

IMAGINE

MAKING CHANGES THAT MATTER

A LEAP FORWARD MOMENT: KEENAN BUILDS NEW CONNECTIONS

CONTRIBUTED BY NADIA GALVAN HERNANDEZ, M.ED., BCBA, BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

A story of meaningful goals, collaboration, and inclusion.

Keenan is a very charismatic and social young man. He easily exchanges smiles with others and is happy to meet new people. However, Keenan had mostly engaged only with staff throughout his life. This was due to difficulties with being in new environments, trying new activities, and becoming agitated when things did not go as expected or things felt overwhelming.

Despite the difficulties, Keenan's team was mindful of his desire to interact with others. Their goal was supporting him to build new connections with peers. Furthermore, Keenan's Service Coordinator Emily and Team Leader Shawn have participated in the Behaviour Leads Program where they gained behavioural support skills and built on each other's knowledge.

The team worked collaboratively with Nadia as the mentoring Consultant and supported Keenan by identifying strategies to facilitate a positive experience when he was in a new situation and trying new activities. In the fall, Keenan began attending the inclusion program through OneSky with support from staff from his house. Through that program, he does volunteer work delivering mail within the agency and participates in recreational activities. He currently attends for the last part of the program when it is less overwhelming, which helps when trying something new. He is mostly meeting new people and experiencing all the things involved in making new friends. For example, he is practising communicating and respecting social boundaries. He has been working toward attending for longer periods and communicating when he wants to leave.

He enjoys participating in activities with others, and his team and family feel happy for him and fulfilled for their contributions in helping him to reach a meaningful goal. Putting that meaningful goal in the centre of their support and collaborating with each other were key elements for this story of inclusion.





TECH TIP: SETTING GOALS

CONTRIBUTED BY JEREMY SHERSTONE, BA, M.ED., BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

As we enter into a new decade, many of us are setting goals for ourselves. These resolutions might include things like new gym routines, changes to our diet, or shifts in our daily life. Whatever you're working towards, here are some tips on how to set goals that are doable and meaningful.

Set some **SMART** goals

Whether you are focused on personal or professional goals, this acronym will help guide your goal setting in every aspect of life.

S = Specific

- **Who** – Is there anyone specific that will be involved with you achieving your goal?
 - Examples: family members, friends, pets, personal trainers, etc.
- **What** – What will the goal involve?
 - Example: Are you hoping to eat a certain amount of fruits and vegetables with each meal?
- **Where** – Where will you be most likely to accomplish your goal?
 - Examples: your home, outdoors, a gym, etc.
- **When** – When will you be working towards your goal?
 - Examples: Will you be working on your goal all of the time? After work? On the weekend?

M = Meaningful

- It is important to make sure that you set goals that are based off of your personal values—that they mean something to you, getting you closer to the person you want to be.

A = Adaptive

- Think about goals that will improve the quality of your life for a long time.
- Keep in mind that long-term benefits will often come from ongoing effort.
 - Example: in order for us to have healthy teeth, we need to brush regularly, not just visit the dentist every six months.

R = Realistic

- Set goals that you feel are achievable.
- Be honest about the amount of time that you can dedicate to your goals, and keep in mind the other things in your life that might serve as barriers to your goals.
- When we set realistic goals, we experience success quickly and regularly—we are rewarded for our effort!

T = Time-bound

- To keep yourself on track, try to set realistic dates or times that you think you can achieve your goal by.
- It can be helpful to break down your goals into steps or chunks, and then spread out those pieces evenly across the time you have given yourself.

Some final tips for goal setting involve setting different types of goals. Think about setting short- and long-term goals for yourself so that you can experience success across time. Finally, consider setting goals that involve the many different parts of your life (e.g., your work/education, your relationships, your personal health, and your leisure time).



THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

CONTRIBUTED BY BRANDON BEATON, MPED ABA, BSC, BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

Whether you're a support worker, home share provider, or even a parent, chances are you have some experience navigating the power imbalance that comes with such a position. Rarely do people like to be told what to do, and rarer still do they like to hear the word "no" as a response to their requests. When people hear words like "no," "don't," or "can't," especially as a response to a request, there is a chance that agitation will follow.

For example:

Let's pretend you are a support worker to a young man who asks to go to McDonald's to buy 20 chicken nuggets. After exploring what financial resources he has available, you realize that he does not have the money for 20 chicken nuggets, so you tell him, "You can't afford 20 chicken nuggets." Unfortunately, this style of communication does not sit well with this individual, who proceeds to argue with you that he does, in fact, have the money and that "you can't tell me what to do."



We are all accustomed to negative framing as a form of communication, but it comes with a cost. Negative framing implies that the focus of the conversation is on what your communication partner shouldn't or can't do, or what you won't do for them. The use of negative framing greatly increases the chance that any further conversation will focus on the language that was just used rather than the rationale for its use. That's a problem—you aren't looking to strike up an argument, but clearly this individual does not have the money to get what he wants. What do you do?

If negative framing isn't the answer, is there another style of communication worth trying? This is where positive framing comes in handy! Positive framing recommends that words like "yes," "can," and "do" are used in place of words like "no," "can't," and "don't." The idea is to use positive words to communicate the same message. Positive framing also makes use of suggestions (e.g., "You could," "Would you like to," etc.) rather than directive statements (e.g., "You need to," "We're going to," etc.) whenever possible. Finally, positive framing implies that you are informing your communication partner what they can have access to now, or when they can have access to their requests.



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Let's return to our example:

When you explore this individual's available money, you realize that he doesn't have the money for 20 chicken nuggets, but he does have the money for 4 chicken nuggets. Instead of telling him what he can't have, you decide to say, "You can have 4 chicken nuggets. Want to go to McDonald's?" Although hesitant at first, he agrees to go to McDonald's with you to purchase 4 chicken nuggets.

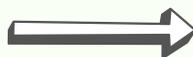


At its core, positive framing is our first line of defense against the power imbalance inherent in supportive positions.



Negative Framing

- focuses on what someone can't or shouldn't do
- uses directive statements like "You need to..." or "We're going to..."



- focuses on what someone can or could do
- uses suggestions when possible, like "You could..." or "Would you like to..."



Positive Framing

INCLUSIVE TIP OF THE MONTH

CONTRIBUTED BY ALYSHA DONKO, M.SC., BCBA, BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT



Providing choice is one of the building blocks of empowerment. It helps individuals to be more in control and actively participate in their lives. Here are a few tips to help you offer more choice to the individuals you support:

Offer a choice between activities
(e.g., going for a walk or going to the gym, going to a movie or going to the mall)

or

Offer a choice within activities
(e.g., walking to the park or to the lake, choosing the radio station in the car, etc.)

Offer choice using open-ended questions
(e.g., what would you like to do today?)

or

Offer choice using close-ended questions
(e.g., would you like to go for a walk or to the gym?)

For those who do not communicate verbally, consider using pictures when giving options, or presenting an option and watching an individual's body language to see if they approach, avoid, or have a neutral reaction toward an object or activity.