

CARE MATTERS

LEARNING & WELLBEING

A carer's guide to personal planning with support organisations

In New Zealand there is an increasing opportunity for carers to get the supports and services they need based on what they want.

It is now common for carers to be asked to participate in meetings where a support organisation might ask questions like: "What does a good life look like for you?", or "How can we best support you?"

This is different from the past, where carers have simply been provided with what the service is prepared to offer. Many supports and services (not all) are now wanting to base what they do more on your:

- Likes
- Strengths
- Ideas about the future.

Ideally, a "personal plan" is where the person with a disability and their carers have more "say" over the types of supports they might use.

This way of doing things has many advantages. However, for it to work well, it also means carers need to be clear about what they want. This resource will assist carers to think about who they are and what they want (today and into the future).

What could the future be?

Below are some thoughts about the value of "imagining better".

Imagination wisdom

"Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you *will* what you imagine and at last you create what you will."

George Bernard Shaw

"The man who has no imagination has no wings."

Muhammad Ali

“I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.”
Michelangelo

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.”
Albert Einstein

Aspiration

- A hope or ambition of achieving something
- A desire or ambition for which someone is motivated to work very hard.

“Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them, and try to follow where they lead.”
Louisa May Alcott

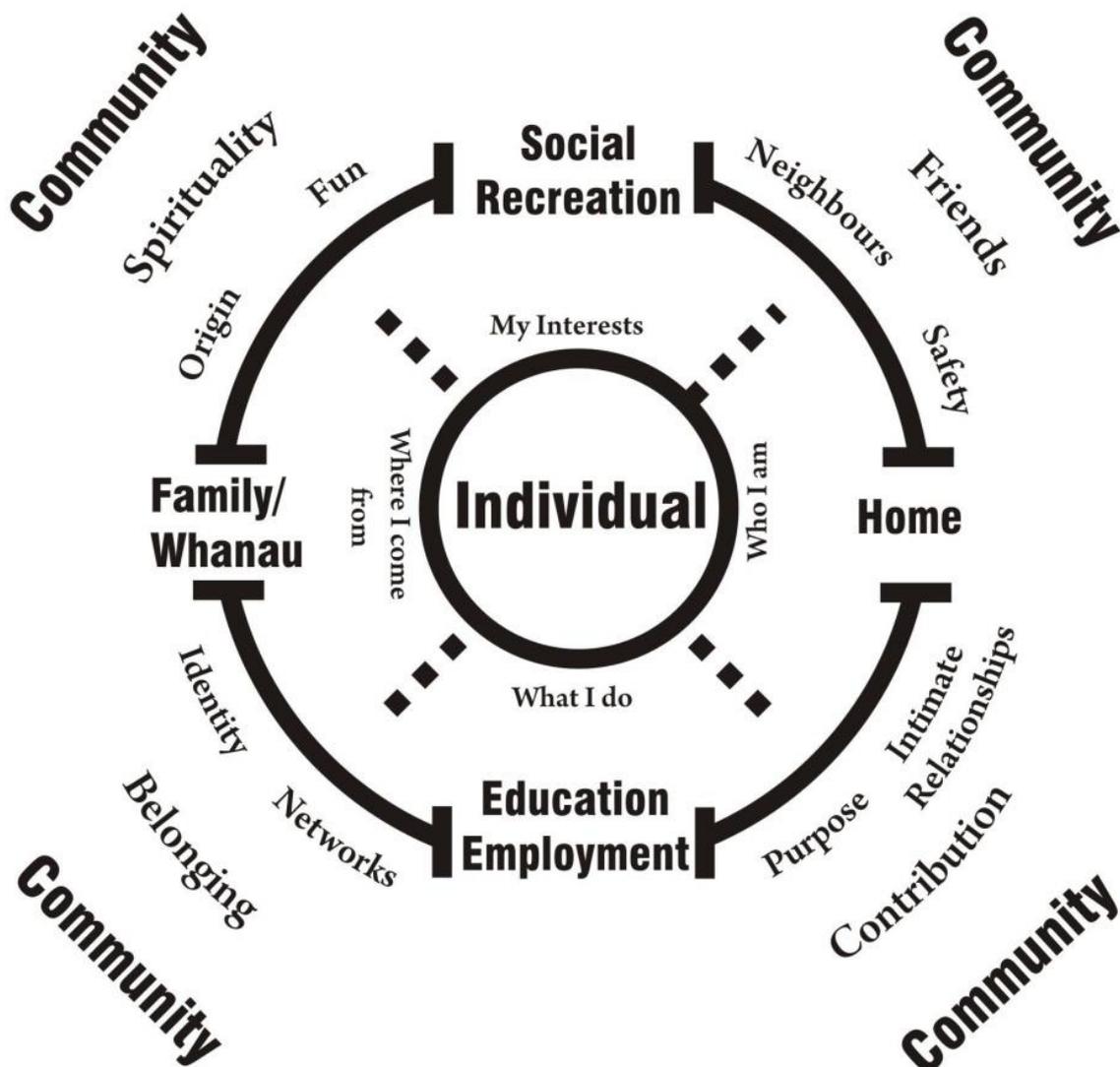
“The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.”
Michelangelo

“In the long run, men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, they had better aim at something high.”
Henry David Thoreau

What is a 'good life'?

For many of us a "good life" is something we guess at. Sometimes a lot of our energy is taken up with the here and now. There can be value in taking a moment to think about what "could be" in your life. This can give direction to the things we do and set us on a path where we can build the things we want. Disabled people, families and carers have come up with ideas that a "good life" involves many things. Some of these things are in the diagram below.

Figure 1 – What is a good life?

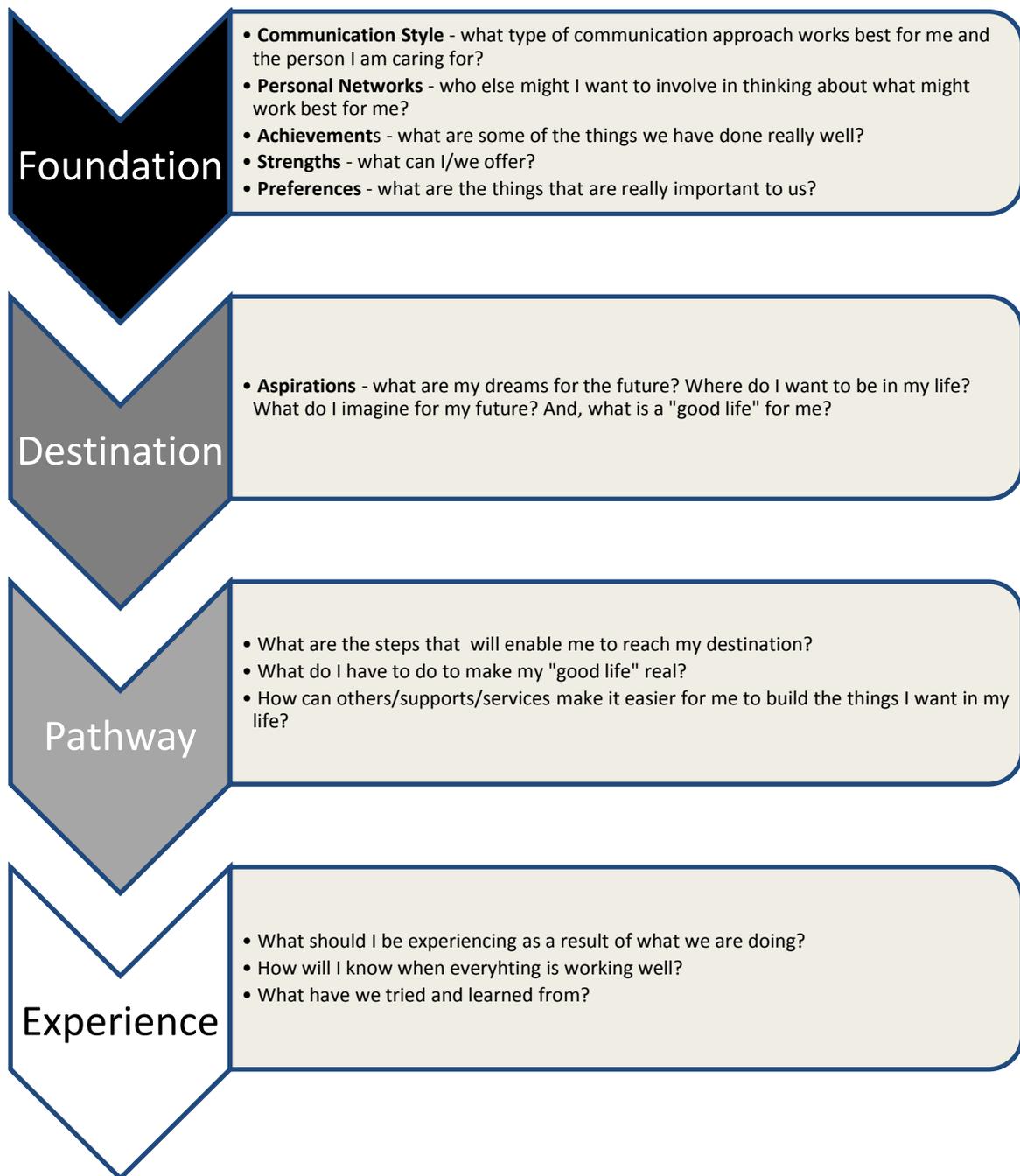


A good life can be associated with:

Being connected with family/whanau	Having friendships	Employment
Living where I want with whom I want	Education	Contributing to the community
Having fun	Being valued	Being able to get around

Personal Planning

Key steps and questions when planning with a support organisation



Trying new things – informed choice

Informed = knowing or educated

Choice = selection or decision between alternatives or possibilities

A dilemma for carers is that sometimes the people we support have had a limited range of experiences. If an individual has not had an assortment of experiences

and/or been exposed to a variety of options, then it is very hard to make an informed choice regarding what they might really want. If people have had limited experiences, then “aspirations/dreams” may be defined as “what I prefer out of what I have known”.

Personal planning can be a chance to try new things out. We can then watch closely to see what might work well or what might need to be changed.

In supporting an individual to be exposed to a new experience, it is useful for carers to think how to “safeguard” the person. This means we consider how to best make sure everything has the greatest chance of being a good experience. We may need to think about a person’s safety:

- physical
- emotional
- psychological and
- social.

Personal planning can be a balance between throwing open the doors to new experiences (which will form the basis for decision-making regarding personal aspiration) and ensuring the individual retains a large measure of control over what is happening.

For some people we support, “informed choice” happens when people actually experience something. If we watch closely we can adapt things as we go along.

Things to think about when a plan is written

- **The language that a plan is written in reflects the words used by the individual and the carer.**

For some people, a “plan” may be best done with pictures or video.

- **The format of the plan is designed in a way to demonstrate a logical flow of ideas.**

Whether the plan is primarily written or visual there is a clear link between the person’s (and your) “dreams” and preferences and the things that will happen in the short-term.

Areas where support is given, directly links to what you want to achieve.

- **Statements are written in a positive manner that describe what will be achieved – not what may be eliminated e.g.**

“ x will identify a social club they want to belong to” not “ x will watch less television”

“ x will buy clothes that will be appropriate to attend a job interview” not “ x will address their poor hygiene and image”

- **Statements that are recorded are specific.**

Everyone knows who will do what and when.

- **You can check the accuracy of the plan before it is finalised /circulated.**

You have the opportunity to agree that the written plan reflects what you were saying and tasks that were agreed to.