



## Resource 1: Active Support

Person centred active support is an evidence based approach to providing appropriate support and assistance to people with disability to participate in their daily lives. It involves listening and supporting a person to think about what they want from their lives now and in the future and providing effective support to improve participation, choice and control over their daily lives (active support). Active support is a way of implementing person centred approaches, positive behaviour support and communicating with people in a way that invites their participation.

Active support is designed to engage people meaningfully in their own lives to the best of their ability, as frequently as possible and as much as they wish in as small or large ways as they choose. Active support used regularly leads to beneficial outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers, as well as staff.

### ADHC Active support videos

Videos showing active support moments are at:

<http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/activesupport>

### Benefits of active support

**Active support practice has demonstrated better outcomes for people with disability through a more active and engaged life and improved self esteem and feeling of control. Its results include:**

- skill development
- increased independence and competence
- opportunities to build meaningful relationships and social inclusion
- role modelling appropriate behaviour
- decreases in challenging behaviour
- a reduction in mental illness including depression and anxiety.

**Service providers and support staff also benefit from active support through:**

- meaningful interactions with people with disability
- a happier more enjoyable work environment
- a supportive work culture
- a safer work environment
- a reduction in sick leave and injuries related to challenging behaviour.

## Active Support

Simone assists Alkira to smell herbs that they will use to cook the evening meal

Kim talks to Mei while cleaning her teeth, letting her know what she does before she does it

David helps Ann to hold the garden hose and they water the flowers together

Emily asks Gordana what she wants to do and waits for Gordana to tell her what she wants

Rory leaves Janice's hairbrush in front of her and waits to see whether Janice will pick it up and brush her hair

## Engagement

The mainstay of active support is engagement. It is important to recognise the distinction between engagement and disengagement. People can engage in meaningful activity and relationships in different ways by:

- doing the whole or only part of an activity/interaction/task
- taking the lead role
- joining in as an active participant
- being involved conversationally

Engagement **can be**:

- cutting the grass
- asking a shop assistant for a drink using the person's communication system (verbally, Key Word Sign, using objects or pictures).
- going shopping and putting items into the trolley
- playing sport of the person's choice
- cleaning their home
- preparing a meal
- getting money from the bank
- greeting neighbours
- using their own OPAL card on public transport
- testing the smoke alarm
- cheering on a sports team
- going to concerts
- inviting friends over for a cup of tea
- keeping in contact with family and friends

## Engaged

George answers the phone

Lisa returns a book to the library

Muhammad holds the bin while Peter places the rubbish into the bin

Deb is introduced to a visitor at the house and shakes their hand

Natasha places a stamp on an envelope and places her mail in the letterbox

Engagement is **not**:

- not knowing what activity is happening next
- sitting or standing disregarded while staff go about their business
- pacing about aimlessly due to boredom
- sitting in the car waiting because it takes too long to get in and out
- not being given the opportunity to go shopping for your own clothes
- rocking
- finger-flicking
- waiting for staff to get things done before 'programs' can commence
- long periods of free time
- being unable to participate in decisions about health and lifestyle.

## Not engaged

Chi is pacing around the garden, flicking a piece of paper

James withdraws Brad's money from the ATM while Brad waits in the van

Sangeeta waits in the lounge room while staff prepare for the house Christmas party

Alice bites her finger while waiting for Aaron to complete the washing