Workshop
One

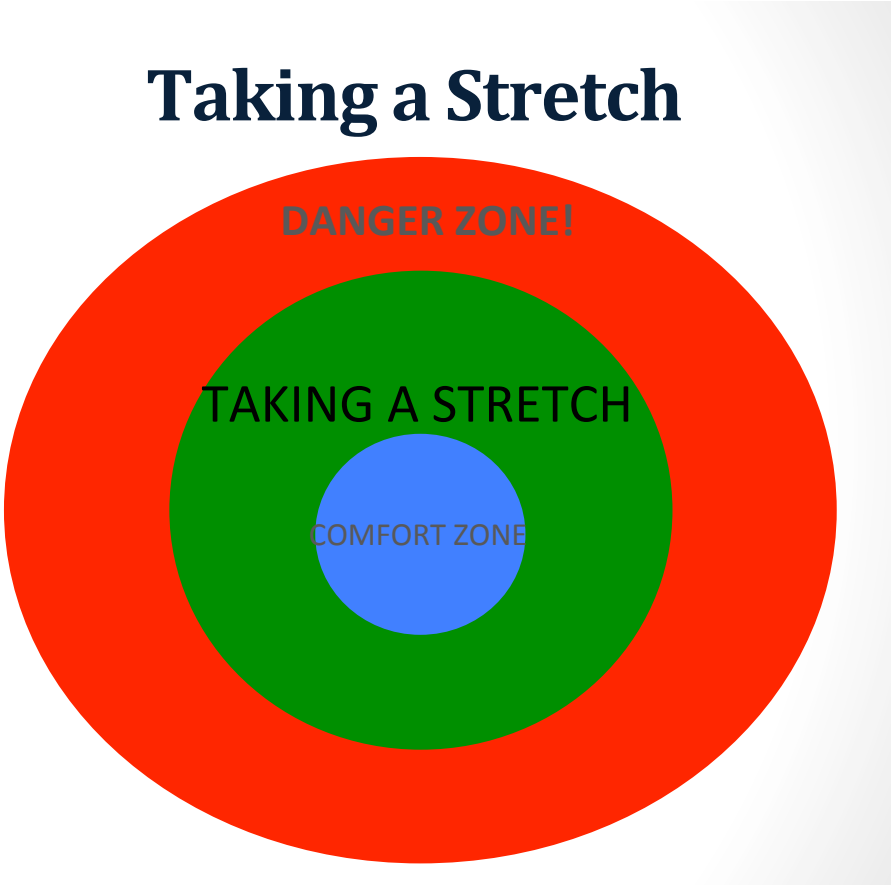
© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Facilitators of the Pathways to Opportunities course:
The facilitators are family members of a person with a disability and/or a person with a disability that are self-directing their supports; the co-facilitator is someone that is experienced working in the disability industry. All facilitators are trained professionals in the development and delivery of this training package. They have participated in the program themselves and have developed Person Centred Plans for themselves and/or their son / daughter with a disability.
Our workshops are in the style of facilitative teaching; we will show the practice, demonstrate how it works, get you to do it, and then ask you to share and discuss it.
The facilitators are committed to ensuring you get the most out of this course to benefit yourself / your family member with a disability. They are contactable for support and advice with planning and are committed to building trusting relationships with all participants.
Any issues or problems please contact Jeder Institute www.jeder.com.au

Introductory Round:
Please share with us your name, what you want to get out of this course and something **positive** about your family member with a disability.

Setting the group culture:
What agreements do we want to work by? What do we want our culture to be to help keep us safe and encourage everyone to speak freely? How do we want to be with one another during our time together?

Comfort, Stretch, Panic:



Comfort Zone: Is the place of safety and comfort, we know everything and feel very comfortable (firm boundaries). If we don't leave here every now and then, we lose the chance to grow.
Danger Zone: A place of exposure and vulnerability (loose or no boundaries). If we get into this territory we leave ourselves open to being hurt or damaged.
Taking a Stretch: The place of growth (flexible boundaries). Taking a stretch allows us to challenge our thinking in a safe space, knowing that we can return to our comfort zone if things get too much. If we really want to change something we will continue to challenge ourselves and to learn from our experiences.

You can plan for learning by working out what will keep you in the stretch zone:

Goal - To be more confident in riding a horse:

Action to be taken	Who	When
Organise a regular riding opportunities – once a month ride and fortnightly lessons to increase skills	Michaela	January
Take notes of how I felt riding at a trot and a chanter after each ride using skills learned	Michaela	Monthly from February
Discuss notes with teacher at fortnightly lessons and figure out strategies to address fear	Michaela	Each fortnight

Recognizing Emotions Throughout Change:

Fear

Anger

Frustration

Excitement

We recognise throughout these workshops a number of emotions may arise. We encourage you to be gentle with yourself and each other. Change affects people in many different ways and everyone has a unique set of circumstances and experiences.
We work hard at creating a safe supportive space within the workshops and encourage you to express your feelings and get the support you need.
We want to acknowledge that no one can be a mind reader, therefore please come speak to us (the facilitators of the workshops) for anything we can do to support you.

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Overview of 6-Day Course:

Day 1	
History of The Disability Inclusion Movement	Disability Inclusion Act
Funding – What's changing under the NDIS?	Journey & Description of the person
Gifts of the Head, Heart & Hand	Relationships
Day 2	
5 Valued Experiences	Vision and Values Statement
Communication Expressive & Receptive	Making Decisions
Day 3	
Important to & for - Life Areas – Rituals & Routines	What's important now / future and to Mum & Dad
Goal Setting	Good Lives & Listening
Day 4	
What does good support look like	Characteristics of people supporting
Working / Not Working & Action Planning	Harmonizing the dream
Day 5	
My Places in community	Power of 10 – blue sky thinking
Community Linking	My Time – timetable & Budget
Day 6	
Writing up the plan – putting it all together	Self Direction / Management
Self Care	Next Steps

From System Centred to Person Centred: Person-centered planning: with Beth Mount (1992)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y77y7XW8GtE

From SYSTEM CENTRED – PAST	Towards PERSON CENTRED - FUTURE
Plan a lifetime of programs	Craft a desirable lifestyle
Offer a limited number of usually segregated program options	Design an unlimited number of desirable experiences
Base options on stereotypes about people with disabilities	Find new possibilities for each person
Focus on filling slots, beds, placements and closures	Focus on quality of life
Overemphasise technologies and clinical strategies	Emphasise dreams, desires, and meaningful experiences
Organise to please funders, regulators, policies and rules	Organise to respond to people

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Disability Inclusion Act 2014: www.facs.nsw.gov.au

The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014 commenced on 3 December 2014.

The Act replaced the Disability Services Act 1993. The Act has two main roles:

1. Committing the NSW Government to making communities more inclusive and accessible for people with disability now and into the future. These commitments will continue even when the NDIS is operating across NSW.
2. Regulating specialist disability supports and services to people with disability in NSW and introducing better safeguards for these services until the change over to the NDIS.

http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0018/300348/DIA-Factsheet-1-Overview-of-the-Act.pdf

State Funding – Now:

What you should know about your funding; available funding; applying for funding and the NDIS:

With all of the changes that are occurring at the moment, the logical place to start is to find out about your funding – or the funding for the person with disabilities, if they have any. This may take a bit of perseverance to find out, particularly if the funds have been with an organisation for a long time, or if you have not ever really thought about it. What is important to know is what supports your funds have been designed to cover now and how they can be used, this is called funding criteria. Sometimes people find that the funds were to cover respite but they have been using it for in-home supports, or situations where the person has used some of their community access funds to purchase callipers so that they can move around more easily at home as well as in the community. Your Departmental liaison person should be able to assist you with finding out the information about the funds including how much money it is. If you know the name of your funding e.g. accommodation, respite, community participation, transition to work, home care, supported living fund, etc. You can look up the funding criteria, see links below.

When you know what funds have been allocated (name of funding package) as well as what for (funding criteria), you will have a place to start. Whether you need to spend time planning on what needs to be done to help the person with disability to have the best possible life or whether you have this sort of information & want to start making sure the correct services & supports are put in place, your knowledge about the funding level (amount of money) and criteria will be really useful.

Sometimes people find that they don't have enough funding. When this happens, you may have to go through another assessment, application or appeal process or consider other avenues for funding. Currently, funding sits within various streams designed to support people with disabilities in different areas of their life, for example, accommodation support, life skills, community access, employment services, respite, early intervention, transition to work, older

parent carers, home & community care, just to name a few. Some of these are funded under the NSW government, whereas others are federally funded.

You need to be aware of the way these funding programs look at the support the person requires. This means understanding the terms used in funding arrangements. For example, instead of saying you want support at home so that the person's parents can go away on holiday, you might need to say that the family would like to go away for a few days, which means that some in-home support will be required for the person with a disability to build their independent living skills & practice these skills in order to live away from the family home one day. Another example might be the person wants to go to a music group or out to see live music, this can be framed as the person would like to make friends and build community support networks through shared interests by attending a music group, local festivals and live music events. It really helps to have a supporter who understands this type of language difference & who can also help you get used to using this language in your writing. If you are unsure of anything you write and would like support please contact your facilitators.

Current funding streams and criteria: www.adhc.nsw.gov.au

Early Childhood:
https://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0004/283387/Plain_English_Information_Resource.pdf

Community Participation, Life Choices & Active Ageing:
http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/?a=228283

Individual Accommodation Support:
http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/individuals/support/somewhere_to_live/individualised_accommodation_support/individual_accommodation_support_packages

Transition to Work:
http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0003/228288/Transition_to_Work_Guidelines_2013.pdf

Individualised Programs:
Currently, ADHC has a number of program areas, which include individualised funding options:

- Supported Living Fund (SLF)
- Individual Accommodation Support Packages (IASP)
- Leaving Care Program (LCP)
- Community Support Program (Younger Onset Dementia [CSP]
- Young People in Residential Aged Care (In-Reach and In-Home [YPIRAC]
- Young People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC IASP)
- Extended Family Support (EFS)
- Community Participation (CP)
- Flexible Respite
- Boarding House Relocation Program
- Life Choices / Active Ageing (LC/AA)

Why is it important to plan? – Adapted from http://www.inclusionbc.org/parent-s-handbook-inclusive-education/planning-your-child-s-education/why-planning-important

Planning allows parents who support people with disability to connect their hopes and dreams to daily actions. It makes possible an inclusive community life for your loved one, one step at a time. Planning can also involve forming a team to work together toward big-picture goals. This team will include you and your loved one at the centre and may include friends, neighbours, extended family and other caring community members.

Planning should be person-centred. It begins with your loved one and your family. It should also respond to all aspects of life — including social relationships, recreation, and educational opportunities — and includes both long-term and short-term goals for your son / daughter. Person-centred planning tools such as Maps, Path and Lifestyle Planning may be helpful for developing plans. Community partners can include school personnel, social workers, neighbours, friends and other professional supporters, they can also help with developing plans and organizing the required supports and services.

Planning is an ongoing, circular process. As you identify new dreams, goals and needs, you will need to revise the plan to address them. As goals in the plan are achieved, you will need to define new goals. There are also many crossroads over the years, and transition planning is key to ensuring good outcomes. Transition plans can plan for visits to a new environment before an actual move. This allows staff in the new environment to develop the best possible strategies to make the move as smooth as possible for your son or daughter. Some districts have transition teams to support people through major changes. Planning should begin well in advance of anticipated transitions.

Over time, the way you plan may change. For example, as people get older, it's important to include them as much as possible in the planning process and the plans themselves may require more details to be shared. Ideally, people should participate in planning meetings. Planning works best when both parents and the person with disability are active and valued participants in the process.

Funding under the NDIS:

The NDIS roll out was announced in September 2015 – see this link for the timeframe and which areas are rolling out when. http://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/our-sites/nsw It is planning that all of NSW will transition to NDIS by 2019.

To enter the NDIS see http://www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-access-checklist - 'NDIS Access checklist'

Once you have passed the eligibility phase a NDIS planner will contact you and send you some information; including:

The Planning workbook - http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/ndis-planning-workbook

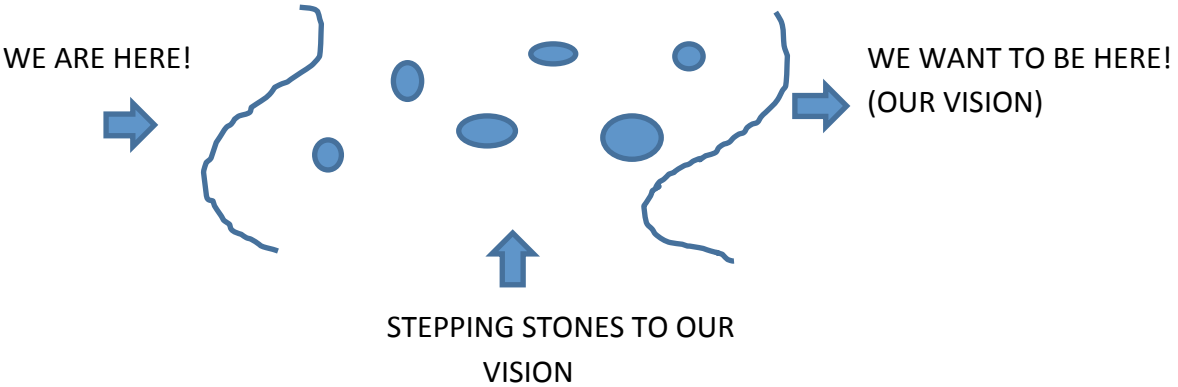
© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Participant Statement Child - http://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/planning-process/developing-childs-plan
Or Participant Statement Adult: http://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/planning-process/developing-participant-statement-adult

The lifestyle plan you will be working on through in this course will cover the components of an NDIS plan plus more. The lifestyle plan is a user-friendly plan that can be used for implementing the stated, desired lifestyle, recruiting a team of supporters, sharing valuable information with people that are introduced into the person's life, information that can be shared in part or as a whole to ensure people are on the same page and working towards a shared vision and the associated goals.
The Lifestyle Plan can also be taken to the NDIS planner for applying for funding.

The Journey:

Exploration & growth is expected during the Pathways to Opportunity course - attending the workshops, going through the workbook and completing the exercises will provide you with the first draft of a Person Centred Lifestyle Plan as well as making some connections and networks with other people that are going through similar situations.
Below is a diagram of starting the journey, crossing the river and getting to the other side.



Sometimes journeys can be emotional and difficult. Discussing our lives and the lives of the people we love can bring up feelings we have put away for a long time. If this happens to you please know this is a natural part of being human, please see the facilitators for support or find someone you can talk to. Please know we are here to support.

The way we describe our son / daughter with a disability is important:
Too often people with a disability are defined and described in terms of deficits, rather than in terms of capacities.

Society's attitude to disability can be a source of distress to families. Families are often told what is wrong with their child/adult, rather than having their capacities highlighted. Often families are encouraged or forced into pointing out their family members deficits in order to receive supports or funding.

Community can see people through stereotypes, and can expect people with disabilities to be incompetent. Finding capacities in people helps others to see how competent people can be when they have the opportunity to express their gifts.

With person centred planning, the focus is on the capacities of people with a disability, and on building opportunities in the community for these capacities to be expressed. In particular the contribution people can make to their community through sharing their capacities, and finding more of these opportunities.

Firstly let's look at describing the person through their capacities:

Descriptions of the person in my life (deficit versus strengths)

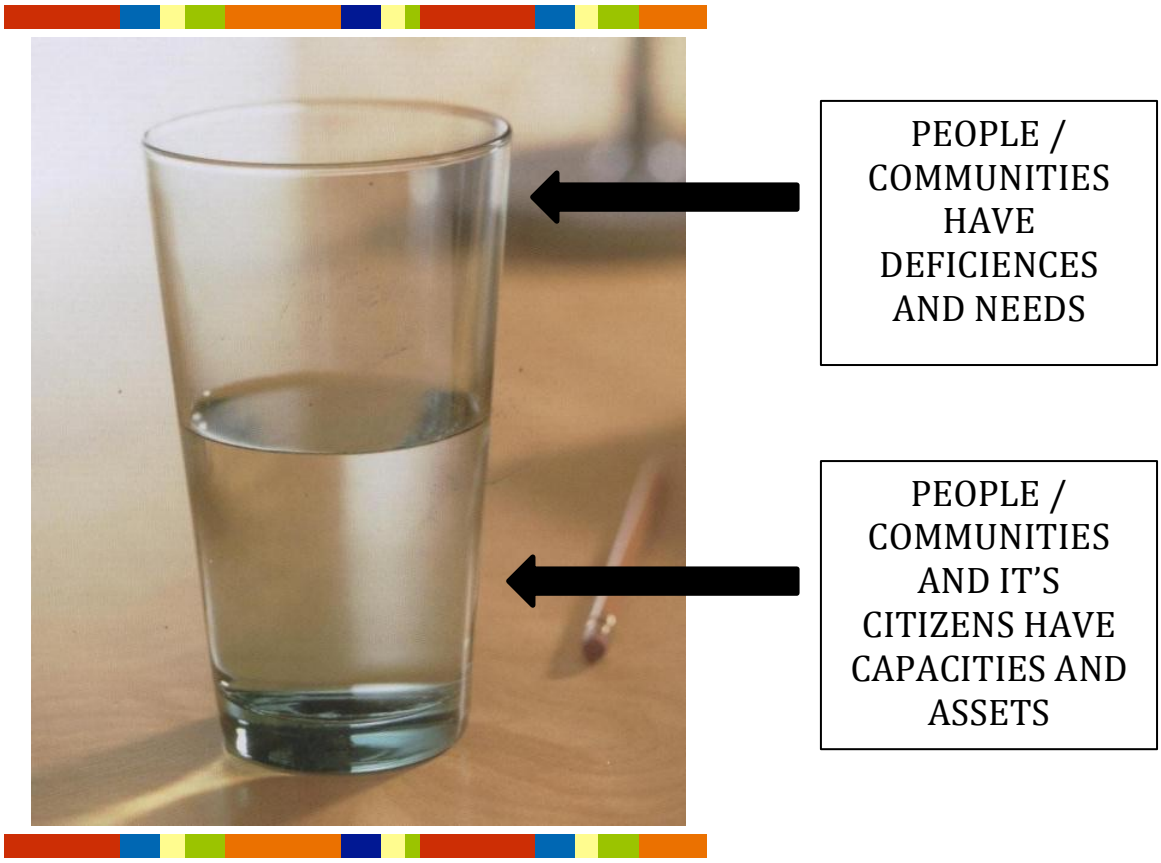
Person A	Person B
• Has high-level quadriplegia & is unable to do anything for themselves e.g. eat, bathe, move around, etc. • Has the mental capacity of a 3 year old • Is brain-blind, unable to speak, has significant intellectual impairment because of a traumatic brain injury • Significant health concerns e.g. multiple forms of epilepsy, neurogenic bladder, significant sleep disorder, coughing disorder • Has a PEG for hydration & medication administration • Sometimes needs to use the PEG for meals • Limited to home life because when they are awake, it may be at 2am so not safe to go out in the community • Unable to use their hands e.g. to use a computer or speech assistant tool • Refuses to use a communicator device so hard to know what the person really wants	• Small business proprietor • Employer of staff • Teacher & Mentor • Italy & Spain are soul homes • Practical joker • Karaoke queen • Change agent • Traveller • Adventurer & risk taker • Adores interesting fashion • Food connoisseur • Great listener with a keen interest in people • Meditator & music lover • Spiritual person • Home owner & neighbour • Gardener especially native gardens • Beekeeper • Loves relaxing in the spa with friends • Baileys & milk lover – not too happy the next day if there is a hangover!

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Activity: Describe yourself or your loved one with a disability:

Deficit / Labels	Strengths & Capacities

Glass Half Empty or Glass Half Full Perspective:
We decide how we look at things.



© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Gifts of the Head, Heart and Hands:

In any community, the most fundamental building block is individual people's capacity to join in contributing their gifts to strengthen their community. Every individual has many gifts – knowledge, skills, and innate talents; gifts of the head, hand and heart.

A very powerful way to build a stronger community taps unrealized potential in two steps. Asking people; What are your gifts? Then connecting gifts to opportunities for contribution. When people purposefully look for gifts, there are amazing discoveries. The key is asking.

The most fundamental action of community building is conversation, people turning to one another and asking each other what is important to them and what they have to offer to a common effort, to work to get what is important.

Activity:
Ask the focus person to tell you **a story about a time when he or she was at his or her very best**, a time when he or she made a positive difference to other people and felt good to be involved in doing so. It can be a small thing or a big thing, what matters is that the focus person felt good about doing it. (If you cannot communicate well enough with the focus person to hear their story, you will need to ask people that know and care about the focus person.)

Reflect on the story by asking, 'What qualities or gifts does this story show the focus person to have?' Put a word or a few words where they seem to belong to identify the focus person's gifts. Then ask 'Are there any other gifts or capacities the focus person has, that aren't in the story?' Add the answers.

Think about:

- **Gifts of the head** – knowledge, questions, experience, and information that the focus person can contribute (for example: figuring people out, organizing and classifying things, travel routes, sports news, fan information, gossip, local history, ability to spot a bargain, ability to debate, sales ability, creative thinking, math, solving puzzles, interests in politics, desire to think and talk about big questions) please note; this does not mean they need to be an expert in the area, just know about it and like to talk about it.
- **Gifts of the hand** (and feet and voice) – abilities and skills that the focus person can contribute (for example: recognizing people and remembering names, dancing, fixing things, singing, typing, drawing, arranging shapes and colours, using a computer, decorating, acting, composing music, figuring out the best way to do a job, sewing, working hard using physical strength, ability to sign, ability to speak or understand another language)
- **Gifts of the heart** – interests, enthusiasms, personal passions, and the rewards of relationship that the focus person brings to others (for example: welcoming people, patience, courage, impatience to move from talk into action, sensitivity to others, high energy, desire for order, ability to listen, passion for justice, love of nature, ability to draw others out, spiritual gifts)

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Reference:
O'Brien, J. & Pearpoint, J., (2004) *Person-Centered Planning with Maps and Path – A workbook for Facilitators.* Inclusion Press
Green, M., Moore, H., & O'Brien, J. (2006). *When people care enough to act – Asset Based Community Development* 2nd Edition. Inclusion Press (pg 31)

Head	Hands	Heart

Activity:
Think about opportunities for the focus person's gifts and capacities to be given to the community. What would help the community be a better place by the contribution of the person's gifts and capacities?

What is one idea that would help the community be better off by knowing the focus person through his / her gifts?

Describe the goal –

What Action/s need to be taken	Who	When

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Relationship Mapping: http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/?pageId=411

Since birth, we have been creating an intricate network of people in our lives, friends and/or family who are there for us in times of trouble, sorrow, and celebration. Those friends take an interest in our lives and us because we share common threads that bind us to one another. This group is called our Circle of Support or Friends. They are people we value in our lives who help us achieve our dreams or lend a hand when we are in need. We can count on them to be there for us. These relationships are formed in many ways, but generally come from meeting people in different places and environments. Meeting people, for most of us, occurs naturally and for the entirety of our lives.

Judith Snow, a woman with a significant disability, explains it further and has described four different circles of relationships that everyone has in their lives.

Circle One: The **CIRCLE OF INTIMACY** is made up of those who we share great intimacy, our secrets, and heartfelt emotions. These are people or perhaps animals or objects that are so dear to us that their absence would impact us greatly. This may or may not include family members.

Circle Two: The **CIRCLE OF FRIENDSHIP** is made up of those people who are friends or relatives who we call upon to go out to dinner, see a movie, but are not those who we consider our most dear friends or those we must see regularly.

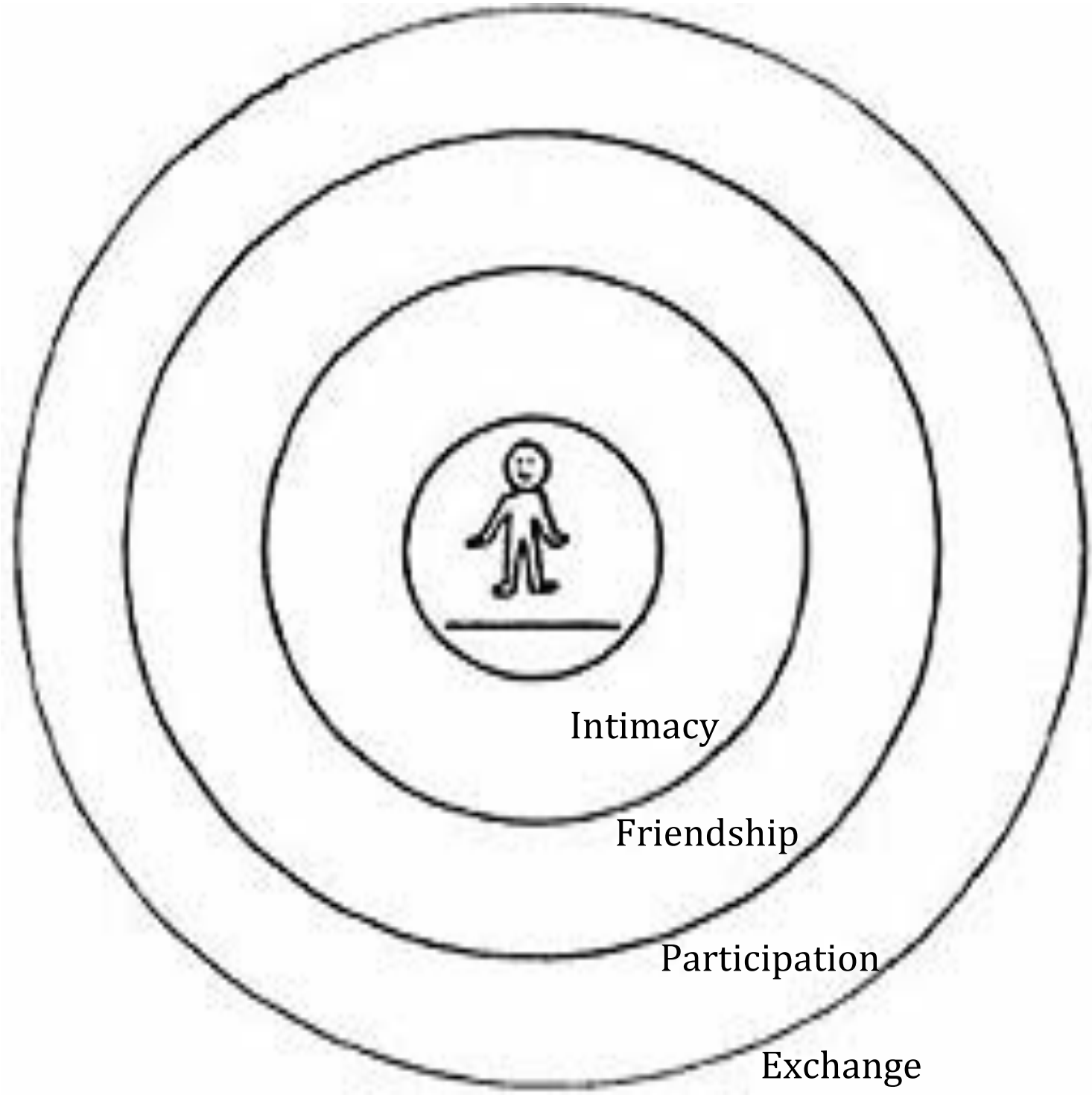
Circle Three: The **CIRCLE OF PARTICIPATION** is where you belong and includes the names of the people or organizations you participate with in life. This could contain spiritual groups, where you work, where you went or go to school, clubs, organizations, athletic teams, or where you participate and interact with people. Some of these individuals may later be in Circle one or two! Circle Three is the garden for sowing future relationships.

Circle Four: The **CIRCLE OF EXCHANGE** is made up of people who are paid to be in our lives. Doctors, teachers, dentists, social workers, therapists, hairdressers, car mechanics, and the like make up the numbers here.

Judith Snow explains that when we look at the four circles for people without disabilities, we can see that there is a fair number in each circle. However, if we were to look at the circles for people with disabilities, we would see a VERY DIFFERENT PATTERN. Generally for people with disabilities, there may be people in Circle One and Circle Four. In many instances, circle four explodes with people paid to be in their lives. Circle Three, the key circle, has minimal organisations or social opportunities available for them and thus, people with disabilities are excluded from creating connections to others and developing a true circle of friends or support. This sort of division can put a huge financial and emotion burden on families. A Circle of Support can begin to alleviate some of that strain and burden for the family; however it does take work and planning.

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Activity: *Develop your own Circle Map; add names into the appropriate circle. Make sure you do this from the perspective of the person, i.e. where they would want them in the map. Sometimes people will want to add pets or people that are deceased, you may add defining details in brackets to help others understand who people are.*
Once you have completed the map, put a heart next to those you / the focus person loves or cares deeply about, put a star next to those who know an important part of your / the focus person's story, put a circle around those that know a lot of people in the community and put a tick next to those you / the focus person would involve in planning.



© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

The Relationship map helps to identify opportunities for personal support and assistance.

- What are the main patterns and themes in the relationships network?
- What areas of relationship are missing? What would be important to build?
- Are there old friends or acquaintances from the past, with whom the person would like to reconnect?
- Are there friends or acquaintances from the community that can be invited to join the circle?
- Where could community members who would like to get to know this person be found?

Building a network of support (circle of support), invitation and agenda - Judith Snow
How does one go about creating a circle of support/friends? What are the steps to follow? There are multiple factors to consider and each is crucial to the success of the circle.

First and foremost is to establish who the focus person is. This person is the one who will be the driving force; the center of all discussion and planning. Once this has been established, the planning begins. There must be a 'champion' or someone who will see to it that this circle is formed and that there will be follow through from the planning to the implementation stages. In many instances, this is one of the parents or a caregiver for the individual. As time passes and a circle develops, this role may be taken on by others.

Decide whom to invite. (It is best if Circle members are not paid to be there, it is **voluntary!**) The focus person has a great deal of say about who to invite. Create a list of individuals committed to change, who believe in the focus person, and who would be committed for the long haul. Members can be neighbors, family, community members, fellow churchgoers, or members of clubs. There are no limits, but be selective. Invite those people who are willing to take a chance and avoid the people who are skeptical or unsure of change.

Obtain facilitators. It is best to have two facilitators; one to lead discussion and one write down the information and do graphics. Interview them as needed to find one that the focus person is comfortable using.

Decide on a location and time. Meetings can be held in a home, church, school, library, back yard, conference room, or any big meeting space that is available. The day of the week and the time can vary depending upon the availability of potential members. Potential times can be immediately after work/school, over the dinner hour, or during the weekend. Sometimes Circle members may want to organize a special event and go to a park, go bowling, or have a pizza party! It is always good to include some refreshments for the meeting: make the meeting as simple or as involved as the focus person desires!

Create and mail invitations to all on invitation list with RSVP date. The invitation can be as simple or as complex as the focus person desires. Some circles have included the reason for the meeting, in a simple and to the point fashion.

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Decide on an agenda for meeting with facilitator. What will be discussed? Do people need to understand a circle of support or to learn more about the individual? There are no real rules about agendas, but it should be discussed ahead of time.
Here is one suggested agenda for an initial circle meeting:

- Introduce all circle members. How long has each person known the focus person and how did they meet? Other questions that help people get to know one another.
- Review the individual's life as it is now to build a picture and add to existing information.
- Clarify ideas about the future. Review obstacles and opportunities, discuss these directions, and select a priority.
- Record obstacles and opportunities as they arise.
- Make commitments for action.
- Set the next meeting time and place.

According to Judith Snow, listening to the dreams of the focus person is the primary function of the Circle of Support (PUSH, 2001).

On the day of the meeting the focus person, facilitator, and "champion" will want to arrive early to ensure the room is set up for the circle, which means chairs in a circle or semi-circle. This ensures that members of the circle can all see each other during the discussion. This early arrival would also provide time for preparation for the meeting by reviewing any questions that will be asked of the focus person and to be sure that person has had time to think of or generate the answers. (This would be true especially if the person is non-verbal or uses augmentative communication and would need time to prepare answers).

The facilitators would open the meeting and follow the agenda that has been created in a timely manner. Most circle meetings are no longer than 2 – 3 hours. At the close of the meeting, members may leave with assignments that would support the circle's efforts to support the focus person. Examples of what circle members may volunteer to do are: helping someone move into their own home, or helping them to develop more relationships by meeting people in the community, school or other community settings. Progress would be reported on at the next meeting, which is always set at the end of each Circle gathering. That way everyone will know when they will be sharing what they learn and it is less cumbersome to plan.

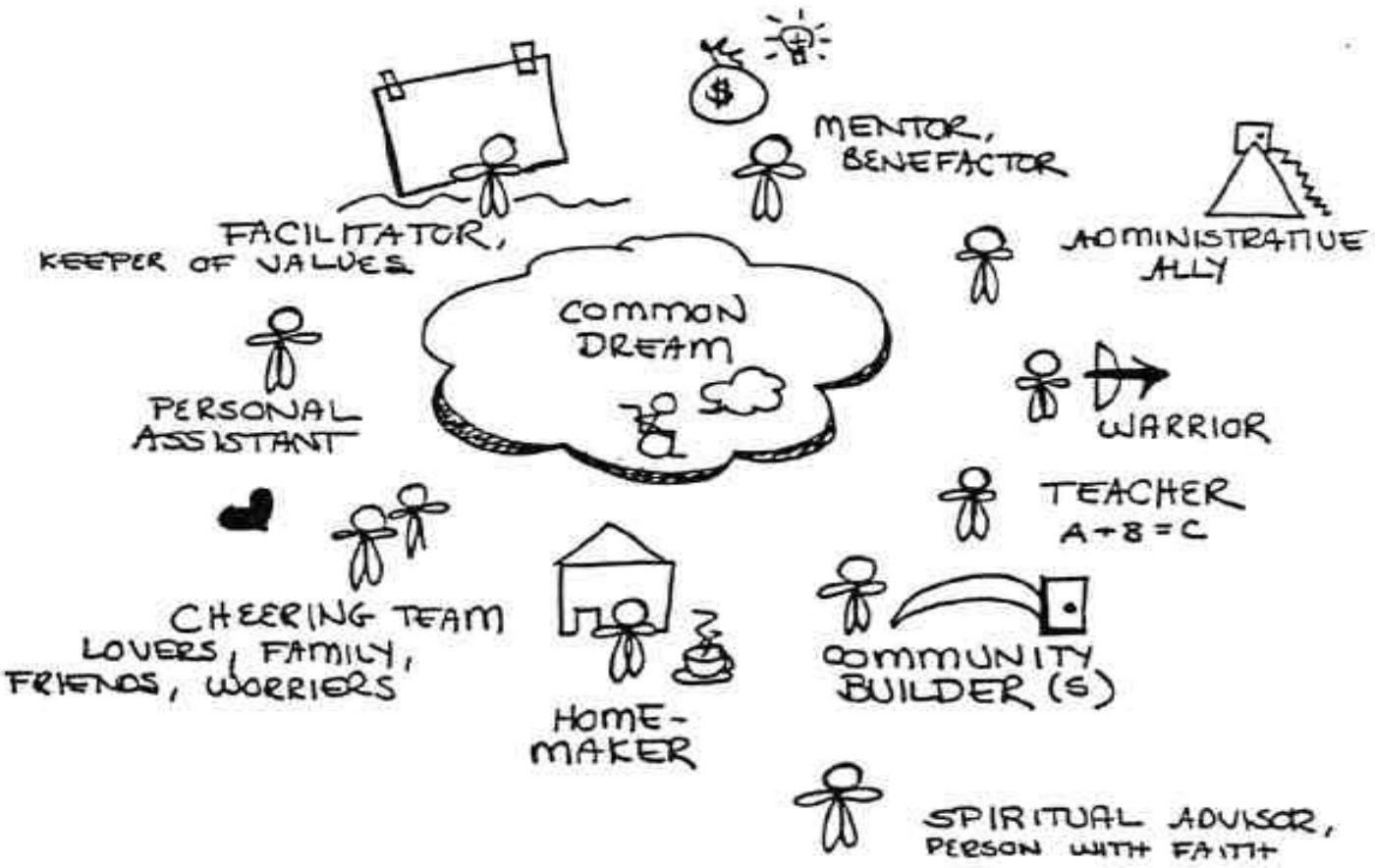
Once the Circle has been created and the first meeting has happened, it will become easier to establish the agendas for future meetings and the number of meetings that will be needed. Some circles may initially meet frequently and then taper off, others only meet quarterly and still others meet only as needed. It is best to maintain a consistent meeting pattern to ensure quality and keep the interest and commitment of the circle members.
A Circle of Support can create many wonderful relationships and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Real friendships can start and lead to a more fulfilling and rich life. It is never too early or never to late to create a Circle of Support.
http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/?pageId=411

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

An ideal person-centered planning group (circle) consists of a variety of people and roles:

- *Family members* – provides a historical perspective, strong alliance with the focus person *Homemaker* – is the guardian of hospitality for the circle personal assistants – are responsible for day-to-day responsiveness to the person
- *Warrior* – focuses on immediate and long-range actions to help implement the plan
- *Teacher* – provides information and skills to the circle to help implement the plan
- *Community builder* – may have many connections, invites and brings others into the circle and the person's life, both to strengthen the circle and help in implementing the plan
- *Administrative ally* – can see and advocate for administrative changes that might be needed both for this focus person and for long-term change
- *Mentor* – can provide information, guidance and insight that will help in long-term change *Benefactor* – may assist in providing what's needed for long-term change
- *Spiritual advisor* – renews the faith of the person and the group over time
- *Facilitator* – provides focus, keeps the process going, keeps the group focused on and clear about the vision and action to implement it

A Profile of an Ideal Person-Centered Planning Group



© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Participation Through Support Circles – Judith Snow

The very nature of our culturally given perception of disability and our response to it seems to obscure our perception of the people behind the labels. What can a concerned person do? Becoming a circle builder may provide opportunities to actually make a difference in the lives of some people.

Support circles break through the disability focus in several ways. Most significantly, circles are powerful because they exist to honor, support and make available a person's capacities and interests, not his or her deficits. Support circles are formed to be vehicles for people to discover and to talk about ways in which a person could be contribution to the wider community through, interests and talents. They work to communicate to a wider world what capacity the focus person has to enrich others. They discover or create places, supports and contacts that will make this person's participation grow and develop.

Secondly, support circles are powerful because their focus is on relationships and not individuals. Circles function primarily by bringing the focus person into a richer, more diverse network of listening people. The person's nature and ability is unfolded by the listening people. The person's nature and ability is unfolded by the interactions fostered by the network. Disability loses its power to focus people's time and energy. Disability is disempowered.

A support circle belongs to the world of participation. Just the initial establishment of a circle is already a step forward to having someone participate in the community. The focus is on one person yet all the members of the circle typically will experience their participation in the circle as a vehicle for examining and improving their own contributions to society.

Although a support circle is not always necessary, it has a unique power for rapidly changing the life experience of an individual who is facing great barriers to inclusion. A circle is a creation in the area of relationship, meaning and interaction. People experience being part of a circle as 'natural' and they 'know' how to offer both formal and informal support to each other.

Circles also empower circle members and builders because they are unpredictable. Energized by multiple, complex relationships they often become magnets of synergy, taking advantage of opportunities that cannot be predicted or bureaucratically managed into existence. This living essence of circles drives out the deadening spirit of disability thinking.

The lives of people who have been 'helped' are usually scarred by disrespect, physical and emotional abuse, and broken relationships. At the beginning and throughout, it is important to recognize that support circles have power – both to support or to hinder. The person who is interested in starting circles can still be drawn into disability as a focus. A personal discipline will help restrain them from doing this harm in a vulnerable person's life. This practice is outlined below.

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

Build a safe course by following these steps.

- Give up disability, its language and its forms. People are opportunities and people have opportunities to enrich community. Learn to see these.
- Practice inclusion to learn inclusion
- Dream. Invite people to listen to your dreams
- Listen to other people's dreams
- Say "Yes"
- Listen
- Give up doing what doesn't work
- Invite diversity into your own life
- Recruit a coach. Be a coach. Together support each other to learn circle building more deeply.

In the gathering of the circle the intention is established to listen to a person's dream and to create the resources and openings required to bring this person's dream into the community. The focus remains on the person who is vulnerable to being isolated and to being a nonparticipant.

The following are the steps required to create a support circle:

1. Figure out who the circle is for
2. Invite
3. Ensure that dreaming, story telling and listening happen at every circle meeting
4. Keep the circle meeting
5. Make sure that the focus person says 'yes' to something that the circle offers

It can often be a little mind-bending figuring out who the circle is for. In the situation where the focus person is an adult who speaks for themselves; the scenario is fairly straight forward. Such a situation is rare. More typically one person is the named focus but the real focus is on a parent or an advocate who typically speaks for this person. There is nothing wrong with a parent or an advocate being the focus. In fact when the circle involves children it is essential that the circle be formed around the parent(s). The issue is simply that when the focus is confused the process gets unclear and actions stall. Therefore it is essential that this issue be sorted out. Occasionally the focus of the circle will shift for a short period of time. This is a good thing unless for some reason it is difficult to return the focus to the person' the circle started for. In such a situation consider starting two circles that are interconnected by having some joint membership.

Inviting is a critical stage. People typically say that they do not know anyone to invite. This is absolutely not true, yet in a certain sense the experience is quite real. It is usual that the person's life is full of paid people and others focused on therapy and advocacy plus lots of other people who have been carefully trained by society to see this individual as limited and in need of fixing. The dynamics of the disability focus make it almost a certainty that all these people have been interacting in ways that push each other away. It doesn't occur to the individual in question that some of these very same people are able to and in fact would love to have an

© Jeder Institute – v3.2016

opportunity to foster participation and inclusion.

Keep the dreaming, story telling and listening alive is not difficult. Yet someone must always watch that dreams don't drop off the agenda. We have all been carefully trained to become busy planners and behavior police. Listen for dreaming, stories and listening and keep the circle going needs intention in the initial stages. It usually takes time for people to catch the rhythm of dreaming, story telling and listening. In fact the person is included as soon as the circle begins to meet since it is the journey of interactions and meaning and the listening to dreams that counts much more than the outward successes. In time, as the circle experiences the invention of its own story and as successes emerge from unexpected directions the intention of gathering becomes less critical.

The point is that the support circle is the vehicle of listening to dreams. The listening must continue until there are enough other possibilities of listening in the individual's relationship network. Even then, life is very fragile, and the circle may need to be called together if the ghost of ' disability' raises its head again.

In summary, circle building is a process liberating a person's participation and inclusion in community. Like all simple things in life there is an underlying integrity which must be honored if support circles are to be effective. This integrity requires a commitment to give up disability and it's focus on fixing people.
Building relationships, building inclusion and building community take time and commitment. They are a slow process that often takes years to reach full fruition. Yet, paradoxically, inclusions and relationship are the road to truly supporting vulnerable people. Nothing else works.

O'Brien, J. & Lyle O'Brien, C. (2002, 3rd Printing). *A little book about Person Centred Planning* Inclusion Press (page 83-87)

Things to think about and do until we meet again:

1. Share with the person with a disability and others that know and care, the activities completed here and ask for their contribution
2. Ask someone identified in the relationship circle to join the next session