

Mutual recognition in paid disability support relationships

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Background – why mutuality matters

- Our current ARC research on recognition is demonstrating that mutual recognition within paid support relationships is key to the wellbeing of both the person with disability and their disability support worker.
- Mutuality: reciprocal caring about, respecting and valuing each other.
- In a project that grew from the ARC, we had the opportunity to explore how to co-design their capacity to create and maintain mutuality within their paid support relationship.
- A key challenge was how to make this practical and concrete.

The project

- **Participatory action research** with disability organisations, people with disability, and support workers participating in workshops for the design, development and evaluation of training resources.
- **Capacity building resources** for enhancing mutuality in support relationships - a training manual and activity guide.



The research process

- The research found that many people are comfortable with articulating their needs and preferences directly with support workers and managing the working relationship from the outset.
- Some required assistance, time and different methods of asking about what they want to be able to communicate about changes they would like to make.

Responding to emerging themes from the research process

- Three phase workbook
- Working in partnership approach
- Diverse activity sets

contents

About this guide

Using this guide

Working together to get more out of your support relationship

part a: working together well

Working together

Building good support together

part b: activity guide

Activity guide

part c: how you work together well

Reflection and review

Thinking about your activities

Building a stronger working relationship

Examples: introducing the core concepts

- Information and exercises
- Breaking down the key elements of recognition
- Exercises to help pairs apply to their working contexts

building good support together

Working together well helps people feel good about themselves, learn new skills, and enjoy spending time together. It helps them to feel important and included.

Good support means different things to different people. Here are some examples of ways that you might work together to build good support:

- You listen to each other
- You pay attention to each other's choices
- You ask each other about how things are going in your lives
- You comfort each other when one of you is having a bad day
- You are polite to each other
- You do not boss each other around
- You arrive on time when you are working together
- You know it is okay to disagree sometimes, as long as you try and work it out
- You treat each other like part of a team
- You take the time to learn new things together and practice
- You celebrate when one of you does well or improves at something.

On the next few pages are some pictures and stories about other people working together well. As you read or look through them, think about how the people in the stories treat each other and work together as a team.















Applying the concepts

- Lots of activity options
- Tested with people with a wide range of communication preferences and needs

our chosen activities

Mark the activities that you have chosen to complete together.

<p>Out and about discussions</p> 	<p>Journal</p> 	<p>Interview</p> 
<p>Taking photos</p> 	<p>What we like</p> 	<p>Hand review</p> 
<p>Joint drawing</p> 	<p>Other visual activity</p> 	<p>Make your own activity</p> 
<p>Memory objects</p> 	<p>Other visual activity</p> 	<p>Make your own activity</p> 

Reflecting on the how concepts affect your work together

- Refreshing key concepts
- Guided reflection activities

building a stronger working relationship

Well done! You have finished the activities and reached the end of this workbook!

Here are some final tips from Danny and Lisa about things that might help you work together well in the future:

- Have fun together – do things that you both enjoy
- Try new things together
- Get to know each other
- Learn from each other
- Have choices and make decisions together about the places you go and the things you do together
- Look for opportunities to work with the people you want to work with
- Go places together that are friendly and accessible
- Look for opportunities to talk to managers and support coordinators about what you want and what you want to change

Some of these things are what support organisations and service providers can do to help people work together better. You could talk to your support organisation or service provider about what you need so you can work together better. You can also revisit this workbook in a few weeks or a few months time, do one of the activities from the activity guide, and see if anything has changed about the way that you work together.

When we started spending time together, we took the time to talk to each other about how we can work together well.



Now that we have got to know each other, I am confident that the choices we make together are good ones, and that we can talk to each other if we want to change something or try something new.



Results

- People with disability said that activities together with the workers were a useful, concrete way of exploring their preferences.
- Some support workers also said they had learnt new things about the person they supported and their interests through the training activities.

activity: make a map of your time together

Use the space on the page opposite to make a map about the things you do together. Write your names, put a photo, or draw a picture of you both in the middle of the map.

In the boxes, write down or draw the things you do together, like going to the shops, hanging out at home, going to TAFE, going to the movies or a cafe, and so on.

There are some questions next to the boxes. Do the first set of questions, and draw some more lines on your map for each place or activity. If you run out of space, continue the map on another piece of paper. You can decorate your map however you like.



This is the map that Danny and I drew together. We chose to draw our map, but you could write, cut out images, take photos, or anything you like. This is your map to make together!



Implications

- We have had some success in operationalising a seemingly esoteric concept of mutual recognition into concrete training activities that model the mutual caring, respect and value that they seek to explore.
- Introducing the concept of mutual capacity building as a training/development model is novel:
 - Difficult to get traction in a crowded and time pressured field
 - Gaining access to workers and people with disability to demonstrate the materials is challenging.
- Web-based material that breaks down the workbook into small content 'bites' would be a really useful next step.

For more information:

The workbook:

https://workforce.nds.org.au/media/projects/media/UNSW_FINAL_Working_Together_Well.pdf

The Relationships and Recognition project:

www.rcypd.edu.au/projects/r/

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