

UNIQUE INFORMATION

Those closest to us have a unique understanding of and know intimate details about each others' lives. Who in your family doesn't wake up until after the second cup of coffee? Who hates to cook but loves to clean? For people with disabilities, these details are particularly important for successful daily living. It is critical that this unique information be captured and recorded for the future.

Jane is a woman in her 30s. She has a job, participates in volunteer activities, and is active in her community. Most people would assume that when Jane is asked to become involved in a new activity that she would jump at the chance. However, Jane usually responds that she is "too busy" or she "can't go do that". Jane's parents have learned that what Jane means when she says these things is that she doesn't understand, is afraid to fail, or doesn't want to change her routine. When she responds in this way, her parents ask her to "think about it for awhile" or to "go see what it is like and then decide". They have found that after a few hours, she generally will agree to give it a try.

Unique ways of supporting the person with a disability are important for daily activities and special circumstances. What techniques help the person understand an issue at hand? Cope with a certain type of situation? Communicate with others? Without an understanding of the individual, communication can be ineffective, experiences may be traumatic or activities avoided.

Michael had a history of difficulty dealing with invasive procedures like medical and dental checkups. Waiting causes him significant anxiety. To accommodate this, his parents follow a simple routine of scheduling his appointments when there are few other appointments (such as first thing in the morning). This avoids delay in getting on with the procedure as soon as Michael enters the office. Michael also has difficulty with new practitioners. To help him, his parents schedule a short appointment so Michael and his new practitioner can get acquainted with one another. At times, this has required an office expense, but has proven to be well worth the cost.

It is important to record this type of information. Family members, support providers and health professionals will find it incredibly helpful in their interactions with the person and will make these encounters much smoother for all involved.

The following tool may help you plan. Provide as much detail as you can. Add extra pages if you need to.

Tool

Unique Information Questions

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1. What techniques, communication and approaches help the person understand, interact or fully participate in.....

Daily Activities:

New Experiences:

Unfamiliar Places:

New People:

Medical and Dental Appointments:

New Caregivers or Support Personnel:

Decision-making:

Handling Finances:



Other:

Family members and friends are good sources of unique information. Don't hesitate to include them in your discussions.

2. What are some unique ways that the person communicates?

a. *Behaviors that indicate a certain emotion or feeling (or the lack thereof).*

- Express happiness, satisfaction by:

- Express concern, fear, anxiety by:

- Other:

b. *Verbal communication that means something different than what is said.*

3. What activities or discussions should be avoided?

Issues that prompt a negative reaction are:

Locations that cause discomfort are:

Personal space issues are:

Other:



Don't forget to include the person with a disability in the life planning process. It will help to assure that the future plan reflects his or her desires as well as yours.