

Supported Decision Making Tips for Decision Supporters

What is Supported Decision Making?

Everyone has a right to make decisions that affect their life. Supported decision making happens when one person gives another person the support they need to participate in decision making. Support needs are different for everyone and will vary with each decision.

Supported decision making involves supporting someone through the decision making process. While there are certain steps in this process, different people will need different amounts of support for each step; some may need a lot of support for the whole process, while others may only need minimal support for one or two of the steps.

Throughout this document there are questions that may help you to support the decision maker. It is important to be aware of the language you use and to ensure that each stage is understood by both the decision maker and you as a supporter.

The decision making process

- Understand the person has a right to make decisions.
- Understand when a decision needs to be or can be made.
- Gather information.
- Weigh up the information and who they trust.
- Think about what the person has done before.
- Think of more options.
- Weigh up the pros and cons.
- Manage risk.
- Make the decision.
- Review the decision.

General Tips

- Think about how you make big or small decisions and what supports you use when making those decisions.
- Talk to the person about how they would like to be supported.
- Ask yourself what is your role in their decision making? Are you the right person to be supporting them in this decision?
- Talk to the person about what is important to them about the decision. Ask them: what is your ideal outcome? What does your best life look like? This is a good way to support them to imagine more options and think about how the options fit in with their values.
- Check in regularly to make sure they feel in control of the decision making process.
- If the person you are supporting is having difficulty having their voice heard or decisions respected you can enlist the help of an advocate. The advocate will support the person by supporting the person through the process, communicating the person's decisions to others and in general representing people who are vulnerable.



Exploring the Decision

Ask yourself:

- What is the decision?
- Can the decision be broken into smaller parts?
- Does the decision have to be made now?

Ask the decision maker:

- What is the most important part of the decision to you?
- Have you made a decision like this before?
- What supports did you use then?

Remember, for people who require support to make decisions and have had little experience making big decisions it can be a difficult experience. Sometimes these decisions can be broken into smaller decisions which may make it easier.

Exploring Options

Having personally relevant options is important in decision making. People who require support are not always offered options.

Ask yourself:

- What are the options?
- Did the decision maker come up with the options?

Ask the decision maker:

- Do the options fit in with your goals or values?
- What does a good life/ day look like to you?
- Can you think of any more options you would like?

Sometimes it can be hard to find 'good' options. Sometimes you have to choose an option which is just 'okay'. Everyone has to do this sometimes but it should not be the case for every decision. You can change your mind later.

Exploring Consequences

Ask the decision maker:

- What are the good things that could happen?
- What are the bad things that could happen?
- Do you have worries about this decision?
- Will other people in your support network worry?
- How would this decision affect the people in your support network?

Dignity of Risk

Consequences are the good and bad things that can happen when a decision is made. Risk is the chance of the bad thing happening.

Everyone has the right to make decisions and everyone has the right to take risks. We all learn from our mistakes and successes. The trick with risk is to manage it so that the risk is less likely or the impact is reduced.

Ask the decision maker:

- What can be done to stop the bad thing from happening?
- What would you do if the bad thing happens?
- How long do you think it could last?
- What can we do to fix it if it happens?
- Do you want this option enough even though the bad thing may happen?

Do you want more information about ADACAS and Supported Decision Making or know anyone who may require support with a healthcare decision?

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