

Building a vision of what a person wants for their lives

Introduction

This Quick Guide looks at how a peer network can help a person think about a vision for themselves. Peer support networks bring people together and offer a great situation in which people living with disability can explore their dreams and wants. Having a safe and supportive place to talk about building a vision for living your best possible life is essential and something that a peer support group can offer.

As journalist Erma Bombeck¹ said

“It takes a lot of courage to show your dreams to someone else.”

So how can a peer support group play a role in helping peer support members build a vision of what they want for, and in, their lives? This Quick Guide provides a starting point for a peer network to plan a meeting around this.

Let’s make it happen

While the NDIS, via Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and Planners, can offer support to people living with disability with developing their plans, peer support groups can offer different support, particularly during the pre-planning phase. It may be that people haven’t been able to talk about a vision for their life, or they find it hard to put it into words. The following questions can be used as a starting point to generate a discussion within a peer network:

1. What is working well in your life and what is not working well?

In the supportive safety of a peer group, people are likely to feel empowered to share experiences and aspects about their life currently. Sometimes people will share feedback on the good stuff, but they will hopefully also feel comfortable sharing what isn’t working well. This could include aspects of their life including:

- Employment or studying activities
- Volunteering roles held
- Family relationships and aspects of home life
- Recreational activities including sports, community groups and social clubs and
- Personal growth and development including maximising independence

2. What things are missing from your life?

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erma_Bombeck

QuickGuide

Government evidence is that there are definitely aspects of life opportunities that people living with disability are ‘shut out’ of, and a peer group is a great place to discuss this issue and support each other to break down barriers and pursue new life vision. This would be an opportunity for people to talk about what is lacking in their lives or parts of their life that they would like to change or make different.

3. *Determine what are the most important issues facing your peer group members in them being able to live their best life.*

Focusing on members’ most current and important issues is key to the success of your peer group, and will ensure it stays relevant and valued by its members. Some members will share issues that are important while others will have distinct issues relating to their particular circumstance. These can include things such as home, education, transport, relationships and will all be important to a person’s future vision. One way a peer network can help this is by having a guest speaker or existing network member to talk to the group about their experiences and ways to think about and build a vision.

4. *Peer group support to document goals and a life vision.*

The peer support network can assist its members to write their own goals relating to aspects of their life that are most important to them. Such goals can then be shared with other important people in the lives of your members, such as their family members, LACs and (if they are able to access the NDIS) NDIS Planners and/or (if they can access funded supports) their service providers. It is possible to work on such goals in creative ways – and there are a lot of tools available online to assist with the dreaming process (see *additional resources* below).

5. *Reframing disability away from ‘challenges’ to talents and passions.*

Peer support groups play a vital role in helping our community to view disability in a new way – with a focus on talents, skills and interests rather than a lack of ability in specific aspects of a person’s life. By talking about what members are passionate about, rather than on what challenges they face due to their disability, peer groups can help reframe the life options and opportunities for its members. Consider talking about:

- What ‘floats the boat’ of members, rather than how they ‘cope’ with disability;
- What people are good at, rather than what they have difficulty doing;
- What works well in members’ lives, rather than only what isn’t working; and,
- What could the NDIS bring into people’s lives, rather than what they could ‘lose’ from change.

Whatever the situation in members’ lives, there are ways of approaching change and life development within a positive framework, and language can be a powerful driver in ensuring peer group members strive to live their best life.

6. *Clarity of Vision.*

QuickGuide

Talking and sharing a vision with others in a peer network for example helps to clarify and demystify it so that dreams can start to become a reality.

“You need to share the vision with others. Your family, your friends, your acquaintances, the professionals you come into contact with, all those people who are so fond of asking you questions about your family member’s life and future. The more this vision of how someone wants their life to be is articulated, the more it becomes part of a real plan.”² Wendy Stroeve

Overall, running a peer support network is all about people coming together and sharing. Great outcomes are possible when the peer group offers its members opportunities to talk about their dreams, visualize a positive and productive life full of life choices and provides its members with the safe and supportive environment essential for the open discussion about these deeply personal thoughts.

Where you can find more information

There are lots of online resources about planning both on the NDIS website and via other community organisations and providers.

Evidence surrounding the experience of people living with disability in Australia is provided within the **Department of Social Services ‘Shut Out’** report available at:

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/shut-out-the-experience-of-people-with-disabilities-and-their-families-in-australia>.

The **NDIS** website offers a range of planning tools, and accessing their Planning Workbook is a helpful starting point which can be accessed via:

<https://www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au/wp-content/uploads/NDIS-Planning-Workbook.pdf>.

Carers Australia also offer a range of tools and resources, including their booklets and tools available via their website, see: <http://carersaustralia.com.au/ndis-and-carers/the-ndis-process/getting-plan-ready/>.

They also provide a range of examples of workbooks completed by people living with disability in a range of different circumstances, such as:

<http://carersaustralia.com.au/storage/sallys-ndis-workbook-example.pdf>.

² <http://thegoodlife.cru.org.au/getting-started/>

QuickGuide

Parent2Parent offers a great planning tool specifically focused on exploring life choices for children living with disability and this can be helpful for chats about planning:

<https://p2pqlid.org.au/our-services/path-planning/>.

The Community Resource Unit (CRU) has a guide called 'Bringing the good life to life':

<http://thegoodlife.cru.org.au/getting-started>

Sunnyfield disability services offers freely available planning tools which are helpful and easy to use, see: <https://ndis.sunnyfield.org.au/>

Co-authored by Jennifer Farnden

