

# Person-Centered Thinking

## WHAT IS WORKING; WHAT IS NOT WORKING

Beginning March 2013, Progressive Community Services, RHD, Triality (now Easter Seals) and Eitas started a long journey to improve service delivery through a process called “Person Centered Thinking Coaches”. Following a two-day training in Person Centered Thinking Skills, Person Centered Coaches were identified among their staff. The role of a Person Centered Coach is multi-faceted. Coaches use person centered thinking skills in their everyday work, and also demonstrate the tools and skills to co-workers with the goal of making them habitual across the organization. Ultimately, the end result is an improvement in the quality of life for people who are supported by these agencies. Throughout the year, Coaches met together every other month to explore the use of Person Centered Tools, and increase comfort level with using the tools in everyday situations. On the off month, Coaches met with Leaders in their organization to share experiences and learning with hopes of designing organizational systems that support Person Centered practices. Michael Smull, a pioneer in Person Centered Thinking and Planning facilitated the Coaches and Leaders meetings. The group pooled resources in order to purchase services, support and technical assistance from Michael Smull.

The following are stories that illustrate the “change” that has occurred since beginning the Person Centered Thinking Coaches process. There are three levels of change that we were seeking as a result of the process:



**Level 1 Change:** Any changes you make now that result in a positive difference in the lives of people who use services or in your own work life.

**Level 2 Change:** Any changes an organization makes to its practices, structure or rules that result in positive differences in the lives of many people who use services or many employees, regardless of the size or structure of the organization

**Level 3 Change:** Any change in practice, structure and rules made at the system level. These changes have an effect on many organizations, and therefore many people’s lives.

Heather Bell, Day Program Manager and Brandon Frederick, Day Program Outreach Coordinator both with RHD’s Imagine That! studio <http://imaginethatkc.org/> illustrate the “change” that has occurred since beginning the Person Centered Thinking Coaches process.



**SHARING SUCCESS**

**Greg’s Day at the Studio**

We discussed what’s working and what’s not working with our artist Greg. Through this method we found ways of helping him enjoy his time at the studio more. Greg was interested in having a more productive time at the studio by lowering his anxiety. With the matching tool, we asked about which artists Greg enjoyed working with. Although we are not able to accommodate his requests every day at the studio, he is with a group of peers that he is comfortable with on most of the days that he attends.

Small excerpt from Greg’s Working/Not Working:

What’s Working	What’s Not Working
Working with peers who are supportive	Being around others who interrupt his concentration
Learning new mediums	Spaces to go to when anxious (this has been modified)
Researching various art forms	Not having one on one time to learn skills

Staff has used the what’s working and not working tool in addition to the matching tool to work on what is important to the artist. After finding out that the artist was having issues with peers in his group, staff rearranged the schedule so that the artist would have one or two days a week with a group that would allow him to have more one on one time. The tools also brought up topics such as anxiety issues, which allow staff to work on finding solutions.

*Heather Bell, Day Program Manager*



For me, Person Centered Thinking has been a means to change my thought process and approach to my job. I try to step back and think about things in a more person-centered way, not only just focusing on an individual’s outcomes and goals, but truly trying to understand and foster what makes an individual happy. I think it has only increased my understanding of how a 'negative behavior' is often times just a breakdown of communication where the needs of someone are not being communicated or heard effectively. The tools, especially “Important To/

Important For,” have been a huge help in trying to understand what the best direction is to go in. Finding those every important overlaps in what is “important for” a person and what is “important to” them is a simple yet amazing concept. We have had small successes with individuals and using these kinds of tools; we are still implementing and helping others see in this way. I strongly believe that through more implementation and consistency we have the ability to help those we support in an even stronger, healthier, and successful manner.

*Brandon Frederick, Day Program Outreach Coordinator*



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