler)
- We are all alike in our infinite ignorance. (Karl Popper)
- “I don’t know” . . . “I was wrong” . . . “That didn’t go as planned” . . . “What’d we learn?”
“
Tugend, A. (2011). *Better by mistake: The unexpected benefits of being wrong*. Penguin.
Wrenn, K. (1994). The benefits of being wrong. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 9, 285-285.

MAKE A PLAN (Actions/Criteria/Duration)

Is this plan working?

YES!
How do you know?

*Too soon to tell?
Not enough info?
What do you need?*

NO!
How do you know?

Keep the plan

Try a new plan

Is this plan still working?

Is this plan still working?

YES!
How do you know?

NO!
How do you know?

YES!
How do you know?

NO!
How do you know?

Keep the plan

Try a new plan

Keep the plan

Try a new plan

Is this plan still working?

Is this plan working?

Is this plan still working?

Is this plan working?

Applying Evidence-Based Practice in the Real World

What resources are needed to implement what I/we believe is the “best” (evidence-based) approach?



What resources are available? When are they available? What resources can we count on?

What does the person/staff/others identify as needed or useful? Does it fit with evidence-based practice? What are their thoughts about what can be done? What are they willing to do? What are they able to do?

START WITH WHAT IS POSSIBLE AND WILL LIKELY BE TRIED WITH SOME FIDELITY

The Language of Planning: Knowing What You Are Doing, Why You Are Doing It, and How You'll Do It

- “Before we do this I was just wondering what you were trying to do. Could you let me know? I just want to make sure that we’re on the same page and that I’m helping.”
- “OK, so what’s the plan? Do you know the steps we’re going to follow? I don’t really know, can you tell me?”
- “What will you need to get this done? Do you have everything you’ll need?”
- “How will you and I know if you need help?” *Collaborative Planning*
- “What will help look like?” *Elaborative Planning*

Some Ways to Start: Making Decisions About a Goal

SOME SAMPLE SCRIPTS TO USE WHEN IDENTIFYING GOALS AND MAKING PLANS:

- “I’m so glad to have the chance to help out. I just want to make sure that I’m really helping, so I was wondering what you’re hoping to do in our time together.”
- “So, what are you trying to do?”
- “What are we here for? What are we doing?”
- “It’s usually a good idea to make sure that we both know that we’re finished with something.
how will we know we’re done?”
- “We’ll know we’re done when it looks like . . .”

Useful Conversation Starters That Demonstrate You're a Collaborator

- **How can I help you?**
- **Describe what would be a good life for you. Paint me a picture!**
- **That's a good question. Truth is, I don't have a good answer. Let's figure out a way to get some answers.**
- **I don't know. What do you think?**
- **That's an interesting idea. Let's figure out how we can test it!**
- **Do we have what we need so we can do that?**

More Useful Conversation Starters That Demonstrate You're a Collaborator

- **I'm out of the prognosis business. Nothing is set in stone. Let's make a plan to try to figure out what we're going to do.**
- **Before we go any further, let me know your worries or concerns.**
- **Wow! That didn't go the way we hoped it would! What did we learn?**
- **Nobody really knows how long this will take. Let's figure out what we want and how we'll know we're making progress.**
- **This is going to be hard for awhile. My job is to help you get through the hard stuff as best we can.**
- **There's something that will work. We just need to figure it out.**

Learning How to Make “Choices”

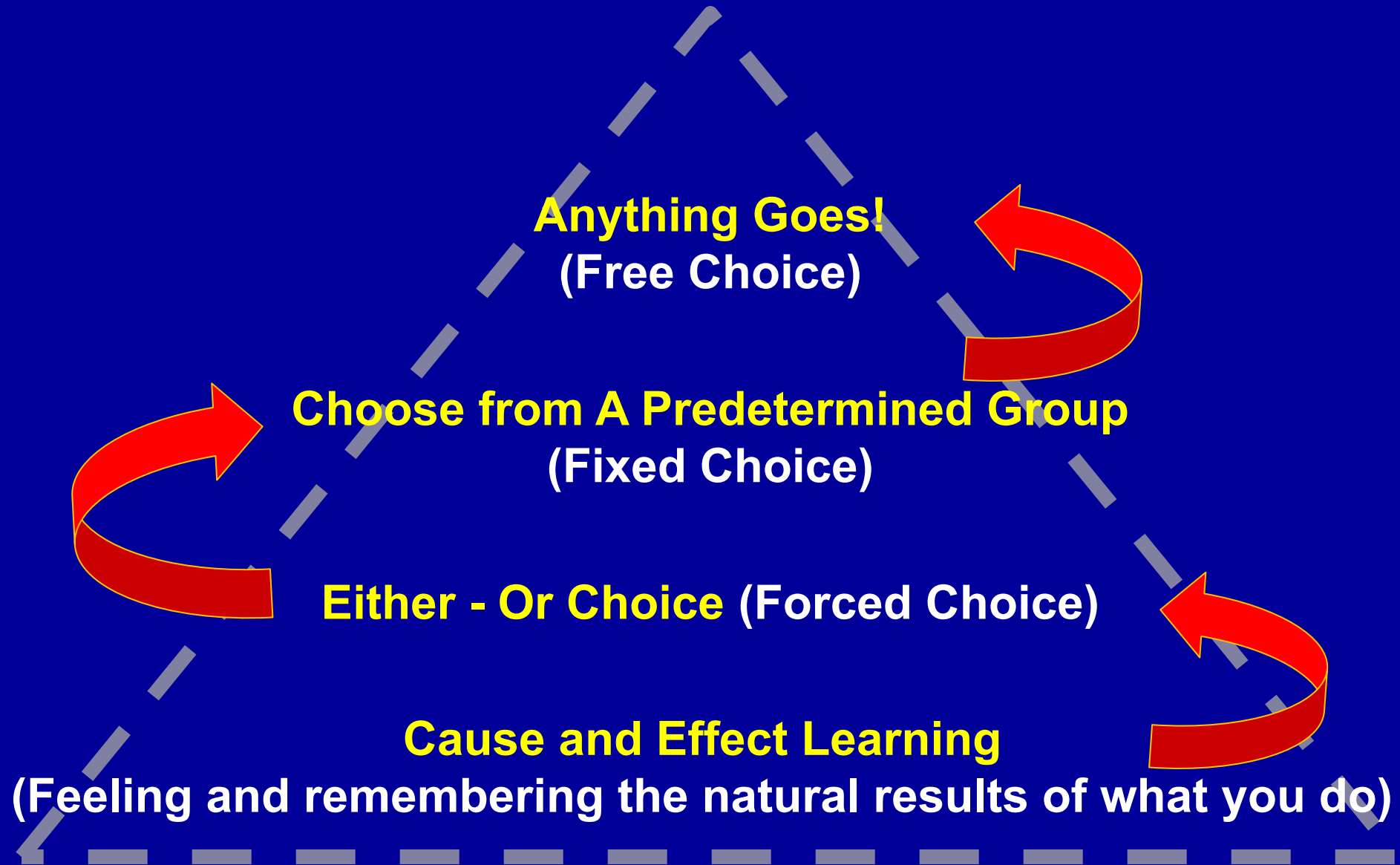
- **We live in a world where everyone talks about people’s choices, that the people we work with have the right to choose and that our programs are based on choices. This is a good thing; however, its critical to make sure that people are really making choices.**

Learning How to Make “Choices”

When choice is offered, of course, it is essential that the person being offered the choice have the information necessary for making a meaningful decision . . . without such information, being given a choice will feel more like a burden than a support for autonomy.

- Edward Deci, 1995
Why We Do What We Do

A Hierarchy of Learning How to Make Choices:



Learning How to Make “Choices”

- **What may have started as a choice often does not end as a choice!**
- **For many people there is a momentum (or a compulsion/obsession or perseveration) to behavior that results in people losing control of their behavior**
- **When this happens we roll with it. We don't discharge or terminate our services, we work to help people to overcome or change the pattern. We keep on trying. That's who we are, that's what we do.**

**We are imperfect people trying to apply
imperfect evidence to support our imperfect
interventions to complex people in imperfect
settings . . .**

so . . .

**We need to figure out a rational manner to
define rational measures so that rational people
can reach rational conclusions.**

START HERE

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
 Objective
 Observable
 Measurable

WHAT IS THE VALUED OUTCOME?
 Personal
 Meaningful
 Aspirational

IDENTIFY OBJECTIVE EVALUATION CRITERIA
 How will we know if what we're doing is helping? Not Helping?
 Are some elements more successful than others?
 Are some people more successful? Why?

IDENTIFY SPECIFIC SUPPORTS/INTERVENTIONS TO IMPLEMENT
 Who will do what? When? How?
Select from an array of evidenced-based practices

IDENTIFY TIMEFRAME FOR INTERVENTION
 How long will we try? What's the bailout procedure?

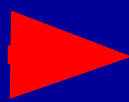
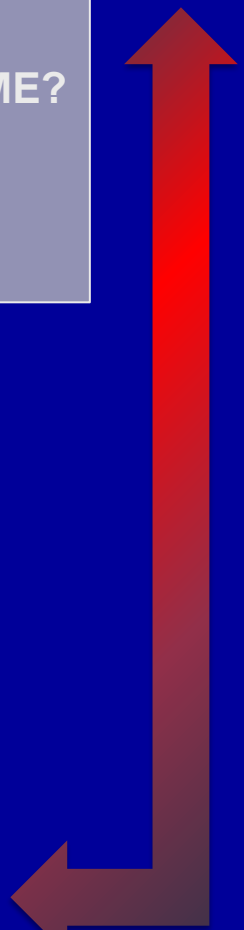
EVALUATE
 Is there evidence that what we're doing helpful?
 What is helpful?
 Should we continue?
 What do we keep/not keep?

CONTINUE
 All? Parts? None?

THEORY OF CAUSE 2

- THEORY OF CAUSE 1
- THEORY OF CAUSE 2
- THEORY OF CAUSE 3

CHOOSE A THEORY AND TEST THE THEORY
 Finding agreement
 Collaboration



Your Theory – My Theory

A General Approach to Any Problem

You've got an idea, I've got an idea, either one might work. Let's test them out!

Before we start, how will we know if something is working or not?

We'll stick with the winners and get rid of the losers

Your Theory – My Theory

A Script for Theory Assessment

Identify the “theory” – why do you think this is happening? How did it get this way?

Are you ready to hear my theory? Can you tell me your theory?

How did *you* reach this theory? Any evidence? What’s “good” about your theory?

How did *I* reach this theory? My evidence? What’s wrong with my theory?

How can we test your theory? My theory?