

**Generation Next: Aug 2019**  
**Resilience matters:**  
*a developmental approach*  
*to nurturing resilience in young people with disability*



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**Who knows someone with a disability through your family, friends or work?**



**So common,**  
and yet too often still seen as 'other'.

**People with different abilities**  
are part of the diversity of our community  
- embracing that diversity makes our communities  
rich, interesting and inclusive.

**Same needs - we all need:**

- ✓ to be valued and belong;
- ✓ to be cared about by and to care for others;
- ✓ to have meaningful activities;
- ✓ to have something to look forward to.

**The difference** is that we may need to think creatively and problem solve to find ways of enabling someone to achieve these things.

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**Introductions:**  
*Professional*

**Director, Centre for Developmental Disability Health, Monash Health, Victoria.**

Striving to improve the health of adults with intellectual and associated developmental disabilities.

Through Educational, Research, Clinical and Advocacy activities .

Worked for 30 years with children and adults with intellectual disabilities and their families and paid carers.




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**Introductions:**  
*Personal*

**Mother of two fabulous young adults:  
 Nick and Emma.**



**Nick**



We have shared 34 years of together;  
 he has enriched our lives enormously.

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**What does disability mean?**

**"Disability" – developmental or acquired - encompasses a huge range of differences in body function, appearance, health and is influenced by the physical and social environment.**

**Everyone's experience of their life, abilities, limitations and opportunities is unique.**



## Resilience

Life can be tough...

... resilience is about bouncing back and growing stronger through adversity.

With thanks to Michael Leunig

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## Resilience in people with disability

People with disability often face more adversity than most.

How can we support them to build their resilience to cope with, and grow stronger through, adversity?

With thanks to Michael Leunig

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## First: Optimise Health

When we are unwell, in discomfort, pain or distress... → Our ability to learn, participate and our quality of life is undermined.

- People with intellectual disability have **poor health**
- Mental and physical health conditions are often **unrecognised** and so **untreated** - particularly when people have trouble describing their feelings and symptoms.

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## First: Optimise Health

**Optimal health:**

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Dental / oral health
- Social & emotional health

→

**Optimal quality of life:**

- Comfort & wellbeing
- Function & independence
- Participation & contribution

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## Developing and nurturing resilience

- Many frameworks and models re building resilience.
- This model from 'Project Resilience' appealed to me because of its **developmental approach**.
- It informs and facilitates building 7 components of resilience at each developmental stage.

Ref: Wolin, S. & Wolin, S.  
The Child, Adolescent & Adult Phases of the Resiliencies.  
[www.projectresilience.com](http://www.projectresilience.com)

## 1. Independence

Having a sense of independence and control is an important component of resilience.

Physical, cognitive, social and/or sensory disability may make this more challenging.

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## Independence ~ challenges ~

As family members, support staff, therapists, we may focus on:

- deficits vs strengths,**
- helping vs coaching,**
- protecting vs stretching.**

**We need to find ways to:**

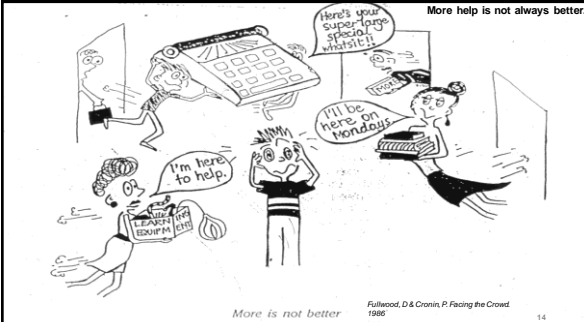
- ✓ **ENGAGE**
- ✓ **ENABLE**
- ✓ **EMPOWER**
- ✓ **ENHANCE**



*Balance needs to be found – and constantly reviewed:*

protection, safety, assistance  
VS  
risk, challenge, learning.

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**More help is not always better.**

*More is not better*

Fullwood, D & Cronin, P. Facing the Crowd 1986 14




## Harness the interest and motivation!

Learn about the young person – understand the implications of their disability ...and then..

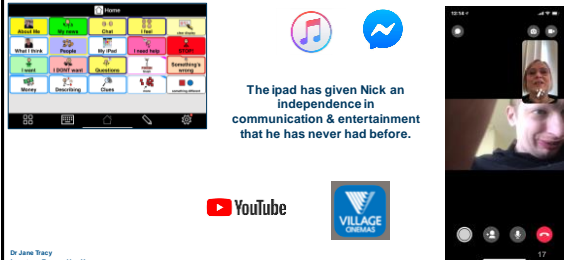
Explore and discover what the person is most **INTERESTED** in and most **WANTS** to do

...and build on what they **CAN** do to work **TOWARDS** their goal.





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## Independence in communication: Technology has transformed opportunities ...and lives!



The iPad has given Nick an independence in communication & entertainment that he has never had before.



 

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*"The new Lion King movie came out in July just before my birthday. I went to see it with my family and afterwards we had a party in Rocs bar at the Jam Factory to celebrate."*

### Power battles

Supporting the experience of choice, power and independence – even if not quite the reality!

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### A change in behaviour is communication

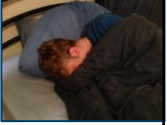

*"What is this behaviour telling me about this person's experience of their world right now?"*

*The behaviour always makes sense if you can see the situation from their point of view!*

Behaviour will change according to:

- Development
- Environment
- People



and will have a increased impact as size increases in adolescence!

### 2. Relationships

Having a sense of belonging, being valued by others and having trusted people to turn to are all contributors to resilience.

Physical, cognitive, social and/or sensory disability may make it more challenging to make and maintain relationships.

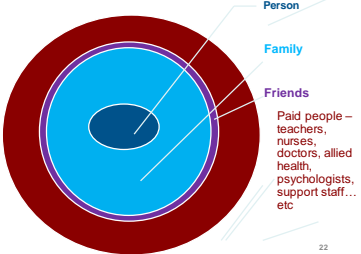



### Relationships ~ challenges ~

People may have **family & paid support people** in their life

– but few friends & other peer relationships.

Having a social world of paid carers makes people more vulnerable to repeated loss and grief.







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### Relationships ~ opportunities ~

Focus on building and maintaining informal supports through shared interests, activities and celebrations: family, friends, neighbours and others

### Relationships ~ Opportunities ~

People with disabilities – particularly those associated with cognitive and/or communication impairments may assistance in building and maintaining peer relationships.

- Create **opportunities** to meet peers.
- **Notice** who they like spending time with
- **Facilitate** opportunities to build relationships, after hours contact, shared activities, building shared interests – e.g. movies etc.
- Provide **practical help**: transport, personal care, time, social skills coaching, & other specific assistance as required.



Parties with friends & family



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**Healthy relationships are reciprocal.  
Giving and caring is a part of belonging.**

**Relationships  
~ using technology ~**

Technology helps people to use their strengths, to communicate with whom they want, to explore interests with like-minded people.

....and yes there are risks – and we need to manage those too.

**NETFLIX** **YouTube**

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**3. Communication:  
There are many different ways we communicate**

Facial Expression  
Body language  
Behaviour  
Vocalisation  
Speech  
Gestures  
Sign language – Auslan  
Showing – visual cues: objects, photos, pictures  
Music  
Art  
Electronic aids: Ipad, phone  
Writing

...and...  
Specialist communication Apps & devices  
?Other

**Nick cant speak, but he's got a lot to say – and he is a very resourceful communicator**

**Nick uses all of these other than speech and writing!**

**Communication**

Communication relates closely to independence and relationships.

**Communication**

Young children may have communication strategies that work within the family – but that is not adequate as they grow up.

Older children, adolescents and adults need to have independence and confidence in communication to engage directly with their wider community.

**4. Initiative:  
~ challenges ~**

**Being encouraged to initiate ideas and action;  
to problem solve and work towards a solution;  
to feel a sense of agency and competence  
- are components to resilience.**

Disability may make it more difficult to:

- explore the world,
- express ideas,
- engage in problem solving,
- set and work towards goals
- experience the stretch of a challenge.

**Balance: protection, safety, assistance  
Vs risk, challenge, learning**



When we cope with difficult situations we grow in confidence.




**Initiative:**  
~ opportunities ~

The young person needs opportunities to **explore**, to **try** and **experience** the results, both **success** and **failure**, to work towards finding a solution to a problem they encounter.

We can give encouragement and support but we should avoid over protection and mediating experiences. We all learn best from those things we experience ourselves – especially those that are hard.

**And it's a great feeling to succeed!**


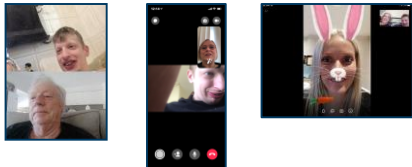
Explore, experience and test one's limits  
When we cope with difficult situations we grow in confidence.  
..... Ideas and decisions – good and bad!



It's a good


**Initiative**  
...in communication and relationships.

Deciding what to talk about and when and with whom!

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**4 & 5. Creativity and humour**  
~ challenges ~




Disability is serious ....

But laughter is an important part of coping with adversity


**4 & 5. Creativity & Humour**

*Creativity and humour involve playing with concepts, rearranging ideas and experiences.*

*Seeing things through different frames helps us build cognitive flexibility*



*and helps to develop the capacity to see humour in tough times ... a strategy many of us use to cope.*



## 4 & 5. Creativity and humour ~ opportunities ~

- Life is fun!



## 6 & 7. Insight and morality

- Develop ability to sense right and wrong – important in deciding on our own actions and judging those of others.
- Knowing not everyone shares your views is important to resilience in coping with complexity & adversity.



Important in safeguarding against abuse and exploitation.

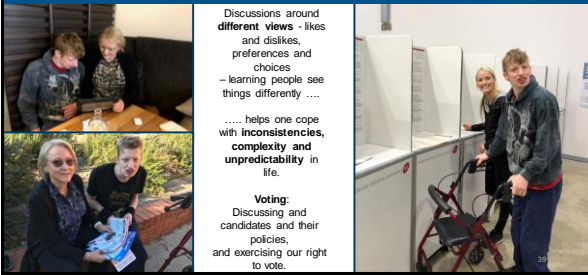
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## Citizenship and voting

Discussions around **different views** - likes and dislikes, preferences and choices – learning people see things differently ....  
..... helps one cope with **inconsistencies, complexity and unpredictability** in life.

**Voting:**  
Discussing and candidates and their policies, and exercising our right to vote.



In summary,  
nurture resilience in young people with disability through:

Optimising physical and mental health

AND providing opportunities for people to experience:

- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Initiative
- ✓ Humour & creativity
- ✓ Insight & morality

While balancing:  
Protection, safety, assistance  
VS  
Risk, challenge, adventure, learning.



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