

The La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework Learning Resource

Workbook





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About this resource

This online learning resource is about support for decision making. It will present the first evidence-based framework to guide you through the process of supporting people with cognitive disabilities to make decisions. Using this framework will help you to enable the people you support to exercise choice and control in their own lives.

This video is an introduction to this resource:



*Watch the video: **About this resource** on the About page of the website for an introduction to this learning resource and how to use it.*

Being able to participate in making decisions is a basic human right.

The foundation of current approaches to providing support for decision making are that everyone has the right to participate in decision making.

People with cognitive disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities or acquired brain injury, are likely to need support to make some decisions about their lives.

This resource has been designed for supporters of people with intellectual disabilities and people with acquired brain injury. Supporters include: frontline managers, disability support workers, team leaders, clinicians, friends, spouses, parents and other family members. It can also be used by case coordinators, case managers, local area coordinators and ability linkers.

If you support a person with intellectual disability or acquired brain injury, this resource will be useful for you.

What you will achieve by working through this resource

By the completion of this resource you will be able to:

1. Reflect upon how you support people with cognitive disabilities to make decisions.
2. Describe the steps, principles and strategies in the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework.
3. Apply your knowledge of the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Framework to supporting a person with cognitive disability.

How to use this resource

- This is a fully online learning resource.
- It comprises 6 separate modules. You should work through these in order because the learning material in one module will inform the next.
- You can work through this resource alone or with colleagues.
- Modules include short video talks introducing key concepts and activity videos that demonstrate different aspects of support for decision making.
- Activities are denoted with a pencil icon. They can be completed using the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section. Suggested ways of thinking about how to respond to the activities are also in the Resources.
- There is a short Glossary. Words that you may not have come across before are written in blue and linked to the word's meaning. For example, click the blue word, choice, to see what it means. The full Glossary is found in the Resources section.
- Each module will take you between 30 and 60 minutes to complete.
- You can get in touch with the authors using the online Contact Form.

Acknowledgements

This online learning resource was led by Professor Christine Bigby and Professor Jacinta Douglas from the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University. This work was developed through a process of research work and was supported with funding from the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services (NSW FACS) managed by St Vincent De Paul Society NSW in partnership with the Living with Disability Research Centre.

For a list of full credits click [here](#).

Module 1: The Context of Support for Decision Making

In this module you will be introduced to ideas about supported decision making, and the changes taking place in expectations of how people with disabilities are supported to make decisions.

The Right to make Decisions

People with cognitive disabilities have the right to make decisions and exercise choice and control over their own lives. They have the right to receive the support they need to participate in decision making. These rights are embedded in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) and the [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#).

We no longer talk about whether a person has the capacity to make a decision but, ***what support do they need to make it?***

Supported Decision Making

Supported decision making holds the promise of enabling good decision support for all people with cognitive disabilities by:

- *Retaining their rights to make decisions* while ensuring access to support and safeguarding mechanisms
- *Recognising informal support arrangements*
- *Taking least restrictive options and enhancing autonomy* by putting the person's will and preferences at the centre of decision making
- *Improving practices of support* through better guidance, capacity building and accountability of supporters to principles of rights-based support
- *Providing criteria* for judging or challenging the quality of decision support
- *Identifying where informal support is lacking* and there is a need for additional formal resources.

The Australian Context

In Australia, the law is slowly changing to reflect the principles of supported decision making. But Australian law in all states still allows the removal of decision making rights from a person with cognitive disability.

Removal of decision making rights can happen if there is conflict about a decision the person wants to make, others consider it 'too risky' or a supporter thinks the person does not fully understand the implications of a decision.

This short video illustrates a situation where a Guardian might be sought to assist with the decision:



*Watch the video: **Conflict in Decision Making: Jerry's New Diet** on the Module 1 page of the*

Administrators can be appointed to make financial decisions for people with cognitive disabilities, and Guardians can be appointed for other types of decisions.

The types of decisions they make are known as 'substitute' decisions. The laws in each state are different. The law sets out the way substitute decision-makers are appointed and must make decisions. Increasingly, they are required to take into account the person's will, preferences and rights.

There are many instances where 'informal substitute' decisions are made for people with cognitive disabilities. This occurs when a person may not be able to clearly articulate their preferences, understand all the implications of a decision or a supporter knows them well and has interpreted their preferences. Sometimes informal supporters make substitute decisions when they think they know best what decision should be made.

Expectations of Supporters

There are changing expectations of the way supporters who provide decision support should act, and that if informal substitute decisions are made they will:

- *Reflect* the person's preferences, will and rights
- Be *accountable* and demonstrate they have not influenced the decision
- Use the type of *support processes* we describe in this training resource.

The idea of preferences is straightforward. A preference is what I want, now at this moment in time. For example, my preference might be to move out of home and into a flat in the inner city.

In contrast, will refers to a longer term and more enduring sense of what I am trying to achieve in my life. For example, my will might be to be more independent from my parents. Understanding a person's will helps to understand why they have particular preferences.

The link between will and preferences can be clear as in this example. My preference to move to a flat in the city reflects my will to be more independent. Preferences might change with experience or situation but generally still reflect a person's underlying will. For example, having experienced living in the city and in a regional town my preference might shift away from the city but still reflects my will to be independent of my parents.

As a general principle, decisions should **minimise** any restriction of a person's rights.

In this resource, we use the term Support for Decision Making to acknowledge that there is no uniform Supported Decision Making legislation in Australia.

Summary Module 1

Support for decision making is a process that is used to support people with cognitive disabilities to participate in making decisions that affect their own lives.

In this module you have learnt that:

- Everybody has the capacity to make decisions
- In Australia, substitute decision making is permitted in cases involving conflict or potential harm
- When supporting a person with cognitive disability to make decisions, you must ensure that the decision reflects their will and preferences and is least restrictive of their rights.

NEXT: Module 2: The Framework

Module 2: The La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework

In this module you will be introduced to the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework. You will learn about decisions and decision making.

The La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework, or the *Framework* for short, provides:

- The foundations for effective decision making support
- A highly practical approach for supporters to follow
- Steps, Principles and Strategies

The Framework is shown in Figure 1.

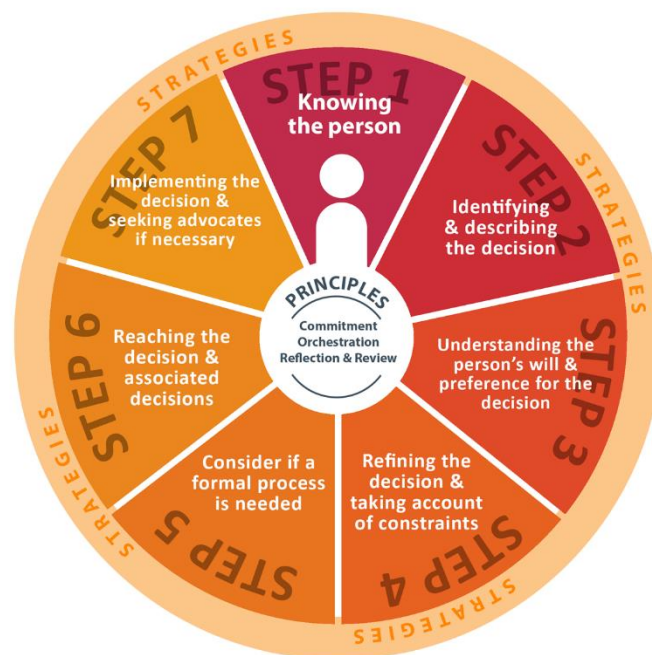


Figure 1 The La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework

This talk video introduces you to the Framework:



Watch the video: ***The Framework*** on the Module 2 page of the website.

Decisions and Decision Making

Everyone needs support to make decisions.

Decision making is an everyday part of life. We are always making decisions.

We can make decisions on our own, or involve the people around us.

A decision is when you have more than one option to pursue. It is not only about exercising choice. Although choice making is one part of decision making, it does not necessarily lead to a decision. This is because the choice may not be acted upon, or it might only comprise a small part of the decision.

Some people think about decisions as being big or small. Big decisions may include a career change or where to live, while small decisions may include deciding what to wear today, what to eat for breakfast, or what movie to see. However, the size of a decision does not always reflect how significant it is to a person's quality of life.

The decisions we make are informed by our preferences and by the opportunities available. These are constantly changing. Decision making is therefore dynamic. What we may have decided yesterday may be different to what we will decide tomorrow or in many years' time. Our decisions change as we grow, evolve and mature.

For people with cognitive disabilities, particularly people with severe and profound disabilities, decisions are often made for them, by others, on their behalf. Yet, decision making is a fundamental human right – everyone has the right to participate in decision making.

Why was the Framework developed?

This talk video explains the development of the Framework:



*Watch the video: **Developing the Framework** on the Module 2 page of the website.*

Making decisions about one's own life is important to personal well-being. It is one way of controlling your life and ensuring your own preferences and values take priority. People with cognitive disabilities gain the same benefits as others from making decisions.

Benefits of decision making for people with cognitive disabilities includes increased:

- Sense of self-identity

- Quality of life
- Psychological wellbeing

The Framework has been developed as a resource for those who support people with cognitive disabilities. It describes a process that you can use to enable the person you support to make or participate in decisions and participate in the many different types of decisions that affect the way they live their life.

How was the Framework developed?

This Framework was developed by searching for the best available evidence that demonstrated the nature of support for decision making provided to people with cognitive disabilities.

An extensive literature review was undertaken, as well as interviews and observations to explore the experiences that people with cognitive disabilities and their supporters had of the decision support process.

The Framework has been piloted with disability support workers and disability professionals in training workshops. Revisions have been made so that the Framework can be understood and applied to supporting people in many different contexts.

This rigorous approach has resulted in a Framework which is:

- **Evidence-based:** it is based on thorough research about what is known about decision support in the area of cognitive disability
- **Authentic:** it incorporates the lived experiences of people with cognitive disability and their supporters
- **Practical:** the Framework has been tested and can be applied in practice.

A presentation about the Framework delivered by Professor Christine Bigby can be accessed from the [Module Resources](#) section.

Using the Framework: It's dynamic

This learning resource will show you how to apply the Framework when supporting a person with cognitive disability to make a decision.

This video presents how the Framework is used in practice.



*Watch the video: **The Framework is Dynamic** on the Module 2 page of the website to learn about its use.*

The way you use the Framework will depend upon the situation you are in, including the type of support role you have.

The Framework is dynamic which means that you can adapt it to suit your situation. You may move backwards and forwards between the different steps.

When providing support, for example, you may reach Step 3, and come to realise that you need to know more about the person to fully support their decision. This will mean that you re-visit Step 1, and then return to Step 3 and continue from there.

Also, depending upon the situation, you might call upon some strategies more than others and maybe only at certain times when providing support. In this way, the Framework is designed to be used dynamically. This concept will be made clearer as you work through the modules and activities in this resource.

ACTIVITY 1: Who helps you make decisions?

We all make decisions every day. A good way of understanding decision making is to think about how you do it for yourself.

Thinking about yourself, answer the following questions. *Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.*

1. Who are the people you go to for support when making a significant decision (e.g., changing jobs)?
2. What are the main characteristics of these people that make you seek them out?
3. Describe what sort of support you expect from these people when making a decision.

Summary Module 2

Developing an understanding about the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework and how to use it will assist you to support someone with cognitive disability to make decisions.

In this module, you have learnt that the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework:

- Was developed using an evidence-based approach
- Is designed to be used dynamically
- Is a process you can use to support people with cognitive disabilities to make decisions.

NEXT: Module 3: The Steps

Module 3: The Steps

This module will guide you through the Steps in the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework.

In this module you will learn that:

- Each step in the process involves the person and the people who support them
- Knowing the person is important in providing support
- A decision isn't really a decision until it has been acted upon.

The 7 Steps in the Framework are shown in Figure 2.

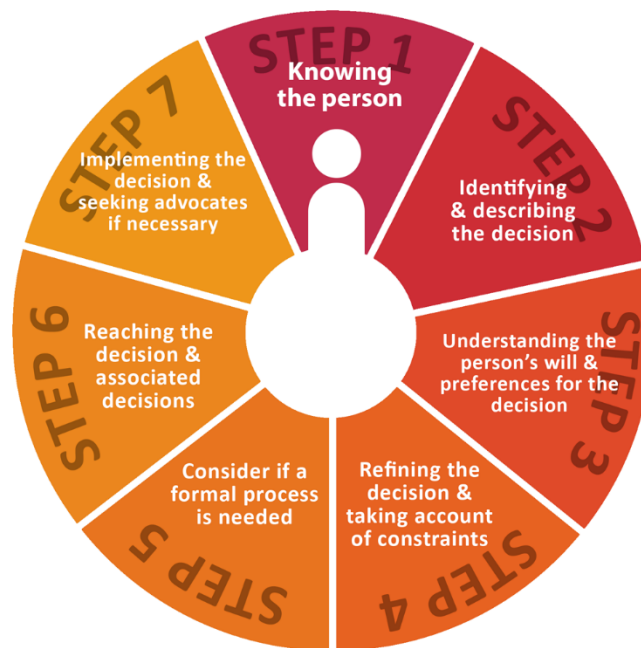


Figure 2 The 7 Steps in the Framework

This talk video is an introduction to the steps in the Framework:



*Watch the video: **The 7 Steps** on the Module 3 page of the website to learn about the Steps of the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework*

Decision making supporters

There is often more than one person involved in supporting a person to make decisions. The same people may not always be involved.

Who is involved will depend on the person and the type of decision.

There is usually a lead or primary supporter for any decision, but there will also be others involved. In this way, a network of supporters can exist.

Different supporters bring different perspectives and knowledge about the person which enables the person's preferences to be kept at the heart of the decision making process.

Effective supporter characteristics

The influence of supporters on decision making can be enabling or disabling. Supporters need to be aware of the effect that they have when providing support for decision making.

When piloting the Framework, workshop participants expressed the characteristics or traits that they associated with being an effective supporter.

These included being:

- *Trustworthy*
- *Honest*
- *Reliable*
- *Giving advice and not telling me what I should do*
- *Following through: not making promises they can't keep*
- *Encouraging*
- *Positive*
- *Believing in the person: they can do this*
- *A good problem solver: they think of solutions rather than focus on obstacles*

Can you see any relation between this list of characteristics and your responses to Activity 1, Question 2?

For some supporters, a shift from a stance of "what do I think is best?" for the person they are supporting to "how can I understand what their preferences are?" will be required.

ACTIVITY 2: How do you support someone to make a decision?

Before we proceed to learn about the Steps in the Framework, this activity asks you to pause and reflect.

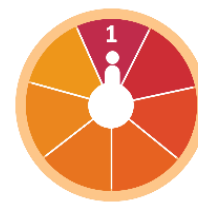
Think about someone with a cognitive disability who you support. With this person in mind, answer the following questions. *Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.*

1. Who are the supporters in this person's network?
2. What are the things you do to support this person with decision making?
3. What have you found to be challenging about supporting this person to make decisions?
4. What have you found works well in supporting this person to make decisions?
5. Which Steps in the Framework (Figure 2) have you used in your own support role?

Learning about the Framework's steps

You now know that there are 7 steps to the Framework. You will learn about each of these in more detail. Read on to get started with Step 1 *Knowing the person*.

Step 1: Knowing the person



'Knowing the person' is Step 1 in the Framework. Knowing the person means knowing about who they are as a person and their preferences. These are to be kept at the heart of the decision making process.

Supporters need to have good engagement with the person.

Knowing the person includes:

- Knowing all aspects of the person
- Having a sense of their self-identity or self-concept – who they are and how they feel about themselves.

Getting to know a person – Talking isn't enough

Too often, people try to get to know a person with cognitive disability only through talking with them. Alternatively, if the person is not able to talk, then other people are sought to talk about them, or for them.

Asking the person what they want is not equivalent to knowing the person. This is because the person might:

- Not understand you, or
- Not be aware of how to articulate a response, or
- Say what they think you want to hear

Make sure your knowledge of the person isn't superficial. You will come to understand, or have already experienced, that it is difficult to support someone with decision making when you do not know them well.

Elements to knowing a person

Supporters need to find different ways of getting to know the person.

There are creative ways of engaging and communicating which include, asking open-ended questions, having experiences with the person, observing them, recognising their hobbies and interests, encouraging them to tell their story while actively listening.

We get to know people in different ways. There are different approaches that we can use in order to more fully understand a person.

Figure 3 summarises the basic elements that will lead you to knowing a person.



Figure 3 Elements that lead to knowing a person

Knowing the person includes knowing about their:

- **Experiences:** their past experiences and the experiences you have had together
- **Preferences:** their likes and dislikes
- **Attributes and style:** including their personal characteristics
- **Level of functioning:** which considers their specific cognitive impairment
- **Social Connections:** with others and how they are seen by others in their network. Their network may include family, friends, support workers and other professional ‘experts’ who have been involved in their life.

Different people will have different knowledge of the person and will provide support in alignment with that information.

ACTIVITY 3.1: Josh's Trip to Newcastle

This video shows an example of knowing the person.

Watch the video "Josh's trip to Newcastle" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 1: Josh's trip to Newcastle** on the Step 1 page of the website to learn more about knowing the person.*

Josh is excited about his trip to Newcastle, but then changes his mind about going just as the group is about to leave.

1. Why don't Josh's support workers take him home as he requests?
2. Leon phones Pete. What does Leon realise about Josh's preferences from that conversation?
3. Explain whether you feel that Josh's support workers know him well enough to support his decision making?

ACTIVITY 3.2: Sarah's New Boyfriend

This video shows an example of knowing the person.

Watch the video "Sarah's New Boyfriend" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 1: Sarah's new boyfriend** on the Step 1 page of the website to learn more about knowing the person.*

1. What are some of the reasons why Sarah's mother, Lesley, would be unaware of her relationship with Ron?
2. Explain how having assumptions about a person would affect the way you support them to make decisions.
3. Think about someone that you support. Describe how you have got to know them.

Step 2: Identifying and describing the decision



'Identifying and describing the decision' is Step 2 in the Framework. This step highlights that in order to provide effective support, it is necessary to identify and describe the decision.

Identifying the person's decision

Identifying and describing decision helps to focus attention on the core issues, guide who to involve in the process, identify tensions, and clarify the potential flow on effects of this decision to other parts of a person's life.

Sometimes supporters make decisions for the person without realising it. They may think they know what the person wants, and what may or may not be possible. Supporters may assume a decision is not important or seems minor, yet it may be significant to the person's quality of life. Importantly, the size of the decision does not necessarily equate to its significance. When supporters make assumptions about the scope and nature of the decision they can inadvertently narrow the options to be considered.

Identifying the decision also helps supporters to become aware of other earlier decisions that have been made by others or simply taken for granted.

For example, if Anne likes to eat muesli for breakfast, her supporters might take for granted the decision about what she wants for breakfast, rather than offering alternatives and asking her everyday to make a decision about what she would like. Or perhaps whether she would like breakfast at all. Would she prefer to wait for brunch?

Describing the features of a decision

Describing the decision allows you to see its features in full. It also assists you to remove any assumptions about what the person wants, and what may or may not be possible.

The features of the decision can be described as follows:

- **Scope:** the type of impact the decision is likely to have on the person's life and other decisions that might flow on from it. For example, a decision about whether or not to continue to attend a social club might only affect one evening every fortnight, but a decision about whether or not to exercise every day will have a much greater impact on fitness and, in turn, other things a person might be able to do in their life.

- **Who is involved?** The decision may need to involve other people or organisations as they may have the power to set the parameters, or maybe hold a power over the decision. This might be the case in decisions about parenting a child. A child protection worker might have to be involved if safety concerns about the child have been raised.
- **Influences:** there will be factors that may restrain the decision and in turn help to shape it. This could include constraints arising from available resources or procedures that need to be followed. Tensions that arise can be identified and resolved.
- **Timeframe:** think about how much time there is to make this decision. Bigger decisions will take more time, and you will need to focus on smaller parts of it along the way. Or there may be an externally imposed timeframe such as lodging an appeal about an NDIS plan or eligibility.
- **Consequences:** consider the likely consequences for the person of deciding to do one thing rather than another.

Figure 4 summarises the features of a decision.

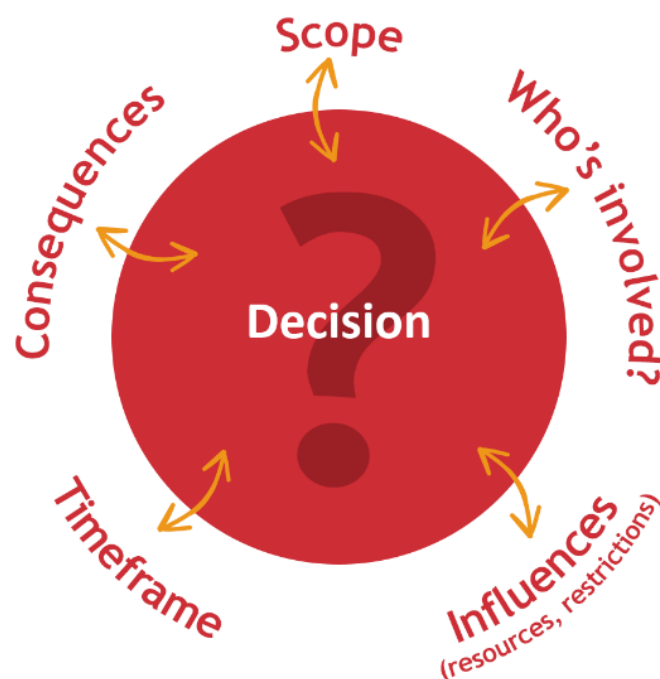


Figure 4 The Features of a Decision

Describing a decision helps to focus attention on the core issues, guide who to involve in the process, identify tensions or influences that might be amenable to change and clarify the potential flow on effects of this decision to other parts of a person's life.

ACTIVITY 3.3: Sarah Wants to Spend More Time with Ron

This video shows an example of identifying and describing the decision.

Watch the video “Sarah wants to spend more time with Ron” and then complete the table.



Watch the video: **Step 2: Sarah wants to spend more time with Ron** on the Step 2 page of the website to learn more about identifying and describing the decision

Complete the table provided in the workbook to describe the features of Sarah’s decision. You write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.

Features of a Decision				
Scenario: Sarah wants to spend more time with Ron				
Scope	Who’s involved	Influences	Timeframes	Consequences

ACTIVITY 3.4: Painting Josh’s Room

This video shows an example of identifying and describing the decision.

Watch the video “Painting Josh’s Room” and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



Watch the video: **Step 2: Painting Josh’s room** on the Step 2 page of the website to learn more about identifying and describing the decision

1. Complete the table provided in the workbook to describe the features of Josh’s decision.

Features of a Decision				
Scenario: Painting Josh’s room				
Scope	Who’s involved	Influences	Timeframes	Consequences

2. What does Josh’s support worker know about him that is important to supporting his decision? Explain.

Step 3: Understanding the person's will and preferences for the decision



'Understanding the person's will and preferences for the decision' is Step 3 in the Framework. This step requires you to determine what the person wants.

In Step 3, the person and their supporters think as widely as possible about the decision, all the possible options to be explored, and the consequences of different options.

Everyone has preferences. Preferences, or what a person wants to do, stem from their own values or cultural norms, knowledge and available information. Preferences are also influenced by past experiences and the consequences of previous decisions. Considering all of these things, it shouldn't be surprising that a person's preferences will change from time to time.

Trying different ways

Understanding a person's preference for the decision may not be an easy or straightforward task. However, you will be well-prepared for this step if you have been thorough at Step 1 *Knowing the person*.

Understanding how the person expresses their preference, and what their preferences are at this point in time for this decision, may take time, creativity and persistence. You must develop multiple strategies to determine this information. If one way does not work, you must try another way.

For some people, preferences have to be interpreted by supporters based on their knowledge of the person, or acquired from the perspectives of others who know the person well or in different contexts.

Preferences are communicated by people in many ways, including through:

- *words*
- *signs*
- *gestures*
- *expressions, including facial expressions like staring at an item of interest*
- *behaviour*
- *actions or lack of actions*

Finding ways to understand preferences

The Principles and Strategies are intertwined with each Step in the support for decision making Framework.

Applying the principles and using the strategies will help you to understand the person's preferences for the decision. You will learn more about the Strategies in later modules, but they are introduced here.

This video talk explains the ways you can go about understanding the person's preferences.

Things you can do to understand preferences include:

- **Active listening and finding different ways to listen:** communication is not always verbal, and observation is important to determine the person's preferences. What hobbies does the person have? What do they like to collect? What pictures do they display in their bedroom? How do they react in different types of settings? Do they seem to prefer noisy lively places rather than quiet places?
- **Exploring and experiencing different options, including creating new experiences:** when making decisions, we use our previous experiences to guide and inform us. For example, if we enjoyed Thai food at a friend's place for dinner, then we might want to try Thai food again on another occasion. However if we had not had Thai food before then we do not really know whether or not we will like it. It is harder to make decisions without having had direct experience.

Many people with cognitive disability may not have had the opportunity to explore and experience different options. For smaller, every day decisions, sampling new experiences is easy. You can provide a selection of clothes to wear for the day, for example, and see which the person likes best. For more complex decisions, such as where to live, it may be difficult for the person to imagine what it would be like to live in a group home if they have only ever lived in a large, secure unit.

You will need to consider different ways to create opportunities for exploration and new experiences.

And remember, that a person's preferences can change over time. What they liked a few years ago might not be their preference now.

Ways to think about understanding a person's preferences include:

- **Keeping internal voices and judgements "still":** this allows the person's preference to be heard. Supporters should avoid imposing their own preference onto others. Try to suspend your own judgements and preferences so you can hear what the person prefers.

- **Unconditional positive regard:** means maintaining a commitment to the person throughout the decision making process. You should maintain this approach, even if the person's decision is in contrast to your own beliefs and values. Taking time to reflect during the process of effective decision making will enable you to consider whether your views are getting in the way.
- **Devoting time and focus:** determining someone's preference can take extended periods of time as well as uninterrupted focus on the person being supported. Doing this effectively may require you to prioritise competing demands so that you are devoting the necessary amount of time.
- **Thinking about risk and taking risks:** if activities involving risk were avoided, we would lead a very dull life. As a supporter, you will need to help the person you support to unpack and understand the potential risks embedded in the decisions they are thinking about. You will need to work with the person to make choices and be involved in activities that may involve some risk while minimising potential harm to themselves or others.
- **Continuously seeking feedback:** it is important that, on an ongoing basis, you reflect and review your own practice. This includes seeking feedback from others who know the person you are supporting. If you are part of a network or circle of supporters around an individual, you should take the time to reflect on the functioning of the group as a whole, and whether any particular aspect of the group's interaction is negatively impacting on the support being provided. Is everyone in the group able to openly express their opinion?

You should check back, again and again, to ensure you understand the person's preferences and that it is actually reflected in all parts of the person's decision.

What to do when you find it difficult to determine preferences

Determining a person's preferences can be challenging. It can be particularly difficult when the person has a more profound cognitive disability and finds it hard to clearly articulate or express their preferences through their actions. For example, a person with severe intellectual disability does not use language or symbols to express their preferences. On the other hand, a person with brain injury may display a tendency to 'live in the moment' due to their short term memory loss. This will mean that their will and preferences may differ from moment to moment, not always reflecting what they truly want.

You may need to think more about a person's 'will' when their preferences are difficult to work out. As discussed in Module 1 a person's 'will' is more enduring than in the moment preferences. A person's will represents the underlying directions they want to pursue in

their life. So, when you are unsure about preferences you might need to think about what you know more generally about the type of life the person prefers – are they striving for independence? Do they consistently enjoy being in situations where there is lots of social interaction?

Thinking about rights will also help when a person's will and preferences are not clear.

Which decision will least interfere or restrict a person's rights? For example, will their right to full participation in the community be restricted more by living in a large facility away from the town compared to living with fewer people or own their own close to local community facilities and their friends?

You might ask yourself these questions in the following order. If you cannot answer one, then move onto the next:

1. **What are the person's preferences?** Do you know the person well enough to answer this? What is important to this person? Why do they want this choice?
2. **What is the person's will?** This reflects the person's longer term intentions.
3. **What are the person's rights?** What is the least restrictive option for this person that will allow them the most choice and control while minimising harm? What would optimise their quality of life?

It is important to remember that people with intellectual disability may have had narrow life experiences, so acting on a least restrictive alternative can open up new experiences for them.

What does a good option look like for the person you support – from their perspective not your own? As a supporter, your purpose is to support the person to explore all the possible options and help them to determine which they prefer.

ACTIVITY 3.5: Carol Asked about Joining Yoga Class

This video shows an example of understanding the person’s will and preferences for the decision.

Watch the video “Carol asked about joining yoga class” and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 3: Carol asked about joining yoga class** on the Step 3 page of the website to learn more about understanding a person’s preferences*

1. What are the different strategies that Carol’s parents use to determine whether she would like to try yoga classes?
2. When providing support for decision making, why would it be important to create opportunities for people with cognitive disabilities to have different experiences?
3. Would you say that Carol’s parents know her? Explain your observation.

ACTIVITY 3.6: Jerry’s Trip to Bali

This video shows an example of understanding the person’s will and preferences for the decision.

Watch the video “Jerry’s trip to Bali” and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 3: Jerry’s trip to Bali** on the Step 3 page of the website to learn more about understanding a person’s preferences*

1. Penny is Jerry’s support worker. What are her reasons for organising Jerry’s trip to Bali?
2. Explain whether Jerry’s preferences were taken into account in organising his trip to Bali?
3. What approaches can Penny use in future to support Jerry to make decisions about where he would like to holiday?

Step 4: Refining the Decision and Taking Account of Constraints



‘Refining the decision and taking account of constraints’ is Step 4 in the Framework. This Step requires you to determine what needs to be considered to put the decision into practice. If there are constraints, some refinement of the decision might be required to get past these.

Constraints Surrounding a Decision

Constraints, or matters that can limit the decision or narrow the options available to the person, will vary depending upon the decision and the context.

Some constraints include:

- **Time:** when time is limited decisions can be made in haste without properly considering the person’s preferences. You might need to think about slowing the process down and taking more time to consider the decision so that opportunities are not limited. As we have already discussed it can take a long time to get to know a person well. Particularly for people who do not communicate using words more time will be required to properly understand their preferences for the decision.
- **Resources:** this includes access to money, people or items needed to carry out a decision. For example, needing to adapt equipment so that the person can use the blender when they attend a cookery class.
- **Impact on others:** consider how the decision will affect others. Taking a job that means you have to get up very early to travel to work might disrupt others living in the same house; deciding to become a parent may affect other family members in terms of expectations about the type of support they might provide.
- **Supporter attitudes:** it is important to maintain positive expectations of the support for decision making process. Negative attitudes can diminish a person’s preference and unnecessarily constrain a decision. This might include deterring someone you support from going to the pub with friends because you do not believe alcohol consumption is good for one’s health.

- **Geographical:** relates to location which will be a factor when someone is deciding where they would like to live. Would they like to live near their family, friends and close to restaurants?
- **Physical spaces and architectural designs:** equipment or living areas might need to be modified in design. Do you need to consider whether the kitchen bench is too high or is the building not easily accessed by someone in a wheelchair?
- **Policy and procedures:** can affect or slow down a decision. Does policy prevent changes to a physical space? Does a procedure need to be reviewed for a decision to be carried out?
- **Negative risks:** it is important to weigh up the pros and cons of a decision. If you consider that the negative risks far outweigh the positive risks associated with a decision, you might need formal assistance from a guardian in order to proceed (this is discussed further in Step 5).

ACTIVITY 3.7: Josh wants an iPhone

This video shows an example of refining the decision and taking account of constraints.

Watch the video “Josh wants an iPhone” and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 4: Josh wants an iPhone** on the Step 4 page of the website to learn more about refining the decision and taking account of constraints.*

1. Describe the constraints surrounding Josh’s decision to have an iPhone.
2. How does Josh’s support worker manage the constraints surrounding the decision while supporting Josh’s preferences?
3. Was a suitable outcome achieved for Josh? Explain.

ACTIVITY 3.8: Thinking Creatively to Refine Decisions

Think about one person that you support to make decisions. Recall a decision that required you to think creatively to refine it while still supporting the person’s preferences to make it happen.

Complete the table to document your experiences. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.

Note: Josh painting his room (from the Activity in Step 2) is provided as an example for you:

Example Scenario: Painting Josh’s room			
What was the decision?	What were the constraints?	How were the constraints managed?	What was the outcome for the person?
<i>-To paint Josh’s room black</i>	<i>- Negative supporter attitude: one support worker explains it is expensive to change all the room colours, and so keeping the rooms the same blue colour is fairer for everyone. - Money: paint and painters are expensive - House policies and procedure: rooms need to look the same</i>	<i>-Josh’s brother talked through the decision with him and made some suggestions. -Josh agreed to pay for the cost of the paint, and he understands that this may mean he misses one of his outings this week. -Discussion to be had with house owners to be granted permission to paint his room black.</i>	<i>- Josh’s room was painted black - The constraints of the decision were addressed.</i>
Write your scenario here:			
What was the decision?	What were the constraints?	How were the constraints managed?	What was the outcome for the person?

Step 5: Consider if a Formal Process is Needed



‘Consider if a formal process is needed’ is Step 5 in the Framework. This step requires you to determine whether there is conflict among supporters or significant harm likely from the proposed decision.

By this stage in supporting the decision making process, you will have gained the knowledge about the decision (Step 2), including how it aligns with the person’s preferences (Step 3) and any constraints surrounding it (Step 4).

In situations involving conflict there is a danger that supporters may override the person’s preferences to avoid risks. This can be the case when a person’s preferred decision could result in harm to them or others.

As a supporter, you need to determine whether further discussion or more formal discussion is required for the decision. Simply saying ‘no’ to the person may mean undermining not only the person’s preferences but also their right to make decisions about their own life.

In these instances, it is important that you bring conflict to the surface and name it so that you can find ways of dealing with it. It may be necessary to seek a formal process to resolve the conflict. This may be seeking help from a supervisor, using an established process in your organisation, seeking external advice or making a request for appointment of a Guardian or Administrator.

It is important to remember that most supporters are not formally appointed as Administrators or Guardians and legally cannot override a person’s preferences. If you are concerned that a decision a person wants to make may cause harm to themselves or others, or there is conflict among supporters you must consider whether a formal process is needed.

Each state has different laws about Guardianship and Administration. A link to the laws in each from the relevant Office of the Public Advocate or Public Guardian can be found in the Module Resources section under Module 3

ACTIVITY 3.9: Jerry's diet

This video shows a situation where a formal process might be needed to manage conflict associated with the decision.

Watch the video "Jerry's diet" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 5: Jerry's diet** on the Step 5 page of the website to learn more about resolving conflict*

1. What type of decision has been made?
2. How does Jerry's support worker justify the decision?
3. Describe the conflict that exists in this scenario.
4. What might be a good way forward from here to both support Jerry's diet and address his apparent behavioural changes?

ACTIVITY 3.10: Tom's Business Idea

This video shows a situation where a formal process might be needed to manage conflict associated with the decision.

Watch the video "Tom's Business Idea" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 5: Tom's Business Idea** on the Step 5 page of the website to learn more about resolving conflict*

1. What does Tom want to do?
2. What type of decision has been made by Tom's father?
3. Describe the conflict that you see in this situation.
4. Explain how Tom's dad could have better supported his son's decision?

Step 6: Reaching the Decision and Associated Decisions



'Reaching the decision and associated decisions' is Step 6 in the framework. This step is about finalising the decision with all things considered.

In order for the main or overarching decision to be reached, it may need to be broken down to its smaller associated decisions.

This is shown as a picture in **Figure 5**.

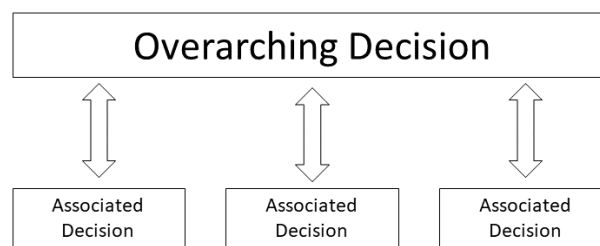


Figure 5. The overarching decision and its associated decisions

Associated Decisions

Let's consider an example to further describe the concept of associated decisions. Sally has decided to study at TAFE. **Figure 6** shows some associated decisions Sally may need to consider so that her overarching decision can be reached.

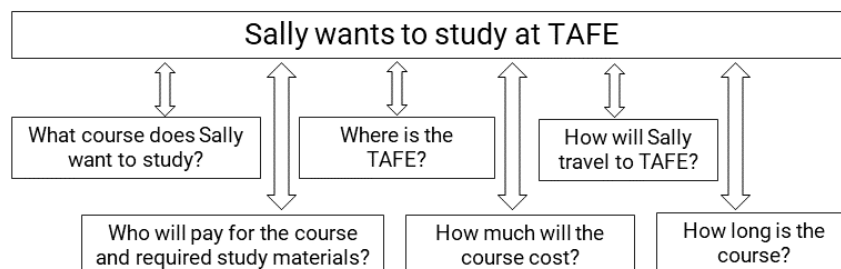


Figure 6. Some of Sally's associated decisions

Identifying and defining associated decisions enables the overarching decision to be more likely reached. Smaller parts of the decision can be worked through as a means to reaching the main decision.

Recording the decision

In some instances, you will need to record a decision as you might need to pass it on for other people can act on it. This can be done in-house, or informally, with the use of a recording template. The completed template can then be stored in the person's individual folder.

A blank recording template is provided on the next page. It is also located in the Resources section so that you can use it yourself. An example of a completed recording template is also provided in the Resources section.

In other situations, you will find that certain decisions will need to be recorded formally. This would be in cases where the decision has been made by an authority figure such as a state trustee or other authority figure.



Decision recording template

Use this template to help you record an in-house/informal decision

Things to identify	Answer
Who is making this decision?	<i>The decision maker is:</i>
What is the decision being made?	<i>The overarching decision is:</i>
What smaller decisions will contribute to reaching the overarching decision?	<i>Associated decisions are:</i>
Why is the decision being made?	
Who needs to know about this decision?	<i>The people affected by this decision are:</i>
When does the decision need to be finalised?	<i>The timeframe for the decision is:</i>
Date recorded:	
Recorded by:	

When completed, this recording can be placed in the person's individual file.

ACTIVITY 3.11: Dan’s Trek Idea

This video shows an example of reaching the decision and associated decisions.

Watch the video “Dan’s trek idea” and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 6: Dan’s Trek Idea** on the Step 6 page of the website to learn more about decisions and associated decisions*

1. What does Dan want to do?
2. What are the associated decisions that you would need to consider in Dan’s scenario?
3. Owen is Dan’s support worker. Considering the strategy he uses, explain whether you think he keeps his judgement of Dan’s decision to himself.
4. Use the Decision Recording Template to record Dan’s decision.

ACTIVITY 3.12: Identifying Associated Decisions

In the table provided, record as many associated decisions that you can think of which will enable the overarching decision to be reached.

An example has been provided for you.

Overarching decision	Associated Decisions
<i>Lucinda wants to move out of home</i>	<i>Which suburb does Lucinda want to move to? What type of home – unit, house, apartment? Will Lucinda live alone? Does Lucinda want a garden? Will it need to be in a quiet area? Does her new home need to be near public transport, restaurants, shops, family, friends? How much money does Lucinda have to spend?</i>
Eric wants to have a party for his birthday	
Now that bowling has finished, Shayne has 4 hours of support on one night per week. He has decided that he would like to do another activity.	
Edward decides that for 2 days a week he wants to change his day service provider from a day centre to an individual service provider.	
Jane wants to buy presents for her family for Christmas.	

Step 7: Implementing the decision and seeking advocates if necessary



'Implementing the decision and seeking advocates if necessary' is Step 7 in the Framework. You need to act on the decision for it to be fully realised for the person you support.

Implementing the decision

Let's consider Nick's situation to highlight the importance of implementing the decision.

Nick is a young man with cognitive disability. His mother, Jane, has written about her own experiences in supporting Nick to make decisions (Tracy, 2015). She writes the following about implementing decisions:

“To make choice making relevant and real, Nick’s choices must be acted upon. Choices should only be offered if they are real and there is an intention to follow through on them. If Nick’s decisions are not acted upon, then his choice becomes meaningless.” (p 35).

Decision making can fail to be implemented because the tasks, the power, or resources required to implement the decision may be beyond the scope of the supporters involved in earlier stages of the decision making process.

Who are Advocates?

Supporters may need to seek out and coordinate advocates to support implementation of the decision if this step is not within the scope of their role.

Advocates can include:

- a case manager
- a paid advocate from an advocacy association
- service provider
- others in the person's support network

Continuing support

By now you will be aware that support permeates all the steps in making a decision. The process of support for decision making does not stop at Step 7. Continuing support should be provided for new and consequential decisions.

It is important to keep checking that the person's preference is upheld throughout implementation. The person's circumstances or preferences can change. If we think about supporting Sarah and Ron's relationship, for example, what decisions would need to be made if Ron moved house and now lived 2 hours from Sarah? You can go back to Step 2 in the Framework and work through the process once more.

Remember, having an advocate or case manager to help implement a decision will not remove the need for continuing support for decision making.

Most people with cognitive disabilities will require ongoing support with some types of decisions, as well as making others on their own. Remember that the type of support a person needs depends on the nature of the decision to be made; that's why identifying and describing the decision in Step 2 is so important.

ACTIVITY 3.13: Carol Missing Out on Yoga

In Step 3, we saw how Carol's preferences were explored in encouraging her to join yoga. We now revisit Carol's scenario, to see how this decision is being implemented.

Watch the video "Carol missing out on yoga" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Step 7: Carol missing out on Yoga** on the Step 7 page of the website to learn more implementing the decision*

1. Alice, Carol's support worker, explains that Carol has been missing yoga classes. What is Carol's explanation for this?
2. Carol's mum takes the lead in implementing the decision for Carol to continue with yoga. What approaches does she suggest to Carol so that she can make it to yoga on time?
3. What would you say was effective about the way Carol's mum proceeds to support Carol in this situation so as to ensure the decision is acted upon?
4. In the end, Alice asks Carol if she likes going to yoga. Why is this check-in important to do?

Summary Module 3

Knowing the Steps in the Framework will assist you in supporting someone with a cognitive disability to make decisions.

In this module, you have learnt that that support for decision making involves:

- A network of supporters
- Thinking broadly about all aspects of the decision
- Refining the decision and considering the factors constraining it
- Determining whether a formal process is needed when conflict arises
- Checking in with the person while acting upon their decision to ensure their preference is being upheld
- Ongoing support.

NEXT: Module 4: The Principles of decision making support

Module 4: The Principles of Decision Making Support

In this module, you will learn about the Principles in the Framework.

There are 3 Principles that you will use at each Step of the decision making process.

These are:

- **Commitment:** to the person and their rights
- **Orchestration:** of others involved in the person's life
- **Reflection & Review:** on your own values, influence and support

The Principles are shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7. The Principles

This video talk is an introduction to the Principles:



Watch the video: **Module 4: The Principles** to learn about commitment, orchestration, reflection and review.

Commitment

This principle requires supporters to demonstrate a consistent commitment to:

- The person
- The person's rights to be actively involved in their decision making. All decisions must reflect the person's preferences, will and rights.

Supporters may find that their commitment may be challenged as they work through the Steps to support decision making.

Challenges can arise, for example, when supporters impose their own views onto the person if they disagree with preferences or others try to ignore the person's rights to participate in decision making.

The relationship between the supporter and the person does not have to be 'perfect' but it does need to be built on unconditional positive regard for the person as a human being of equal value and a holder of rights.

Supporters will need to use a range of strategies, tools, values and knowledge so that the person's preferences can be achieved in spite of the challenges being presented to them.

ACTIVITY 4.1: Sarah & Mum on Holiday

This video shows an example of commitment.

Watch the video "Sarah and Mum on holiday" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



Watch the video: Sarah & Mum on Holiday on the Module 3: Principles page of the website to learn more about commitment

1. In what ways does Sarah's mum demonstrate her commitment to Sarah's relationship with Ron?
2. What are some of the benefits to the person when supporters maintain positive expectations throughout the decision making process?
3. Think of a person you support. What are some ways you demonstrate your commitment to them during the decision making process?

Orchestration

Decision making is a shared task.

People involved in the decision making process include:

- The person
- The primary or lead supporter
- Other supporters, including advocates

The support is shared between a range of people who know the person in different ways. These people can include support workers, managerial staff, friends and family members.

A primary supporter leads and orchestrates support.

Like the conductor of a musical orchestra, the primary supporter draws in other supporters, both formal and informal, from various parts of the person's life. They update other supporters with information as required and also mediate any differences between supporters.

The primary supporter will orchestrate people with appropriate skills, and if necessary those with expert knowledge, at a particular time and for a particular duration in order to act on a decision.

If a primary supporter is not evident, then for some decisions, it will be necessary to find someone willing to take on that role.

ACTIVITY 4.2: Mum involves Tess

This video shows an example of orchestration.

Watch the video "Mum involves Tess" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



Watch the video: Mum involves Tess on the Module 3: Principles page of the website to learn more about orchestration

1. Sarah's mum makes a number of suggestions to Tess about how she can help in Sarah's decision. What are these?
2. How does Sarah's mum respond to Tess' concern about Sarah making the 'wrong' decision?
3. What is the one thing that Tess is asked to do now to support Sarah's decision?

4. As a supporter, and with the knowledge you have gained from this resource so far, do you think there are 'wrong' decisions? Explain.

Reflection and Review

As a supporter, you need to continually reflect on and review the support you provide for decision making all through the process.

Supporters must reflect to ensure that they are not influencing a decision based on their own values or preferences in the way they present information.

In their study, Bigby, Whiteside & Douglas (2017, p. 7) recorded the following information provided by one mother who sought to delay a decision. She advised that if her daughter wanted to leave home she had to:

“learn to be independent in cooking and budgeting, paying ... bills, learn how not to use too much electricity or gas...”

This statement from another family member in the study highlights how supporters can deliberately present information that is framed by their own perspective:

“we did provide [the information] in such a way that we knew what decision [the person] would make.”

Asking yourself the following questions may help you to reflect and review:

- Are my core values getting in the way of the person’s decision?
- Am I being biased in the way I have presented the options or framed the information?
- Are my opinions changing the decision the person wants?
- Am I being judgemental?
- Have I put aside my own preferences?
- At all times, have I focussed on the preferences of the person I am supporting?
- Have you enabled the person to take risks or have you taken a protective stance?

Further information about risk enablement can be found here:

<http://www.enablingriskresource.com.au/>

As a supporter, you must take time to reflect to become aware of your influence. Your actions can enable or obstruct a decision.

Continual reflection and review is vital to ensure that your views are not getting in the way of effective support for decision making. Talking your experiences or a specific example through with someone might assist you to reflect and review.

ACTIVITY 4.3: Carol's Mum Chats with a Friend

This video shows an example of reflection and review.

Watch the video "Carol's mum chats with a friend" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



Watch the video: Carol's mum chats with a friend on the Module 3: Principles page of the website to learn more about the principle of reflection and review

1. Jen is Carol's mum. She raises some worries about Carol with her friend, Mary. What are Jen's concerns?
2. Do you think that Jen has put aside her own preferences in supporting Carol?
3. Explain how Mary helps Jen reflect and review.

Summary Module 4

The Principles are associated with every Step in the support for decision making process.

This Module has highlighted that supporters must:

- Be committed to the person's rights to be actively involved in decision making
- Coordinate other supporters and involve them when required to implement the decision or parts of it
- Remain non-judgemental.

NEXT: Module 5: Strategies for Practice

Module 5: Strategies for Practice

In this module, you will learn about the Strategies in the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework.

As you will have seen, you use these strategies at each Step in the decision making process.

The strategies are:

- Attention to communication
- Education about consequences and practicalities
- Listening and engaging to ensure all options are considered
- Creating opportunities
- Breaking things down
- Enabling risk

This video talk is an introduction to the Strategies



*Watch the video: **Module 5: Strategies for Practice: Introduction** on the Module 5 page of the website to learn more about strategies to use in decision making*

As you work through this module, you will come to realise that these strategies have already been demonstrated in the various case scenarios associated with each Step used in this resource. The Principles inform all of your strategies.

Tailoring support to the person can be achieved by applying these strategies.

To be an effective supporter, you need to develop a set of flexible strategies that you can readily call upon as the demands of the decisions change at each Step of the process.

Often, we refer to these Strategies as being a part of a supporter's "toolkit" for practice.

Learning about the Framework's strategies

Each strategy is described further for you below.

Attention to communication

By now you will have noticed that communication is important throughout the support for decision making process.

This video talk introduces the strategy: Attention to communication:



*Watch the video: **Module 5: Attention to Communication** on the website to learn more about strategies to use in decision making support.*

Using these approaches will assist in your communication strategy:

- **Pitching information and communication methods at the right level:** use very basic language in your descriptions, pictures, symbols or electronic devices to assist in explaining the situation. You might also need to use other methods like pointing to or touching things.
- **Being aware of verbal and non-verbal behavioural cues:** everyone communicates through non-verbal language. Can you interpret the person's body language, facial expressions or gestures? For example, a staff member might reflect that if there is something the person doesn't like to eat, they will just push it away.
- **Checking back for understanding:** you can ask the person you support to repeat things back to you in their own words or with their own gestures. This way, you can check that what you have discussed is being understood. This might also require you to repeat things several times. Remember, that you may need to give the person time to process the information before they respond.
- **Reviewing information presented:** this is about checking whether what the person has said is what they meant to say. For example, they might decide to order a coffee, but they normally have a chocolate milkshake.

ACTIVITY 5.1: Communication techniques

Watch the video and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



Watch the video **Communication techniques** on the **Module 5** page of the website to learn more about communication strategies

1. What are the different types of communication techniques shown in this video?
2. What different types of communication strategies does the supporter use?
3. Think about someone you support to make decisions. What types of strategies do you use with them to assist with communication?

Education about consequences and practicalities

Supporters provide education about the consequences and practicalities of the decision.

People with cognitive disabilities may find it difficult to determine the consequences of their own decisions and will likely need ongoing support in understanding them.

This video talk introduces this strategy:



Watch the video: **Module 5: The Strategies: Education about consequences and practicalities** on the website to learn more about strategies to use in decision making

You can use the following approaches with this strategy:

- **Make it understandable:** break the decision and its consequences down into smaller parts. Then you can discuss these smaller parts more easily. You can start with one part, find a solution for that and then move onto the next small-sized part.
- **Do the research:** gathering and assembling information or expert knowledge about the decision is necessary to make further decisions. For example, to enable the person to make a decision, you might need to collect some brochures about holiday

destinations for an upcoming trip.

- **Present the options and related pros and cons:** presenting positive and negative aspects of the decision assists the person to understand the effects of their decision. You can write a list together to assist in having the discussion.
- **Identify associated smaller decisions and consequences:** remember in Step 6 we identified decisions associated with the overarching decision? Identifying those and the consequences arising from them will influence the implementation of the final decision.
- **Explain the consequences and that priorities can be undermined by small decisions:** ensure that the person really understands the reality of what they want. This involves explaining the consequences of the decision. For example, if the person wants to enrol in a course, you might need to explain that there are some classes that they will need to attend. If the person is not interested in attending classes, then that could undermine their overarching decision.

ACTIVITY 5.2: Dan's Trek Discussion

This video shows an example of how the person can be educated about the consequences and practicalities of the decision.

Watch the video "Dan's trek discussion" and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Dan's trek discussion** on Strategies page of the website to learn more about strategies in decision making support.*

1. What does Dan want to do?
2. Dan's support worker, Owen, highlights some concerns about his decision. What are these?
3. Owen suggests that Dan goes to the beach instead. How does Dan respond?
4. Dan's brother, Tony, works through the decision with him. What approaches does Dan use to explain the consequences and practicalities of the decision? Explain.
5. Would you say that Tony 'knows' Dan? Explain.

Listening and Engaging to Ensure All Options are Considered

Listening to the person you are supporting is a vital part of providing support for decision making.

This video talk introduces this strategy:



*Watch the video: **Module 5: The Strategies: Listening and engaging to ensure all options are considered** on the website to learn more about strategies to use in decision making support.*

You will need to:

- **Be attentive to preferences:** actively listening to what the person is saying and hearing what the person thinks will assist you in providing appropriate support for the decision being sought.
- **Take sufficient time:** every decision takes time and people with cognitive disabilities need ongoing support with decision making. You need to take the time to help them think through their decision. Equally, the person needs time to process what is being discussed and presented.
- **Use others as sounding boards:** you can check the interpretation of preferences with other supporters. For example, does the person really like exercising early in the morning, or are they just doing it because their friend will be there?

ACTIVITY 5.3: Carol Orders Coffee

This video shows an example of listening and engaging to ensure all options are considered.

Watch the video “Carol orders coffee” and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Carol orders coffee** on the Module 5 page of the website to learn more about strategies*

1. Explain whether Carol’s mum is supporting her to make a decision?
2. Do you think that Carol’s mum is listening to Carol’s preferences?
3. What decision making type is this?
4. How is Carol communicating her response for the decision being made?
5. What strategies could Carol’s mum have adopted to improve her listening and engaging approach?

Creating opportunities

Creating opportunities for people with cognitive disabilities allows them to have experiences they otherwise might not have.

This video talk introduces this strategy:



Watch the video: **Module 5: The Strategies: Creating opportunities** on the website to learn more about strategies to use in decision making support.

To create opportunities, you will benefit from undertaking the following:

- **Actively reframe your approach to invite participation:** purposefully seek feedback from the person you support about what they think. For example, you can ask them about a place they have visited and whether they'd like to go back.
- **Providing a sounding board:** means that you are present while the person you support expresses their concerns and wishes. This is an opportunity for them to talk things through with you.
- **Acknowledging low expectations and building confidence:** people with cognitive disabilities are often not used to making decisions or haven't been given the choice to make decisions. This means that when they are faced with the opportunity to do so, they might not be able to express their desire or ambition. It is important to acknowledge that and work with them to build their confidence during this process so that they do not respond with what they think you want to hear.
- **Testing options:** building the person's experiences comes with supporting them to test or try different activities. You can expand the person's boundaries by encouraging them to try different exercises, food options or places to visit, to name some options. As a supporter, you have a role in broadening the person's choices. Remember, in Step 3, we saw that Carol's supporters tested her options by encouraging her to join yoga class for the first time.
- **Introducing and nurturing the seeds of ideas:** involves observing what it is that the person has preferences for, and nurturing those options. The activities in this resource about Dan's Trek demonstrate how his idea was nurtured – his support worker suggested they start with a trek closer to home, and then go further from there.

- **Bringing in others to trial a situation:** using the principle of orchestration here will assist in creating new opportunities. You can ask the person’s friend if they would like to bring a friend to their dance class, for example.
- **Creating distance to enable greater autonomy:** means stepping back to enable the person to try new things. Stepping back from situations creates greater autonomy for the person. For example, you can ask the person to pay for the groceries at the supermarket, or you can suggest that they might like to go to the movies with someone else this time.

ACTIVITY 5.4: Carol orders coffee, again

This video shows an example of creating opportunities.

Watch the video “Carol orders coffee, again” and then answer the questions. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Carol orders coffee, again** on the Module 5 page of the website to learn more about strategies*

1. What is “good” about the support provided in this scenario?
2. Can you see how Carol is provided with greater autonomy? Explain.
3. What do you notice about the way Carol is communicating in this scene?
4. Do you think Carol’s options have been tested here?
5. Think of someone you support. In what way/s have you created distance to provide greater autonomy for them?

ACTIVITY 5.5: Tom’s business opportunity

This video shows an example of creating opportunities.

Watch the video “Tom’s Business Opportunity” and then complete the table. Write in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.



*Watch the video: **Tom’s business opportunity** on the Module 5 page of the website to learn more about strategies in decision making support.*

Complete the table below to describe the ways in which Tom’s dad has gone about creating opportunities for him. The first row has been completed for you.

Creating Opportunities	How this is demonstrated
<i>Nurturing the seeds of ideas</i>	<i>Tom’s dad offers to organise an appointment for him with a financial advisor</i>
<i>Providing a sounding board</i>	
<i>Using active reframing to invite participation</i>	
<i>Creating distance to create greater autonomy</i>	
<i>Acknowledging low expectations and building confidence</i>	
<i>Bringing in others to trial a situation</i>	
<i>Testing options</i>	

Breaking things down

Breaking things down allows the person to work through the decision in smaller steps.

You have seen in Step 6 that decisions can be broken down into associated decisions. This makes it more likely that the overarching decision will be reached.

It also highlights aspects of the decision that require further consideration.

Remember Sally’s decision to study at TAFE?

Enabling risk

Many benefits arise from supporting people with cognitive disabilities to participate in positive risk taking. These include increased engagement and the development of new skills.

Activities involving risk can range from things such as cooking to forming new friendships.

Enabling risk means being proactive. You will need to find ways for the person to undertake a risky activity while minimising harm. For example, if the person's preference is to go outside on a sunny day, then ensuring they wear a hat, apply sunscreen and have water is a good way forward.

Knowing what the person wants, and staying true to their preferences, is an important part of enabling risk.

The 4 Essentials of Risk Enablement are:

1. Putting Positives First
2. Being Proactive
3. Staying True to Preferences
4. Minimising Harm

These are shown in **Figure 7**. You will note that the person is at the heart of the risk enablement process.



Figure 7. The Essentials of Risk Enablement

You can learn more about Enabling Risk in disability support work, and undertake activities, by accessing the separate online learning resource we have developed:

<http://www.enablingriskresource.com.au/>

Summary Module 5

The Strategies are associated with every Step in the support for decision making process.

This Module has highlighted that supporters should:

- Tailor the strategies to the individual and their situation
- Find different ways to communicate
- Work through consequences of the decision with the person
- Take the time to listen
- Break the decision into smaller parts
- Enable positive risk taking

NEXT: Module 6: Bringing it all together

Module 6: Bringing it all together

You have now worked through each of the Framework's components – the Steps, Principles and Strategies.

Using a case scenario about Tanya, this module will provide an example of how all the pieces of the Framework can be used together.

Tanya has decided that she wants to go on a date.

Using Tanya's scenario, all of your learning about the Framework will be brought together and summarised in this module.

In this module, you will be reminded that:

- The Principles and Strategies are intertwined with every Step in the Framework
- Decision making is shared between the person and those who support them
- Continuing support should be provided for new and consequential decisions.

Case Scenario: Tanya's Date

This case scenario is presented in 3 parts.

Part 1: Tanya is a 30-year old female with mild traumatic brain injury. She enjoys going to the gym, and attends at least twice a week with her support worker. On this particular day, she meets someone new at the gym.

Watch the video, "Tanya meets someone new at the gym", which further introduces this scenario, then read on.



Watch the video: ***Tanya meets someone new at the gym (Part 1)*** on the Module 5 page of the website to learn how to 'bring it all together'.

Part 2: Tanya is noticeably excited that Jason has asked her to meet up with him sometime. When she returns home her supporters, her mother and her support worker, discuss her encounter.

Watch the video “Tanya’s supporters have a discussion” then read on.



Watch the video: ***Tanya’s supporters have a discussion (Part 2)*** on the Module 5 page of the website to learn how to ‘bring it all together’.

Part 3: Tanya’s supporters feel conflicted about Tanya meeting up with someone. They decide that the way forward is to sit down and talk it out with Tanya.

Watch the video which shows the discussion between Tanya and her mother and support worker (“Tanya wants to go on a date”) and then read on.



Watch the video: ***Tanya wants to go on a date (Part 3)*** on the Module 5 page of the website to learn how to ‘bring it all together’.

The Support for Decision Making Checklist

Using the Support for Decision Making Checklist will enable you to understand how the Framework has been applied to support Tanya’s decision. Tanya’s checklist has been completed for you as an example of how this checklist can be used. Access it via the Resources section.

A blank checklist is also provided for you in the Resources section. You can use this in your own work.



Support for Decision Making Checklist

Completed by:

Date Completed:

The decision:

I HAVE..... (tick box that applies)	I DID THIS BY.....(insert explanation)
--	---

Followed the Steps:

<input type="checkbox"/> Found ways to know the person	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identified the decision	
Described the features of the decision	
<input type="checkbox"/> Scope	
<input type="checkbox"/> Who's involved	
<input type="checkbox"/> Influences (resources, restrictions)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Timeframe	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consequences	
<input type="checkbox"/> Understood the person's will & preferences	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identified constraints	
<input type="checkbox"/> Refined the decision with constraints considered	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identified whether conflict existed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identified whether a formal process was needed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Reached a final decision	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identified associated decisions	
<input type="checkbox"/> Selected advocates to implement the decision	
<input type="checkbox"/> Checked the person's preferences were maintained during implementation	

Applied the Principles:	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Commitment</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Orchestration</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Reflection & Review</i>	
Used the Strategies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Attention to communication</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Educated about consequences and practicalities</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Listened and engaged</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Created opportunities</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Enabled positive risk taking</i>	

ACTIVITY 6: Reflecting upon my decision making support

Read the questions then write your answer in the downloadable workbook located in the Resources section.

Think about someone with a cognitive disability who you have supported to make a decision then answer the questions below.

1. With this scenario in mind complete the Support for Decision Making Checklist. (Note: *You can follow Tanya's example provided in this Module*).
2. Thinking about the decision-making support you provided for this person, is there anything you would do differently next time?

Closing comments

You have now learnt how to use the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework to support people with cognitive disabilities.

The Framework guides you through the Steps of decision making support, while the Principles inform all of your Strategies. The Framework is dynamic – you can go forwards or backwards through the Steps. It has also been designed enable decision making support to be tailored to the person and their situation.

Through ongoing reflection and by applying what you have learnt from this online resource, you will enable people with cognitive disabilities to participate in making their own decisions.

Summary Module 6

This Module has highlighted that you should:

- **Tailor** the support to the person and their situation
- Maintain **positive expectations**
- Always keep the **person's preference** at the heart of decision making.