

7c1

Natural Supports

Do

Encourage other participants in the inclusive setting to offer informal, friendly help to the person in the same way as they do with other people.

Everyone on the bus shares in Michael's delight at doing the ride on his own, and the bus driver ensures that he gets off at the right stop.

Story

Michael enjoys his regular Saturday morning bus ride around the estate where he lives. The support worker usually does this with him to help maintain his contacts with the local community. He is well known and everyone speaks to him on the bus, including the driver. After a while, the support worker withdraws.

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Natural Supports

Hints & Hazards

Gradually transfer from professional supports to natural supports by recruiting existing people and locating new people to help. Don't ignore existing relationships and informal supports. *Rogan (1993, p13)* suggests that we should delay identifying the natural supporter, since an unlikely person might emerge once the focus person is placed in the setting. Check out how everyone else gets supported to use the setting (see 2b2 @Ecological Inventory'). Different places will have different levels of natural support. For example, a college tutor is expected to provide pastoral care, while a fitness instructor is not.

Identify a particular place the person can withdraw to if they need some time out and get permission for them to do this. Arrange things so that the person can return easily.

Don't rely too heavily on the person in charge but look to peers. The key individual who offers natural support may herself need some information, support of guidance on how to do this well.

In a study of employment support, *Storey & Certo (1996)* found that developing natural supports was more effective and longer lasting than using an external job coach.