

Disability Resource Hub Disclaimer

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If people receiving support from services are to have a range of rich experiences and opportunities enjoyed by any other member of the community, particular attention must be paid to the way people are introduced and described. Countless people in services have negative reputations that are either recorded in files or recounted from one staff person to another. These negative reputations or labels may have originated from an incident that occurred decades ago and may not have happened since. They may describe behaviour that puts the person or others in danger, or they may simply describe traits that have been challenging to staff in the past, but that don't necessarily cause harm to anyone else. When people are introduced by their negative reputations or labels, access to the most appropriate services and supports can be restricted, and it is certainly more challenging to help people make connections in community. This does not mean that negative reputations can simply be disregarded without spending time exploring them further, particularly if the person's behaviour can impact on the health or safety of themselves or others.

reputations

The reputations tool helps people to think about the negative things that someone may say or do, talk about when these things happen, and then for each negative, ask 3 questions:

1. Are there circumstances in which the negative can be seen as a positive?

If yes, add how it can be seen as a positive to information about what people like and admire about the person.

2. Does the negative reflect something that is important to the person?

If yes, add it to the important to list.

3. Is the negative sometimes really a negative?

If yes, what do other people need to know or do to support the person when it is a negative? Add it to the "what others need to know or do to support" information.

This information was developed by Helen Sanderson Associates (Australia) in 2011, for Ageing Disability and Home Care, Department of Human Services NSW, as a resource to support the Lifestyle Planning Practice Guide and Tools. Most of these tools are Person Centred Thinking tools, and were either developed by The Learning Community for Person Centred Practices, or Helen Sanderson Associates. They are used here with permission. We would like to thank the residents, family members and staff for their time and support in developing examples.

These instructions are not intended as a substitute for training. If you are using these tools for the first time and have not attended a Person Centred Thinking course, please seek support from a colleague or manager who has attended training.





..... positive reputation

What is important to

How best to support

tips

- 1 Think about when the negative label is a problem. It is common for some people to always witness the negative, for some people to never see it and others to only see it sometimes. Talk to all these people to see what insights they can provide from their different experiences.
- 2 When you are capturing information about how to best support the person, think about things that you know work for them and think about if there is anything that people should NOT do.
- 3 Avoid blaming or labeling language when you capture the information, but also ensure that important issues of health and safety are not glossed over in a way that could endanger others.



Sam's Reputation

Sam's staff were worried that it wasn't safe to support him in the community anymore as he frequently bit staff or other people around him. They used the reputations exercise to help better understand why Sam was biting and to ensure there was a consistent approach to how staff supported him with this.

The person centered thinking tools were developed/adapted by The Learning Community for Person Centered Practices (TLCPCP) and are used with permission. For more information about person centered thinking and TLCPCP, please visit us at www.learningcommunity.us.





Sam's positive reputation

Assertive – won't be walked over.

Amazing memory for facts & people.

Great sense of humour.

What is important to Sam

To have constant reassurance about what is happening next, especially in new places or trying new things.

Always knowing what's happening next.

Never being ignored.

Having personal space (at least his own arm's length on all sides), unless he has asked you in/ you have checked e.g. hugs, hand holding.

Gathering vital facts about others, especially what kind of cars you have owned – present and past, how old you and various other people are.

Never being 'baited' or 'set up' – only being given immediate choices that are possible!

How best to support Sam

When Sam gets very upset, confused or agitated, he sometimes will bite people, usually whoever is closest.

This is likely to happen if you ignore him. He may be asking a lot of repetitive questions and you may be feeling frustrated, but ignore him at your own peril! Try to break up the questions with jokes and turning the question back to him.

If you are in a crowded place with Sam, keep telling him what will be happening and remind him of the fun thing you will do together. Try to hold his hand firmly (if he will let you) and squeeze it in a regular rhythm, this seems to help him not focus on the crowd.

Sam often talks very fast and makes a high pitched "eee" sound before he bites, when you hear this, calmly encourage others to move away.

If Sam bites you, stay calm, reassure him that everything is okay. Continue to say things like "it's ok, gentle Sam". Do not pull away or get angry or you will lose skin.

tips

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