

Multicultural Peer Network

Peer facilitator training manual



For equality
of life.

SSI acknowledges the Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples as the
First Australian and Traditional Custodians
of the lands where we live, learn and work.
We pay respect to Elders past and
present and recognise their continuous
connection to Country.

How to use this guide

This guide is divided into two separate sections.

Part A is designed to train facilitators how to run peer led support groups. It provides the knowledge needed to set up a peer support group and develop the skills to take on a facilitator's role.

Part B is a list of resources that the trained peer leader can use to run groups. Once the groups have been set up, the contents of Part B can be used as a template for running conversations around important topics.

Multicultural Peer Network (MPN)

MPN program

In 2020, SSI created a successful model for running disability support groups in multicultural communities across NSW called the Multicultural Peer Network (MPN). The program was funded through the Department of Social Services (DSS).

During the MPN program, SSI found tailoring disability support groups to different cultures, languages and interests had a vastly positive impact on people with disability in these spaces.

With the program coming to an end, SSI is sharing resources from the MPN program so community leaders and organisations can start their own peer groups.

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Part A



Facilitated peer groups

“

People who live with a disability have a right to be equal citizens in the community.

”

MPN program

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The social model of disability

What is the social model of disability?

‘Disability’ as the result of the interaction between people living with a disability and an environment filled with social, communication and physical barriers.

The environment must change to enable people living with a disability to participate in the community. This includes providing education, employment, accessibility and inclusive practices all aimed at establishing equality and access for everyone in the community.

The social model seeks to change society in order to accommodate people who live with a disability, rather than trying to modify the person so as to accommodate society.

People who live with a disability have a right to be equal citizens in the community.

The history of service delivery models in Australia

Medical and charity models to social model (1970-2000)

- > The medical profession moved away from claiming **responsibility** for people living with disabilities — disability was thought to be a social issue.

- > The guiding principles involved **integration** into mainstream society and service provision to promote this integration.

Community-based model (2000–)

- > The focus changed from community integration to **inclusion**.
- > The focus turned from the disability to the **person** and their individual strengths.

The medical model

The medical model saw the person living with disability as:

- > a **problem to be solved**
- > needing to be fixed or cured
- > needing to be treated by the medical profession/medical experts

If we follow the medical model, we are likely to view people as patients. This includes the following assumptions:

- > sick people don't go to work
- > sick people don't go on holidays
- > sick people have something wrong with them

The charity model

The charity model sees the person as:

- > a **victim** of circumstance (poor thing/been dealt a bad hand in life)
- > deserving of **pity**

The charity model limits the community's role to just giving money. Disability is still seen as a problem, but it's someone else's problem.

The social model: people are experts in their own lives

The person who lives with a disability is an **expert** in their own life. They know their limitations and have their own hopes and dreams but there are barriers to what they or their bodies can or can't do:

- > the **environment** is disabling
- > **attitudes** are disabling



“

People who live with a disability often have low expectations.

”

Disabling attitudes include low expectations and negative attitudes:

- > they can't achieve — grow/develop or be capable of learning
- > they are all the same
- > they belong with their own kind
- > they have nothing to contribute — they can't work
- > they hold others back
- > they are a burden to others

?

Ask: Are there any other disabling attitudes?

Review

- > Does this new social model make you feel more comfortable as a person who lives with a disability?
- > Has anyone experienced any disabling attitudes in the past due to their disability?
- > What barriers have you experienced when going out into the community?
- > Does anyone have any additional comments or afterthoughts?



Disability and social inclusion

What is social inclusion?

“Social inclusion is about participation, equal opportunity and empowerment”

In 2019, Inclusive Australia launched its first Social Inclusion Index and identified five key aspects of social inclusion:

- > a sense of belonging and wellbeing
- > prejudicial attitudes and experiences of discrimination
- > the amount and quality of contact with people from minority groups
- > a willingness to volunteer in inclusion activities
- > a willingness to advocate for social inclusion

“

Social inclusion allows a sense of belonging.

”



“

The three levels
of inclusion are:

- > participation
- > encounter
- > presence

”

What does social inclusion mean for us?

Social inclusion means **individual purpose** and **meaning**:

- > doing things that have purpose (e.g. work, school, university, TAFE)
- > independence and making your own choices (e.g. catching a bus, going shopping, going out with friends)
- > doing things that make YOU happy (e.g. what you want to do/what you enjoy — sport, socialising, making friends)

Social inclusion means **diversity of choice** — doing things that everyone else does:

- > going to work
- > going to school, university or TAFE
- > going out into the community to relax and enjoy life
- > volunteering
- > participating in community and political activities

Social inclusion means **doing things together and not apart**:

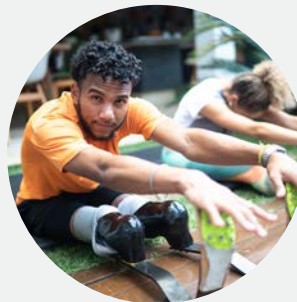
- > going to places used other members of the community
- > not being segregated or set apart

There are three levels of inclusion



Participation

Developing
connections
and friendships



Encounter

Meeting new people



Presence

Just being there in
community even
though you may not
speak to others

Definable outcomes of social inclusion

- > Self-selected **choices**
- > **Happiness** in participation
- > The right amount of **support**
- > Receiving a wage or **income**
- > New **life-skills** and **independence**
- > **Acknowledgement** of contributions

“
Social inclusion
can improve
physical and
mental health.
”



Ask: Does anyone have any other suggestions?

Social inclusion can result in:

- > making new connections and friendships
- > improved physical and mental health
- > optimism and motivation to participate

Social exclusion can result in:

- > loneliness, anger, resentment (feeling belittled and devalued)
- > negative beliefs and behaviours, which can develop into mental illness
- > low motivation
- > decreased confidence, which can result in a decline in the capacity for social interaction

A good example of the effects of social exclusion has been the deterioration in mental health during the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020–21. Being unable to attend social events and work due to COVID-19 has offered individuals a clear example of a choice-limiting situation beyond their control, including the potential for increased anxiety and, for some, acute and/or long-term mental illness.



Ask: When the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns first started, how did it affect you when it came to social settings? How was your mental and physical health at the same time in 2019?

“

Social exclusion
can result in
loneliness, anger
and resentment.

”

Social inclusion looks like...



Ask:

What does social inclusion look like for you and your family?

What do you think it might look like for your peer support network?

How will you find out what outcomes the network members want?

Do you think your outcomes would differ from those in your network?



Think about:

Being supported to start your own business.

Working in a mainstream industry or office where you are paid.

Joining a local club and participating in club activities e.g. sailing, cycling, bowling.

Attending community celebrations.

Just doing everything everybody else does!



Ask: Are there any comments or afterthoughts?



Ready
to start
facilitating



Preparation and set-up

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Book the **venue** or set up the **online meeting link** – Zoom, Teams, or another tool
- ☐ Send **invitations** to participants
- ☐ Arrange **catering** (face-to-face meetings only)
- ☐ Send **confirmations** with an outline of the program
- ☐ **Confirm attendees**
- ☐ Think about and arrange **facilitation support** — this can be in the form of a co-facilitator, assistant or support professional

Resourcing checklist

Face-to-face facilitation

- ☐ Laptop and cable
- ☐ Speakers to play videos
- ☐ Butcher's paper and/or a whiteboard (with marker pens)
- ☐ Paper and pens for participants
- ☐ Evaluation forms
- ☐ Cater to individual additional needs: such as accessibility or live captioning requirements

Online facilitation

- ☐ Schedule meeting using agreed online tool
- ☐ Send meeting details and link to all participants
- ☐ Check your laptop camera and microphone are working
- ☐ Ensure you have adequate internet access to enable online conversations and play videos
- ☐ Explain the interactive tools available to participants — this will vary according to the medium chosen

A photograph of two women in a professional setting. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a black top. The woman on the right has curly hair, wears glasses, and a red skirt. They are both looking down at a document held by the woman on the right. An orange rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'Starting the session' in white. The background is blurred, showing other people and bright lights.

Starting the session

Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country

An Acknowledgment of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect to the Traditional Owners of this Country.

Following this traditional custom is an important way to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People back their place in society and a way for us to formally pay our respect their People, history, and culture.

A Welcome to Country is performed only by a Traditional Owner Elder who is welcoming you to their Country, whereas an Acknowledgment of Country is for anyone to conduct to show respect to Australia's First Nations People as the Traditional Owners of the land.

For your Acknowledgement of Country, you may proceed by stating the following.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to Elders past and present and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples.



Timing of sessions

A schedule gives participants an idea of content and how much time each session will take as well as when breaks will occur.

Sample schedule		
Time	Length	Topic
9:00am	15 min	Welcome, introductions, overview
	10 mins	Check-in, housekeeping and expectations
	20 mins	Values and group agreements
5-minute break		
9:50am	45 min	What is peer support?
15-minute-break		
10:50am	15 min	Check-in and recap
11.50am	45 min	Self advocacy
End session or lunch, debriefing/networking etc		

Welcome to participants and introductions

Some sample questions:

- > What is your name?
- > What brought you here today?
- > Do you have any previous facilitation experience?
- > **If you are employed:**
 - What is your role?
 - What do you like about it?
 - What is challenging about your work?
- > **If you are a student:**
 - What do you like about your studies?
 - What are you finding challenging?

“

This training will give you the resources to facilitate peer groups.

”

- > **If you are a carer:**
 - What do you enjoy?
 - What are you finding challenging about being a carer?
- > What are you hoping to get out of today?

Ask participants to write down some **individual goals** and **desired outcomes**. Encourage them to check these regularly.

Purpose, goals and outcomes

The purpose of this training is to enable participants to facilitate inclusive groups covering a variety of special-interest subjects. Encourage participants to consider what they would like to learn.

Discuss

On completion of this training, you will have a basic structure and the resources to facilitate peer groups.

Summary of topics

- > Basic facilitation skills
- > Ethical facilitation
- > Creating a safe space
- > Communication
- > Group dynamics and personalities
- > Conflict resolution
- > Stages of group development
- > Self-care and support systems



Housekeeping

Face-to-face facilitation

- > Where are the amenities?
- > Where are the exits?
- > What is the fire safety procedure?

Online facilitation

Self-care during online participation is important — chair position, posture, stretching in breaks, walking, looking away from the monitor/screen to relax your eyes, having water handy, using earphones etc.

Group agreements

Ask the group to establish some group agreements.

Examples:

- > Phones should be turned off
- > We all need to arrive on time
- > We should raise our hand if we want to comment or ask something
- > We need to keep confidential what is shared by others in group discussion
- > We need to be respectful and supportive of one another



Ask the group to be respectful and supportive of one another.



The role of the facilitator

Facilitator training will cover:

- > Basic facilitation skills
- > Ethical facilitation
- > Creating a safe space
- > Communication
- > Group dynamics and personalities
- > Conflict resolution
- > Stages of group development
- > Self-care and support systems

“5 minutes is usually a good discussion time to talk about peers.”

What is a peer?

A peer is a **person who belongs to the same group as you**, maybe because of age, where they live, where they are from, or the kind of work they do.

- > What is peer support?
- > Where and when can it happen?
- > In what areas can peers support one another?
- > What are some good things that happen when peers support one another?

We are all peers here today because we are all facilitators!



The role of the facilitator



What does it mean to 'facilitate'?

To ease, enable, support, assist, aid or help.



What is the facilitator's job?

Their job is to present, guide, monitor, redirect and assist.



What is NOT the facilitator's job?

The facilitator is not the expert. We are all experts in our own lives and we are all learners together.

Watch the following video: Six quick facilitation tips

<https://youtu.be/ZxOAYfRWAQ>



What sort of facilitator would you like to be?

Watch the following video: Eight things to be as a facilitator <https://youtu.be/cQGQXTuLf80>



Ethical facilitation

Create a **safe space** for everyone.

You will often be working with people who are potentially **vulnerable**, come from different backgrounds and have varying needs. It is your role to treat all participants equally and fairly, regardless of gender, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, age or ability.

You need to manage differing personalities and potential conflict among group members.

Creating a safe space

Agreements should be the result of **group participation and sharing**.

We make group agreements to:

- > Create **boundaries** so that everyone can feel safe, respected and heard
- > Create a **safe and supportive environment**
- > Help with **comfort** and the **flow of conversation**, especially when dealing with sensitive or challenging issues
- > Deal with **inappropriate behaviours**, such as inappropriate language, put-downs etc. and provide tools for how to address these behaviours
- > Encourage people to **share** ideas, information, values and attitudes
- > Build **trust**



Ask: What do we value? Why?

Examples:

- > family
- > friends

Why?: Because we share trust, respect etc.

One of our agreements is to **listen** to each other so we can **communicate**.

“

Create a safe space for everyone.

”

One of our agreements is listen to each other so we can communicate.



This is what we agree on ...

1	4
2	5
3	6

(Note: Add the following if they are not mentioned — **safety, listening to each other, taking turns**. If necessary, the facilitator could put these up first.)

NOTES



Communication

“

Communication is the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.

”

Effective communication occurs when the receiver understands the sender's message in the way the sender intended.

A facilitator helps communication by **listening** and **asking** clarifying questions.

Watch the following video: What is communication?

<https://youtu.be/JdbL7jJb3JE>



Communication can be:

- > **Visual** — see what is being communicated
- > **Auditory** — hear what is being communicated
- > **Sensory** — imagine you can touch/smell/taste what is being communicated

Communication is more than just the words spoken. It also includes the **tone of voice** and the **body language** used.

What happens with communication for those of us who are hearing, vision or speech impaired?

Discuss



Listening — A foundation for good communication

Active listening

When we actively listen, we focus on the speaker.

Examples:

- > **repeating content** (e.g. “What I heard you say was...”)
- > **responding supportively** (e.g. “How did you feel about that?” or “How did that affect you?”)
- > **verbally acknowledging** (e.g. “mm”, “Ah-ha”, “I see”)
- > **physically acknowledging** (e.g. nod or appropriate facial expression)

“When we actively listen, we focus on the speaker.”

Open and closed questions

Examples:

- > “Did you have a good weekend?” (**closed question**)
- > “What did you do on the weekend” (**open question**)



Ask: What is an example of a closed question?

Closed questions require a brief response — e.g. “yes”, “no”. Closed questions often start with: Can ...? Did ...? Will ...? Have ...?



Ask: What is an example of an open question?

Open questions require an explanation or a more detailed response. They may start with: How...? Why...? What...? Tell me more/about...

“

Silence is ok.
Some people can
take longer than
others to process
information.

”



Ask: What gets in the way of really listening?

- > arguing
- > filling the silence
- > pretending that you are listening
- > pretending that you have understood
- > being impatient (e.g. saying “get to the point!”)
- > being distracted
- > thinking about what to say/ask next
- > looking at your phone

Helpful hints when facilitating

If **someone talks too much**, or **for too long**, you could politely interrupt.

Examples:

- > “We have to move on now but we can revisit this later.”
- > “I will just ask you to hold that thought so we can give someone else a turn.”

Allow silences. Remember that everyone does not process information at the same rate, especially those who may have an impairment or are taking medication.



Ask: When have you had trouble listening, or when have you not felt heard or understood?

Empathic listening

It is important to both **hear** and **feel** the other person’s point of view. Good listening skills can enable you to ‘walk in another person’s shoes’.

Examples:

- > “I understand what you are saying...”
- > “You are **[emotion]** because...”

Group dynamics and personalities

Building rapport and trust

Building **rapport** involves creating trust and respect for one another.

Empathy means feeling another person's feelings.

Sympathy involves acknowledging another person's words or feelings.

Watch the following video: Brené Brown on empathy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10>



Monitoring and maintaining group focus and flow

Your role is to guide and keep the group focus on the topic. You also need to keep to the timeframe.

This does not mean there is no room for discussion and ideas. You can **maintain flow** by asking questions.

Examples:

- > “Can anyone give us an example of that?”
- > “Could you tell us a bit about ...?”

“

Create trust
and respect for
one another.

”



Remember:

- > lower
- > slower
- > fewer

If something unexpected happens (e.g. someone becomes upset, a participant moves away from the topic, or someone refuses to stop talking) then it is your job to bring the focus back to the topic.

Examples:

- > “Let’s think about [the topic] again.”
- > “Hold that thought, I wonder if anyone else would like to add something.”

Managing personalities

(Note: If there is a co-facilitator, they can monitor participants and assist the facilitator if necessary)

What can interrupt the flow of conversations?

Discuss

Argumentative personalities

These people tend to **argue** or to **disagree** with most ideas.

It is important to be firm but polite and to return the focus to the topic.

Examples:

- > “I understand your position.”
- > “Can we agree to disagree on that point?”

Remember that it is important to keep your **voice low and slow, and use fewer words.**

If someone makes an accusation that you have no understanding of their situation (e.g. “You don’t know what you’re talking about”), stay calm and do not argue. Calm the situation, then involve the group by asking them to discuss the topic.

Examples:

- > “Thank you, this is a good example of how we are all experts in our own lives.”
- > “Thank you for your input. Now, what do other people think about ...?”



Distracting or annoying behaviours

Side conversations or comments, using phones and texting are some examples of distracting and annoying behaviours.

Take a breath before speaking!

Examples:

- > “I just have to say, if you are on the phone or otherwise distracted, it is very hard for me to stay focused, or for you to hear everything I am saying. I’d like it if you could put your phone on silent, as we agreed earlier.” **(point to the group agreements)**
- > “If you are having side conversations with other participants, it is very hard for me to stay focused, or for you to hear everything I am saying. May I ask that you wait for the break to chat?” **(point to the group agreements)**
- > “May I ask that we all stay present in the room” and, after a short pause, “Is that doable?” **(wait for acknowledgement and consensus).**

Participant is upset or angry

If a participant appears upset or angry during the discussion, it is important to stay calm. **Remember: lower > slower > fewer.** If needed, the co-facilitator can step in and have a one-on-one conversation with them.

Participant diversions and tangents

Although it may be interesting information, it is not helpful if it is not related to the discussion. Acknowledge that the points are interesting and may be raised at a later time.

Examples:

- > “Let’s just note that one down for later.”
- > “Maybe we can talk about that later.”

“

People often disagree and want to express their own opinions. Don't take it personally!

”

Dominating personalities

Sometimes there is a 'know-it-all' or someone who wants to be the 'voice of experience'. Acknowledge the points they make (e.g. "I'm glad you said that") then invite others into the discussion.

Examples:

- > "That is a very interesting point — what do others think?"
- > "I can see that you have had experience in this and you'd like to share. Would you mind making a list of some key points and, if we have time later, we can re-visit those points? Thank you."

Shy or quiet personalities

Some people prefer to remain silent or are too shy to speak in front of a group. Draw them into the discussion by asking them a question.

Example:

- > "What is your experience...?"

Use smaller groups, which are less intimidating. Offer positive encouragement and reinforcement but never put pressure on the person.

Don't take it personally!

People often disagree and want to express their own opinions. If a person becomes upset or angry, it is unlikely to be about you. More commonly, it is to do with their nature, life-situation or even a recent occurrence.

Discuss

It helps to know your audience. Sometimes group dynamics and personalities can lead to conflict. That is when **conflict resolution** becomes important.

Conflict resolution

People have their own perceptions, personalities and opinions. As a result, conflict can come from any one or multiple internal or external factors including:

- > a difference of opinion
- > poor communication
- > differing views and values
- > personality clashes
- > poor management skills
- > poor information sharing
- > feelings of inequity

Understanding what may have led to the conflict will help you to manage and resolve it.

Ways to minimise conflict occurring:

- > accept and respect one another's right to express needs, opinions and feelings honestly and appropriately
- > listen to the needs, opinions and feelings of others

Note: Redirecting the issue back to the group agreements about behaviour can also help.

“

Listen to the needs, opinions and feelings of others.

”



Ask: What did we agree earlier about respecting one another's point of view?

Listening

Use **active listening** to acknowledge the differences in viewpoints or to redirect the conversation and involve others.

If this is unsuccessful, try a '**drop the rope**' strategy. This means avoiding conflict by refusing to argue and moving the conversation on.

Example:

- > “Shall we agree to disagree and move on? Would that be ok?”

“

Remember the five stages of group development and when to reset.

”

Stages of group development

There are five stages of group development (Tuckman 1965).

Forming — the focus is on you and participants take direction from you

Storming — participants compete for positions and personalities emerge (e.g. dominant, quiet, conflicting)

Norming — the group knows what is expected and starts to settle

Performing — participants are ready to participate, perform and grow

Adjourning — the group may choose to meet again and/or want the group to continue

When a **new member** joins the group, the group resets to the **storming stage**.

Adding a **new facilitator** would reset the group to the **norming stage**.



Self-care and support systems

“Simple relaxation techniques may help someone who is feeling stressed.”

Managing stress

We are facilitators and not counsellors.

There are times when people could be affected by the discussion and need support. Simple relaxation techniques may help, although some people may need more (e.g. someone to talk privately with).



Ask: What are some of the indicators of being stressed?

If a member of the group becomes **upset**, the co-facilitator can step in and take the person aside for a chat. You could also offer a drink (e.g. water, tea, etc.).

Allow the person to talk if they want to do so. Alternatively, encourage them to focus on their breathing and sit quietly. You can also suggest they contact someone — a friend, support person or professional — who may be able to help.

Examples:

- > “Would you like to talk to someone privately?”
- > “Would you like a drink?”
- > “Is there someone you would like me to contact for you?”

This is not the time to tell someone what to do. Unsolicited advice can be disempowering. If someone starts to give advice, you can acknowledge the positive intention and then ask them respectfully to stop.

Self-care

Personal comfort and needs include such things as:

- > **environment** — chair, room temperature, screen time
- > **refreshment** — drinks and snacks
- > **amenities** — toilet breaks

Take self-care breaks (e.g. walk and stretch)

Mindfulness strategies, such as deep breathing, can be useful. Encourage people to be aware of, and respond to, any physical discomfort (e.g. moving into a more comfortable position or repositioning their chair).

Debriefing

Sometimes it helps to talk to someone.



Ask: Who do you debrief with?

Examples:

family, friend, manager, supervisor, peer, colleague, etc.

Sometimes it helps to write in a journal. This can be particularly important in cultures where it is normal to keep things to oneself.

Support systems

Support systems are essential.

Examples:

- > **Support person** — someone available in the event you need help
- > **Physical outlets** such as exercise or socialising with friends
- > Engaging in a '**community of practice**' — groups of people who share a common interest or value



Ask: What are some other examples of a positive support system?

We cannot support others effectively if we cannot support ourselves first (e.g. the oxygen mask on a plane scenario — if you run out of oxygen you won't be able to help anyone).

“

Support yourself first, so you can support others in need.

”

Review

Topics covered

- > Basic facilitation skills
- > Ethical facilitation
- > Creating a safe space
- > Communication
- > Group dynamics and personalities
- > Conflict resolution
- > Stages of group development
- > Self-care and support systems



Ask: Does anyone have any comments or afterthoughts?



Multicultural Peer Network (MPN)

The goals of MPN were:

- > To help improve social and community participation between people who live with a disability and the communities in which they live
- > To increase knowledge of the services available to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, including the NDIS
- > To support local communities in making informed decisions
- > To provide helpful in-language resources to CALD communities
- > To create opportunities where CALD communities can continue learning and share information
- > To provide ongoing contact for isolated CALD communities
- > To train and employ paid Lived Experience Facilitators to deliver sessions throughout the year

The next steps

You are now ready to run facilitated workshops in the targeted special interest areas.



Part B

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a white chef's hat and a white apron over a white t-shirt, is smiling warmly at the camera. She is holding a white tablet computer in her hands. The background is a blurred kitchen setting with stainless steel equipment.

Self-advocacy

“

Self-advocacy is about making change for yourself by speaking up.

”

What is self-advocacy?

Advocacy means **speaking up**. It is about making change for yourself by speaking up.

Types of self-advocacy



Ask: What are the types of self-advocacy?

Your own rights

- > Self-advocates speak up for themselves, including their own rights
- > They believe that every person should be treated as an **equal**
- > Self-advocacy also includes the right to make **choices**

Another person's rights

- > Self-advocates can also advocate for and defend **someone else's rights**

An issue in the community

Examples:

- > **lack of accessible facilities** — e.g. train stations/trains that do not have suitable access such as an accessible ramp or lift
- > **parking** — e.g. not enough accessible spaces or parking spaces being taken by people without a Disability Permit
- > **lack of inclusive activities or events** — e.g. activities that exclude people who live with a disability because of issues involving access
- > **discrimination and negative stigma** — e.g. stereotypes and negative beliefs about people who live with a disability in the community

Group advocacy

Group advocacy can involve an **individual advocating for a group** or a **group advocating together**.



Ask: Does anyone have examples of their own experiences of self-advocacy?

“

Self-advocacy also includes the right to make choices.

”

Your rights



Ask: What are your rights as a person?

- > **Human rights** and **freedoms** are things we all share
- > We all have **options** and **choices** about the life we want to lead
- > People who live with a disability have the **same rights** as people who do not live with a disability
- > Every person should be **treated equally**



“

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for what you want or need.

”

Being a self-advocate



Ask: What do you think it might be like to be a self-advocate?

Being a **self-advocate** involves speaking up. Issues will present themselves in everyday life and you can use self-advocacy skills to take control.

There are a series of simple steps you can follow:



Veronica is a high school student with ADHD who struggles to pay attention during class.

- > **Know the issue** — Veronica has ADHD and struggles to pay attention in class. She is easily distracted and misses some of the material covered. She also forgets to take notes.
- > **Talk to others** — Veronica could talk about her struggles with someone that she trusts (e.g. family, friend, colleague etc) and prepare what she wants to say when self-advocating.
- > **Identify what change you want** — Veronica could think about what changes could be made to support her learning in class. She could talk with her teacher to make a plan: e.g. moving to the front of the class and being given a copy of the notes.
- > **Make a plan** — Veronica needs to have a plan, and preferably a back-up plan in case her first plan doesn't work. She needs to be clear about what she needs and wants. Where the outcome is different, she can accept the alternative outcome or go to her back-up plan. Knowing she has a plan will give Veronica a say and some control over how she would like to be supported.
- > **Learn new skills** — Veronica can also consider the possible benefits of learning new skills to help her focus, as well as communication and interpersonal skills.



Ask: Have you ever tried to be a self-advocate?

Speaking up for yourself

Self-advocacy involves making **informed choices** about the supports required to meet your needs as an individual.



Ask: Can you think of someone who spoke up or took a stand?

Examples:

- > Charles Perkins fighting for social change with his Freedom Ride through NSW towns in 1965.
- > Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus and challenging racial segregation law in the USA.

You can speak up for yourself if:

- > someone treats you badly
- > a service does not support you the way it should
- > an organisation does not give you the opportunity to have your say
- > information is difficult to read or a website is hard to use
- > you just want to change something in your own life

Watch the following video: Claire Bertholli, Self-advocate

<https://youtu.be/2TkOdFOcdPQ>



“Being a self-advocate involves speaking up to take control.”

“

It is important to be prepared when speaking up for yourself.

”

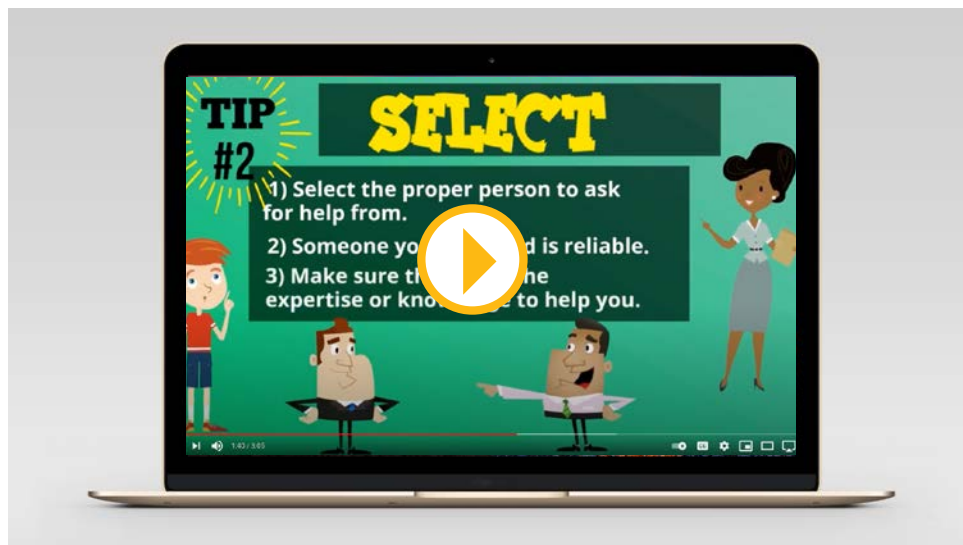


Ask: Have you ever spoken up about what you want or need in your daily life?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

Watch the following video: Self-advocacy skills — Self-advocacy strategies

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74G_Zpz-7Bk&t=97s



Ask: What are the main points raised in the video?

Making a plan



Ask: How do you make a plan to advocate for what you want? How will you know that you have achieved your goals?

Be prepared when speaking up for yourself about your needs and goals.

Think about your situation and be clear about what you want and what you need. If you are clear about the support you need it will be easier for others to help you to achieve your goals.

What is the problem you want fixed?

Example:

- > You have moved to a new area and want to meet new people, make new friends, and be invited to share in sporting and leisure activities.

What do you want to change?

Example:

- > The desired change is to make new local friends and community connections with the goal being to create a new social group who share the same interests, sports and social activities.

What support do you need?

Example:

- > You may benefit from having a support person, or group of individuals such as your circle of support (discussed in the next part, **Circles of support**) who can help you look for social groups or community organisations in your local area. They can also be with you when you are meeting new people.

What is the best way to communicate what you want? Is it better to use the phone or email, or would you be more successful talking to someone in person?



In person — organise a suitable time to have a discussion with everyone involved.



Phone — think about who you need to call (e.g. local sports organisations, the person running groups or programs at local centres, etc) and when would be the best time to call (e.g. during business hours or after business hours).



Email — find the name of the best person to contact. Decide in advance if you think someone else needs to be included or copied into the email (e.g. your trusted support person).



“Speak up for yourself if a service does not support you the way it should.”

“

Ask someone you trust what they think about your plan.

”



Ask: Why do you think it is important to make a plan?

Ask someone you trust what they think

Ask someone you trust (e.g. family, friends, support person) what they think about your plan.

Practise your self-advocacy skills with a family member, friend or support person — they could role play the person you are going to call or meet.

Take someone with you

Take someone you trust with you.

Make sure they know why you're meeting the other person, so they can back you up.



Ask: Who would you trust to support you?



Effective communication

Effective communication occurs when the receiver **understands** the sender's message in the way the sender intended.

“

It is important to be prepared when speaking up for yourself.

”



Ask: What are the two different types of communication?

Verbal communication means using your voice. This includes tone of voice.

Non-verbal communication includes body language, gestures (e.g. a thumbs up, nod or shrug), facial expressions (e.g. smile, frown), using Auslan and even communication using other senses such as sight, smell and touch. Non-verbal communication can also include:

- > **written communication** — email, text messages, hand-written notes and documents
- > **visual communication** — pictures, movies, YouTube, internet-generated images, artworks etc.

Clear communication is important. It may be a good idea to practise using your communication skills with someone you trust. Your support person can give you feedback and ensure that your message is clear.



Ask: What are the key things to remember in effective communication?

Active listening

When we actively listen, we put our focus of attention onto the speaker.

Examples:

- > **repeating content** (e.g. “What I heard you say was ... ”)
- > **responding supportively** (e.g. “How did you feel about that?” or “How did that affect you?”)
- > **verbally acknowledging** (e.g. “mm”, “Ah-ha”, “I see”)
- > **physically acknowledging** (e.g. nod or appropriate facial expression)

“

When it comes to self-advocacy, clear communication is important.

”

Open and closed questions

Examples:

- > “Did you have a good weekend?” (closed question)
- > “What did you do on the weekend?” (open question)

Closed questions require a brief, definitive response — e.g. “yes”, “no”. Closed questions often start with: Can ...? Did ...? Will ...? Have ...?



Ask: What is an example of a closed question?

Open questions require an explanation or a more detailed response. They may start with: How... ? Why...? What...? Tell me more/about ...?



Ask: What is an example of an open question?

Support people



Ask: Who would be the best person or people to ask for support?

Examples:

- > **Friends or family** — trusted friends and family members who know you and will support you every step along the way
- > **Someone you trust** — colleagues, peers, neighbours
- > **Teachers** — teachers who understand the challenges you face and who are supportive and encouraging
- > **Support workers** — support workers will work with you to prepare a plan that may include self-advocacy. They will help you with setting and achieving your goals as well as connecting you with services that can assist you
- > **An advocacy organisation** — there are a number of supportive advocacy organisations that are able to help you to self-advocate



Ask: Who would you ask?

Resilience and advocacy



Ask: What does resilience mean?

Resilience means **bouncing back** after difficult times, events or situations.

It involves dealing with challenges, knowing that you are capable of coping with any situation. It means that no matter how bad you may feel at the time, you will be able to recover.

Building resilience strengthens your **voice** and gives you the confidence to speak up for yourself.



Ask: How is resilience critical to success in life?

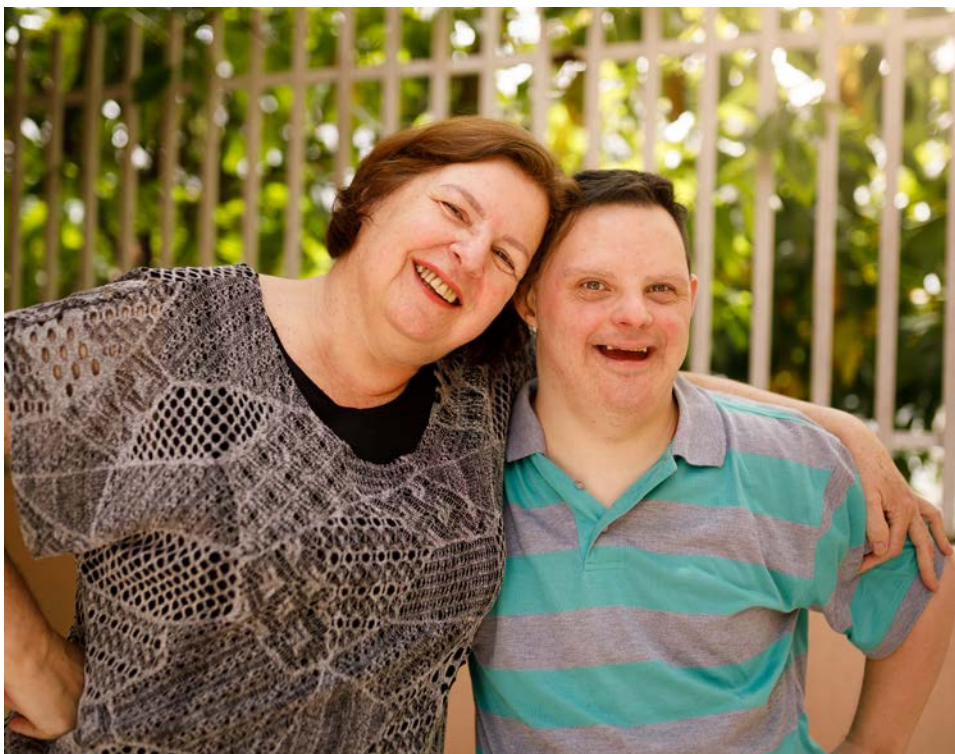
Examples:

- > resilience stops you from being overwhelmed
- > resilience allows you to move on
- > resilience involves learning and growing

“

Resilience and advocacy helps you to communicate your needs.

”



“

**Set goals to
do everything
everybody else
does!**

”

Discuss

- > What is self-advocacy?
- > What are my human rights?
- > How do I make a plan?
- > What is resilience and why is it important?

Goals to think about

- > Having access to community facilities
- > Joining a local club and participating in club activities: football, sailing, cycling, bowling or other sports
- > Attending community celebrations
- > Just doing everything everybody else does!



Ask: Are there any comments or afterthoughts?



Further reading

Disability Advocacy Unit (DARU) (2016) **What is disability advocacy?**, <http://www.daru.org.au/what-is-advocacy>

NOTES

A photograph showing a group of people, including a man and a woman, stacking their hands in a circle. The man is on the left, wearing a grey sweater, and the woman is on the right, with long brown hair, wearing a blue top. They are both smiling and looking down at the hands. The background is blurred, showing an indoor setting with tables and chairs. An orange rectangular overlay is on the right side of the image, containing the text "Circles of support" in white, underlined.

Circles of support

“Circles of support are all about the person at the centre of the circle: in this case, you!”

What are circles of support?

Circles of support are **groups of people who come together to help promote the goals and interests of one person**. They are all about the person at the centre of the circle: in this case, you!

Circles of support make time for thinking, planning and dreaming, for considering possibilities and achieving goals and dreams.

Circles of support are a natural part of life for most of us. When we are troubled, we call on our family, friends and support professionals for help, or to share our worries. When good things happen, we call on our circles to share our joy.



**Ask: Does anyone have a circle of support?
Who is in your circle?**



My circle of support



“People can have relationships across all four circles.”



Circle one is the **family circle** and includes the individuals who are closest to us.



The second circle is the **friends circle**.



The third circle is made up of the people who support us at work, school and in the community: people we see on a regular basis at work and/or school, as well as in the clubs, sporting teams, interest groups and anywhere we interact with the community.



The fourth circle contains the professionals whose job it is to support us: doctors, teachers, dentists, social workers, carers, support workers and therapists, etc.

People can have relationships across all four circles.

A person who lives with a disability may be vulnerable to **social isolation** and may have only a few people in their circles. Building circles can help to bring more people into our lives, including developing mutual goals with others in the circle.

“

Circles of support can help you in your everyday life.

”



Ask: Do you now understand circles of support?

Why are circles of support useful?

A circle of support can help you to make **decisions about your life**, to change things that may be worrying you and help you achieve your goals.

A circle of support puts you in the centre and helps you to stay strong, in charge and in control. Circles of support can **connect** you to other people in the community. They can also **speak up** on your behalf.



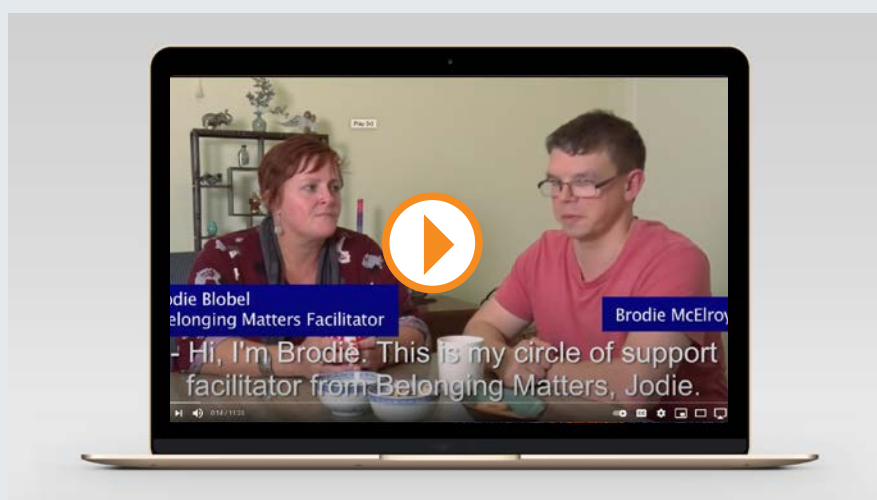
Ask: Is a circle of support useful? Why or why not?

Example:

Brodie is a person who lives with a disability and has set up a circle of support. See how his circle of support helps him.

Watch the following video: Circles of support — Introducing Brodie's circle

<https://youtu.be/gPfHheOrl18>



Ask: How does Brodie's circle of support help him in fulfilling his goals?

What do circles of support NOT replace?

Circles of support can play many important roles in a person's life, but they cannot replace:

- > the role of family
- > the role of support workers
- > the individual care that the person at the centre of the circle (you) receives on a daily basis

Circles of support should keep their focus on supporting the person at the centre. They are not meant to address all the issues you may face and it is essential to have realistic expectations. For example, specific family issues should remain private and be resolved within the family.

Making changes in your life will take time and there may be some setbacks. The advantage of having a circle of support is the opportunity to go back to the beginning and start with another idea.

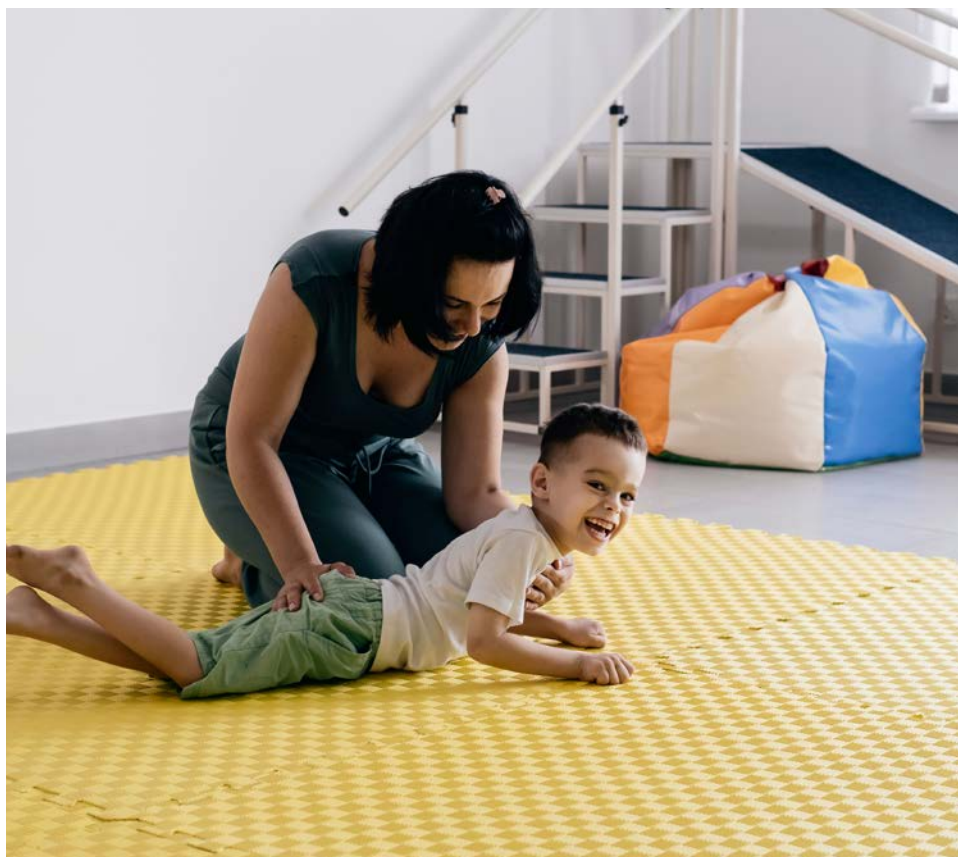
“

Circles of support should focus on supporting the person at the centre.

”



Ask: Do you have any questions or comments?



“

Your circle should include peers and people of a similar age to you.

”

Inviting people into your circle

Who to invite into your circle

Invite people you know and trust, people who have a genuine interest in being supportive.

Think about who you know and like. You could also ask a trusted person to help you choose who to invite:

- > family
- > friends
- > teachers
- > neighbours
- > classmates
- > recreation or sports groups
- > local community people and community groups
- > faith-based groups
- > work colleagues
- > people with useful expertise or experience

It is important for the circle to include **peers**, people of similar age and generation to you. Peers can help you to pursue age-appropriate interests and encourage friendships with people your own age.

Circles can grow over time and members might come and go. Whether small or large, it is important that the circle's focus is on the person in the centre — you.



Ask: Who would you invite into your circle?

How to invite people into your circle



Ask: Has anyone invited people into their circle of support? What was the outcome?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

When inviting people, it's important to **explain what is involved**. Tell people the **purpose** of your circle, your **goals** and the **support** you need. Explain how each of the members of the circle could support you.

There may be reasons why a person is unable to join your circle. Personal and work commitments, as well as lack of time, are common reasons. This is not a personal rejection of you, so do not let this affect your relationship. Keep the communication lines open just in case they want to join at a later time.

It is important to ensure that circle members do not feel obligated to get involved.

For more detailed information on how to ask people to join your circle see: <https://www.ric.org.au/assets/Uploads/circles-of-support/fc67c032b4/Circles-of-Support-Manual-2019.pdf>



Does anyone have any questions or comments about inviting people into their circle of support?

“

It is important to ensure that circle members do not feel obligated to get involved.

”



“
Your circle can support you in all areas of your life from finance to making friends.
”

What is the purpose of your circle?



Does anyone have any questions about the purpose and benefits of having a circle of support?



Circle meetings

Running your circle meeting

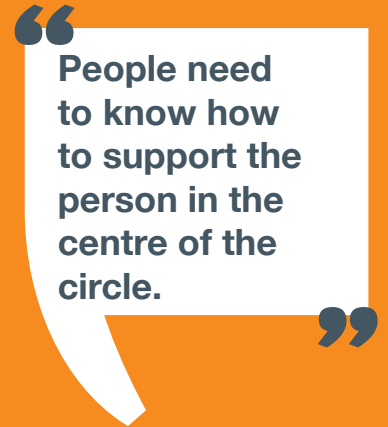


Ask: Has anyone had a circle of support meeting?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

Every circle of support will be different:

- > **Casual or formal** — formal meetings have meeting notes with action items listed and allocated to individuals. Casual meetings are less structured
- > **Regular meetings** — some circles meet every few weeks while some meet every few months
- > **Agreements** — people need to know what to do to support you. They should discuss issues with you and help you make decisions
- > **Facilitators** — a facilitator can keep discussions focused, stick to the agreed time and help the group reach agreements or compromise
- > **Location** — the setting needs to be comfortable and private. Distance attendance can be managed using video-conferencing technologies such as Skype, Zoom, speakerphone etc.
- > **Timing** — this should be agreed by the circle members at the first meeting and take into account everyone's needs
- > **Length** — meetings usually run for between one and two hours. It is important to remember that people are volunteering their time and meetings should not go past the scheduled finishing time



“

Specify the help and support needed to achieve your goals.

”



First circle of support meeting — making your plan

It is important to **make a plan** for the first circle of support meeting.

Let everyone know what you would like them to help you with and ask them for their ideas. Specify the help and support needed to **achieve your goals**. Discuss the frequency, timing and venue. Talk about who does what: facilitator, note-taker, caterer, etc. How will money be managed, if relevant?

- > **What is going well for you?** — e.g. your family, friends, social activities, school, university or job
- > **What you would like to change about your life?** — e.g. more independence, getting your driver's licence, having more choice in finding sporting and social activities
- > **What will the circle's role be in supporting you with any changes?** — e.g. setting and achieving goals and realising your dreams. This may include finding the appropriate supports and services
- > **How often will you meet?** — e.g. monthly, fortnightly, every six weeks or every two months
- > **Arrange date of next meeting**
- > **Set goals or actions (short and long term)** — e.g. organising a birthday party in a month might be a short-term goal while creating a plan for getting a driver's licence is a longer-term goal
- > **Review and reflection** — What worked and what didn't work? What can be improved?



Ask: Do you understand how a circle of support meeting works? Do you have any questions or comments?

Discuss

- > What would your circle of support look like?
- > How will you find out what outcomes the circle members want?
- > Do you think your desired outcomes differ from those in your circle?

Goals to think about

- > Working in a job where you are paid a fee
- > Joining a local club and participating in club activities
- > Attending community celebrations
- > Just doing everything everybody else does!



Ask: Are there any comments or afterthoughts?



Further reading

Resourcing Inclusive Communities (2019) Circles of Support: A manual for getting started, <https://www.ric.org.au/assets/Uploads/circles-of-support/fc67c032b4/Circles-of-Support-Manual-2019.pdf>

“

Set goals to do everything everybody else does!

”

NOTES

A man with a prosthetic leg and a face mask is the central figure, standing in a grassy field. He is wearing a green t-shirt, blue jeans, and a blue face mask. He holds a blue plastic bag in his left hand and a long black pole in his right. In the background, other volunteers wearing green shirts and face masks are visible, along with a wooden gazebo and trees. A teal overlay on the left side of the image contains the word 'Volunteering' in white text.

Volunteering

Introduction to volunteering

Volunteering can help you **meet new people** and **discover your talents**. It is a great way to get out and get involved in your community.

Volunteering allows you to connect to your community and make it a better place.

Volunteer work is unpaid.

“Volunteering connects you to your community and helps make it a better place.”



Ask: Would anyone like to share their stories or experiences of working as a volunteer?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

Volunteering and social inclusion

Reasons for volunteering:

- > Being part of your **local community**
- > Making **new friends**
- > **Belonging** to a group of like-minded people
- > **Helping others** in your local community
- > Discovering **new skills**
- > Building up skills that will help in **finding a paid job**
- > Wanting to **make a difference**



Ask: Is anyone interested in volunteer work? Why/Why not?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

“When you volunteer you can make a difference for others who are disadvantaged.”

Why volunteer?

Volunteering can help improve your self-confidence and overall happiness. It can also give you a feeling of pride and identity. By giving your time as a volunteer you are doing good for others and the community.

Volunteering can help you in many ways:

- > Learn **new skills**
- > Gain important **work experience** and sometimes even qualifications
- > Take on a **challenge**
- > Build **confidence** and **self-esteem**
- > Develop **communication skills**
- > Be part of a **team**

Watch the following video: Circles of support — Making volunteering work for you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClrFW2Y2Bv8>



Ask: Does anyone have any questions or comments?

Career experience and pathways

Volunteering can be an exciting way to explore your interests and passions, and help you to build on your skills.

Volunteering is a great way to get work experience and try out a new career without having to make a long-term commitment.

“

Volunteering can challenge you to try something different.

”



Ask: Does everyone understand what volunteering can do for you in terms of your career?

Personal benefits of volunteering

- > **Explore** your interests and passions
- > **Experience** real hands-on work
- > **Try** new things
- > **Meet** new people from different cultures, backgrounds and walks of life
- > **Be inspired** by others and let others be inspired by you
- > **Develop** your social and communication skills

Watch the following video: Circles of support — Benefits of volunteering

<https://youtu.be/DuD8Rd61q18>



Ask: What did you take away from the video? Does anyone have any questions or comments?

“

Volunteering can help you to build on your skills and to gain paid employment.

”



Where can I volunteer?

- > Ask people in your circle of support for help with ideas
- > Volunteering Australia has lots of information:
www.volunteeringaustralia.org
- > Check your local council website
- > Your local library may have information
- > Check with your local church, religious organisations or schools



Ask: Does anyone have any questions or comments?

Discuss

- > What are the benefits of volunteering?
- > What would I like to do as a volunteer?
- > How can I become involved?

Goals to think about

- > Joining a local club and participating in club activities such as football, sailing, cycling, bowling or other sports
- > Attending community celebrations
- > Just doing everything everybody else does!



Ask: Are there any comments or afterthoughts?



Further reading

Volunteering Australia website:
www.volunteeringaustralia.org/#/

NOTES

“

**Set goals to
do everything
everybody else
does!**

”



Employment

Job seeking

Will a disability make it hard for me to get a job?

Even if your disability has no bearing on your ability to do the job, some employers may have concerns. It is up to you to show them that, despite your disability, you are the **best person for the position**.

When you apply for a position, it is important to be clear about your qualifications.

“
Be clear
about your
qualifications.
”



Ask: Has anyone had trouble getting a job because of their disability?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

Where to find jobs

- > personal contacts
- > classified ads
- > job-placement services
- > disability advocacy job-placement services or support groups
- > vocational rehabilitation agencies
- > internet searches



Ask: Does anyone have anything they would like to add?



Do your homework

Getting to know the company shows you are motivated:

- > Are they a Disability Confident Recruiter? www.and.org.au/pages/disability-confident-recruiter.html
- > Do they have a good reputation with disability advocacy groups? — e.g. hiring, training and promoting people who live with disabilities
- > What are their strengths and weaknesses? — e.g. look at the company website
- > How does your background and experience make you a good candidate?



Ask: Has anyone researched a role, or a company, for a job application?

Helpful technology

Regardless of your disability, your talents and skills may be enhanced through the use of **adaptive technology**. For example:

- > **speech recognition software** can make using a computer easier for someone with a disability and
- > adjusting a **monitor's resolution** can make reading small print easier for people with limited vision.



Ask: What adaptive technology or special requirements will you need?



Do I disclose my disability?

You can decide when to disclose your disability:

- > Even though the law states you are not required to reveal your disability to your employer, unless it relates to completing essential job functions, you should consider being open on this subject
- > If you volunteer this information, your employer may see you as a strong and confident person

Timing

You could describe your disability in a **resume**, **cover letter** or **job application**, during the **interview**, when accepting the job or even after beginning the job.

Think about your disclosure plan.

Watch the following video: The job search and disclosing your disability <https://youtu.be/9mbaaz4FMZk>

“

**Think about
your disclosure
plan.**

”



Ask: Do you have a disclosure plan?

“
This is an opportunity to use your self-advocacy skills.
”

Watch the following video: Disclosing disability in the workplace

<https://youtu.be/5AYsl36G8Wc>

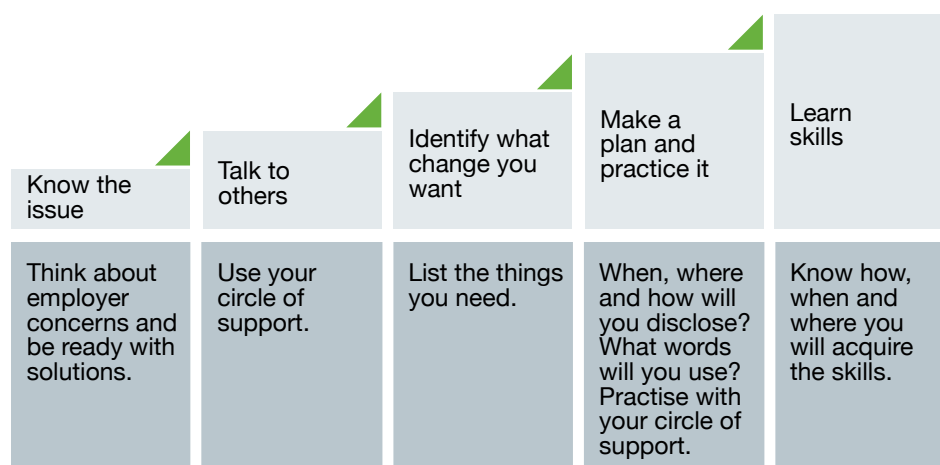


Ask: How would you create your disclosure plan?

In creating a disclosure strategy, consider:

- > **When** would be the best time to disclose?
- > **Where** would be the best place to disclose?
- > **How** would you disclose?
- > **What** words would you use?

Creating a disclosure plan is an opportunity to use your **self-advocacy skills**:



Focus on the solution: When meeting with prospective employers, go with the solution, not the problem.

Example:

I have a disability. It doesn't define who I am as a person, it just enhances me in a way which differentiates and strengthens me. My disability should be viewed as an ability to see the world in a different way.

“
Notify your interviewers in advance so that they are prepared.
”



Ask: Is there anything that you would like to share?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

Interviews

Notify your interviewers in advance so that they are prepared — e.g. if you are bringing an interpreter to your interview, you use a wheelchair, have a guide dog or some other accessibility requirement.

It is also a good idea to inquire about accessible entrances to the building, as well as the best route to take once inside to get to your interview.



Ask: Has anyone been for a job interview?
Did you need to let the interviewer know about your special requirements?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)





Role play: practice makes perfect

It is important to be comfortable with explaining **how you will perform** the job.

Practise answering these questions with a support person:

- > What are your skills and strengths?
- > What tools will you need (e.g. a specialised keyboard, accessible car space, a quiet location, etc.)?
- > How will the company benefit from hiring you?

The more you practise, the better you will become at responding to questions and the more comfortable you will be with disclosing your disability.



Ask: Has anyone done any role playing when it comes to job interviews? What does it mean when they say: “practice makes perfect”?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

Dressing appropriately

People often wear a dark blue or black outfit with dress shoes for interviews.

For some disabilities, the process of dressing for a job interview can be quite a challenge, but **it's worth it**.

Find out about the workplace before making a decision about what to wear.



Ask: Does anyone have any questions?

Resumes and samples of your work



Ask: What is a resume and what information should it contain? Has anyone written a resume?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)

Examples:

- > education summary
- > employment summary
- > qualifications
- > volunteer work experience
- > references

What to bring to the interview:

- > a clean, printed version of your resume
- > samples of your work
- > any relevant qualifications, references and so on



Ask: Does anyone have any questions about resumes?

“

Demonstrate how you have overcome challenges.

”

Anticipating and addressing concerns

Some people have fears and prejudices about workers with disabilities. You can deal with these by offering examples to demonstrate how you have accomplished tasks and overcome challenges. Talk about your determination and resilience.

- > **Describe** how using support equipment makes no difference to your ability to perform the tasks involved
- > **Highlight** the times where the disability you live with may even help you to do the job better



Ask: How would you address concerns about your disability with an employer?

“

Be assertive.

”

Inappropriate interview questions

It is illegal to ask about a person's medical history during an interview.

If you are asked an inappropriate question, respond **calmly**.

Examples:

- > “Nothing in my personal life will keep me from doing an outstanding job in this position.”
- > “Is this question relevant to the job?”
- > “I don't feel comfortable in answering this question as it relates to my privacy, may I please ask how the question relates directly to the job.”

Some questions are meant to test your ability to be assertive or to self-advocate. These skills may be required for the job.

The best way to manage an interview is to **practise, practise, practise**.

Remember your **communication skills**:

- > use active listening and responding
- > use open and closed questions to ask for more information
- > give examples — how have you previously dealt with similar situations or challenges?



Ask: What are some examples of inappropriate questions?

(All stories are private and should be treated as confidential)



Discuss

- > Will living with a disability make it hard for me to get a job?
- > How do I find out about job opportunities?
- > What should I include on my resume?
- > What are the important things to remember in interviews?

Goals to think about

- > Working in a job where you are paid a fee
- > Getting a job in an industry/activity you enjoy
- > Just doing everything everybody else does!



Ask: Are there any comments or afterthoughts?



Further reading

Australian Network on Disability JobSeeker toolkit:
and.org.au/students-jobseekers/jobseeker-toolkit

“

**Set goals to
do everything
everybody else
does!**

”

NOTES

A man with a prosthetic arm is smiling while working in a greenhouse. He is wearing a grey t-shirt and green cargo pants. His prosthetic arm is blue and silver, and he is using it to hold a wooden crate filled with red tomatoes. The background shows rows of green plants in the greenhouse.

NDIS access

What is the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)?



Ask: Has anyone heard of the NDIS?

(If they answer yes, ask if they are an NDIS participant)

The NDIS was launched to help improve the way people who live with a disability are supported to become more active members of their community, in line with their personal goals.

Understanding the NDIS

- > The NDIS provides **funding** to the person who lives with a disability to **support** them with their **individual needs and goals**
- > The NDIS is for people who have an impairment or condition that is likely to be **permanent** (lifelong) and that **limits their ability** to do everyday things by themselves
- > The NDIS helps the person to access '**reasonable and necessary**' **supports**
- > The NDIS provides the person who lives with a disability with **choice** and **control** in their lives
- > The NDIS helps increase the person's **independence**, including their social and economic participation

Who is eligible for the NDIS?

To check your NDIS eligibility, see the NDIS Access Checklist:
www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/am-i-eligible

You can also speak to your LAC in the area.

“

NDIS provides people with a disability choice and control in their lives.

”

What support is there to access the NDIS



Ask: Has anyone heard of Local Area Coordination?

Local Area Coordination

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) support people aged 7 - 64 to access the NDIS and other mainstream services in the community.

SSI is partnered with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to deliver Local Area Coordination Services to residents in the following area of NSW:

Sydney

Ashfield
Burwood
Canada Bay
Leichhardt
Marrickville
Strathfield
Sydney

South Western Sydney

Bankstown
Camden
Campbelltown
Canterbury
Fairfield
Liverpool
Wingecarribee
Wollondilly

To access SSI's LAC call 1800 960 975 between 9.30am - 4.30pm, Monday - Friday or email ssilac@ndis.gov.au for assistance.

If you live outside the above areas you can find your local LAC here: www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/ndis-each-state

In-language videos

The SSI LAC resource portal provides useful information to help you understand and access the NDIS in the following languages.

English
Arabic
Croatian
Farsi
Indonesian
Khmer
Korean
Spanish
Tamil
Vietnamese

You can access these resources here: www.ssi.org.au/services/disability-services/local-area-coordination/resources

NDIS pathway

NDIS pathway information is available in various languages:
www.ndis.gov.au/languages

For a downloadable pathway booklet see:
www.ndis.gov.au/participants

If people do not have access to the internet, you can direct them to the SSI leaflets available. They may also speak directly to a facilitator or Local Area Coordinator (LAC) for further information.

If you need an interpreter you can call the TIS on 131 450.

TIS (Translating Interpreting Support) National

TIS National is an interpreting service for people who prefer to use a language other than English to access available services such as the NDIS. It includes:

- > immediate phone interpreting
- > pre-booked phone interpreting
- > on-site interpreting

How to call the NDIS if you need an interpreter

You can **call TIS National direct on 131 450** and ask to speak to the NDIS on **1800 800 110**.

If you are hearing impaired or deaf, you can use a **TTY phone** by calling: **1800 555 677**. The interpreter signs to you using FaceTime on your phone or laptop while talking on the phone to the NDIS person with whom you are communicating.

- > Interpreter services are free
- > The interpreter's role is to interpret the spoken words and not to give advice
- > NDIS Planners, Early Childhood Early Intervention Services, LAC Services or Support Coordinators can help you find or book an interpreter for you



Ask: Does anyone have any questions? Has anyone used an interpreter when it comes to talking to the NDIS over the phone?

Discussion

- > How has the NDIS helped you as a person who lives with a disability?
- > Was the NDIS easy or difficult to understand at first?
- > Were you able to get the correct supports from the NDIS?
- > Is there anything that you would like to share about the NDIS?
- > Did you have enough support?



References and resources

The following list includes the references and resources used in this Training Manual. If you believe there has been an omission please contact: SSI on (02) 8799 6700 or info@ssi.org.au

Australian Network on Disability JobSeeker toolkit,
<https://and.org.au/students-jobseekers/jobseeker-toolkit>

Disability Advocacy Unit (DARU) (2016) What is disability advocacy?,
www.daru.org.au/what-is-advocacy

NDIS (2019) Languages, www.ndis.gov.au/languages

NDIS (2019) Am I eligible, www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/am-i-eligible

NDIS (2021) For participants, www.ndis.gov.au/participants

PeerConnect (no date) Setting up and running peer networks,
www.peerconnect.org.au/setting-and-running-peer-networks

Resourcing Inclusive Communities (2019) Circles of Support: A manual for getting started, www.ric.org.au/assets/Uploads/circles-of-support/fc67c032b4/Circles-of-Support-Manual-2019.pdf

Tuckman, B W (1965) Developmental Sequence in Small Groups. Psychological Bulletin, 63(6), 384–399

MPN resources for SSI partners (2023), www.ssi.org.au/services/disability-services/multicultural-peer-network

MPN resources for individuals (2023), www.ssi.org.au/services/disability-services/multicultural-peer-network/connect-in-your-community

SSI's Local Area Coordination services page in NSW (2023),
www.ssi.org.au/services/disability-services/local-area-coordination

SSI's personalised employment support services (2023),
www.ssi.org.au/services/employment

Videos

BeA Topfacilitator (2012) Six quick facilitation tips,
youtu.be/ZxOAYfRWAQ

Brown, B (2017) Brené Brown on empathy (child friendly version, edited from 2010 Ted Talk), www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10

Career and Life Skill Lessons (2019) Self-advocacy skills — Self-advocacy strategies, www.youtube.com/watch?v=74G_Zpz-7Bk&t=97s

CISVicAustralia (2017) Making volunteering work for you,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClrFW2Y2Bv8

EasyExplaining (2016) What is communication? Let's discuss!, youtu.be/JdbL7jJb3JE

Falbo, K (2013) Benefits of volunteering, youtu.be/DuD8Rd61q18

geniebray (2014) The eight things to be as a facilitator, <https://youtu.be/cQGQXTuLf80>

HealthWest TV (2019) The importance of social inclusion, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeEPf2rxfgI>

Inclusion Melbourne (2018) Circles of support — Introducing Brodie's Circle, <https://youtu.be/gPfHheOrl18>

Job Access (2017) Disclosing disability in the workplace, youtu.be/5AYsl36G8Wc

People with Disability (PWD) Australia (2019) Claire Bertholli, Self-advocate, youtu.be/2TkOdFOcdPQ

Shape Arts (2017) Social model of disability, https://youtu.be/24KE_OCKMw

TheDOITCenter (2018) The job search and disclosing your disability, <https://youtu.be/9mbaaz4FMZk>

Websites

Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC): humanrights.gov.au

Carers NSW: www.carersnsw.org.au

Council for Intellectual Disability — Team up: cid.org.au/team-up

Diversity and Disability Alliance (D+DA): www.ddalliance.org.au

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS): www.ndis.gov.au

Volunteering Australia: www.volunteeringaustralia.org

SSI: www.ssi.org.au



ssi.org.au

The Multicultural Peer Support Network (MPN) is an initiative of the Settlement Services International (SSI). The project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

