

Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

5 PCT Core Concept: Important To and Important For and the Balance
Between Them



Introduction

These slides contain content adapted from the Administration for Community Living's Person Centered Counseling Training Program. The content includes text and narration from online courses. To view original content or for more information, please visit nwd.acl.gov or contact NoWrongDoor@acl.hhs.gov.

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Welcome! (1/3)

Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals must be able to recognize the difference between the concepts of important to and important for. They must also be able to guide people seeking support in determining what is important to and for them. They must be able to support people to address these aspects of their lives and express their preferred balance between the two. They can do this through person-centered discovery and planning strategies.

Welcome! (2/3)

In this lesson, the learner will review these concepts as they are defined by the Learning Community. They will practice differentiating the two areas. They will also learn more about why the sequence of discovery matters. And they will learn how to help people address their “to/for balance” when planning supports are reviewed.

Welcome! (3/3)

Learning Objective

After completing this lesson: You will be able to describe critical aspects of the important to and important for concepts and how to approach the balance between them for individuals.

Some Challenges of the “To/For Balance” in Services

Like everything else, service paradigms and views of people with disabilities have a history. Past views do still heavily influence today. They are embedded in service language, policies, beliefs, and practices. All of these are still rooted primarily in a medical model of disability. As a result many of these views often become common knowledge in communities even though they are inaccurate. Change often takes scrupulous review of these, along with specific effort to overcome them. The community movement has been in the works since the 1950s. However, there are still issues related to full inclusion, choice, direction, control, and opportunity.

— Sorting Out the “To/For Balance” (1/2)

People with all types of needs and expectations will come to the No Wrong Door system. Some people will more easily be able to share what is important to them. They will have a strong sense of what would make it possible for them to achieve those goals. They may also have the support of their families or others to achieve their goals. Others will come with histories and situations that make that more challenging.

— Sorting Out the “To/For Balance” (2/2)

Standard assessments and eligibility checklists will focus on what’s important for a person rather than what is important to them. Many professionals are committed to the core values of choice, direction, and control. However, the activities and expectations of their work can make it challenging. Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals must be able to support a discovery process that starts with what is important to a person.

Identifying Important To

Things that are important to a person are the things they are the least apt to be asked about or consider sharing. They are so much part of a person's life that they may not be noticed until missing. They are rooted in our circumstances and our culture. Ultimately, they are what make our lives uniquely ours.

Identifying and Addressing Important For

Most long-term service systems have been built around a focus on maintaining health and safety. However, these have not been offered on people's own terms. Too often, people experience long-term services and support as being kept "safe and healthy" through denial of choice, control, and direction. Supervision and limits have taken the place of educating, supporting and empowering. Control is used in place of shared responsibility and dignity of risk.

The “To/For Balance”

We all have things we know we should do (important for). And we all have things we want to do (important to). Achieving the “to/for balance” is something we engage in every day. All of us engage in risk-taking behaviors and less than perfect choices around our health. Some studies show that, even with chronic illnesses, 40 to 60% of people do not follow through with treatment recommendations.

The truth is most of us only do what we “should” do if it is connected to something that is important to us.

The Role of Discovery and Planning in the “To/For Balance”

When engaging in a discovery conversation and planning for responses, it’s important to keep these two things in mind:

The sequence in which you engage discovery matters. Always start with trying to find out more about what is important to the person.

People often do what is important for them willingly if it is connected to what is important to them. In planning as well as discovery, make sure to start with important to. Make sure the connection to important for goals is clear.

Person-Directed Balance

When only important for is considered, we have an institutional model. A person may be “safe and protected” but their life is not their own. On the other hand, for some people, if there is no support for the basics of health and safety, they are likely to fall ill, get hurt, or shorten their lives unnecessarily. Each person decides for themselves what is the right balance and what are the right tradeoffs within the “to/for balance.” Keep in mind, no one maintains perfect balance all the time.

Final Thoughts on the “To/for Balance” (1/2)

You may work with people who have challenges in understanding the “to/for balance.” It’s one thing to support decisions when you believe the person has made a free and informed choice. It’s another when you feel they may not understand the consequences.

In these situations, it’s even more important to start by learning what is important to the person. Ensure those things are the basis of options offered to them. Helping to make explicit the connection between “to and for” and offering enough support can be helpful. For example ensuring that a person who has grooming challenges understands the connection of clean clothing and good hygiene to maintaining the job they want.

Final Thoughts on the “To/for Balance” (2/2)

Offering them appropriate support options to help them arrive clean and well groomed is also important. When faced with real choices and real outcomes that matter to them, people frequently make better decisions for themselves. Even when people require some supervision or monitoring to stay safe, they can be provided options that work for them and embrace what is important to them.

Conclusion and Lesson Review (1/3)

- An essential skill in being person-centered is being able to discriminate between important to and important for. Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals must also be able to assist people seeking services to identify what is important to and important for themselves.
- Important to includes things that help a person feel satisfied, content, comforted, fulfilled, and happy in their life. It includes relationships, status, and choices about daily routines and options. It includes meeting health, safety, and societal norms on the person's own terms.

Conclusion and Lesson Review (2/3)

- Important for includes health, safety, and things that others see as important to fit in, such as grooming.
- Discovery should start with learning more about what is important to a person. It will help to illuminate options that will be meaningful to the person.
- No one has a perfect “to/for balance” but in general, people only willingly and seriously address health and safety in the context of what’s important to them.

Conclusion and Lesson Review (3/3)

Learning Objective

After completing this lesson, you will be able to describe critical aspects of the important to and important for concepts and how to approach the balance between them for individuals.

Reflection on Learning Objective

Directions: Review the objective(s) on this page. Write down your answers to the following questions:

1. What did you learn in this lesson that you felt was important?
2. What will you do differently because of the content in this lesson?