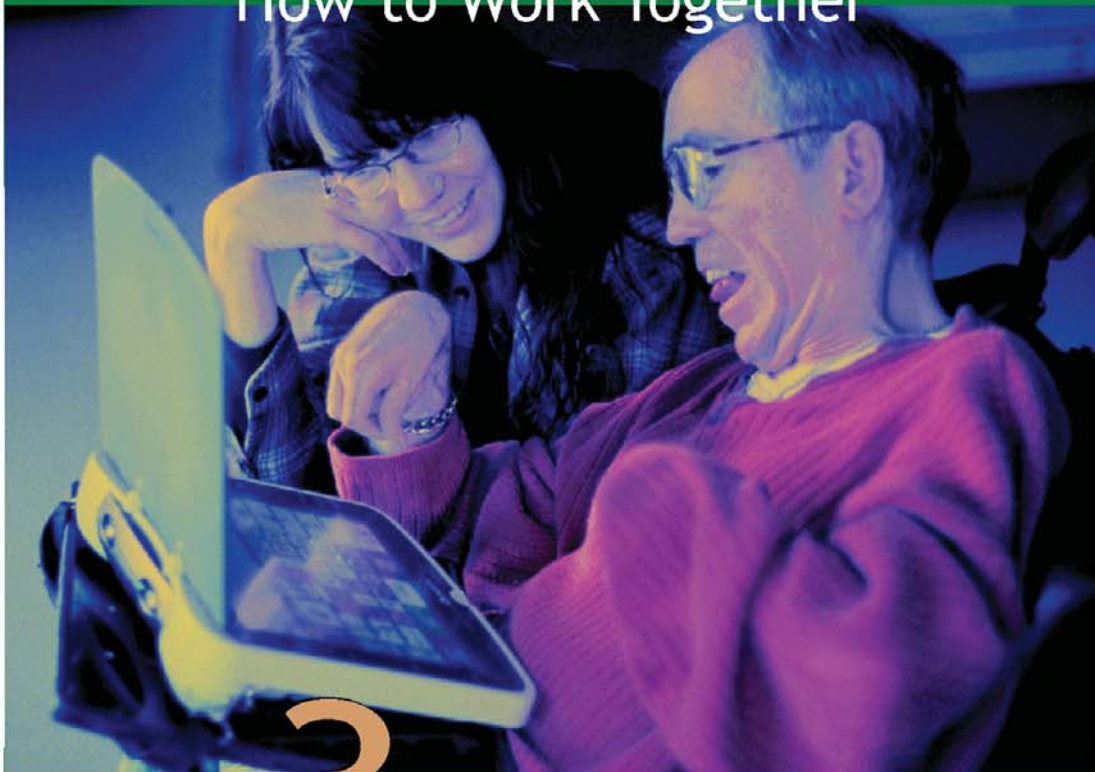


Consumer in Direction Personal Assistance

How to Work Together



3 Communication

LEARNING GUIDE

Distributed by:

 **Program Development Associates**

www.disabilitytraining.com

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Introduction

Welcome to Consumer Direction in Personal Assistance: How to Work Together. This program is made up of a video series along with Learning Guides. Consumer Direction in Personal Assistance: How to Work Together is also available as a CD-ROM. Go to <http://www.infouse.com> for more information.

Consumer Direction in Personal Assistance: How to Work Together is intended for people who are personal assistants or who are training to become personal assistants. Four units prepare personal assistants for being on the job as a crucial element in the independence of people with disabilities:

- Unit 1 – Consumer Direction: What Is It? introduces the person with a disability as the boss in the personal assistance relationship.
- Unit 2 – Health and Safety provides information about how a personal assistant can stay healthy and safe on the job while reinforcing the leadership of the person with a disability.
- Unit 3 – Communication reviews real world communication techniques that can help personal assistants and the people with disabilities that they work for to work together more effectively.
- Unit 4 – Rights and Responsibilities details a roadmap to what the personal assistant and the person with a disability are each entitled to as well as what each has a responsibility to do.

Each unit contains three lessons. The program presents each lesson in this order:

1. Introduction (video)
2. Facts (Learning guide)
3. Perspectives of Consumers, Personal Assistants, and Agency Representatives (video)
4. Questions (Learning Guide)
5. Question Feedback (Learning Guide)

This learning guide contains Facts and Questions for each Lesson within an Unit. These are designed to enhance your understanding of the material. The video will ask you to stop and review the learning guide when it is appropriate to review. The Questions sections also contain explanations of the correct answers (feedback).

Note on Language: This video shows people using several different ways of referring to people with disabilities and the people who are hired to do work for them. That language may be confusing. Below we list the different terms used:

Person with a Disability = Consumer = Employer =
Person with a Disability = Client

Personal Assistant = Attendant = Worker = Personal Care Attendant =
Aide = Chore Person = Home Care Worker

How to Use the Video and Learning Guide

Each Lesson is structured in the same way. Begin with the video. The video will play an introduction to the lesson. When the introduction has completed, the video will ask you to stop and review the Facts listed in this Learning Guide.

This Learning Guide has Facts for each of the three lessons in Unit 1. Turn to the appropriate Facts pages and review. When you have completed the Facts pages, restart the video from where you had paused it.

The next part of the video plays interviews with consumers, personal assistants, and agency representatives for their perspectives on issues raised by the lesson. When the Perspectives section has completed, you will again be asked to stop the video and turn to the Learning Guide.

The Learning Guide also contains Questions for review in each lesson. The Guide also provides answers to the questions and the Feedback about those answers. When you have finished reviewing the Question Feedback in this Learning Guide, you are done with the Lesson.

Note: If you are viewing this in a group, we recommend having a discussion after each video section on what has been shown.

Unit 3

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UNIT 3 – COMMUNICATION

This Learning Guide accompanies Unit 3. Unit 3 has three lessons:

1. Stay focused, ask questions

This lesson provides tips for a personal assistant to keep focused on the job, to sharpen listening skills, and to ask questions to clarify what the consumer wants.

2. Positive problem-solving and feedback

This lesson first teaches how to prevent problems with good communication. Sometimes problems happen anyway. In this case the lesson demonstrates positive problem-solving techniques. Finally the lesson reviews how to give and receive feedback.

3. Disability awareness and cultural sensitivity

This lesson illustrates how to speak respectfully about people with disabilities. The lesson shows how a personal assistant can serve as a model for others in communicating with people with disabilities. The lesson also gives tips on how to communicate with people with different types of disabilities.

Begin by starting the video.

Lesson 1

Stay focused, ask questions

FACTS

Keep the focus on the job

It can be harder to keep the focus on the job when working in someone's home than in an office or shop. Here are a few tips.

- When you arrive, go over the plan for the day with the consumer. If adding a task possibly means not getting to something else planned, say so: "That means I won't get to the vacuuming. OK to put that off till tomorrow?"
- Don't get distracted by social contact. Remind the consumer (and yourself when necessary) that the main reason you're there is to get a job done. But always be considerate: "Oh Mrs. Silva, I'd love to have a cup of coffee with you, but I'll drink it on my break time."
- Shift overly personal conversation back to the task at hand: "If your son doesn't call tomorrow, then you can call him. I better get started in the bedroom."

Listen closely

By listening carefully and asking the right questions (next screen), you show respect for the disabled person and you improve communication.

But listening isn't always easy. Sometimes we think we already know what the other person is going to say. Other times we want to jump in and "correct" him. Here are a few tips.

- Wait until the other person is done speaking before you talk.
- Rephrase what you heard to be sure that you understood what was meant: "So what you're saying is..."
- Listen carefully without jumping to judgment. Accept the other person's feelings as his own without trying to change them.
- Try to see the issue from her perspective. Put yourself in her place for a

moment and imagine what the situation may feel like.

- Show you are listening carefully by making eye contact.

Asking questions

Asking the right question at the right time can make a big difference.

- Ask questions to learn how the employer wants the job done. Don't assume you know. Even people with the same background or disability may want routine things done differently. Ask "Do you have a way you prefer having this done?"
- Ask questions to deal with small issues before they become big problems: "I'll need to be about 30 minutes late tomorrow. Is that OK? I can work later today."
- Ask questions in a way that doesn't make the other person feel bad or uninformed. For example, say, "Which tablecloth would you like tonight?" not "I don't think the green one looks good, do you?"
- Ask questions to help an unsure consumer feel more confident in his ability to direct your work. "You're the boss, Bill. Do you want it lower?"

Lesson 1

Stay focused, ask questions

QUESTIONS

1. If the disabled person wants you to visit with him and to put off your work tasks until tomorrow, this is OK.
True or False

2. If you've been a personal assistant for years and know how to do the job, then there's no need to ask questions.
True or False

3. Both the personal assistant and the employer must ask questions and listen carefully to have good communication.
True or False

4. You shouldn't rephrase what the other person says because it is repetitive and insulting to do so.
True or False

5. Which are important for getting your work day off to a good start?
 - A. Have a cup of coffee or tea and decide what you want to do for the day.
 - B. Review the plan for the day with the employer and check for any changes she may want in the schedule.
 - C. Arrive and start to work according to the work agreement.
 - D. Switch today's work schedule with the Thursday schedule so you can leave early.

6. Which of the following is NOT a good way to show that you are listening?
 - A. Keeping eye contact.

- B. Interrupting the other person while he or she is speaking.
 - C. Rephrasing what the other person said.
 - D. Not passing judgment.
7. Your employer wants to tell you about the birth of her new granddaughter and show you pictures. You should tell her:
- A. You want to call her daughter right now and congratulate her.
 - B. You both need to talk about this right now because her daughter shouldn't have a child at her age.
 - C. You'll make coffee right now and she can tell you all about it.
 - D. You would be happy to talk with her, but you need to get your tasks done first.

Lesson 1

Stay focused, ask questions

QUESTION FEEDBACK

1. False.

Your job is to perform tasks that help the disabled person to live independently. Be friendly and considerate, but don't get distracted if it keeps you from doing your tasks.

2. False.

Asking questions is important for all personal assistants, whether or not you are experienced. The only way you can learn how the employer wants the job done is to ask questions.

3. True.

Communication is a two-way street. Even if you are a good listener and communicator, you cannot have good communication if your employer does not listen and talk to you effectively.

4. False.

Rephrasing what you heard is an excellent way to make sure that you understood what was meant. You do not need to rephrase excessively or in an insulting way.

5. B.

By starting your work day focused on the job, you help yourself stay focused for the rest of the day. Reviewing your plan with the employer helps you make sure your tasks are meeting her needs.

6. B.

When you interrupt someone, you prevent him or her from finishing their thoughts. You also substitute your own ideas and judgments for the other person's. Good listening involves focusing on what the other person is saying.

7. D.

Even if the news is exciting, you need to get your work done first. Be friendly, but also know that disrupting your schedule to talk about news will keep you from completing your tasks.

You are now done with Unit 3, Lesson 1.

Lesson 2

Positive problem-solving and feedback

FACTS

Preventing problems through good communication

The best approach to problems is preventing them in the first place. Using these guidelines can help you keep small difficulties from growing into big problems.

- Say up front what you can and can not do. If you know you can't be there at 1 PM every day, say so. It's better to negotiate early on than make excuses later.
- Don't look for blame. Was she unclear or did you misunderstand? No matter. Just say "Sorry. Please tell me again how you want it cooked."
- Don't be afraid to ask for what you need to do the job properly. If you don't have the right supplies to do the cleaning correctly, tell your employer you need some supplies and suggest that you can pick them up (if that is one of your tasks).
- If you have been asked to do something that you think is unsafe, tell your employer. The two of you can decide how to do the project correctly and safely.
- Keep the communication open. If you believe that your employer is not satisfied with the way you're doing your job, bring that up and say: "John, I feel that you're not satisfied with my work. Anything you can suggest?"

Positive problem-solving

Problems can happen even with good communication. Positive problem solving involves seeing a wider picture of the issue and getting to the roots of a problem. Positive problem solving can help avoid bad feelings.

- Talk with your employer about what caused the problem.
- Suggest more than one way to solve the problem.
- If you feel like you or your employer are getting upset about the problem, suggest that you each take a little time to calm down before you try to solve the problem.
- Not all problems can be solved by the two of you. Ask your employer if bringing in a third person would help. The third person could be an agency

representative, or a friend or relative of the employer.

Giving and receiving feedback

Being able to give feedback — telling someone what you think is done well and what is not — is at the heart of any personal assistance relationship. Feedback can be either positive or negative. It is important to know how to give and receive both.

- Let the employer know you appreciate positive feedback: “Thanks, Margaret. It’s good to hear that you like the way I prepared that.”
- When giving positive feedback, be specific about what you thought was done well: “I appreciate hearing that, Mr. Morito. But you make it easy since you’re so clear about how you want your laundry done.”
- Admit a mistake or misunderstanding if you think you acted incorrectly: “Yes, that was pretty clumsy of me. I’ll pay more attention next time.”
- Don’t react to criticism by returning criticism. Instead, listen for how the employer wants the job done and repeat that: “Oh, I must have misunderstood. Sure, I’ll buy Fido Treats next time.”
- Be honest, polite, and respectful when answering negative feedback. Try not to be defensive or make excuses. Explain why you did what you did: “I moved it there because I thought the carpet cleaning would be today.”
- Giving negative feedback is more difficult since the consumer is your boss. Still, let her know she is acting in a way that makes it hard for you to do your job: “I agree the fish was overcooked, Doris. But when you criticized me in front of your guests, I felt hurt. I’d appreciate it if you wouldn’t criticize my work in front of others.”

Lesson 2

Positive problem-solving and feedback

QUESTIONS

1. If your employer criticizes you, you should criticize him back.
True or False

2. The best feedback—positive or negative—is specific and describes exactly what was right or wrong.
True or False

3. It's okay to admit that you cannot do something.
True or False

4. All problems stem from bad communication skills.
True or False

5. You sense that your employer isn't happy with something you are doing but he isn't saying anything. It's okay for you to bring it up so you can improve.
True or False

6. Which of these ways of communicating help prevent problems?
 - A. Saying up front what you can do.
 - B. Refusing to accept blame if you feel you are right
 - C. Not asking for things you need to do your job.
 - D. Keeping silent about a task that you think is unsafe.

7. You have to clean the bathroom, but the consumer has run out of cleaning solution. What should you do?
 - A. Go out and buy cleaning solution yourself.

- B. Ask the consumer how to get cleaning solution.
 - C. Make do without cleaning solution and just use water.
 - D. Refuse to clean the bathroom.
8. Which of the following positive feedback is the most specific?
- A. "Good job! You're doing great work."
 - B. "I really like what you did with the groceries."
 - C. "Keep doing whatever you're doing when you go shopping."
 - D. "The way you arrange the food in the fridge makes cooking easier for me."

Lesson 2

Positive problem-solving and feedback

QUESTION FEEDBACK

1. False.

Never respond to criticism with criticism. The best way to respond to negative feedback is to admit a mistake or misunderstanding. Find out what your employer wants so you can avoid problems in the future.

2. True.

When you give specific feedback, you help the disabled person understand why something turns out well or poorly. Ask questions if you receive feedback that is not detailed. That will help you to understand exactly what your employer liked or did not like.

3. True.

One way to avoid problems is to be clear about what you can and can't do. If you cannot do something, it is better to say so. If you try to do it you could end up hurting yourself or the consumer.

4. False.

Good communication cannot prevent all conflicts. Sometimes problems come up when something unexpected happens. Sometimes problems come up when there is a simple difference of opinion. But good communication can still help you solve these problems after they occur.

5. True.

Don't be afraid to bring up problems before your employer mentions them. It's much easier to deal with them before they become a big issue.

6. A.

It is better to say what you can and cannot do early than to make excuses later.

7. B.

Ask for whatever you need to get your job done properly. But don't take this situation as an excuse to avoid a task, or go behind the consumer's back. She needs to know what you need, and to be part of the solution.

8. D.

The best kind of positive feedback lets you know exactly what you're doing well, so that you can continue doing it. When the feedback is vague, it is hard to understand what part of your actions is successful.

You are now done with Unit 3, Lesson 2.

LESSON 3

Disability Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity

FACTS

We are all people first

When speaking about people with disabilities, use the following guidelines:

- Use language that focuses on the person, not the disability. Say “a woman with a hearing impairment,” not “a deaf woman.”
- Use words that reflect differences. For instance, “visually-impaired” is not the same as “blind,” “hard of hearing” is not the same as “deaf”.
- Use words that focus on abilities, not disabilities. Say “that programmer we met,” not “that guy in the wheelchair who programs.”
- Don’t say “normal” or “healthy” to refer to people without disabilities. These terms suggest that people with disabilities are NOT normal or healthy.

Raising awareness of disability

You may notice some people are not comfortable being with persons with disabilities. These tips can increase everyone’s comfort level.

- Speak directly to the disabled person, not to a friend or assistant.
- Treat adults as adults. Show the same respect toward a person with a disability as you would if he did not have the disability.
- Don’t assume that because a person can not speak clearly, she can not think clearly.
- One disability doesn’t indicate multiple disabilities. You probably don’t need to speak louder to a person in a wheelchair.
- Don’t be embarrassed if you “make a mistake” like saying “See you later” to a visually impaired person.
- Show respect by making changes that ease communication. For instance, move to where someone with a hearing impairment can see you more easily.
- If you offer help, wait until the offer is accepted. Then take instructions.

- Listen closely to someone who has difficulty speaking. Don't cut him off. If necessary, ask questions that have short answers, or can be answered with a nod or shake of the head.

Communication for particular disabilities

Personal assistants may need to learn how to communicate with persons with certain disabilities. Ask the person what is the best way to communicate with him.

If a person has hearing difficulties:

- Look directly into the person's face while speaking.
- Not all people with hearing impairments can lip-read. Nevertheless, don't cover your lips with your hand or have objects in your mouth while speaking.
- Use paper and pencil if that helps.
- Beware of false impressions based on body language. For instance, head nodding doesn't necessarily mean, "I agree."
- Don't repeat the same words or phrases if a person has trouble understanding you. Try another word or mode of expression.
- Minimize distractions.

If a person has speech difficulties:

- Don't pretend you understand when you don't.
- Allow enough time to communicate.
- Be aware of what your own facial expressions are saying.
- Be patient. You will soon learn to understand them better, especially if you are aware of their activities and preferences.

If a person is visually-impaired:

- Identify yourself when you enter a room.
- When talking in a group, identify the person you're talking to.
- When speaking about something you are looking at, describe it first.

If a person has Alzheimer's disease or dementia:

- Speak slowly. Use short words and sentences. One message at a time.
- Take the time for the person to respond.
- Match actions and words. Maintain eye contact, use touch. Use a gentle tone of voice.
- Use smiles.
- Provide structure by telling the person what to expect. "Now we're going to the living room." Include yourself in the activity.
- Even if you can't understand the content of a message, talk about and name the emotion: "I can see you are worried."
- Let the person tell the same story over and over.

Lesson 3

Disability Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity

QUESTIONS

1. It's okay for people who are uncomfortable talking with people with disabilities to speak to you instead of speaking to the consumer.

True or False

2. You have to talk louder and slower to a person with a disability.

True or False

3. It is okay to ask a person with a disability if she would like help with something.

True or False

4. It is okay to ask a person with speech or hearing difficulties what is the best way to communicate with him.

True or False

5. What is the best way to talk to someone with Alzheimer's or dementia?

- A. Speak slowly, use short words and sentences, match your actions to your words
- B. Identify yourself whenever you enter the room, or before speaking when you're talking in a group
- C. Face the person, avoid obscuring your lips when speaking, or use paper and pencil when necessary

6. What is the best way to talk to someone with a hearing impairment?

- A. Speak slowly, use short words and sentences, match your actions to your words
- B. Identify yourself whenever you enter the room, or before speaking when you're talking in a group
- C. Face the person, avoid obscuring your lips when speaking, or use paper and pencil when necessary

7. What is the best way to talk to someone with a visual impairment?

- A. Speak slowly, use short words and sentences, match your actions to your words
 - B. Identify yourself whenever you enter the room, or before speaking when you're talking in a group
 - C. Face the person, avoid obscuring your lips when speaking, or use paper and pencil when necessary
8. You should not refer to a person without a disability as "healthy" or "normal" because
- A. You are not a doctor.
 - B. There's no such thing as a healthy person.
 - C. No one is completely normal.
 - D. This suggests that a person with a disability is abnormal or unhealthy.

LESSON 3

Communication: Disability Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity

QUESTION FEEDBACK

1. False.

You can make everyone more comfortable by politely directing the conversation back to the disabled person.

2. False.

Most people with disabilities do not require that you speak louder or slower. Let the disabled person tell you if he wants you to speak louder or slower.

3. True.

Wait for the person to reply whether or not she needs or wants help. Wait for instructions or ask what would work best in the situation.

4. True.

It will be easier for both you and the disabled person if you know the best way to communicate with one another.

5. A.

A person with Alzheimer's or dementia will understand you better if you speak slowly and use short words and sentences.

6. C.

Facing the person enables him to read your lips. Paper and pencil also can be used when lip reading or hearing is difficult.

7. B.

When a person with a visual disability is present identify yourself when joining a group or before speaking. This is a basic courtesy.

8. D.

Just because a person has a disability does not make him unhealthy or abnormal. He has a right to feel offended if you imply this.

You are now done with Unit 3, Lesson 3.

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Unit 3 - Communication

UNIT 3 reviews real world communication techniques that can help personal assistants and the people with disabilities that they work for to work together more effectively.

Covers: • Open Talk, Feedback • Awareness Words
• Work with Differences • Staying Flexible

This training series, along with the accompanying videos, is intended for people who are personal assistants or who are training to become personal assistants. The series focuses on the concept of the person with a disability as the “boss” who manages the services he or she wants. Other units in this series include:

Consumer Direction – What is it? • Unit 1
Health and Safety • Unit 2
Rights and Responsibilities • Unit 4

Learn from insiders. You’ll get tips, viewpoints and experiences from people who need your services, from personal assistants and from placement agencies.

Learn at your own pace. Use printed Learning Guides for facts presented in each unit. Review lessons, stop-and-start the

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