


**Whose
Decision
Is It
Anyway?**

**USER'S
GUIDE**



Whose Decision Is It Anyway?

A four-part set of videotapes and workbooks on promoting self-determination for people with developmental disabilities

- Young Adults Working on Self-Determination
- Parents Prompting Self-Determination
- Educators Encouraging Self-Determination
- Service Providers Supporting Self-Determination

User's Guide

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- Section 1 - Introduction

Whose Decision Is It Anyway? is a four-part set of videotapes and workbooks on self-determination.

Self-determination means having the opportunity and the support to make choices and take control of one's life.

These videos and workbooks introduce people to the idea of self-determination and its importance in their lives. The videos and workbooks also contain helpful information on providing opportunities to increase self-determination.

Each part of the set is intended for a different audience:

- Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities
- Parents of Adolescents with Disabilities
- Special Education Teachers
- Developmental Disabilities Service Providers

Sections 3 to 6 of this Guide contain descriptions of the people who appear on each of the videotapes, and what they talk about. The Sections also include information on how to use each of the videos and workbooks with different audiences.

These materials were developed with the help of nearly 200 people who shared information on the importance of self-determination in their lives and the things they have done to increase opportunities for the self-determination of others.



- Section 2 - Overview of Materials

Videotapes

There are four videotapes in this set:

- Young Adults Working on Self-Determination
- Parents Prompting Self-Determination
- Educators Encouraging Self-Determination
- Service Providers Supporting Self-Determination

Each videotape has people from that group talking about self-determination in their lives. The videotapes include information on the things that get in the way of self-determination, or the things that sometimes make it hard to become self-determined. The videos also include people talking about things that have helped them become self-determined or things that help other work on self-determination.

Workbooks

There are four different workbooks in this set, one to go with each videotape. Each workbook has *Six Questions to Ask Yourself* about opportunities for self-determination. For each question, there are suggestions that can be used to increase opportunities for self-determination. The questions contained in each of the workbooks are listed in sections 3-6 of this guide.



- Section 3 - Using the Young Adult Video & Workbook

The individuals appearing in this video include three high school students and three adults who have disabilities. If they had to describe their disability, they would probably call themselves *slow learners*. Mabel, Tony, Cindy, Mike,

"It addresses issues in a format that students relate to by peers. And it addresses issues that are very important to them."

Jennifer, and Philip talk about wanting to be in control of their lives, but they admit that it can be scary to take on that responsibility. They talk about the importance of trying new things so that they know what they like and what they don't like. They talk about how important it is to have people who encourage them to try new things and who help them when they

need it. Being responsible is the way that they show others that they can be in control of their own lives.

The video tape and workbook can be used with middle school and high school aged kids:

- individually, in small groups, or with a whole class;
- to increase awareness of self-determination;
- to stimulate conversation;
- as an introduction to a unit or class on living on your own;

"I think most of my students could find someone in the video they related to even though the ability levels are different."



Six Questions to Ask Yourself as a Young Adult

1. Do I try new things?

2. Do I ask for help when I need it?

3. Do I know how to make my own decisions?

4. Do I let people know what my decision is?

5. Do I learn from my mistakes?

6. Am I learning to be responsible?

- as a part of a transition class on community living;
- as part of a communications or career development class;
- in teen groups for discussions on transitioning out of school;
- in conjunction with panel presentation by older students;
- in conjunction with planning and the IEP process; and
- to revisit the concepts across the year.

The videotapes can also be used with parents:

"It is essential as teenagers grow into young adults to develop the tools to be more in control of their lives."

- at transition meetings to introduce self-determination;
- to help explain outcomes for their children.

The videotape can also be used with educators:

- to enlighten educators on self-determination



- Section 4 - Using the Parent Video & Workbook

The parents portrayed in this videotape include four mothers of high school age sons and daughters and a mother of a daughter who has been out of high school for several years. Pam, Hildegard, Paula, Kathy, and Fredi talk about parenting a young adult with developmental disabilities and the challenge of letting go of control while balancing concerns for health and safety of their children. They address the importance of giving choices, and allowing their kids to take risks, to try new things and to learn from mistakes.

"I kept thinking my son could not do this, but maybe he can. I will look for more ways for him to make his own choices."

Although no fathers are shown on this video, fathers can be very involved in the development of self-determination in their children. Ask fathers viewing the video if their involvement differs from that of the mothers on the tape. Do fathers and mothers have different experiences in prompting self-determination in their children?

"I recognized some of their feelings as my own."

The videotape and workbook can be used with parents

- individually, in small groups or with a large group;
- as their students transition to high school;
- as topical content for school parent groups;



Six Questions to Ask Yourself as a Parent

- 1. Do I give my young adult child as many choices as I can?**
- 2. Do I do things for my young adult child that they could do for themselves?**
- 3. Do I push my young adult child to try new things/**
- 4. Do I model ways to cope with mistakes and learn from mistakes?**
- 5. Do I allow more risk as my young adult child becomes more responsible?**
- 6. Do I give my young adult child opportunities to learn skills of daily living?**

- in parent support group;
 - to introduce dialogue between people;
 - at transition planning meetings;
 - at the start of school or a new class on independent living to include the parents in the process;
 - and for social workers to show to new parents or parents of younger kids.
- "Respite families often face the fear and worry of 'letting go' and what the future will bring for their children. Seeing this would be positive."*

The videotape can also be used with:

- educators, counselors, case managers, and service providers who need an understanding of the parents' perceptions.



- Section 5 - Using the Educator Video & Workbook

The three educators you hear from in this video work with young adults who have mild and moderate cognitive disabilities. David, Leah, and Greg discuss the difficulties of working within a system that supports students only until age 21, when many students may not be ready to take on the role of independent, responsible adults. Educators have a multifaceted charge of motivating

"It reinforced the ideas of choice, responsibility, and motivation."

students to make choices and to learn independent living skills, while setting up a safe environment that allows the students to learn from mistakes. Another integral role of educators in maintaining a good relationship with the family and helping them to understand the importance of self-determination for their student.

"A good reminder to let kids have choices even at an elementary level."

"I learned that independent living skills go beyond cooking, cleaning, vocation and leisure. True independence includes decision-making and living with consequences."



**Six
Questions
to Ask
Yourself as
a an
Educator**

- 1. Do I give as many opportunities for choice as possible?**
- 2. Do I have students try out situations where they learn more about their own preferences?**
- 3. Do I look for ways to motivate each student?**
- 4. Do I teach skills that lead to greater independence for the student?**
- 5. Do I allow students to learn from their mistakes?**
- 6. Do I work with parents to teach the importance of independence for students?**

The videotape and workbook can be used with:

- peer tutors working in the classroom;
- other classroom staff;
- parents and siblings;
- teachers in training as an introduction to choice and self-determination and in conjunction with practicum; *"The message is very clear: 'Give students a chance to own some of their education'."*
- staff in group homes for younger kids; and
- regular ed staff to gain understanding of allowing mistakes and other issues.



- Section 6 - Using the Service Provider Video & Workbook

In this video we hear from people who provide case management and vocational services to adults with developmental disabilities. Richard, Ernie, Paul, Leah, Joan, Cheryl, and George address the challenges of supporting young adults as they dream about their futures, set goals, and make their own decisions. Service providers work to learn skills of sharing information without telling the young adult what to do, and supporting decisions of the young adult that they may not agree with. It is important to include the young adult's family in the process as they will remain a lifelong source of support.

"I particularly like the workbook and the practical application of the suggestions it includes."

challenges of supporting young adults as they dream about their futures, set goals, and make their own decisions. Service providers work to learn skills of sharing information without telling the young adult what to do, and supporting decisions of the young adult that they may not agree with. It is

The video tape and workbook can be used:

- as an orientation for direct care staff of residential, vocational, and case management programs;
- for training foster care providers;

"The topics are very meaningful . . . service providers are always dealing with the issues of personal choice versus safety and program liability."



**Six
Questions
to Ask
Yourself as
as a Service
Provider**

- 1. Do I help young adults dream about their future?**
- 2. Do I help turn goals into short-term plans?**
- 3. Do I question whose values are guiding the services?**
- 4. Do I give information without telling people what to do?**
- 5. Do I work with the whole family?**
- 6. Do I support the young adult's decision even if I would make a different choice?**

- with transition specialists working with young adults facing life-style and work choices;
- in staff training to spark conversation, with work books for guided discussion; *"The discussion on values is very important . . . respect for individuals and their personal values."*
- for board of directors trainings; and
- with parents of transition age students.

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