



**LA TROBE**  
UNIVERSITY

LIVING WITH DISABILITY  
RESEARCH CENTRE

A composite image with a red background. On the left, a close-up of a woman with dark hair, wearing a blue shirt, looking down. On the right, a man in a white t-shirt with 'G-U' printed on it, holding a yellow ball. A white text box is centered over the image.

**Previewing 'Skills for Active Support':  
A new online training resource**

Dr Lincoln Humphreys

# Active Support Training Resources

- Active Support training resources have been available since the 1980s
- Welsh Centre training material: Jones, Felce, Lowe and colleagues (1996, 2009, 2017)
- Tizard Centre training material: Mansell and colleagues (2005); Beadle-Brown and colleagues (2017)
- Both approaches include classroom training and onsite training. Research has shown poorer implementation when only classroom training has been delivered and no onsite training (Jones et al., 2001)
- Every Moment Has Potential (La Trobe University & Greystanes) online resource: Bigby, Warren & Bould, 2015
  - Developed drawing on Tizard Centre training material
  - Used videos to introduce ideas and show Active Support in use

# Every Moment Has Potential online resource

- Popular website – one video has 102,000 views on Youtube, six videos have more than 40,000 views
- The training resource provided the material for delivering classroom style training in 2 day workshops, followed by onsite training.
- Good at showing real support in practice, particularly supporting people with severe and profound intellectual disabilities.
- But needed more examples of supporting people with moderate intellectual disabilities, some videos were long (E.g., > 9 minutes), and organisations who had implemented Active Support wanted some more advanced skills shown such as how to support a group.
- Some videos were not clearly signposting or making it overt when a particular aspect of Active Support was being used. For example, how types of assistance were being used, when or how staff were using every moment has potential, or little and often.

# Review of Every Moment Has Potential online resource

- 10 interviews with 13 participants about how they use the resource, overall positives/negatives, in-depth discussion about each module.
- Convenience sample: participants were either known to the interviewers or worked in organisations part of a longitudinal study into Active Support.
- Most participants:
  - were either trainers in their organisations or had extensive experience delivering training in Active Support.
  - had in-depth knowledge, could quote lines, knew people's names.

*Olivia: I absolutely think it's useful, 100%, but I do think it needs a revamp.*

# Suggested Changes

- Keep the content relevant to support workers – remove irrelevant sections (e.g., TAFE alignment, organisational support module).

*Olivia: I think people drop off at this point, 'This is not relevant to my role as a support worker, I'm not interested in this'.*

- Have less text on the webpage and use simple language.

*Rodney: I think its real simple language, less words, really getting to the crux of what it is.*

- Revise the modules, have first module introduce Active Support and engagement/disengagement, separate the 4 essentials into different modules.

*Emma: I would've put it [engagement] earlier. I think it's one of those initial concepts about why we're doing this and why it's important, and I think it fits into that stuff that was back in module one about how this actually links to quality of life. I've always thought it was a bit funny towards the end.*

# More Suggested Changes

- Videos with commentary that explain when and how Active Support is being used.

*Rodney: The videos at the moment don't have a lot of talking. A lot of it is visual. So, I think there is room to put a voice over, to have a commentary that actually guides you with what you're seeing.*

- Videos that show support to engage in social interactions, in the community, more diverse support needs, changes to how a person has been supported over time.

*Emma: You don't see anyone on a journey within the package, which I think is probably something that would be really useful to show.*

- New content: how to keep improving and reflective practice, more advanced support such as how to support a group.

*Michael: I think it's important to identify that it doesn't just stop.... There's always room to grow, room to develop. I think that needs to perhaps be highlighted.*

*Heather: So that's like one of the biggest things I've got, how do we support people when we're supporting three people at once?*

# Skills For Active Support (Bigby & Humphreys, 2023)

- <https://www.everymomenthaspotential.com.au>
- A training resource for support workers
- There are 8 modules
- **Module 1:** Active Support and Engagement
- **Modules 2 to 5:** the 4 Essentials
- **Module 6:** Supporting Relationships and Social Interactions
- **Module 7:** Supporting More than One Person
- **Module 8:** Person Centred Practices and Continuous Improvement



Training resource developed with funding from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

# New Videos

- 19 videos were created
- Videos that introduce and explain key ideas and support strategies
- Commentary videos of good support
- Majority of the footage is of real support – filmed documentary style
- 2 videos have interviews with staff talking about their experiences
- The website has text to supplement the videos and provide more information, as well as activities to enhance learning
- Learning methods: self directed working through the modules, with colleagues, trainer delivered

# Engagement

- The purpose of Active Support is to enable a person with intellectual disabilities to **engage** in meaningful activities and social interactions.
- **Engagement means doing things:**
  - participating in meaningful activities on your own or with other people
  - or interacting socially with others.

As you watch the next video on what is engagement think about:

- a. What did it look like when people were engaged?
- b. What did it look like when people were not engaged
- c. What staff were doing when people were engaged and disengaged
- d. Why being engaged in these activities is important to the people in the video



# Engagement/Disengagement

- What did it look like when people were engaged? **Leisure** (reading, swimming), **self care** (brushing hair), **household activities** (making a drink, using a drill, watering plants, vacuuming, cooking), **social interactions** (sharing a joke, listening to someone talking, talking on a phone), **group activities** (taking part in a dance class, playing music with others, playing cards with friends)
- What did disengagement look like: just sitting, waiting, watching what others were doing
- What were the staff doing when people were engaged and disengaged: when disengaged, staff were not around, they were busy doing household tasks, separation between staff and people supported. When engaged, staff were with the people and providing assistance to participate, doing things together
- Why being engaged in these activities is important to the people in the video: something interesting to do, enjoyment, accomplishment, meeting their needs, contributing to others, being included, maintaining relationships, keeping fit → quality of life

# How to do Active Support: the 4 Essentials

**Every moment has potential:** every task, activity or interaction has opportunities to involve a person

**Graded assistance to ensure success:** provide the right type and amount of support to assist a person to engage in an activity or social interaction

**Maximising choice and control:** offer choices to increase a person's control over their life

**Little and often:** support a person to try new things or participate for a short time to increase their experience



# Every Moment Has Potential: Key Strategies

- Recognise that the everyday opportunities can be used to support a person to be engaged.

- Think:

*When a task needs to be done, how can I support someone to be involved?*

- Noticing when someone is disengaged and thinking:

*What are the opportunities available to them to be engaged right now in this moment?*

- It could be an activity (leisure, self care, domestic) or a social interaction, at home or in the community.
- **Think in steps** → break a complex activity into simpler parts → each step is an opportunity for engagement

COMMENTARY

Every Moment

Has Potential



# Video: Every Moment Has Potential

**Budgeting money for dancing** – writing programs on an envelope, writing the amount of money, counting money, putting it into an envelope

**Washing a car** – filling bucket with water, pouring in detergent, spraying the car with water, wiping the car with a cloth.

**Watering plants** – filling bucket with water, watering plants, mopping up water

In each of the scenarios we saw the workers recognising opportunities for meaningful activities, breaking down the activity into steps, and then providing opportunities for the person to do it themselves or with support

Had the workers not taken these opportunities what might the people be doing? These were household activities however the people were happy to participate.

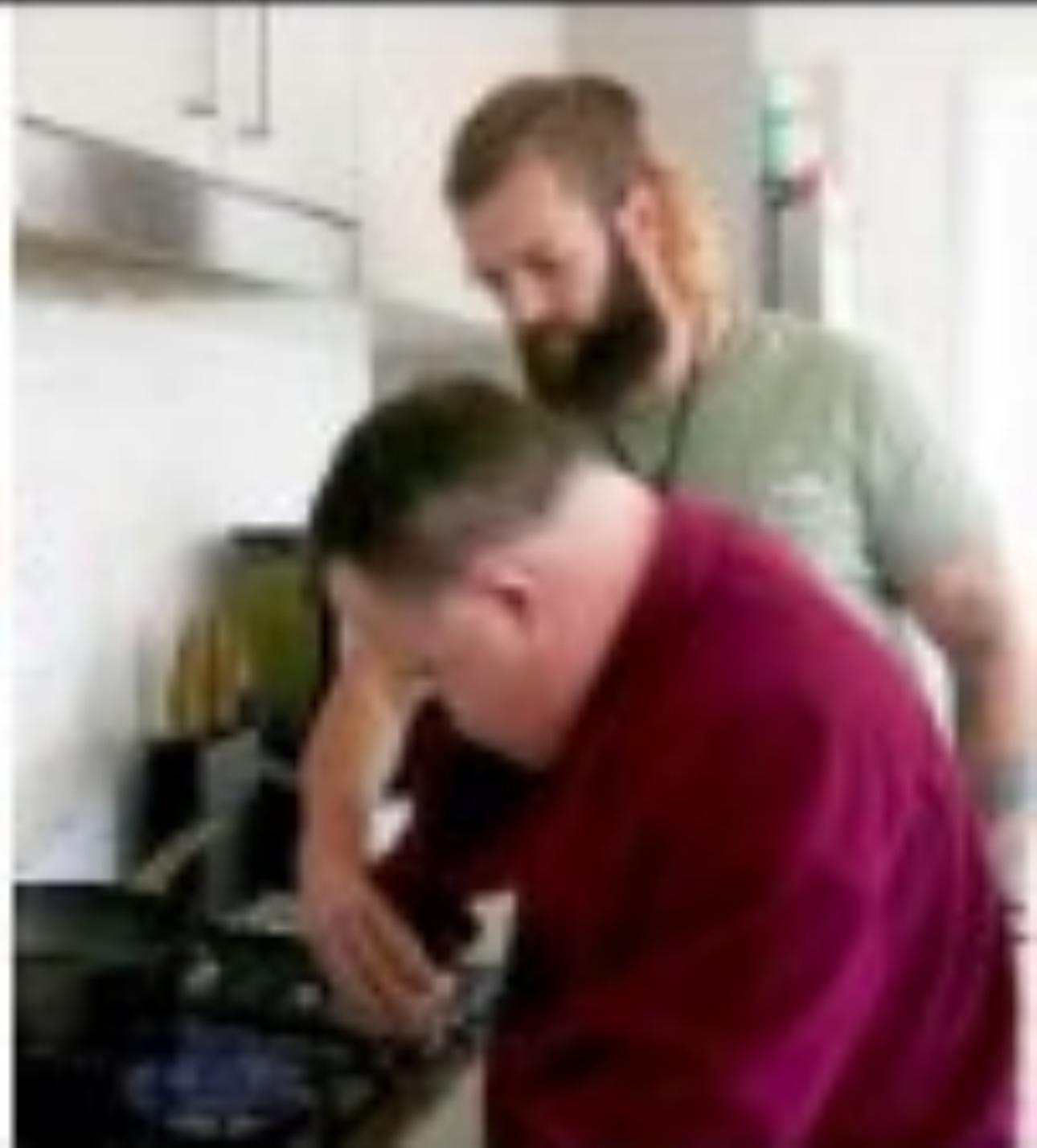
# Graded Assistance to Ensure Success

- To participate in an activity or social interaction, a person may need support. There are different ways of providing assistance.
- There is:
  - **Asking:** “Can you get the milk from the fridge?”
  - **Instructing:** “Press the switch on the kettle”
  - **Prompting or gesturing:** Pointing to the cupboard to get a cup
  - **Demonstrating:** Showing the person how to hold a carton to pour milk
  - **Guiding a person physically:** You and the person holding the kettle to pour hot water into a cup
- The type of assistance and how much of it to provide depends on the person and the situation.



COMMENTARY

**Graded Assistance  
To Ensure Success**



# Video: Graded Assistance

- Saw provides James with different types of support to make an omelette
  - Asking – “How many eggs do we do?”
  - Instructing – “Get a handful of mushrooms”
  - Gesturing – pointing to push the button on the blender
  - Guiding – both holding the knife to cut the broccoli
- Sam (worker) standing back and letting James crack the eggs himself
- Neither providing too little or too much support, which is a real skill
- Sam adjusts the assistance depending on what James is doing and whether he needs support, and if so what will be most effective for James to do it
- What was it like for James – he was able to participate successfully and perform each of the steps

# Supporting a Group of People to be Engaged

- When working in services, staff often support a group of people to do the same activity or each person to do different activities.

*How can staff support a group of people to be engaged?*

- Use the same 4 Essentials of Active Support, as well as additional strategies:
  - ✓ Start by supporting one person to engage in the activity
  - ✓ Then move to the next person and support them to be engaged
  - ✓ Continue until everyone is engaged
  - ✓ Then frequently rotate your attention around each person and provide assistance as required
  - ✓ Think about the steps for each person's activity: what are they doing now and what assistance do they need, what is the next step and what support will they need
  - ✓ Adjust your support for each person
  - ✓ Position yourself in the right place: between the people supported, opposite them, or closest to the person who needs the most support

COMMENTARY

# Supporting a Group of People



# Video: Supporting a Group

Ed's implementation of the key strategies:

- ✓ Started by supporting one person to engage in the activity (Stuart)
- ✓ Then supported Alex → set up with pencils
- ✓ Frequently rotated his attention between each person and provide assistance as required → playing connect 4, conversation with Alex
- ✓ Thought about the steps for each person's activity: what are they doing now and what assistance do they need, what is the next step and what support will they need
- ✓ Adjusted his support for each person. E.g., conversation and communication
- ✓ Positioned himself in the right place: at the head of the table where he can interact with both Alex and Stuart

# Developing and Improving Active Support Skills

- Developing skills in Active Support takes time: start small, identify activities and interactions that are more likely to succeed
- Being supported to be engaged may be a new experience for some of the people being supported
- It is better to build up experience and success (both for yourself and the people you support), rather than attempting too much too soon
- Learn from experiences and reflect on providing support

*What worked well? What could I improve? What could I do differently next time?*

- Being observed providing support and receiving feedback from a skilled practice leader
- In the next video, Anita talks about her experience of supporting Laura



# Additional Content on the Website

- The remaining 2 essentials of Active Support: Maximising choice and control, Little and often
- How to create a friendly atmosphere and warm relationships
- Supporting social interactions
- Good communication in Active Support
- How Active Supports works with Person Centred Planning, and Positive Behaviour Support
- How to continuously improve skills in Active Support

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