

A supported model of decision-making:

The starting point:

The starting point is not a test of capacity, but the presumption that every human being is communicating all the time and that this communication will include preferences. Preferences can be built up into expressions of choice and these into formal decisions. From this perspective, where someone lands on a continuum of capacity is not half as important as the amount and type of support they get to build preferences into choices. (Beamer, 2001)

Basic Assumptions of Supported Decision Making

- All human beings communicate
- Everyone expresses affective responses to an experience. These can become clear preferences with support.
- These choices and preferences are the building blocks of decisions
- Everyone uses their support networks in making decisions that are difficult for them
- When people's choices and preferences directly lead to action, this means someone is controlling their own life, even if they need substantial help to make their choices happen.

Support me in my decision

Reflect and document

Give me information

Get to know me – LISTEN!

What decision do I need to make?

Is this decision important to me?

What are all my choices?

Consider new possibilities and opportunities.

I need a range of experiences before I can know what my choices are. You need to help me have a life!

I need practice with small decisions

**I maybe passive and unwilling to choose!
This maybe because I have had a life
time of not being heard!**

Get to know me - LISTEN!

Truly “listen” to me. “Listen” to my sounds, my cries, my laughter, my scratches, my smiles, my grimaces, my tapping, my shouts, my silences. Follow my eyes to things that interest, excite or perhaps scare me. Don’t only ‘hear’ the things that you want to hear, rather listen to understand me.

Spend time with me doing things I enjoy. You are more likely to learn how I communicate this way because we all communicate about things we enjoy.
What is it about these things that I enjoy?

Get to know the people who know me, love me and focus on my capacities. They are most likely to know me and the way I communicate intimately. They will know my stories too. My history and my stories will influence the choices I make.

Think about what the people in my community say about me

Record very detailed information about how I communicate. You may need to interpret a lot of what I say. You may not be right! Consider using tools like multimedia profiling.

Give me information

We all need information to make decisions.

We need it in a way we are likely to understand. Please speak my language

I may have problems seeing or hearing you

I may need A LOT of time to understand what the choice involves. Present the choices in a way I can manage

I may not always get everything you say to me. Even if I am nodding and saying yes

If I sometimes act in ways that challenge you, it may be because I am not understanding

Please don't judge! I need unbiased information.

Reflect and document

Think about my likes, dislikes, culture, values, preferences, life experiences.

Check interpretations. You can't necessarily ask me directly. So be a good observer. Compare what I communicate in different situations and with different people. Keep a record of my responses over time

What do people who love me say? Put everyone's ideas together

If everyone is unclear about what I am saying make a guess and stick to it! Keep a record of how I respond to your interpretation. Review this record with everyone

Be clear as to what everyone's hopes, assumptions and agendas are. These might affect the decision making process.

Record all this information in detail using imaginary methods (photos, multimedia etc)

Review the information regularly

Support me in my decision

Base the decision on all the information gathered.

My choice may differ from the people who love me. Like anyone, I am likely to choose what is important TO me. The people who love me may choose what is important FOR me.

Keep in mind, that I have a right to take risks and make mistakes. Like anyone, I learn from my failures and successes.

Perhaps I need an opportunity to experience my choices before I ultimately decide what it is I want.

Whatever I choose I will need your support to see it through

Allow me to live with the consequences of my decisions

Like anyone, my choices may change over time

I may need help understanding that sometimes I can't have everything I want

Because of my life experiences I may be intimidated to make a choice that is unpopular. Please be aware of this.

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Implications of this Model:

- Takes time
- Is not dependent of scientific or quantitative methods
- The need to develop 'circles of support'
- The need to communicate in alternative formats
- Broad based organisational support
- Documentation and practices that support the model
- Clear pathways to other channels if necessary (grievance and legal)