

Each of us want lives where we:



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An Overview of Essential Lifestyle Planning

Our quality of life everyday is determined by the presence or absence of things that are important to us - our choices, our rituals.

M. Smull, 1996

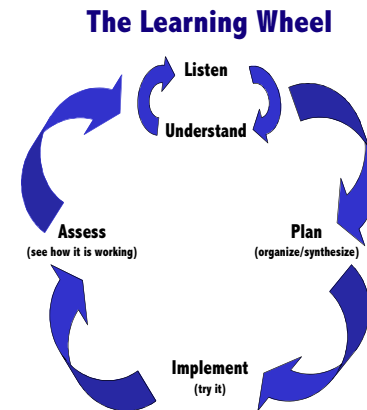
An Overview of Essential Lifestyle Planning

Adapted from an article by
Michael Smull and Susan Burke Harrison

Essential lifestyle planning is a guided process for learning how someone wants to live and for developing a plan to help make it happen. It's also:

- a snapshot of how someone wants to live today, serving as a blueprint for how to support someone tomorrow;
- a way of organizing and communicating what is important to an individual in “user friendly”, plain language;
- a flexible process that can be used in combination with other person centered planning techniques; and,
- a way of making sure that the person is heard, regardless of the severity of his or her disability.

Essential lifestyle plans are developed through a process of asking and listening. The best essential lifestyle plans reflect the balances between competing desires, needs, choice and safety.



Developing plans that really reflect how people want to live require:

- the perspectives of those who know and care about the person;
- their stories about good days and bad; and,
- what they like and admire about the person.

Good plans reflect the perceptions of the focus person and those who know and care about him or her. Learning how people want to live is just the beginning, the foundation. Helping people have their own lives requires changing:

- how we think;
- how we are organized; and
- how we act.