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# Learning From ROUTINES and RITUALS

Most of us have some regular routines or rituals in our lives. For some people, routines help them make sense of what's happening during the day, week or month. This is particularly true of people who don't use words to communicate and require a lot of support from others with their communication. For people who can't easily ask what will happen next, routines provide predictability. When people are not supported with their routines in consistent ways, they can become confused and understandably upset.

Those of us who do not have to rely on others for support are generally in good control of our own routines, and if they change, we at least know and understand the reason why. Capturing and honouring the routines of people receiving support is a crucial part of helping people to make sense of, and feel in control of their own lives. Regular staff may know these routines very well, but it is rare for them to be recorded in enough detail to ensure consistency between staff, and to enlighten a new or casual staff member. For people attending respite, the ability of staff to effectively follow someone's routine can mean the difference between a positive and negative experience.

Most staff struggled to get Cara up in the morning, while one particular staff member had no problems. When they all wrote down how they supported her in the morning, the staff member who did not have trouble shared that she turns music on in Cara's room to wake her up. The other staff simply turned the light on and wished her good morning. All staff then started to turn music on to wake Cara up, creating happier mornings both for Cara and her staff. It's easy to miss the small details or assume that others know them. Capturing how each staff person supports the person with their routines and then looking at what works and doesn't work about each approach can lead to creating the person's ideal routine. It is important to regularly check reflect on what is working and what is not working about the routine that has been documented to ensure it changes as needed.

Reflecting on people's routines and rituals can also tell us a lot about what matters to people and how best to support them. Once routines have been captured in detail, look for patterns and themes, ask questions about which things must happen, or must happen a particular way or in a certain order. These sorts of things will help you to start to make some guesses about what's important to the person – If the person or others who know them well can't verify these guesses, use learning logs or 4 + 1 Questions to test out your ideas.

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.



## Routines and rituals

# tips

- 1 Ask open ended questions that start conversation, rather than ending in yes or no answers.
- 2 If the person can't tell you with their words, look for their reactions and other non verbal communication. Ask other people questions that help them to think about the person's routine eg, "what happens if you assist her to get out of bed too soon after she's woken?"
- 3 You can look at other areas of a person's life – transition routines, evening routines, mornings on the weekend to gather good information about what's important to them and how to best provide support.



Important to

Best to support



## Routines and rituals – morning

<i>Time</i>	<i>What happens?</i>
6:30	James will probably call out for assistance to go to the toilet (he'll use the bottle in his bed) After he's finished, ask him if he wants to get up or sleep in longer.
7:00	James is usually ready to get up by now. Some mornings he does want to sleep in, if he does he needs to be up by 8am. If he stays in bed check if he wants the TV on to watch the news (Channel 9). Assist James to put the bottom half of his clothes on while he is still in bed. Ask him if he wants tracksuit pants or trousers. Transfer him to his chair, put deodorant on (remind him to look away while you spray), then help him with the top half of his clothes. James likes to have two options at a time to choose from and for you to work from there i.e. long sleeve or short sleeve, T-shirt or shirt. He will usually then choose from there but is open to fashion advice. If he has something special on James will usually want to wear a shirt and tie. Check if James wants to wash or have breakfast first.
7:20	<b>Assisting him to wash</b> If James puts his hands in the sink he wants them washed. Use a face washer to wash his face, check if he wants cold or warm water. James uses a mint mouth spray and sometimes a Listerine tab, check with him. James uses an electric shaver for his face, don't assume he wants to shave every day, check with him. Use a water spray bottle to wet James' hair and check if he wants gel. If he is going out for the day he will usually want aftershave, check.
7:30	<b>Breakfast</b> Ask James if he would like to have coffee or juice before he eats. To find out what he wants to eat give him two choices at a time and work from there, ie. toast or cereal. If he has toast James usually wants honey or jam on it. Check which one and if he says no to both go through the other spread options one at a time and he'll nod when you get the right one. If James wants cereal it's either wheatbix or bran cereal with one of the following topping mixes – yoghurt and milk, fruit puree and milk. This is finished off with another coffee (strong with 1 sugar and milk). James will let you know where he wants to be assisted with breakfast by driving himself there; outside, kitchen bench, lounge room. If James has had a wash before breakfast he'll want to have his face wiped again after. Wait a few minutes until he's finished digesting his food.
8am	Check if James wants another drink before he leaves. (if there's time, he usually wants another coffee).
8:20	When James is ready he will want to check his back (the back of his wheelchair) to make sure he has everything that he needs for the day. These things usually are, lunch, camera, communication book, clip folder with paper, his cup, glasses (on and clean).

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- 3 You can look at other areas of a person's life – transition routines, evening routines, mornings on the weekend to gather good information about what's important to them and how to best provide support.



## Important to James

Being able to have a "lie in" some mornings and watching TV in bed.

Looking good and feeling fresh every day, wearing a shirt and tie for days when he has meetings or something special on. Wearing aftershave and smelling good if he's going out.

Never having decisions made for him, always being involved and given options.

Having at least 1 coffee every morning, strong with one sugar and milk. It needs to be warm, not tepid or cold.

Knowing that he has everything he needs for the day, feeling prepared.

## Best to support James

Ask James if he wants to stay in bed for a bit and then put the Television on Channel 9 so he can watch the news at 7.00am.

When you are supporting James to get dressed, hold up 2 different items of clothes at a time for him to choose from, he is open to fashion advice but must have the final say. Assist him with trousers while he is still in bed and then transfer him to his chair before putting his top on. (his manual handling profile is in the top drawer beside his bed). When you are putting deodorant on remind James to turn his head away as he often forgets.

When you are supporting James to freshen up, check to see if he wants warm or cold water, also ask if he wants a shave as some mornings he doesn't. Check if he wants a Listerine tab or mouth spray - He doesn't have teeth but still likes fresh breath. Ask if he wants aftershave on. James likes to have his hair sprayed with water and combed. Ask if he wants some gel in it.

Check if James wants a drink before he eats and then go through the food options, starting with toast or cereal and then going through all the options from there.

James often likes to eat breakfast outside, just follow where he drives his chair and that's where he wants to eat. (His meal time assistance profile is in the folder on the kitchen bench, check it before you assist him.)

James needs to know that his back has been properly packed, even if you did it the night before, show him the bag and its contents checking that he has: lunch, camera, communication book, clip folder with paper, his cup.

Wait about 10 minutes after James has finished breakfast and then support him to wash his face with a face washer. While you are doing this, make sure his glasses are clean.

When James is ready, if there is time to wait, ask if he wants another coffee.