

IT'S MY RIGHT!



MANAGING SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS: WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO ASSIST YOU

A guide for people with disabilities
who live in the community and use
paid or unpaid support people.

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Managing Support Relationships: Working With People Who Assist You is a companion to the ***Staying Safe & Preventing Abuse Guide***.

These Guides were developed with the help and suggestions of 52 people who have disabilities.

There is a feedback form at the end of this Guide and we welcome input and suggestions to further improve this Guide.

If possible, you may want to consider completing this workbook along with a friend who has her or his own copy of the book. That way, the two of you can discuss the information and share ideas about the skills shared throughout the workbook.

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Introduction

Managing Support Relationships: Working with People Who Assist You

Support people may be formal paid assistants or they may be people such as family members, intimate partners, neighbors, colleagues, or community members who provide informal, unpaid assistance.

Often, people with disabilities have not been given the chance to make choices about the personal assistance given to them, and they have not had the chance to direct (supervise) their support people. As a result, it may be challenging for individuals with disabilities to identify and communicate their needs and preferences. It may also be challenging to give directions about how tasks should be performed and to negotiate support from friends or family members.

Additionally, recruiting, hiring, training, and managing formal support people can be difficult if you've never had the opportunity to learn how to do these things.

Learning to direct your support, and creating strong relationships with support people might be challenging, but the benefits of developing mutual trust, dependability, respect, and open communication will help ensure you get the best possible assistance.

The goal of this guide is to help you accomplish those things!

Part One

Improving Relationships with Support People

1. Defining Tasks & Priorities
2. Communicating Effectively and Respectfully with Support People
3. Developing & Using Checklists
4. Giving Directions to Support People
5. Offering Feedback to Support People
6. Identifying Support Person Qualities Needed to Get Tasks Done

#1: Defining Tasks & Priorities

I AM IN CHARGE!

“I am in Charge!” means that you have the right to make your own choices and decisions.

It is the belief in self-determination and self-direction. It means identifying what you want and need, and then asking others to assist you so your needs are met.

“I am in Charge!” affirms that you have the right to ask for the support you need and to ask that assistance be given in a way that is safe and comfortable for you.

You are the Expert.

You are the expert on your life and your situation! You know how support people can best assist you and how you prefer things be done. Believing that you are capable of making good decisions and choices is the first step to being able to ask people to assist with tasks in a way that feels safe and comfortable to you.

Even if the people who are helping you are not being paid, you are still the one in charge and you can still ask that things be done to meet your needs.

Self-determination and self-direction mean that you direct your own life, and that you ask for what you need in order to accomplish your goals. Being able to recognize your own needs and being able to ask for help is just as important as the ways in which you assist other people in your life. We are all interdependent, and we all need to ask for—or give—assistance throughout our lives.

Thinking about Tasks & Requesting Assistance.

Sometimes, if people have been helping us for a really long time, we may not even realize that we would actually prefer to do certain things for ourselves! On the other hand, maybe there are things that you usually do for yourself that would go more smoothly or quickly if someone were able to provide some assistance.

On the next page is a worksheet to help you determine which tasks you prefer to do for yourself and which tasks you would like assistance with.

Maybe there are some tasks that people generally help you with that you'd like to try to do for yourself. Maybe there are other tasks you'd like more help with than you currently receive. This worksheet is designed to give you an opportunity to think about how you feel about different tasks.

Tasks I Want to Do Myself & Tasks I'd Like Help With

Tasks I want to do myself.	Tasks I want only <i>some</i> help doing.	Tasks I want help doing.
<p>Example: Making the grocery list.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>5.</p> <p>6.</p> <p>7.</p> <p>8.</p>	<p>Example: Balancing my checkbook.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>5.</p> <p>6.</p> <p>7.</p> <p>8.</p>	<p>Example: Making meals.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>5.</p> <p>6.</p> <p>7.</p> <p>8.</p>

Once you complete the worksheet on the previous page, it's a good idea to prioritize those tasks.

Prioritizing tasks means listing tasks in order of importance.

Prioritizing tasks means listing tasks in order of importance.

There may be tasks that *must* get done in order for you to be safe and healthy such as eating nutritious meals or taking medications properly.

Other tasks might be important, but not as critical to your immediate health and safety (such as paying your bills). Finally, there might be tasks that you would like to get done, but aren't going to put you at risk if they don't get done (such as washing the windows).

Prioritizing tasks is important because we have limited time and resources and our support people often have limited time and resources also. Prioritizing our needs helps us know what is reasonable for us to expect of ourselves, and what we can reasonably expect of others.

Being able to effectively manage tasks and support people means being able to ask that the most important tasks get done first, so that less important tasks can wait a bit longer if the support person has limited time on a particular day.

Worksheets.

There are three worksheets on the following pages. Using the worksheet you filled out on the previous page as a guide, you can complete the worksheets on the next three pages.

- The first worksheet will help you prioritize tasks you want to do yourself.
- The second worksheet will help you prioritize tasks that you want *some* help with.
- The third worksheet will help you prioritize tasks that you might need quite a bit of assistance with in order to accomplish.

On each worksheet, list most important tasks first and then other tasks in order of decreasing importance.

Tasks I Want to Do Myself

Very Important Tasks (things important to my health and safety)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Important Tasks (things that need to get done for my peace of mind)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Additional Tasks (things I'd like to get done if time allows)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Tasks I Want *Some* Help With

Very Important Tasks (things critical to my health and safety)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Important Tasks (things that need to get done for my peace of mind)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Additional Tasks (things I'd like to get done if time allows)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Tasks I Want Help With

Very Important Tasks (things critical to my health and safety)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Important Tasks (things that need to get done for my peace of mind)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Additional Tasks (things I'd like to get done if time allows)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Communicating Tasks & Priorities.

Completing the worksheets on the previous pages will help you communicate your needs and priorities to the support people in your life. If you feel safe and comfortable, you may want to show them what you listed as your priorities, what you've decided you want to do yourself, what you'd like some help with, and what you'd like the support person to do for you.

Changing Priorities.

Sometimes, based on changing life circumstances, what we need to get done (the importance of different tasks) will change over time. The tasks that are most important to your physical and emotional health may change, or the degree you need help with particular tasks might change. For this reason, you may want to update the task sheets once in a while.

#2: Communicating Effectively and Respectfully with Support People

Now that you've developed lists of tasks and priorities, we'll explore ways to respectfully and effectively communicate those needs to the support people in your life. Strong communication skills will strengthen your support relationships and will help ensure you get the assistance you need.

When you make decisions about which tasks need to be done, the order they should be done in, and how they should be done, you are taking charge of your life and your well-being!

The idea of being in charge means that you not only ask for assistance with getting a task or job done, but that you also request that it be done in the manner you prefer. For instance, you would not only ask that someone help transfer you, but also give directions to ensure they do it in the manner that is most safe and comfortable for you.

What do you think respectful communication patterns look like? Take a few minutes to think about the following questions, and then jot down some notes to yourself about how you'd answer the questions. It might be helpful to discuss these questions with friends so you can brainstorm ideas together.

Questions to Consider

Which behaviors do you think help create communication patterns that are effective, honest, respectful, and relaxed? (Example: listening carefully)

When people ask *you* for help, how do you like them to phrase their request?

When you've needed help in the past, what have you done to successfully get the assistance you needed?

Are there things about your communication style that might hurt your ability to communicate effectively and respectfully? (Such as being impatient or not being specific about what you need done?) If so, list the things that you might want to work on to communicate more effectively:

Now that you've thought about communication patterns and styles, let's explore some ideas about how you and your support person can communicate in order to establish comfortable, respectful relationships.

What you can do to communicate effectively and respectfully:

- Know exactly what you want done. This means knowing and communicating what the task is and the specific steps that need to be taken to get the task done in a way that is safe and comfortable for you.
- Create a comfortable relationship with your support person by understanding that they may have a different communication style than you do.
- Know your lifestyle and what you need during your day. Think about what would feel best to you.
- Sometimes, we are grateful for assistance so we get into the habit of letting other people dictate how and when things should be done. Discuss options with your support people and see if you can compromise so that things are done based on what works for you, too.
- Make sure that the support person is listening to you and understands what you are communicating. If you are unsure whether the support person heard you or understood you, ask the support person to repeat back what they heard to see if it's accurate.
- Let the support person know you are happy to answer any questions they have, and that you expect them to ask questions if they are confused or need clarification.
- Similarly, you should ask questions if you need clarification.
- Ask the support person if what you've told them makes sense and is clear.
- What other ideas do you have to establish healthy communication?
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

What support people can do to communicate effectively and respectfully:

- Actively listen when you talk or request help.
- Ask questions if they don't understand what you are saying or asking.
- Let you know if they are distracted and it's getting in the way of their ability to pay attention.
- Repeat back what you said to seek clarification.
- What else can the support person do to improve communication?
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

If it feels safe and comfortable, share these lists with the support people in your life and see what suggestions they have.

We can't force other people to respond and communicate the way we'd like them to, but we can always role model respectful communication skills and be direct when stating our needs and preferences.

We can ask that our needs be met in a way that honors our own expertise on what needs to be done and how it should be done.

#3: Developing & Using Checklists

Talking directly to people is a good way to build relationships and to communicate, but sometimes we need tasks done and we're not available to explain our priorities or say how we want things done. For these reasons, using checklists might be helpful in terms of managing and directing support people.

A checklist is a set of tasks (or a set of steps to complete a particular task) listed in the order that they should be done. Most important tasks are listed first, and less important tasks are listed toward the end. Each task (or step) has a little box next to it so that the support person can check it off as they complete that task.

Because the checklist has the most important tasks listed first, if the support person runs out of time, they've at least completed the most critical tasks on your list.

For instance, your "morning checklist" might look like this:

- Help me transfer from my bed to my chair.
- Assist with medication.
- Prepare breakfast.
- Assist with grooming.
- Assist with grocery shopping.
- Assist with paying bills.
- Assist with writing letters to friends.
- Clean the house.

In this checklist, the most important things are listed first. If the support person doesn't get to the last thing on the list, it may be frustrating, but it's not going to put you in an immediately dangerous situation.

A checklist can also be developed to ensure that detailed steps for each particular task can be followed easily without you needing to repeat yourself over and over again while the person is learning the routine of doing a particular task.

For instance, each of the tasks on the above checklist could be broken down into more detailed steps:

Task: Assist with grooming

Checklist for Grooming:

- Using a washcloth and warm water, gently wash my face with the lavender soap located near the sink.
- Wet hair with washcloth.
- Shampoo hair gently.
- Rinse hair with a wet washcloth.
- Apply small amount of conditioner.
- Rinse hair with wet washcloth.
- Blow dry hair using low setting.
- Comb hair gently using the black comb in the bathroom drawer.

Additional instructions could be given for brushing your teeth, applying deodorant, assistance with getting dressed, and so forth.

The idea is to put the tasks in the order that you want them performed and to be as specific as possible about how you want the tasks performed.

Breaking complex or detailed steps down into short sentences is helpful. Remember, what may seem obvious to you (for instance, how someone should brush your teeth) might not be obvious to the support person.

Because checklists provide detailed instructions they help minimize miscommunication and frustration between you and the support person.

Additionally, checklists help you identify areas where the support person can make improvements. Addressing these small problems will help you resolve them before they become big problems.

Other Benefits of Having Checklists:

- *Screening Tool:* Because checklists describe the tasks and steps a support person will be performing, the lists can be very useful when interviewing or hiring support people. You can ask applicants to review the checklists so they know exactly what will be expected of them if they are hired.
- *Weeding Out People Who Won't Take Direction From You:* Showing a potential support person a check list will also help you determine whether they're comfortable with you telling them exactly what you need done and how you want it done. For instance, if you interview someone who doesn't like the idea that you'll be their boss, then you should be careful about hiring that person. If someone is uncomfortable taking directions from you, it's a sign of disrespect and the person may eventually become controlling or abusive.
- *Ongoing Understanding of Job Expectations:* Once you hire someone, the checklists can serve as a "mini-contract" for job responsibilities. You can refer to the lists throughout the person's employment to ensure the tasks that were agreed upon are being done as requested.
- *Evaluation:* Checklists are a tool that can help you determine whether your support person is completing tasks correctly. This is helpful when you're evaluating their performance or offering feedback.
- *Positive Feedback:* Sometimes, the only feedback support people receive is about poor performance (such as when they've made a mistake). If people only get negative feedback (constant criticism), they may not want to help you. Checklists help you see opportunities to give support people positive feedback for tasks they have done correctly.

Creating Checklists for Yourself.

In addition to creating checklists designed specifically for support people, you may want to create checklists for yourself as well. For instance, you might want to create checklists for:

- Organizing and prioritizing tasks you plan to do yourself over the course of the week.
- Organizing medication routines.
- Organizing your daily schedule (appointments, meetings, activities, classes, etc.).
- Organizing and prioritizing household chores.
- Listing items needed for outings such as vacations, camping trips, trips to see family and friends, or running errands.
- Organizing grocery lists or gift lists.
- Organizing a resource list of agencies and supports in the community.

What are other things that you might want to create checklists for?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

On the next few pages are worksheets to help develop checklists.

Developing a Checklist

Take a few minutes to think of a task that a support person helps you with that doesn't always go as smoothly as you would like it to.

1. What is the task? _____

2. Who helps you with the task? _____

3. What happens right now with the task that isn't working for you or makes you feel uncomfortable?

4. What are the steps that you'd like the person to take when completing the task in the future?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

If necessary, use additional sheets of paper to list all of the details and steps.

If it feels safe to do so, share your checklist with the person who helps you with the task. Let them know what you need and why the steps you listed are important to you.

What other things might you want to create checklists for?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

On the following pages are some additional worksheets to help you develop checklists. You may want to make copies of these pages so you can make multiple checklists (or you can develop your own style of making checklists).

Developing A Checklist

Task:

The person who helps me with this task is: _____

I'd like to change how the task is done because....

Specific steps I'd like the person to take when completing the task in the future:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Remember, you are the expert on your situation and you know what feels best and safest to you! By sharing this list with your support person, you are asking that your expertise is respected.

Developing A Checklist

Task: _____

The person who helps me with this task is: _____

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Specific steps I'd like the person to take when completing the task in the future:

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- _____
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- _____
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Developing A Checklist

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- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Remember, you are the expert on your situation and you know what feels best and safest to you! By sharing this list with your support person, you are asking that your expertise is respected.

#4: Giving Directions to Support People

All of the information you've explored so far in this workbook will help you give clear directions to support people.

Being able to give directions is important for many reasons. First, it ensures that things are done in the order you want them to be done. For instance, it may be very important that you eat a substantial meal before taking certain kinds of medications so you don't feel sick. Being able to direct your assistant to prepare the right kind of meal, and making sure they understand the importance that you can't take your medication until after you've eaten is critical to your well-being.

The world never puts a price tag on you higher than the one you put on yourself.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

It's also important, in order to give clear directions, that you first believe that it's okay to ask for what you want. Giving yourself permission to ask that your needs be met may feel uncomfortable if you're not used to asking for help or not used to telling the person how you'd like things done.

But remember, you are the expert on what you need done and how you need it done. Valuing your own opinion is important if you expect other people to value your opinion and directions.

If you struggle with defining what you want and how you want it done, you may want to write down some ideas or talk to trusted friends who can help you brainstorm about what you want, need, and prefer. As you practice being more assertive, it will become easier over time.

Giving Clear, Detailed Directions

If you want something done correctly, it's important that you're detailed and specific about what you want done and how it should be done. (Again, checklists are helpful when determining how to give directions.)

If you do not give detailed instructions it can result in frustration for both you and your support person. For instance, a support person may feel as if

they've done what you've asked, but if you weren't clear about how you wanted the task completed, then they might not have done it the way you prefer it be done. If this happens, you may become angry, and they feel frustrated.

Example: You tell your assistant to clean the kitchen. Your assistant says "okay," and about ten minutes later she tells you that she's done cleaning the kitchen. When you go into the kitchen, you see that the dishes have been put away, but there are crumbs on the floor, the kitchen window is dirty, and there is spaghetti sauce on the stovetop.

You feel angry because you feel you're being taken advantage of. So, you tell her that she clearly hasn't cleaned the kitchen and she better do it right next time! Your assistant becomes angry, too, and tells you she *did* clean the kitchen and that you're being mean and unfair.

This situation may simply be the result of poor communication. Her idea of "cleaning the kitchen" and your idea of "cleaning the kitchen" might be very different things in which case poor communication has caused both of you to feel angry and frustrated.

That's why it's important to give detailed directions (or a checklist) rather than assuming the person will know exactly what you want them to do.

In this case, you could develop a checklist:

Checklist for Cleaning the Kitchen:

- Wash all dishes using hot, soapy water.
- Dry dishes using blue dish towel.
- Put dishes away in cupboard above the sink.
- Wipe counters with wash cloth.
- Clean stovetop with wash cloth using Mr. Clean (under sink).
- Wash the kitchen window using Windex (under sink).
- Sweep the floor using broom (in the hall closet).

- Every Monday, mop the floor using bucket and cleaner under sink.
- Every Friday, empty the trash and put in the container near garage.
- Put a new trash bag in the wastebasket after removing trash.

You can ask the assistant to check off each box as he or she completes the task. Let him or her know that if they have any doubt about what you want done, that you are happy to answer their questions. Once they've completed the task, you can evaluate how they did. Give praise for what they did well, and note what could have been done better or differently.

For instance, you might say, "I see you did the window, but it's kind of streaky, I'd like for you to clean it again so it's not so smudgy. But you did a great job on the floor—it's sparkling clean!"

Having a checklist like this will make the assistant's life easier and your life easier. The assistant can easily refer to the list to know exactly what you want done and how you want it done, and you don't have to constantly repeat yourself.

With a checklist in place and your offer to answer questions, your assistant really doesn't have any excuse to not follow your directions. If they fail to follow directions after you've discussed the directions and given them a checklist, you might want to ask them whether they really want the job.

For instance, you might say, "I feel I've been clear about what I want done and how it should be done, but you don't seem interested in following the directions. I need to know whether you want this job. If you want to continue to work for me, I need for you to follow my directions. Otherwise, I'll need to find someone who's willing to do what I ask."

If your assistant is following your directions and completing the checklist as requested, let them know you appreciate it!

The idea is to correct or address behaviors that are disrespectful, inappropriate, or unprofessional and to reward and acknowledge respectful professional behaviors.

#5: Giving Feedback to Support People

Giving “performance feedback” means evaluating how well someone is doing a task and then talking to them about your assessment.

Performance feedback is important because it:

- Helps you develop a good working relationship with support people.
- Lets you communicate exactly what you like and dislike about what support people are doing (or not doing) for you.
- Maintains open communication between you and your support people.
- Enhances the level of trust and comfort.

Sometimes, we get stuck in a particular communication style and may always respond to people with the same type of feedback regardless of the situation. However, there are actually three types of performance feedback: positive, corrective, and negative feedback. Each type is appropriate for different circumstances. Let’s explore these types of feedback, beginning with positive feedback.

#1: Positive Feedback

When you give someone positive feedback you are giving them praise. Praise usually motivates people to continue to do a good job.

Think about a time in your life when you did something well or learned a new task. You probably liked it if someone praised you and recognized the effort you put into learning it. Similarly, support people will appreciate knowing that their efforts are recognized. When you give positive feedback you are telling the support person that they did a good job and that you appreciate their performance.

Positive feedback includes not only praise but also an explanation of specifically what they did that was so helpful or useful. For instance, “You transferred me smoothly and comfortably just now! Thanks for doing it the way I asked you to do it.”

Other suggestions for giving praise for a job well done:

- I really like the way you _____!
- The way you _____ was just the way I like it.
- You're doing _____ much better.
- I feel more comfortable when you _____ .
- You did such a good job at _____, it will make my whole day easier!
- Wow, _____ looks great!
- I really appreciate your honesty and work ethic.
- Thank you for calling to let me know you'd be a few minutes late. It put my mind at ease.

#2: Corrective Feedback

Corrective Feedback explains why a task was performed incorrectly and gives specific instructions on how you'd like it performed in the future. When giving corrective feedback, you can give some positive feedback about what was done correctly, and then explain what could use some improvement. It can also be helpful to explain why you'd like it done a particular way.

For instance, you could say, "You did a good job when washing my hair, but it's important that you use the low setting when drying my hair because my skin is sensitive and it hurts when you use the hot setting."

Benefits of using corrective feedback:

- Corrective feedback helps the support person understand what was done wrong, how to do the job better the next time, and why it's important that they follow your directions.
- Corrective feedback allows you to assert yourself in a healthy way.

Examples of Corrective Feedback:

- “You did a good job with my bath today, but next time I’d like you to use a little more conditioner on my hair.”
- “The kitchen looks really clean, but next time please put the food away, so it doesn’t spoil.”
- “When you transfer me in the Hoyer lift, be sure to put the chains facing out, otherwise they dig into my side and it hurts.”
- “Thank you for paying my bills. Next time I’d like to write them myself with your assistance.”

Five Steps for Giving Corrective Feedback

1. Offer the feedback immediately after the situation or problem happens.
2. Speak in a calm, respectful voice. Yelling at the person or being sarcastic won’t fix the problem and will likely make the person defensive, angry, or scared.
3. Explain to the person specifically what he or she could have done better or differently. Explain why it is important that things are done the way you ask.
4. Let the support person know the consequences if they ignore your directions. For instance, will you need to let them go if the behavior continues? Also let them know how the situation made you feel (unsafe? scared? angry? disrespected?)
5. End by telling the support person you know he/she will try to do better in the future.

How you handle difficult situations with new support people is important because it will set the tone for the future of the relationship for better or worse. Errors made by support people during the training period may be unintentional mistakes based on the person being new and unfamiliar with your needs and routine. If you become angry and yell at your assistant, he or she may become frustrated and confused about what you expect.

On the other hand, if they yell at you or refuse to listen to corrective feedback, then you may want to re-consider whether you want the person

working for you because they may become more hostile or abusive over time.

In summary, the goal of corrective feedback is not to punish the person, but to give them helpful ideas and suggestions about how they can improve their performance. Being helpful and giving the person the benefit of the doubt will usually create a better outcome than ignoring the problem or over-reacting to the problem.

If you've given the person corrective feedback several times and the behavior persists, you might need to consider being more specific about the consequences. For instance, you might need to tell the person, "I've discussed this problem with you three times, and you're still disregarding my directions. I feel you aren't respecting me as an employer. If the behavior happens again, I'll need to let you go."

#3: Negative Feedback

Hopefully, you can resolve problems using positive and corrective feedback. But, if an assistant continues to do something incorrectly or places you at risk by being stubborn, then you might need to use negative feedback. Negative Feedback is firm and direct.

Benefits of negative feedback:

- Lets the support person know what you need them to do *immediately*.
- Can help you get you out of a potentially dangerous situation.
- Explains exactly why you are upset, angry or feeling disrespected.
- Lets your support person know that you expect to be taken seriously.
- Lets the support person know what the consequences will be if they continue to neglect your safety, needs, or directions.

Examples of negative feedback:

- "I noticed the receipt from the store and the amount of change you gave me don't add up. I want you to give me the rest of my money now."

- “I don’t deserve to be yelled at. If you raise your voice one more time, I’ll have you leave.”
 - “The bath water is burning me. Take me out immediately.”
 - “The way you’re touching me is inappropriate. Stop it *now*.”
-

Summary: Giving Directions & Providing Feedback

1. Decide what you need done. (Define the task.)
 2. Create a checklist that breaks the task into clear steps.
 3. Give your support person the checklist and explain why each step is important.
 4. Explain the consequences if they fail to follow the steps.
 5. Ask if they have any questions.
 6. Have them practice the task while you watch.
 7. Stop them if they are doing something incorrectly and explain the correct way to do it.
 8. Upon successful completion of the task, thank them for work well done and give praise when appropriate.
-

#6: Identifying Support Person Qualities Needed to Get Tasks Done

Support people may be paid or unpaid. They may be professional personal assistants or they may be informal assistants such as family members, spouses, friends, neighbors, or people we meet in passing.

Depending on which tasks we need done, who our support people are, and what our relationships are to those people, it is likely we will interact with them differently. For example, giving direction to a paid assistant will likely be different than asking a person we do not know very well to provide some immediate, informal assistance.

On the next page is a list of types of people who may provide you with support. For each type of person, list people you know who fall within that category and list the qualities they have that would make them a good support person for particular kinds of tasks.

~ Family Members ~

Name	Personal Qualities	Tasks person can assist with
Example #1: Bob	Physically strong, patient	Transfers
Example #2: Sara	Detail-Oriented, organized, willing to drive	Medication assistance, assistance with making grocery shopping

~ Friends ~

Name	Personal Qualities	Tasks person can assist with

~ Neighbors ~

Name	Personal Qualities	Tasks person can assist with

~ Religious/Spiritual Community Members ~

Name	Personal Qualities	Tasks person can assist with

~ Co-Workers ~

Name	Personal Qualities	Tasks person can assist with

~ Other Informal Support People ~

Name	Personal Qualities	Tasks person can assist with

Strangers

When relying on a stranger to provide immediate assistance, consider the people available to request help from and determine who seems not only able to help with the task but also who seems the safest. Trust your judgment and your intuition when asking for help.

Even if the person is a stranger, it's okay to not only ask for help but to also give instructions so that you're directing what they are doing.

For instance, you may say, "Excuse me, I could use some assistance with this task. Would you be willing to help?" If they say, "yes," thank them and then say, "It works best if you can follow three steps that I can explain as we go..."

Some people may be rude or unwilling to help. Don't take it personally! It's a reflection of that person's character; it's not a reflection of you. Better to have a rude person walk away than to have them assist you in a way that feels impatient, disrespectful, or abusive.

Keep in mind that some people are very abusive in general and may be more likely to be abusive to someone they perceive as vulnerable.

If someone begins to help you and you begin to feel that the person is being inappropriate or possibly dangerous, ask them to stop immediately. Don't hesitate to draw attention to the situation by yelling or screaming if someone is doing something that frightens you. We are often told that we must always be nice, but protecting yourself is more important than being nice. Do what you need to do to take care of yourself even if it makes someone else uncomfortable.

Working with Formal Support People (Paid Personal Assistants)

Expectations for paid support people are usually more formal and directive since you are their employer. Think about the tasks that you need done and about which types of qualities a paid support person should have in order to complete the tasks to your satisfaction. Keep these tasks and qualities in mind when hiring support people. For instance, you might really like a particular person, but if you need assistance with transferring and that person is not physically able to assist in a safe way then you'll need to take that into consideration.

Task	Qualities/Skills needed to complete task.
<i>Example:</i> Assistance with medication management.	Detailed, organized, and focused

Task	Qualities/Skills needed to complete task.

**You have completed Part One of this workbook—
congratulations on all the good work you’ve done so far!**

**In Part Two, we’ll explore self-directed support and how you can
assume more control in the screening, hiring, training,
and managing of support people.**

Part Two

Managing the Employer/Support Person Relationship

1. Understanding Self-Directed Support
2. Developing a Job Description
3. Recruiting & Screening Potential Support People
4. Interviewing Potential Support People
5. Hiring Support People
6. Training Support People
7. Managing Support People
8. Evaluating Support People
9. Retaining Support People
10. Solving Problems
11. Terminating a Support Person If Necessary

#1: Understanding Self-Directed Support

What is Self-Directed Support?

Self-directed support means that you manage your support person by explaining which tasks should be done, providing direction on how the tasks should be done, and determining the order in which they should be done.

Ideally, being able to direct your own support means that you have choices about who you hire, and that you are responsible for authorizing payments for the work done.

When you have options and choices about who works for you, which tasks support people assist with, and how they complete the tasks, it's likely you will feel safer, more satisfied with the work accomplished, and more in control of your life.

Directing and managing your support person ideally means that:

- You are able to assume responsibility for hiring, training, managing, and—if necessary—terminating personal assistants.
- You define which types of assistance you want, which tasks you want assistance with, and how those tasks should be prioritized.
- You are the person who evaluates the quality of the work of support people.
- You are the person who authorizes payments to your assistant for hours worked.
- In your home and within your personal space, you determine which behaviors are acceptable to you. You communicate your expectations and rules clearly to support people. For example, you may ask people not to smoke while they are close to you or while they are in your home.
- Your support person is involved with your finances only to the degree that you ask for assistance.

Becoming Comfortable with Directing Your Support

**Your needs,
preferences
& decisions
are important
and valid!**

If you have never been given choices about who provides your support or how support people help you, then you might initially feel uncomfortable directing your support person or asking that things be done the way you prefer them to be done.

In order to direct your support effectively, it's important you believe you have a right to direct your support. If you believe that your preferences, choices, and decisions are important and valid, and you value yourself as the expert on your needs, then you'll feel more comfortable asking that support people respect your needs and preferences, too.

By completing the worksheets earlier in this workbook, you started the process of exploring how you can build mutually respectful relationships with support people. Once those types of relationships are established, it's more likely that you'll be able to communicate your needs and preferences directly and clearly.

Although we'll be discussing skills and tools that will help you manage support relationships comfortably and effectively, we realize that not everyone has the financial resources or social support systems available to ensure that you have complete control over your support person situation. But this information may help you move in the direction of creating greater self-determination and assuming a greater degree of support person management.

**When you direct the support you receive,
it's likely you will feel safer, more satisfied with the work
accomplished, and more in control of your life.**

#2: Developing a Job Description

Earlier in this workbook (pages 36-42), you thought about which qualities people in your personal life had that made them well-suited to assist you with particular tasks. In this section, you will develop a job description that will help you explore which personal and professional qualities are important to you as you think about who you might want to hire to work with you.

Why is writing a job description important?

By clearly defining which skills a support person needs to have to complete tasks, and which personal qualities you prefer in a support person, you will go into the recruitment and interviewing process with more confidence, and you will be able to identify the people who are best suited to meet your needs and preferences.

Writing a job description helps you define exactly what you are looking for and what you prefer in terms of professional skills, personality, and communication style. For instance some people may prefer to work with someone who is outgoing and chatty. Someone else may prefer to hire someone who is quiet. If you're going to spend hours with the person, it's a good idea to find someone who is not only able to complete tasks competently, but who you will also feel comfortable around.

Even if you aren't currently looking for a personal assistant, developing a job description may be a useful tool to improve the relationship you have with your current support person.

Following is an example of a job description. As you read through the example, keep in mind that this is only an example. What you prefer might be completely different than the list below, and that's fine.

EXAMPLE: Job Description

Personal Qualities I Want in a Support Person:

- Prefer a female support person.
- Dependable and responsible.
- Polite and honest.
- Positive attitude and a sense of humor.
- Must be patient when working with the employer, as it takes the employer a long time to understand and do things, for example, learning how to do new things for the first time.

Professional Skills & Requirements

- Must be capable of doing all of the job duties listed in the section that follows. (Job training will be provided by the employer.)
- Able to communicate respectfully with the employer.
- Must have a current CPR card and current First Aid card.
- Must be physically strong and healthy.
- Prefer someone who has experience assisting people with disabilities.
- Must have a valid driver's license, her own vehicle, car insurance, and health insurance. (Needs to be able to drive the employer to and from places in the community as requested by the employer.)
- Preference will be given to people who have a background in nursing and general nutrition.
- The employee must be able to assist the employer in times of mental or emotional stress, and must be able to stay calm in stressful situations for the employer. The employer has anxiety attacks sometimes.
- The employee must be able or willing to help the employer clean up after being physically sick or ill.
- Must be able to help keep up with wheelchair maintenance and all other adaptive equipment devices.

- Additional tasks may be added as necessary. Additional tasks will be discussed with the assistant in detail.
- Must be willing to take direction from the employer, and be able to follow detailed checklists developed by the employer.

Tasks/Duties

- Heavy cleaning and house keeping.
- Menu planning and meal preparation.
- Assistance with grooming and bathing.
- All stovetop cooking done on request by employer, including oven cooking.
- Do some of the grocery shopping for the employer upon request.
- Do some errands in the community upon request by the employer.
- Assist employer to pay bills, budget money, and balance the checkbook.
- Assist employer in scheduling or making appointments upon request.
- Assist the employer in arranging transportation to and from places in the community upon request by the employer, for example, any medical appointments. (Employer may need accompaniment and assistance during the appointment as requested by the employer.)

Rules & Expectations

- Absenteeism and tardiness are unacceptable because of safety and health reasons.
- Advanced notice of planned time off is required, and a two-week notice is requested for a job termination.
- No smoking or drinking are allowed in my home (or around employer when in the community).
- No guests, children or pets of the employee are allowed on the premises while on the job.
- The employee must respect confidentiality and privacy of the employer.

- Cussing and swearing are not permitted in employer's home (nor around employer when in the community).
- Employee will not use employer's computer, phone, laundry facilities, etc. for personal use unless consent has been given by employer.
- Must be flexible to changes in the schedule. Schedule may change often. Employee will need to check in with the employer at the beginning of the week to confirm schedule.
- The employee will be subject to a 3-month trial period, and will be evaluated at the end of that time period. After the 3-month trial period, if the employee and employer both want to continue the professional relationship a contract will be signed.

Schedule

- Monday–Friday: 5:00pm to 8:00pm
- Saturday and Sunday: 10:00am to 6pm
- The employee will get the first weekend of every month off.

There are worksheets on the following pages so you can develop a job description for the support people in your life or for future support people based on your preferences and needs.

Create a Job Description Based on Your Preferences & Needs

Personal Qualities I Want in a Person Who Will Assist Me: Think about your priorities, needs, and lifestyle when determining the personal qualities you are looking for in a support person. For instance, do you want someone who is friendly? Talkative? Quiet? Outgoing? Other qualities?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Tasks the support person will assist with: List all tasks you expect the support person to assist you with or to complete on their own. Tasks may include things such as assisting with personal hygiene, cleaning, cooking, assistance with bill paying. (Remember, it's helpful to develop detailed checklists for each task listed.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Necessary Professional Experience or Skills: List the skills or experience needed to ensure the person is able to perform the tasks listed above. For instance, they may need to be able lift a certain amount of weight, have experience with medication management, have a driver's license, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Rules and Expectations: List rules that you expect support people to follow when they are working for you. For instance, you may have rules about whether swearing/cussing is acceptable, whether people can smoke inside your home, whether they can use your telephone for local calls, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Schedule: List the hours that the person will work each day:

- Mondays: _____
- Tuesdays: _____
- Wednesdays: _____
- Thursdays: _____
- Fridays: _____
- Saturdays: _____
- Sundays: _____

List the hourly wage or the weekly or monthly salary (for instance, the person will be paid \$10/hour, or will be paid \$200/week):

Great! Based on the work you've done and thought you've put into these worksheets, you now have a basic job description that will help you determine which of the people you interview will best be able to meet your needs.

The job description you've developed is also useful because, once you start the recruitment, screening, and interviewing process, you can share the description with candidates in order to see how they respond not only to the required tasks, but also to your preferences, expectations, and rules.

Now that you have the job description in place, you can start to think about recruiting and screening people for the position.

#3: Recruiting & Screening Potential Support People

Now that you have a job description, you'll want to start recruiting people to screen and interview for the position.

The first step is to decide which information you feel safe and comfortable sharing when advertising the position, and which information you are going to keep confidential to stay as safe as possible. For instance, you may not want to say that you're a woman with a disability who lives alone and then list your address and phone number.

Which information you share is up to you, but keep in mind some people aren't safe. Some people prey on people they think may be vulnerable.

Generally speaking, including your address in an ad is not very safe, but you could say something such as, "I live in the SE part of the city." If possible, it's a good idea to use a cell phone or a phone number that cannot be traced to your home address.

It's also a good idea to let people know in your advertisement that you will check their references and conduct a criminal background check on them. Letting people know this immediately might weed out people who might not be safe.

On the next page are two examples of advertisements.

Full-Time Personal Assistant Needed

Full-time, female personal care attendant needed to live with disabled female.

Assist with personal care, grocery shopping, and housekeeping.

Room, board, and \$450.00/month salary.

A criminal background check will be conducted, and references will be required.

Call: XXX-XXXX
between 7pm-10pm.

Seeking Experienced Personal Assistant

Part-time personal care attendant needed for disabled male.

8am–noon, weekdays.

Help with personal care, grocery shopping, and light housekeeping.

\$9.00 per hour.

A criminal background check will be conducted, and references will be required.

Call: XXX-XXXX
between 8am and 8pm.

Once you've decided which information to share, the next step is to decide how and where you want to recruit. For instance, you may want to post flyers, or you may want to place advertisements in a local newspaper or newsletter.

People who may be able to help you with recruitment include:

- Family members
- Rehabilitation counselors or occupational therapists
- Trusted friends
- Therapists or case managers
- Community support people
- Teachers or Advocates
- Co-workers
- Kaiser Home Health Services
- Providence Home Services

Possible Places to Post Your Flyers or Place Your Ad:

- Community newspapers or college newspapers
- Local newsletters (such as those created by churches, hobby clubs, or special interest groups)
- Employment offices
- Financial Aid offices at colleges, universities, technical schools
- Bulletin boards in apartment buildings
- Social service agencies
- Grocery stores
- Hospitals/Health clinics
- High schools
- Bingo halls
- Libraries

- Vocational Rehabilitation Centers
- Independent Living Resource Centers

After you have placed your ad or posted your recruitment flyers, you may want to keep a pad of paper, a pencil, and a copy of the job description by the telephone so you can easily take notes and respond to questions from interested people.

If you have trouble writing down detailed information during conversations, you may want to use a telephone tape recorder to record your conversation—but if you do record the conversation, you need to let the person know.

Screening Candidates

When people call and express an interest in the position, it's a good idea to informally screen them before spending the time and energy of setting up a formal interview.

You might want to ask a few basic questions (a mini-interview) during the conversation in order to get a sense of the person.

For instance, you might ask:

- Do you have experience working with people with disabilities?
- How would you describe your personality?
- Are you comfortable taking direction?
- How do you deal with feedback?
- Are you willing to have a criminal background check conducted?
- Do you have references?

As the person answers the questions, you may want to keep notes about the person's communication style, impressions of whether you think your personality is compatible with the other person, and so forth.

If the person is reluctant or unwilling to give you personal and professional references, you should be wary of that person.

**You don't have
to meet with every
person who calls you.**

**Trust your intuition
if someone seems
unsafe.**

Perhaps the person is willing to have a criminal background check done, and yet you get a funny feeling that the person is not safe or not a good fit for the position. Remember, you're in charge! You can choose to not set up an interview with the person if they make you uncomfortable. You're not obligated to meet with every person who calls. Trust your intuition.

For instance, if the person seems pushy or disrespectful, then you may want to tell the person you don't think it's a good personality fit.

Other warning signs would include the person asking a lot of personal questions about your financial situation, whether you live alone, where you live specifically, and so forth.

Even if you like a particular person, you can let people know you're going to screen potential candidates for two weeks or until you talk to ten people (or some other designated screening tool) and then narrow down the candidates to your top three or four choices for formal interviews. You can let the person know you'll call them back once you've narrowed down your top choices.

When you are ready to schedule in-person interviews, it's probably safest to schedule the interview to take place at a public location rather than in your home. For instance, you could meet at a local service agency, a community center, a library or some other public place where other people are nearby, but you still have a degree of privacy.

If you have safety concerns discussing your personal circumstances with someone you do not know well, you may want to ask a friend or family member to accompany you to the interview.

#4: Interviewing Potential Support People

Once you've narrowed down your top choices from the people you conducted telephone screenings with, you'll want to schedule in-person interviews with the top candidates.

Before interviewing people, you might want to complete the following worksheets to help clarify what is *most* important to you as you consider different candidates.

For instance, you might need to pick between one person you really like in terms of personality and another person who is more skilled and experienced. The worksheets will help you prioritize what's most important to you if you have trouble deciding who is the best overall candidate for the job.

Most Important Qualities

Of all the personality traits you listed on the job description worksheets (pages 50-52) which two or three are the most important to you? (Example: "sense of humor" or "being a quiet person.")

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are some behaviors that you absolutely won't put up with no matter how skilled the person is? (Examples may be "rudeness" or "impatience" or "controlling behaviors.")

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Which skills or requirements are absolutely necessary for the person to have when you hire them? (For instance: “passed a criminal background check” or “has experience transferring people with a hooyer lift.”)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Which skills or requirements are you willing to take the time and energy to train the person on if they don't have any experience with that skill?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

After interviewing each person, you can consider them in relation to these worksheets and determine whether they are a good overall candidate.

Setting up the Interview

As discussed in the previous section, it's a good idea to narrow down the people who called in response to your ads to three or four top candidates. Once you've selected the best candidates, set up interviews in a public place where you have some degree of privacy. You could possibly meet at a coffee shop, library, or community center.

When you set up the interview, ask the person to bring to the interview personal and professional references. For each reference, they should provide:

- First and last name
- Profession title or occupation
- Telephone number
- Address
- How long they've known the person
- Type of reference (personal or professional). Personal references vouch for the person's character. Professional references are usually former employers who can vouch for the person's work ethic and professionalism. (Let the person know you'll ask them to sign an authorization form that allows former employers to speak freely about their experiences with the person.)

The Interview

- Things to take to the interview:
 - Job description
 - Interview questions (see suggestions below)
 - Sample of a checklist for tasks to be completed
 - Pen, pencil, paper and/or tape recorder
 - Release of information forms (see next section)
- If you're uncomfortable conducting the interviews by yourself, you may want to ask a trusted person to assist with the interview process to get a second opinion about each person interviewed.

- When you meet the applicant, introduce yourself and thank them for being interested in the position.
- Be careful not to share too much personal information with the person until you've checked their references and conducted a criminal background check. For instance, you might not want to give your full name or your address.
- Ask the person to tell you about themselves. You may want to ask for the person's references at this point.
- Give the person a copy of the job description and ask them to read it before asking the interview questions. That way, they can answer the questions in relation to the duties and expectations of the position.
- Ask them if they have any questions before the interview formally begins.

Possible Interview Questions

1. Why are you interested in this job?
2. Do you have experience working with or assisting people with disabilities? If so, please tell me about your experiences.
3. What do you think are the most important qualities of a good employee?
4. What are your strengths?
5. What are your weaknesses?
6. Are you comfortable following detailed directions and checklists?
7. How do you respond when people give you constructive feedback?
8. Is there anything that would prevent you from doing the job?
9. If you have a problems with something I say or do, how would you handle it?

10. What are some ways you would assist me to do more in the community?
11. Would you be willing to be a back-up support person?
12. What are you most proud of when you work with others?
13. Do you have any questions or concerns about the position that you'd like to talk about?

Think about other questions that are important and relevant based on your unique situation. For instance, if you have a pet or a service animal, you might want to ask whether the person is allergic to animals and whether they are comfortable around animals.

Another example would be if you need assistance with transfers. You might ask:

- Do you have experience assisting with transfers? If so, explain the experience and type of transfers you've assisted with.
- Are you strong enough to assist me when transferring?
- What do you know about transferring that would ensure you and I are both safe from being injured in the process?

Following are additional questions to help determine whether the person may become controlling or abusive over time:

- How flexible are you?
- Will you complete tasks the way I ask you to even if you prefer to do things differently?
- How would you respond to feedback if I'm not happy with the way you are doing things?
- Are you comfortable with the fact that I'd be your employer, and that I'd enforce rules and expectations while you're in my home or when you're with me in the community?
- Show the person your checklists for the tasks they will be expected to do and ask how they feel about the tasks and the detailed steps they'll be expected to follow.

Listen carefully to how the candidates answer your interview questions. Pay attention to the attitudes and behaviors of the candidates during the interview to make sure they are not controlling or disrespectful.

Examples of controlling answers include things such as:

- I like to do things my own way.
- I know what I'm doing, so you won't have to give me directions.
- Your checklist isn't how I like to do things.
- I can figure out what you need—I don't need checklists.
- I don't like to be told what to do.
- You're not paying me enough to tell me what to do.
- I'll listen to you if what you're saying makes sense to me.

Even if people don't make these types of comments, if someone is impatient, sarcastic, or annoyed it's possible they might become abusive over time. Even if the person isn't being overtly hostile, if you get a bad feeling about someone, trust your instincts. It's important that you find someone who's qualified and that you safe and comfortable with.

References & Releases of Information

Remember, if you interview a person that you like and are considering hiring, ask for at least two personal references and two professional references. Personal references vouch for the person's character. Professional references vouch for the person's work ethic.

Recent court cases may hold previous employers liable for information they provide about former employees. For this reason, you may want to use a release of information form (see next page) before contacting a person's previous employer.

The release form is signed by the applicant, and is mailed to the former employer. It gives the former employer permission to talk to you; however, it does not mean the former employer *has* to talk to you—it's their choice and they may decline even with a signed release of information form.

When you mail a release form, be sure to keep a copy for your records.

You don't need a release of information to contact personal references (who are usually friends, family members, or acquaintances of the person). However, once again, it's up to the person whether they want to talk to you. If the person has given a name as a reference it generally means the person has agreed to talk to you.

In addition to the release form, you'll want a reference check form to keep track of reference information. The forms on the following pages are modified versions of forms developed by Jean Swenson, a consumer from Minnesota.

Release Form

(To be sent to former employers before doing the reference check.)

Dear _____:

I am considering hiring _____ (name of applicant) as a personal assistant. I would appreciate talking with you to verify information about the applicant's work history and character. The applicant has signed this release form to acknowledge they are granting you permission to talk to me. I will contact you by phone within one week, or you may call me at your convenience. Thank you.

Your name

Date

Your Telephone Number

I hereby authorize you to supply the requested information. Thank you.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Printed Name of Applicant

Professional References: Notes For Myself

After you've sent the release of information form to professional references you can call to ask questions about the support person applicant. Copy the following sheet and write notes about the person for each professional reference you talk to.

Applicant's Name: _____

Date of Phone Call: _____

Name of Reference Person (previous employer):

Title of Position that Applicant Held: _____

General responsibilities applicant had in previous job:

How long did the applicant work for the previous employer? (It's good to ask for dates. For example, "from January of 2002 until March of 2003."):

Reason for leaving: _____

What are the applicant's strengths? _____

What are the applicant's weaknesses? _____

How would you compare applicant's work to that of other people who've worked for you? _____

Was the applicant dependable? _____

Was the applicant honest? _____

Was the applicant respectful? _____

Did the applicant let you know when there was something he or she did not like or did not agree with? _____

How often was the applicant late to work? _____

How often did applicant miss work? _____

Did the applicant drive safely? (If they drove in previous job)

Would you re-hire the applicant? _____

Do you have any other comments? _____

Personal References: Notes For Myself

Copy the following sheet and write notes about the person for each personal reference you talk to.

Applicant's name: _____

Date of phone call to personal reference: _____

Name of personal reference: _____

Relationship to applicant (friend, family member, etc.): _____

How long has the personal reference known the applicant: _____

How would you describe the applicant's personality? _____

What are the applicant's strengths? _____

What are the applicant's weaknesses? _____

How does the applicant respond to stress? _____

Do you think this person would make a good support person? _____

Other comments? _____

At this point, you have:

- Your own assessment of each candidate based on the interview you conducted.
- Information about each candidate based on the telephone calls you made to each applicant's personal and professional references.

You may want to compare the applicants based on the worksheets you completed earlier in this workbook (pages 59-60) to see which applicant most closely meets what you earlier defined as your most important criteria.

Once you select the person you are most likely to hire, it's a good time to conduct the criminal background check.

Oregon Criminal Background Check

Regardless of which county you live in within Oregon, you need to submit your request for a criminal background check in writing to the Oregon State Police:

Oregon State Police
Attn: Open Records, Unit 11
Portland, OR 97208-4395

You will need to include the applicant's:

- full name
- birthdate
- social security number
- current address

Remember to include your own contact information in the letter.

The process takes 14 days from the time your request is received. The applicant will receive a notification letter from the Oregon State Police letting them know that you requested the information.

The fee is \$15 per request, and your check or money order should be addressed to the Oregon State Police.

If you are requesting a criminal background check on more than one person, each request must be on a separate sheet of paper. (And each separate background check is an additional \$15.)

For more information, you can call The Oregon State Police, Identification Services Section at 1-503-378-3070. (This is a number in Salem.)

Or you can look at the Oregon State Police website:
<http://www.osp.state.or.us/>

Keep in mind that a person may have a criminal history in another state that will not be detected by a check done in Oregon.

Also, some people are criminals who have never been caught or convicted. While doing a background check is a good step in staying safe, a clean record does not guarantee the person can be trusted. Again, trust your intuition and judgment when hiring someone.

See the next page for a sample letter.

Sample Letter

January 14, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I am interested in hiring the person below, and am requesting a criminal background check.

The person's name is: _____

His/her birthdate is: _____

His/her social security number is: _____

His/her current address is: _____

Enclosed you will find my check for \$15 made out to the Oregon State Police.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you,

[sign your name]

Print your name

Your Telephone Number

Your Mailing Address

Your email Address

Form for Potential Support Person to Complete

You can use the following form to collect the information you need from applicant's in order to complete the request letter to the Oregon State Police.

I understand that you will be using the below information in order to contact the Oregon State Police for a criminal background check on me.

Sign name: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____

My full name is: _____

My birthdate is: _____

My social security number is: _____

My current address is: _____

#5: Hiring Support People

At this point, you've conducted interviews, narrowed down the candidates to your top choice, checked references, and conducted a criminal background check. It's now time to think about formally hiring the best person and having him or her sign an employment contract.

Employment Contracts

Employment contracts have similar information as the job description, but are often more detailed and are, by nature of being a legal contract, more formal.

There are standard things that should be included in an employment contract such as salary, hours, and so forth, but the details of the contract can be personalized to best meet your needs and expectations.

Employment contracts are legal documents that:

- Define and protect the professional relationship agreed upon between you and your support person.
- Define what the support person is responsible for and what you are responsible for.
- Details the requirements of the position (tasks and responsibilities).
- Details your rules and expectations of acceptable behavior.
- Details working arrangements (such as hours to be worked, wages, benefits, vacation time, etc.).

On the next page is an example of a contract that can be modified to reflect the details of your situation. Much of the information needed to create the contract can be taken directly from the job description that you have already completed.

EXAMPLE: Work Contract

Working title: Hourly Employee

Purpose of the position: To assist a person with a severe disability to do activities of daily living (ADL's) and maintain their home.

Work schedule:

- Monday-Friday: 8am-11am & 7pm-9pm.
- Saturday mornings: 9am-11am

Supervision: Tasks are done under the supervision of the employer, with possible support from a Registered Nurse.

Employer/employee relationship: The employee is an "Hourly Employee" who works for the employer who signs this form.

Wages:

- Wages for this job are \$ _____ per hour (or \$ _____ per _____)
- Hours of service per month are estimated to be _____ hours.

Duties and Responsibilities: Tasks include assisting with approximately:

_____ % Activities of Daily Living (ADL). Includes assistance with bathing, eating, dressing, toileting, mobility, and cognitive skills.

_____ % Self-Management Tasks. Includes assistance with the employer's medications, laundry, housekeeping, transportation, meal preparation, and shopping.

Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- ◆ **Communication:** The employee must be able to communicate well with the employer through any means needed.
- ◆ **Reliability:** The employee must be able to plan and use time so that services are provided in a reliable manner.
- ◆ **Performance of Routine Complex Tasks:** The employee must be able to assist the employer with complex and precise moves during activities of daily living.
- ◆ **Employer/Employee Relationship:** The employee must be able to establish and maintain good working relationships with the employer. Employee understands that the employer will provide direction for the completion of tasks and that the employee is expected to follow detailed instructions.

Additional Provisions:

- ◆ **Working Conditions:** The employee will work in the Employer's home, but sometimes may need to do ADL tasks in other settings such as stores, social settings, etc. The work may expose the employee to body substances, and minor or major medical conditions. The employee must know how to use Universal Precautions that help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. The employee will use cleaning and home care products, and be exposed to cleaning by-products such as dust and molds.
- ◆ **Liabilities and Statutory Boundaries:** The employee must agree to comply with Drug Free Work Place laws from the Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Government. The employee may do tasks that are allowed under the Nurse Delegation Act of Oregon. The employee understands that there is no Worker's Compensation with the employment contract.
- ◆ **Termination of Services:** The employee agrees to give at least a two-week notice of resignation. The employer agrees to give two weeks of

notice of termination unless the employee is putting the employer at risk through egregious behaviors. (See below.)

- ◆ **Special Termination:** The employer has the right to terminate the employee without notice, if any of the following occur: financial, physical, sexual, or emotional/verbal abuse; theft; arrest and conviction for any crime; violation of the drug-free workplace law.
- ◆ **Professional Ethics:** The employer and employee understand that doing things that may create a conflict of interest (like setting up personal loans or owning a business together) is not ethical. These actions can lead to major problems between the employer and employee. They may also lead to labor grievances or employer abuse. Except when there is abuse, SDSD has no responsibility for problems arising from unethical behavior.

Rules & Expectations (Examples)

- ◆ The employee will not smoke in the home of—or around—the employer while in the community.
- ◆ The employee will not cuss or swear while around the employer or when assisting the employer in the community.
- ◆ Employee will never use the personal belongings of the employer without asking permission. The employer reserves the right to say “no” to any request.
- ◆ The employee will not use drugs or alcohol while working for the employer, and will not show up for work under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- ◆ The employee should be available to the employer at all times during the shift. Therefore, things such as using a personal cell phone for non-work related calls while on duty is not acceptable.

Signatures:

Employer Signature: _____

Employer Name (Print): _____

Date: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Employee Name (Print): _____

Date: _____

Changes and/or additions to this contract are not valid until all parties have signed an amendment to this contract.

Develop an Employment Contract

Employment Contract Between:

Employer (full name) _____

Employee (full name) _____

Work Schedule (list the hours for each day; include "a.m." or "p.m.")

Monday: _____

Tuesday: _____

Wednesday: _____

Thursday: _____

Friday: _____

Saturday: _____

Sunday: _____

Wage: Employee will be paid (select one and fill in appropriate amount):

\$ _____ per hour

\$ _____ per week

\$ _____ per month

Method of payment (check one):

_____ in cash

_____ by check

Additional Details:

- Taxes will be withheld by employer: Yes _____ No _____

- Assistant will live in employer's home or apartment: Yes ___ No ___
- Meals provided for personal assistant?
 - breakfast: Yes _____ No _____
 - lunch: Yes _____ No _____
 - dinner: Yes _____ No _____
- Laundry facilities available? (for live-in person): Yes _____ No _____
- Use of phone for local calls: Yes _____ No _____
- Use of phone for long distance calls: Yes _____ No _____
- Use of employer's computer/internet: Yes _____ No _____
- Employer will pay for attendant to accompany him or her to theatre, restaurants, travel, entertainment: Yes ___ No ___
- Employee understands if they damage or destroy personal items of the employer that salary will be withheld until such items have been replaced.
- Other things assistant will be allowed to use (list item and expectations around use):

Item: _____

Acceptable use: _____

Item: _____

Acceptable use: _____

Item: _____

Acceptable use: _____

Acceptable Social Behaviors While at Employer’s House:

- Swearing: Yes _____ No _____
- Smoking inside home: Yes _____ No _____
- Smoking outside of home: Yes _____ No _____
- Drinking alcohol on premises (when not working): Yes _____ No _____
(Note: Drinking alcohol while on the clock is grounds for termination.)
- Overnight guests allowed: Yes _____ No _____
- If “no,” guests of employee must leave by (insert time): _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Employer’s Responsibilities (Check appropriate items)

- _____ Employer will independently perform all tasks within his/her ability as determined by the employer.
- _____ Employer will not expect attendant to stay past the agreed-upon time (except in emergency situations).
- _____ Employer will be responsible for making arrangements for emergency back-up attendants.
- _____ Employer will evaluate and maintain records on employee performance.

Additional responsibilities of employer:

Assistant Responsibilities (Check appropriate items)

- Attendant will respect the confidentiality of the employer.
- Attendant will follow all directions given by the employer.
- Attendant will complete duties by the agreed-upon time.
- Attendant will be on time.
- Attendant will perform all duties as outlined in the performance checklist.

Additional responsibilities of assistant:

Absences

Both the employer and the attendant must give at least ____ days advance notice of an interruption to the schedule. In case of an emergency, the employer and attendant must notify each other as soon as possible.

Termination

- Number of absences that will result in termination of employee: _____
- Number of times being late for work that will result in termination: _____
- Attendant will be reminded of unacceptable behavior this number of times before being terminated: _____
- Each party shall give _____ weeks notice before termination.
- ***Note: If the attendant's behavior is endangering the employer's health or safety, the attendant will be terminated immediately.***

Employer's Signature

Date

Employee's Signature

Date

The previous sample contract and worksheets are to assist you in the development of a contract that makes sense to you based on your personal needs and your lifestyle. If your contract clearly states your needs, expectations, and rules, then you are more likely to establish a good working relationship with your support people.

While you may decide to create a contract that differs from those proposed in this workbook, important areas that should be considered and included to be thorough include:

- Salary/wages
- Hours and schedule
- Required duties
- Rules and expectations for employees (while on the clock and while off the clock if the person lives with you): including things such as use of your personal property, guests, smoking, drinking of alcohol, cursing, etc.
- How mutual privacy will be respected for both the employer and the employee
- How time off will be negotiated
- Which benefits are available to the employee

Signed copies of the employment contract should be given to your support person and you should keep one for your records.

#6: Training Support People

You may hire someone who has never worked as a support person before, in which case you'll need to train them to perform required tasks and duties. Even if you hire someone who has a lot of experience working as a support person, it's likely that you'll want to train them to do things in a particular way.

While training takes time and energy, it ensures a clear understanding between you and the support person about which tasks you want done, and how you want those tasks done. This can help prevent problems resulting from unclear expectations or a lack of communication.

Training the support person also establishes the professional relationship where you are seen the employer who directs the relationship.

Techniques for training a support person:

- ◆ The most important part of training a support person is to provide clear, concise, and organized directions. When you are training your support person, you need to be comfortable giving instructions. This will help build a good working relationship between you and your support people.
- ◆ When explaining procedures, break all steps down into simple language.
- ◆ Explain task completion in detailed step-by-step instructions. If possible, "show and tell," make a video of how the task should be completed, or have another trained support person demonstrate the proper way to do the task.
- ◆ Have the support person repeat your instructions back to you and have them demonstrate the procedure as needed. This will help prevent anxiety and careless mistakes.
- ◆ Be patient. Don't assume your support person will immediately understand what you need, or will understand everything after one explanation.
- ◆ Expect the person to be respectful of you and to follow your directions. If the person is not respectful, you can say something such as, "I feel

your comment (behavior) was inappropriate and it made me uncomfortable. I need for you to not say (do) anything like that again.”

- ◆ Create checklists whenever possible so that you don't need to constantly repeat yourself (and so the person can complete the task even if you aren't around to provide detailed instructions).
- ◆ Post checklists on the wall near where the task will be performed (for instance, checklists about cleaning the kitchen could be posted on a kitchen cabinet or on the refrigerator).
- ◆ You may need to re-explain your needs, abilities, and limitations with the support person during the training. What may seem obvious to you may not be obvious to the support person.
- ◆ Encourage the support person to ask questions if they are confused about what they are supposed to do.
- ◆ Make your priorities clear (what must get done, what you would like to get done, and additional things to be done if time allows).
- ◆ If appropriate (based on your personal circumstances) post the names of medications you take, time of day and amount taken, and what to do if the medication is not taken or is taken late. Post a list of side effects you may have from the medications you take.
- ◆ Post a schedule of the assistant's work hours and give them a copy to take home, so they can keep track of their time, schedule, and routine.
- ◆ Be sure to explain procedures for any potential emergencies—such as allergic reactions to a certain food or symptoms as a result of forgetting to take a particular medication. Document the tasks and actions your support person should perform in case of different types of emergencies. Post a list of emergency telephone numbers including primary physicians, fire station, police, preferred hospitals, and person to contact in case of an emergency (such as family member or friend). Document any allergies you have and symptoms of your disability that can be given to a doctor in case of an emergency.
- ◆ For the protection of both you and your support person, you should have latex or rubber gloves available to your support person at all times. These gloves are to be worn by your attendant while providing any personal care that involves contact with blood or bodily fluids.

- ◆ When you train someone, you're giving them a lot of information within a short period of time, and it's reasonable they're not going to learn everything immediately. Be patient, and go over information until your support person clearly understands everything.

Keep in mind that training will be an ongoing process as your needs and preferences change.

The most important thing is to establish healthy, respectful communication so that you both feel comfortable asking for clarification and addressing small problems that arise before they become large problems.

Train Your Support Person To Transfer You Safely

Transfers involve the highest risk for injury for both you and your support person—especially when the transfer takes place in the bathroom. The results of poor transfer techniques can be continual fatigue, strain, or serious injury. Using poor body mechanics over time can lead to pain, joint, and tissue damage for each of you. It is critical that you teach your support person the correct and safest way to transfer you.

Think about the transfers that support people assist you with, and ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ Does your support person use good “body mechanics” when lifting?
- ◆ Would a mechanical lift make your transfer safer?
- ◆ Would a “hospital bed” make your transfer safer?
- ◆ Can you use a sliding board, transfer disk or other equipment?
- ◆ Is your equipment in good working order?
- ◆ Would slip resistant footwear help your transfer?
- ◆ Is there enough space to complete the transfer?
- ◆ Is the space clear of clutter?
- ◆ Is there enough light to do the transfer safely?

- ◆ Is the support person transferring you patient and gentle, or are they putting you at risk or discomfort by rushing the process?

You may want to create a checklist for each transfer procedure. For instance, you might have a checklist that details how you want to be transferred from your bed to wheelchair and another for wheelchair to toilet.

In addition to explaining how you want the transfer done in detailed, prioritized steps, you may also want to explain things that might impact the transfer such as:

- whether you can bear any weight
- your joint flexibility
- any spasticity that might occur
- areas of pain
- what feels most gentle, safe, and comfortable to you

Ideally, train the new support person by having an experienced support person demonstrate how they assist you with different types of transfers. The more you help explain and guide your support person, the safer you both will be.

#7: Managing Support People

If you've never had the opportunity or training to manage a support person, it may initially feel awkward or uncomfortable to be giving them directions and telling them how you want things done. However, the more you practice being the employer, explaining your needs, giving directions, and directing your support, the more comfortable it will become over time.

Remind yourself—and ask friends or family members to remind you—that you deserve to have control over your life and how things in your life are done. Additionally, managing your support person is important to your safety, health, and quality of life.

This entire workbook supports this particular section on “Managing Support People,” because this workbook is about taking control of your life and creating a professional, healthy relationship with your support person. It also includes information on how to recruit, hire, train, evaluate and—if necessary—terminate support people. All of these things increase your ability to manage the support in your life and increase your sense of empowerment and self-direction.

Therefore, the following strategies are reminders of important points we've already discussed.

Strategies to Manage your Support Person

- Give clear directions and refer to checklists when appropriate and necessary.
- Ask questions for clarification when there appears to be confusion or misunderstanding. Encourage the support person to ask questions whenever necessary, too.
- Maintain your position as the “manager.” This doesn't mean you can't be friendly and have a sense of humor, but it does mean protecting your boundaries and asking for what you need. It means not letting a support person take advantage of a friendly relationship. For instance, let's say you have a pleasant, friendly relationship with your support person, and she is scheduled to work on a Saturday night. On Thursday night, she

calls to say that she was invited to a party on Saturday and she really wants to take the night off from work. The choice of whether you need her to work as scheduled is up to you. You don't need to feel guilty if you need her to work. It's her job, you're her employer, and two days notice might not be enough for you to find a back-up person. Don't be "nice" at the expense of putting yourself at risk. Perhaps you can easily find a replacement and don't mind giving her the night off. Do what's right for you.

- Expect respect. Let the support person know when they do or say something you find disrespectful.
- Be respectful as well. Ask that the support person let you know immediately if they are unhappy or frustrated by anything so the two of you can address the issue before it leads to irreparable stress or anger.
- If a third party is involved in the relationship, such as a case manager, make sure all three of you agree and understand the roles and expectations of each person in relationship to each other. For instance, the support person should not see the case manager as their boss. It is important that you direct as much of the relationship between yourself and your assistant as possible.
- All of the steps we discussed about recruiting, screening, interviewing, hiring, and training support people are important to the overall management of support people. The more actively involved you are in every aspect of the employer/employee relationship, the more you'll feel empowered and in control of your life.
- What other strategies have we discussed so far or can you think of that would help you effectively and comfortably manage support people in your life?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

#8: Evaluating Support People

Although you will likely give your support person ongoing daily feedback about what's working well, and what needs improvement, it's also a good idea to conduct formal performance evaluations on a regular basis (such as at the end of each month).

What is a Performance Evaluation?

A performance evaluation is a formal way of assessing (deciding) whether your support person is:

- Completing tasks correctly.
- Following your directions.
- Treating you with respect.
- Communicating effectively with you.
- Respecting your rules and expectations.

In order for the performance evaluation to be a positive, helpful experience for both you and the support person, it's best to explain to your support person that the evaluation is a tool to increase mutual understanding and to ensure you are both on the same page. In other words, it is best if the support person doesn't feel as if the evaluation is a "punishment" or a time when she or he is going to be criticized without being given positive reinforcement for what they are doing well.

Why conduct Performance Evaluations?

Performance evaluations:

- Help address small problems before they become big problems.
- Provide documentation of your support person's performance for your records (in case you need to terminate them or in case you want to reward them for improvement over time).

- Ensure your support person receives regular feedback—both positive feedback about what is working well and constructive feedback (about what needs improvement).

How do I conduct a Performance Evaluation?

The various worksheets you have completed in this workbook so far (the checklists, the job description, and the employment contract) can all be used as performance evaluation tools—to compare what the support person should be doing with what he or she actually is doing.

Additional Tools

Additional worksheets for evaluating your support person are on the following pages.

Performance Evaluation Checklist

This evaluation form can be filled out, and then you can meet with your support person and go over your concerns, comments, and praise.

After reviewing the evaluation form with your support person, give her or him a copy for their records, and have them sign a copy for you to keep with your records.

Date: _____

Support Person's Name: _____

Once you've reviewed the document with the support person, have them sign a copy for you to keep with your records.

I have received a copy of the following evaluation.

Support Person's Signature: _____

Part One: Completing Tasks

Task or Duty	Well Done! (add comments)	Suggestions for Improvement (explain specifically what needs to be improved)
Cooking		
Cleaning		
Laundry		

Transferring		
Dressing		
Bathing, hair care		
Shopping, errands		
Pay bills, help with checkbook		
Activities in the community		
Transportation Getting to appointments		
Additional Task:		

**Part Two of Performance Evaluation:
Professionalism, Respect, and Communication**

1. Praise or concerns about **dependability**: _____

2. Praise or concerns about **communication** (is communication clear and respectful?) : _____

3. Praise or concerns about **following directions**: _____

4. Praise or concerns about **respecting privacy**: _____

5. Praise or concerns about **house rules and expectations being followed**: _____

6. **Additional praise or concerns:**

It's also a good idea to ask your support person if he or she has any questions or concerns that she or he would like to discuss.

#9: Retaining Support People

When you have a support person who is professional, competent, and pleasant to have around, it's likely you'll want to employ that person for as long as possible.

Retaining support people means creating a positive work environment and respectful relationship so that outstanding support people will want to continue to work for you.

Strategies to increase retention of good support people:

- Express appreciation and give praise when appropriate and sincere. For instance, you can let people know when they've completed a task exceptionally well, or that you enjoy their sense of humor or some other aspect of their personality.
- Deal with conflicts in a respectful way. Rather than yelling at a support person or criticizing them, talk to them respectfully and calmly. Even if you're upset, you can still communicate in a calm, direct manner. For instance, you could say, "I'm feeling really frustrated by what you just did, and I'd like for us to talk about what just happened, so we can do things differently next time."
- Create a work environment that is pleasant for the person. This means treating them the same way you would want to be treated. It also means that, although we all have bad days or days where we feel not-so-good, that few people want to spend a lot of time around someone who is constantly negative or complaining. It is likely that your attitude will greatly impact the attitude of your support person.
- Ask your support person what they enjoy in terms of work. Some people like doing the exact same routine every day. Other people may become bored by doing the exact same thing and may prefer more variety in how each day is structured. Your needs are important, and there may be some routines that cannot be changed, but there may be other things throughout the day where flexibility is possible.

- You can do small things for the support person to express appreciation such as making them a birthday card. Again, it is up to you whether you want a strictly professional relationship or a more informal, friendly relationship but whatever kind of relationship you establish, there are ways to let the person know that you value them as an employee and person.
- In the next section, we'll discuss how to solve problems as they arise. Solving problems in a respectful manner is another important way to keep good support people.

What other ideas do you have about how to retain good support people?

#10: Solving Problems

The best way to minimize problems is to be very careful of who you hire. As discussed earlier in this workbook, it is a good idea to carefully screen potential support people through a criminal background check, personal and professional references, and by trusting your own judgment about personality compatibility and sense of comfort and safety.

Even if you do an excellent job of screening, it's still likely that over time your support person may do or say something that makes you angry or uncomfortable. When this happens, it's a good idea to address the issue immediately even if the thing done seems small or not a big deal. If you don't address little problems, they may become big problems over time. For instance, a support person might test what they can get away with, and if you don't call them on inappropriate behaviors they may think they can get away with more and more inappropriate behaviors.

Many of us were taught that conflict is "bad" or "scary" or something to be avoided. Or we were taught that we should be nice in order to avoid conflict or in order to make people around us more comfortable. However, whenever people spend a lot of time together, it's likely that there will be occasional conflicts, personality differences, and misunderstandings.

If we accept that conflict is natural and it happens once in a while, then we are more prepared for it and more comfortable handling it when it does happen.

Conflict doesn't have to be a big problem as long as it's addressed and handled in a respectful way. And, sometimes, working through conflict can make a relationship stronger because it means you both trust each other to make it through the difficult times.

When we talk about "conflict" or "problems" in this section, we generally mean problems that can be resolved within a relationship that is overall respectful. So, by encouraging you to work through problems, we're making the assumption that the overall relationship is worth investing in.

However, if someone is abusive, threatening, or intimidating, then it may be difficult to change their behaviors since abusive people often don't accept responsibility for their behaviors.

It's up to you whether you want to resolve conflicts or whether you feel so scared or upset by a support person that you just want to end the relationship altogether.

On the following pages are some worksheets that can help you think about conflicts and how you might want to approach resolving them. These sheets can be used to organize your thoughts, or can be shared with your support person as you work to reach an agreement or solution.

Worksheets: Identifying & Resolving Conflicts

1. Identify the problem or conflict. What is making you unhappy or uncomfortable? (Example: “Sarah, my support person, doesn’t listen to me.”)

2. Thinking about the problem you wrote about above, be as specific as possible about what is happening that you don’t like. (For example, “Sarah doesn’t listen when I am telling her what I want to eat and she makes food that I don’t like.”)

3. How do you feel about the problem? (Examples: Angry, frustrated, sad, scared, disrespected: “I feel angry and frustrated when Sarah doesn’t listen to me, and I have to eat food I don’t like.”)

4. What do you think about the problem? (Example: “I think I have a right to be heard when I speak, and I think Sarah should make what I want to eat since I’m her employer and I’m paying her.”)

5. What do you want to happen? (Example: “I want Sarah to listen to me, and make the food I ask her to make.”)

6. How can you communicate what you want to your support person in a respectful way? (Example: “I can discuss this with Sarah during her performance evaluation.” Or, “I can show her these worksheets and explain the problem, how I’m feeling, and what I want.” Or, “Tomorrow, I’ll ask Sarah to sit down before making breakfast, and I’ll calmly and clearly tell her that I feel disrespected and she needs to honor my requests.”)

7. In addition to communicating directly with the support person, are there other strategies or things you could do to address this problem? (Example: “I’ll address the problem with Sarah in a calm, direct manner, but I’ll ask a friend to be there so I feel supported.”)

8. What will you do if the conflict remains unresolved? (Example: “If Sarah continues to ignore what I want, I’ll let her know that I’ll need to find a different support person.”)

If you’re not comfortable with conflict, you may want to either mentally practice talking to your support person or write down exactly what you want to say.

If it’s your first time addressing a conflict, you can ask a friend or family member to role-play or practice the interaction with you so you can practice being firm, clear, and direct (without becoming angry or without becoming apologetic).

Remember, you have a right to ask that your needs are met!

In summary, you want to identify and then communicate:

- What the problem/conflict is (be as specific as possible).
- How the problem makes you feel.
- What you think about the problem.
- What you want to happen in terms of resolving the problem.
- Be respectful when you communicate your concerns and expectations to the support person.
- Consequences if the conflict or problem continues.

Dealing with conflict is never easy, and it can take a lot of time and energy to work through differences, but if you spend the time and energy and approach problems with a spirit of cooperation, you can build even stronger, more respectful relationships with support people.

#11: Terminating A Support Person When Necessary

Despite all of your efforts to screen, hire, and train quality support people, it's possible that you may end up with a support person who is not working out.

Perhaps you have a support person who you have talked to repeatedly about inappropriate behaviors or lack of attention to detail when they complete tasks, and yet their behaviors remain the same. In this case, after making reasonable attempts to address and resolve the issues, you may want to consider terminating the person (letting the person go or firing them).

If you find yourself in this situation, you will understand the importance of having kept detailed performance evaluations that document ongoing problems, a copy of the employment contract that the support person is not living up to, and checklists that show where the support person is failing to follow directions.

If you decide to fire a support person, you should write a letter that includes:

- The date the letter was written.
- The reason(s) you need to fire the person. (Be as professional and specific as possible. For instance, don't say, "Joe was lazy and rude" which is vague and subjective. Rather you can say, "Joe did not complete all required tasks on time, and called me 'stupid.'")
- List steps you have taken to try to resolve the issue(s). ("I spoke with Joe on four occasions about my need for him to complete all tasks on time, and he agreed to change his behaviors, but his behaviors did not change.")
- The final date of work (usually you should give the person two weeks notice).
- Your signature.

You can ask the employee to sign a copy of the letter that acknowledges they received the letter for your records. If they refuse to sign the letter, keep a copy for your records anyway and note that they refused to sign it.

Be prepared. Many people become angry when being fired, so you might want a friend or family member to be there when you present the letter to the person. It's also a good idea to have back-up support people lined up in case the person quits immediately upon finding out that you are firing them. (In other words, don't assume the person will work the last two weeks just because you gave them two weeks notice.)

Although it's reasonable to give a person two weeks notice if you're letting them go, there are circumstances when it would be appropriate to fire someone immediately. For instance, any of the following circumstances would justify firing someone immediately:

- The person abuses you physically, emotionally, verbally, or sexually.
- The person steals from you or financially abuses you.
- The person threatens you or intimidates you (or threatens or hurts your children or pets).
- The person ignores directions and puts you at risk.
- The person fails to show up for work.
- The person shows up drunk or high.
- The person steals or uses your medication (or under-medicates or over-medicates you).
- The person breaks or takes away mobility or communication devices.
- The person stops you from talking or seeing important people in your life.
- Any other behaviors that frighten you or put you at risk or physical or emotional harm.

If you are firing someone you are scared of, you might want a friend or family member to be with you when you let the person go. If the situation is dangerous, contact the police and explain the situation. If it's an immediately dangerous situation, call 911. You have a right to be safe.

See the following section to remain as safe as possible.

#12: Being As Safe As Possible

One of the best things you can do to keep yourself safe is to have a list of people who are willing to provide emergency back-up support in case you ever need it unexpectedly.

You may want to put together a list of people you think would be able to help you (either paid or unpaid people), and then call each person to verify that they're willing to help out in an emergency.

Keep in mind which tasks different people can assist you with and how much time they feel they can commit to assisting you as you compile your list. For instance, maybe you have a friend who is willing to provide back-up support, but she may be physically unable to assist with transfers. If that's the case you wouldn't be able to rely on her alone for an extended period of time.

If you live in Multnomah County, emergency back-up support can be provided for up to 72 hours in certain circumstances. You can call the county helpline for more information at 503-988-3646 or TTY 503-988-3683.

Following are worksheets to help you organize emergency back-up care information so that, in a crisis, you can quickly and easily find someone to assist you.

Example:

Name: Jenny Smith

Relationship: (such as "friend" or "paid provider")

Day Phone: 503-333-3333

Night Telephone Number: 503-222-2222

Tasks person can assist with: medication, transfers, food preparation

Available: weekends and evening; during the day in extreme emergencies

I have contacted this person and asked if they can help in an emergency: Yes

~ Emergency Back-Up Support Contact Information ~

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Day Phone: _____

Night Telephone Number: _____

Tasks person can assist with: _____

Available: _____

This person has agreed to help in an emergency: Yes No

~~~~~

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Night Telephone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks person can assist with:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Available:** \_\_\_\_\_

**This person has agreed to help in an emergency:** Yes No

~~~~~

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Day Phone: _____

Night Telephone Number: _____

Tasks person can assist with: _____

Available: _____

This person has agreed to help in an emergency: Yes No

~~~~~  
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Night Telephone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks person can assist with:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Available:** \_\_\_\_\_

**This person has agreed to help in an emergency:** Yes No

~~~~~  
Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Day Phone: _____

Night Telephone Number: _____

Tasks person can assist with: _____

Available: _____

This person has agreed to help in an emergency: Yes No

In terms of your safety, this Guide has a companion guide called “Staying Safe & Preventing Abuse” which talks about preventing, reporting, or minimizing any abuse and violence your life. For instance, it talks about warning signs to look for in potentially abusive people, strategies for staying safe, and how to report abuse.

If you would like a copy of the Staying Safe & Preventing Abuse Guide, please contact ***[insert PSU information here]***.

In addition to the worksheets you completed about emergency back-up support people, you may also want to fill in the worksheet on the following page to have contact information for local resources in one place. (Again, the Staying Safe & Preventing Abuse Guide has more detailed worksheets for you to fill out around safety resources—we encourage you to get a copy of that guide, too.)

~ Community Resources ~

Local Independent Living Resources Center

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Local Domestic Violence Hotline

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Local Police

Emergency Number: 911

Non-Emergency number: _____

Address: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Local Hospital

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Medical Equipment Supplier

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Doctors

Doctor's Name: _____

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Doctor's Name: _____

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Doctor's Name: _____

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Doctor's Name: _____

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Local Adult Protective Services Office

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Other Local Agency/Organization

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Other Local Agency/Organization

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Other Local Agency/Organization

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Other Local Agency/Organization

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Other Local Agency/Organization

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Services available to me: _____

Is the agency accessible to me: _____

Conclusion

Congratulations for putting the time and energy into completing this workbook! We hope this information will help you feel more in control of your life and the types of assistance you receive!

Please contact us if you have questions, would like a copy of the Safety Guide, or want to give us suggestions to improve on this guide—we welcome your valuable input.

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