THRIVING IN TRANSITION: Creating a Plan for Success for teens and young adults with learning differences

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IT TAKES A VILLAGE

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TRANSITION

① “Passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another”
② “A movement, development, or evolution from one form, stage, or style to another”
TRANSITION
WHAT IS “TYPICAL?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TYPICAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>“LEARNING DIFFERENCES”</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to do their chores</td>
<td>Don’t want to do their chores</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t want parents to “Tell them what to do”</td>
<td>Don’t want parents to tell them what to do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forgetful</td>
<td>Forgetful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hates cleaning his/her room</td>
<td>Hates cleaning his/her room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical levels of support</td>
<td>Ongoing planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some instruction</td>
<td>Specific assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continuous progress monitoring</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reevaluation of goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explicit skill building and teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explicit Feedback</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT TODAY..
INCREASED LEVELS OF SUPPORT
WHERE ARE THEY IN THE PROCESS?

- Parent
- Teacher
- Therapist
- Classes
- Peers
- Adulthood
IMPORTANT THEMES

- Strength-Based
- Person-centered
- Teaching Skills
WHAT IS THE GOAL?

“When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy.’ They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.”
HOW DO WE GET THERE?
◆ Knowing your highest strengths and re-crafting your life to use them

◆ Engagement
MEANINGFUL LIFE

- Using strengths in the service of something larger than yourself
- Helping others!
- = to life satisfaction
What we will cover

- Understand what it means to thrive
- Develop goals
- Get tools
- Start Planning
WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR YOUTH AS LEARNERS?

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR YOUTH AS HUMAN BEINGS?
What if?

“MY LIFE IS GOING WELL”
MODERATELY + STRONGLY AGREE

Source: M. Furlong, PhD
“Comorbidity,” describes any distinct clinical entity occurring in a patient during the clinical course of an index disease under examination. Feinstein (1970)

- Co-existence of mental disorders, substance use disorders, physical condition

- What is a collection of positive traits called?
Search Institute

What Teens Need to Succeed

40 Developmental Assets!

External Assets
- Support
  1. Family support
  2. Positive family communication
  3. Other adult relationships
  4. Caring neighbourhood
  5. Caring school climate
  6. Parent involvement in schooling

Empowerment
- Community values and youth
- Youth as resources
- Service to others
- Safety

Boundaries
- Expectations
  1. Family boundaries
  2. School boundaries
  3. Neighbourhood boundaries
  4. Adult role models
  5. Positive peer influence
  6. High expectations

Constructive Use of Time
- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Religious community
- Time at home

Internal Assets
- Commitment to school
  91. Achievement motivation
  92. School engagement
  93. Homework
  94. Bonding to school
  95. Reading for pleasure

Positive Values
- Caring
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Restraint

Social Competence
- Planning and decision making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Resistance skills
- Peaceful conflict resolution

Positive Identity
- Personal power
- Self-Esteem
- Sense of purpose
- Positive view of self
- Physical health

more is better!
Assets and Risk Behaviors

Source: Power of Assets: http://www.search-institute.org/research/assets/assetpower
Assets and Positive Development

Source: Power of Assets: http://www.search-institute.org/research/assets/assetpower
So, What is Trait Factor X?

“MY LIFE IS GOING WELL”

Source: M. Furlong, PhD

Total Number of High Scores on Trait Factor X
The co-occurrence of positive intrapersonal assets and interpersonal resources, the combination of which increase the odds of a youth having positive developmental outcomes and robust psychological wellbeing.
Age Span Perspective: Preliminary Investigations
College-Age

- UCSB Study
FIT STATISTICS
$X^2 = 129.43, df = 55, p < .05$
CFI = .96, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .06

FIT STATISTICS
$X^2 = 141.74, df = 60, p < .05$
CFI = .95, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .07

Source: M. Furlong, PhD
How about Adolescents?
BUILDING BLOCKS to WELLBEING

- Emotion Regulation
- Self-Control
- Empathy
- Emotional Competence
- Optimism
- ZEST
- Gratitude
- Engaged Life
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Efficacy
- Grit
- Belief-in-Self
- Family Coherence
- Peer Support
- School Support
- Belief-in-Others

Source: M. Furlong, PhD
“My life is going well”

% Moderately + Strongly Agree with this item

ROC AUC 95% CI = .78-.81

Source: M. Furlong, PhD
Substance Use Patterns by Number of Personal Strengths

- Self-efficacy, self-awareness, persistence, peer support, school support, family coherence, empathy, self-control, emotional regulation, gratitude, zest, optimism

Source: M. Furlong, PhD
HOW DO WE DEVELOP THESE PERSONAL STRENGTHS DURING TRANSITION?
TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS

1. Assess it!
2. Dream it!
3. Build it!
4. Learn it!
5. Try it!
6. Check it!

[Diagram of a cycle process with arrows connecting the steps]
PERSON CENTERED PLANNING

Assess it!

Check it!

Dream it!

Try it!

Build it!

Learn it!
ASSESS IT
OVERVIEW

- Tips
- Strengths
- Skills
- Support
Assessment is an ongoing process and should look at all aspects of the youth (struggles and strengths)

- Look at all areas not just the individual
- Focus on strengths
ASSESS THE 3 S’S

**Strengths**
- What is the youth good at?
- What is he/she interested in?
- What assets do the team members bring?

**Skills**
- What skills have been mastered?
- What skills need more practice?
- What skills still need to be developed?

**Supports**
- Who is currently on the team?
- Who or what will need to be added to build the necessary skills?
WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?

- Emotions
- Organization
- Fun
- Work Environment
# Assessing Transition Readiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and Training</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Independent Living</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic skills</td>
<td>Career interests</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional skills</td>
<td>Work skills</td>
<td>Money management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed accommodations</td>
<td>Interview skills</td>
<td>Healthy living skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment experience</td>
<td>➢ Personal grooming</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer Experience</td>
<td>➢ Health care</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>➢ Nutrition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ Sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooking</td>
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<td>Cleaning</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to access resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Advocacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SKILLS**
WHAT ARE WE MISSING?

- Opportunities for engagement and meaning
- Well-Being
  - Belief in Self
  - Belief in Others
  - Emotional Competence
  - Engaged Life
SKILLS ASSESSMENT

- Observation and Progress Monitoring
- Asking for Feedback
- Others:
  - Casey Life Skills
  - Positive Psychology Measures
  - Full psychological assessments
  - Vineland, social emotional, etc.
DREAM IT
The first step of the journey is being aware of your talents, and the rest of the journey is leaning to own and apply them.
POSSIBLE PATHWAYS
HOPE IS HAVING MORE THAN ONE CHOICE
VISION

- Directional
- Not too specific
- It is the guiding light
- Aims for highest potential
GOAL SETTING

- Focus on Assets
- Build on Interests
- Plan for challenges
- Make it measurable
“Your goals are the road maps that guide you and show you what is possible for your life” ~ Les Brown
S.M.A.R.T GOALS

**Specific:**
well defined and understandable.

**Measurable:**
ability to know when the goal has clearly been achieved

**Attainable:**
realistic and achievable within the given resources and amount of time.

**Relevant:**
appropriate and related to the long term goals

**Time-bound:**
ability to be measured within a certain time-frame, or have an expected date by which the goal should be achieved.
“You must have long term goals to keep from being frustrated by short-term failures” ~ Charles C. Noble
LONG TERM GOALS

- Should involve the youth
- Must be fluid and flexible
- It is harder than it sounds
SHORT TERM GOALS

◆ Utilize strengths
◆ Small attainable parts
◆ Build in a lot of reinforcement
◆ Motivation is key
LISTEN TO EACH TEAM MEMBER

Really listen....
LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

**Parent Goal:** I want him to have a happy successful independent adult life.

**Young Adult Goal:** I want to get the &^%% out of this house and do my own thing.
STEP 3

Assess It

Dream It

Build It

Learn It

Try It

Check It
BUILD IT
BUILD IT

_building_
- Protective Environments
- Your team/ supports
- Opportunities for participation
- Opportunities to give back
- The scaffolding
BUILDING PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Caring and Supportive Relationships
- High Expectations
- Opportunities for Participation and Contribution
EVOLVING TEAMS
PREPARING FOR POST HIGH SCHOOL
Molly’s Services and Supports

- Speech/OT
- Technology
- Department of Rehab
- Small Class Sizes
- Therapist
- Tutor
- IEP
- Parent
- Peers
- Teacher
- Home/School Communication
When beginning to determine who should be on the team, consider the following questions:

1. Who am I the most comfortable around?
2. Who can help me build on my strengths?
3. Who do I trust the most?
4. Who do I go to for advice and support?
5. Who would I like to assist in my transition from school to adulthood?

(adapted from Wehman, 2001):
SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each team member.
- Common goals and objectives are established and the best ways to achieve them are agreed upon.
SCAFFOLDING

“A temporary framework for construction in progress” ~ Cazden, 1983
Some are more complicated than others...you may need to decide which pieces will stay...and which will go
"Son, there's a world out there ripe for the taking. You better stay home with me."
STEP 4

- Assess It
- Dream It
- Build It
- Try It
- Check It
- Learn It
LEARN IT: TEACHING SKILLS

- Prioritize
- Define expectations
- Create a step-by-step system for teaching the skill
- Responding to Challenging Behavior
PRIORITIZE

- Start with skills that affect safety
- Building on current strengths
SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- Frame it in the positive
- Set clear expectations
- Use behavior specific language
TEACH THE SKILL FROM START TO FINISH

◆ Break it down (small, teachable parts)
◆ See one, Do one, Teach one
◆ Create a checklist and self monitor
RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS
Plan and prepare for challenges
Old habits are hard to break
If you “give up” than it is going to be harder next time
Give up the power struggle
Business-like approach and walk away
Sometimes it is the messenger
Q: WHAT IF HE JUST WANTS ME TO GO AWAY? BY WALKING AWAY, AREN’T I JUST GIVING HIM WHAT HE WANTS?

A: You are not just walking away. You have listed your expectations, potential rewards and consequences, and are now allowing them space to make their decision.
STEP BY STEP

- Leave one step unfinished
- Then leave two steps unfinished
- Continue backwards through the checklist/task analysis
Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF THE YOUTH IS “STUCK” ON A STEP?

A: When this happens, try:

- Increasing prompts
- Increasing reinforcement
- Breaking the step down further
- Skipping the step, if possible, and/or moving on to the next step in the sequence
Celebrate Successes
Don’t change the goal...yet
Avoid making promises you cannot deliver or threatening punishment that is too difficult to enforce.
MOTIVATION
CREATING MOTIVATION

• Start with an interest
• Offer in the moment motivation
• Build in incremental success
“People often say that motivation doesn’t last. Well, neither does bathing - That’s why we recommend it daily”
~ Zig Ziglar
STEP 5

Assess It

Dream It

Check It

Try It

Build It

Learn It
ALLOWING MORE INDEPENDENCE
TRY IT: PRACTICING SKILLS

◆ Fade support to promote independence
◆ Reinforce the skill
◆ Generalize the learned skill
◆ Problem solve when presented with challenges
Create several opportunities per day to practice the skill

One skill at a time

Use your checklist to teach each step to mastery

Keep in mind how the youth learns best
"Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength."

-Mahatma Gandhi
SHAPING

Shaping involves reinforcing behavior that is closer and closer to the ultimate desired behavior.
Generalization involves teaching a youth to complete a skill across many environments with different people, materials, etc.
PROMPTS

- Allow space to process
- May be not verbal
- Reduce over time
- Use “errorless learning”
  - DO FOR
  - DO WITH
  - CHEER ON
- Use age-appropriate prompts (reduce dependence on adults/parents)
TIPS FOR REDUCING PROMPTS

- Provide more reinforcement when the youth completes the skill with greater independence.
- Practice the skill with different adults in different environments.
- Keep it simple, stay calm, 5 words or less.
- Don’t ask – Just check.
- Create a checklist and teach self-monitoring.
HAVE A PLAN FOR RECOVERY

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, But in rising every time we fall”

~ Nelson Mandela
A TIME TO TRY WITH SUPPORT
STEP 6

- Assess It
- Dream It
- Build It
- Try It
- Learn It
- Check It
CHECK IT: MONITORING PROGRESS

- Why taking data is so important
- How to take data
- Different ways to measure behavior change
- How to evaluate if the teaching strategies are working and the youth is making progress
- How to use the youth’s treatment team to ensure consistency and generalization across environments
WHY TAKE DATA?

◆ To see if a skill should be targeted for change
◆ To set a reasonable goal and monitor progress
◆ To determine if teaching is effective or not
◆ To motivate and inspire
THE PROCESS

Define the Behavior

Take Baseline Data

Intervention/Teaching

Ongoing Data Collection
BASELINE DATA
MONITORING PROGRESS

- Keep it Simple
- Graph it...
- Keep monitoring after mastery has been reached
INVOLVE YOUTH IN THE PROCESS
Q: WHAT IF IT IS NOT WORKING?

A: Evaluate and Simplify

- Evaluate your reinforcers
- Evaluate your prompting strategies and supports
- Simplify the task
“When you can’t change the direction of the wind, adjust your sails” ~ H. Jackson Brown
TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS

Assess it!

Dream it!

Build it!

Learn it!

Try it!

Check it!