

Chapter 6

Habilitation Skills

As we assist individuals, it's crucial that we focus on our role as "Instructional Support." Remembering the first Service Guideline - Competence - it's important for us to develop our training skills.

Learning Styles - VAK

There are three primary sensory learning styles: Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic. We use all three to learn, but it is very common that each person has a primary style. This style is not only the primary method we learn from, but it is also the primary method we use to instruct others. It's important to know what our own tendencies are and be mindful that others may have a different style than ours, and be able to accommodate their preferences to best meet their learning needs. Below are descriptions of each learning style.

Visual - Visual learners prefer to learn by seeing, watching or imagining. They do well with the use of pictures, color coding, maps and videos.

Auditory - Auditory learners prefer to learn through sounds and hearing. They do well with listening activities, reading, and activities involving discussion.

Kinesthetic - Kinesthetic learners prefer to learn by touching, feeling and movement. They do well with hands on activities, experiences, stories and movies that can be emotionally experienced, and activities that require movement. Doodling or performing a "mindless" activity while listening can help with learning.

Systematic Instruction and Task Analysis

Structured teaching, also known as task analysis or systematic teaching is a process of breaking the skill down into smaller steps. Structured teaching is used when:

1. Safety is an issue. It might be due to use of machinery or other safety concerns.
2. When the individual needs to learn in small steps. Many people with Autism need to have the skills they are learning broken into smaller steps, start from left to right, have the prompt for the next step built in to the process, use of a jig and other structured methods before they can learn. Do you think it might have been helpful if you could have used a jig as part of your training for the last activity?
3. When quality is an issue. These are considered when a person is completing tasks for work.

In supported living, the tasks we teach are also measured so there will be documentation for teaching methods that will be taught as you learn about each person's programs. Please pay close attention to this documentation. The purpose of documentation is to:

Fundamentals

- ensure growth in the individual's progress
- ensure that the teaching is consistent between trainers
- ensure that feedback is given to the program writer so that the program can be adjusted as needed
- know when to set new learning tasks for growth in a meaningful life

Your role is to be consistent in teaching. That's consistent with yourself and with other people who are also training the task. Imagine learning something from 5 different people and trying to make sense of their instructions. Each one is teaching in the way they like to learn and now how you like to learn. What do you imagine is going on in their heads? Take some answers (confusion, they give up trying) the good news is that in the next chapter, we will learn more about IISPs where you can find the training programs for each individual along with the instructions you are to follow.

Hierarchy of Prompting

"Prompts" are instructions, gestures, demonstrations, touches, or other things that are done to assist individuals in learning a new task or skill. Using a hierarchy of prompting is a systematic progression of decreasing the level from most assistance needed to least assistance needed. Not every person or every task begins at the lowest level (full physical assistance prompts), but the ultimate goal for every task is independence; no assistance needed.

6. Highest level:	Independence; no assistance needed
5. Indirect verbal/nonverbal prompts:	Does not tell - says things like "What's next?" and may gesture with head nods or eye cues
4. Direct verbal/nonverbal prompts:	Will point or say what needs to be done or said next
3. Modeling prompts:	Demonstrates what needs to be said or done next
2. Partial physical assistance prompts:	Limited physical assistance required, such as prompting by touching elbow or hand
1. Full physical assistance prompts:	For those who first require full "hand over hand" assistance

1. Full physical assistance is used when the person doesn't seem to understand other directions. You stand or sit right next to the person or directly across from them so they can make eye contact. By placing your hand over theirs and doing the movements required you begin to build that muscle memory that we already discussed. It's habit or just something you do without thinking. When teaching people with developmental disabilities it is used when people have had no training or you just can't seem to get them started.
2. Partial physical assist could be a nudge on the elbow to get the arm moving or a tap on the shoulder to get attention.
3. Modeling is showing the person what they are going to do and doing it right next to them. Modeling starts at a very young age when a child first learns to eat. What do you do when feeding a child their first spoonful of whatever? You open your mouth until they open theirs! It's a great teaching tool and no words are necessary!
4. Direct verbal means that you are telling the person what to do at each step. This is the most difficult step to fade away from. You may have a voice in your head telling you to check for people on the sidewalks but in reality no one is telling you how to drive your car when you are alone behind the wheel.
5. Indirect verbal prompts are a combination of gestures and speaking. More gestures and fewer words here! You begin to reposition yourself from right next to to next to but slightly behind. You are still close enough to assist and gesture without being in the line of sight. As a person, you are part of the prompt. Your physical appearance in the peripheral vision of the individual doing the task may mean that they won't reach independence if you are still in the picture.

Fundamentals

6. Independence is what we all are in our daily lives. We get up, eat breakfast, shower, shave, drive to work, do our jobs and go home. We go out, make plans for the weekend, see our friends. It's what we all want for the people we support. They should have no less of a life than you do.

Benefits of Backwards Chaining

1. When an individual experiences immediate success, the reward reinforces learning
2. Because the learner only needs to initially remember the last step, this is less taxing on short term memory
3. Eliminates the frustration of starting and not being able to finish, or getting lost in the middle
4. Learner is significantly more likely to stay involved in both the immediate and long term learning process
5. Is an easier method of teaching for the instructor, is more rewarding and prevents them from being tempted to finish the task themselves (which inhibits learning)
6. Because the experience is highly rewarding for both the learner and the instructor, it can also have a positive impact on the relationship
7. Over time with repetition, skill is more successfully transferred to long term memory

Error Free Learning

A type of learning that is frequently not discussed is error free learning. This is used when a new skill is being taught and you don't want any errors. Have you ever heard, "Let's practice the RIGHT way!"? Well it means that you don't want to practice mistakes. You want to do it correctly every time.

Error free training interrupts the stops and starts in a process, the requirement to ask for permission, and any number of other things. As a staff, you would watch as the task is performed and interrupt the part that isn't a step in the learning process. You would actually body block, move a hand to the next step or do other interrupting types of things. You might use your voice and make a sound. Moms use this when they clear their throats, give a look – you know the one, or say one word that signals for you to do the right thing. Take the next correct step.