ACCESS
to Leisure

Training manual for local informal supporters

How to become leisure co-facilitators of people with learning disabilities?

ACCESS to Leisure

Adult education Courses on Capacity-building for the Engagement and Support of Self-advocates in the field of Leisure

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INTRODUCTION

Objective of the training manual

The content of the training manual provides a practical and theoretical background for informal local supporters to become leisure co-facilitators.

In order for people with learning disabilities (PwLD) to be able to connect with the local community as effectively as possible, we consider it essential to involve members of the local community in the training process. By co-facilitators, we mean local supporters **who are willing to get involved in this process as partners**. We believe that a natural supportive environment can be achieved and expanded through their involvement.

The training material in this manual focuses on the practical aspect of providing support for PwLD and the importance of being involved in local community events.

The training includes valuable features that are important to consider when cooperating with PwLD as well as elements that help PwLD participate in local community programs.

About the target group: informal local supporters

Informal local supporters are **members who are part of the informal network** (with user-level IT skills). We are looking for locals who will contribute to the natural support of PwLD in spending their free time.
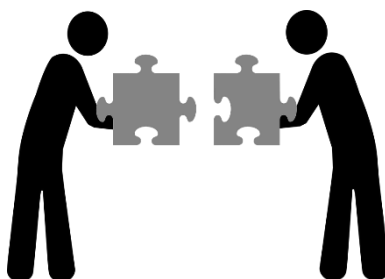
Before you start... What is supporting someone? (Inclusive team, Hubbie, 2022)

1. Helping someone gives you a sense of **doing the right thing**, purpose in life.
2. It is your own choice to help someone, so you are free to do so. It is not something that you HAVE to do but **something that you WANT to do**.
3. Supporting someone means being there for the other person, helping where needed, **showing interest in them**.
4. Together **we make the world a better place** by helping each other.
5. I love helping, not only for the other person, it **makes me feel good.**
6. When you support someone **you are not alone or lonely**.
7. **Helping means listening**, really listening, and then doing something about it.

A little story...

Koen lives in Brussels, nearby the social organisation 'Hubbie'. He has time every 2 weeks to spend it usefully and socially. He notices Hubbie's volunteer vacancy and goes for an interview. Koen has a dog and he is willing to go for a half-day walk with his dog every 2 weeks, together with some of Hubbie's clients who live nearby. Koen's motivation is mainly to help people and spend his time usefully. He enjoys the smiles he brings to the clients every two weeks.

SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Objective of this module

This module introduces the concept of leisure and helps to understand the role for you as a local informal supporter in partnership with people with learning disabilities.

Explanation of words

Leisure

Leisure time means taking a break from everything that has to be done. It is making time for yourself or others, in which you can enjoy or relax. (Inclusive team, Hubbie, 2022)

Leisure time, based on individual choice, is a **very important part of our lives,** and the right to it is inalienable for everyone, including people with learning disabilities.

Types of leisure activities

Southby (2019), referring to Stebbin (2012), describes the three main types of leisure:

1. **The 'casual' leisure activity**: is a leisure activity of short duration, the enjoyment of which does not require any major training, skills or qualifications (e.g. visiting a museum, eating a cake, going to the cinema)

2. '**Serious' leisure activity**: is a major area of leisure interest that requires a high level of emotional, physical and intellectual investment of energy (e.g. taking piano lessons, being part of a sports team, painting).

3. **'Project-based' leisure activity**: shorter, simpler, occasional or infrequent activities (e.g. art project, cooking class, 3-day trip abroad).

All three types of leisure activities involve different activities and have different impacts on people's lives (Stebbins, 2012; Southby 2019).

Little exercise

Think about your own leisure time. Answer the following questions:
- *What does leisure time mean to you?*
- *Is leisure time important to you? If yes, why?*
- *What leisure activities do you spend your time with?*

Self-determination

In addition to the creation of a natural supportive environment (effective contact with a local supporter), the other main area of leisure education is the development of self-determination for people with learning disabilities. When developing leisure activities for people with learning disabilities, it is therefore very important to focus on creating opportunities to increase self-determination and develop the skills needed to do so.

Making your own choices means (Definition, Inclusive team, Hubbie, 2022)

- Doing what **I** feel like doing.
- Making a **trade-off**.
- Following your **gut**.
- Influencing yourself on how you will **act**.

Decision-making support & hints for decision-making support

The leisure experience has associated positive effects that can be observed on the subjective state of mind, identity and self-definition (Dattilo, Kleiber, & Williams, 1998, Dattilo, 2013).

To engage in leisure is to:
- express **talents**,
- demonstrate **capabilities**,
- pursue one's **potential**,
- experience a variety of **positive emotions** associated while participating in **enjoyable** and **meaningful activities**' (Datillo, 2013, p. 77.)

The opportunity to spend leisure time, the realisation of the experience itself, goes hand in hand with the **reinforcing feeling** that people have or will have (if learning is involved) the knowledge and skills needed for that leisure activity. This in turn empowers them and contributes to a sense of self-determination (McGuire & McDonnell, 2008; Datillo, 2013).

Inclusion

Inclusion means the right to be **included in society**. Inclusion means belonging, not merely being "allowed" to belong, but being an integral and inseparable **part of it**. It means being **accepted unconditionally**, being allowed to be who you are and being valued for it. This **appreciation** is reflected in the extent to which you are not socially prevented from taking up your **citizenship** and society offers the **necessary support** to do so.

Translated to society, this means that society, without your full "part-of-being," is incomplete. When you do not belong, are not (allowed to be) part of it, in whole or in part, for whatever reason, that society is consequently incomplete, not whole, imperfect. **Inclusion thus starts from society**.

Core elements of inclusion are **choice** and **control, empowerment, full citizenship** and **quality of life**.

Based on this inclusion vision, you as local informal supporter will support PWLD in their search for leisure activities

Leisure difficulties

The leisure activities of people with learning disabilities are often characterised by previously fixed, narrow identities that limit their opportunities and creative expression (Charnley et al., 2019).

Allcock (2018) categorised the main leisure difficulties of people with learning disabilities as follows:

- Lack of accessible venues and facilities
- Lack of accessible information
- Financial constraints
- Mobility and transport considerations.

It is important for you as a local informal supporter to consider the needs of PWLD, map them out and see how you can remove the barriers together.

Principles of cooperation and co-production
Cooperation means **working together** and all partners **gain benefits**. We refer here to Roger Banks' term co-production.

Coproduction means delivering public services in an **equal and reciprocal relationship** between professionals, people who use services, their families and their neighbours.

Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become much more effective participants of change.

$$E \quad + \quad P \quad = \quad C$$

Expertise   Partnership   Creation

E = Bring what we know and the best we have to offer
P = Working together as equals, celebrating each other's expertise
C = With the objective of producing something

Tips in starting start with co-production as a local informal supporter

- **Recognise people as assets**: equal partners in the design and delivery of services;
- **Build on people's existing capabilities**: co-produced services start with people's capabilities (not needs) and look for opportunities to develop them;
- **Mutuality and reciprocity**: co-production is about a mutual and reciprocal partnership;
- **Peer support networks**: peer and personal networks alongside professionals;
- **Blurring roles**: blurring the distinction between professionals, users, family members, community representatives;
- **Professionals are catalysts of change**: Enabling professionals to become facilitators and catalysts of change.

Little exercise

Think about **self-determination**. Answer the following questions:

- Which talents do you use during leisure activities?
- What does self-determination mean to you?
- How can you support PWLD in making their own choices?

The role of informal local supporters

Importance of informal local supporters

What is meant by informal supporter? What is expected of you as an informal local supporter? (Hubbie, Inclusive team, 2022)

As informal local supporter:

- You set aside time to volunteer to support others.
- You bring innovative, fresh and different insights and talents. You provide extra eyes, extra helping hands, extra care, extra recreation, extra supply, and extra time.
- You work together with professional colleagues, clients and other volunteers to create a warm environment, broaden their world view, expand their social network and experience freedom.
- You have space and time to build up experience and knowledge and to grow and develop yourself, at your pace and applying your talents and interests.

- You are expected to keep appointments, to have a sense of purpose and to interact with clients and colleagues in a respectful, patient manner.

Why are you as an informal local supporter so important in the leisure process?

Informal local supporters know less background and look at clients honestly and with their hearts. They can view the **professional operation from a distance** and have **fewer duties** than their professional colleague. They have **no final responsibility** and they create a **different atmosphere** with the clients because of this.

Promoting cooperation around strengths and needs

Cooperation begins with getting to know each other. Starting from strengths and talents.
The basis for cooperation is strength-based teamwork. Starting point of this vision = all people have an inherent capacity to learn, grow and change within them.

Basic principles

- Human beings are total and unique with their own aspirations and characteristics;
- Control remains with the client, who decides what is important, what he/she wishes to achieve and how the client wishes to do it.

- Strength resources (sources of support, competencies, qualities) of the individual and the environment are brought together.
- Provide tailored opportunities for clients to learn skills and attitudes that are part of a personal development process defined by the client.
- Provide incentives to set realistic goals and work toward them incrementally.
- Provide realistic feedback allowing people to acknowledge and correct unrealistic perceptions and interpretations.

- Access to other/more areas of life which expands the social world.

Tools for strength-based cooperation

As an informal local supporter, you look to connect with where the client's strengths and energy are, connect with the client's desires and what the client is capable of doing.

Together with the client you look for sources of strength in himself and the environment in order to grow together and enter into processes of change that lead to a greater quality of life, of both the informal local supporter and the client.

Tool 1. Cooperation in partnerships starts with a wide introduction

Get to know each other based on the questions below.

1. **Personal development**

- What are your talents?
- What do you get compliments for?
- What do you already do in your leisure time (hobby, sport,...)?
- How is this going?
- Is there someone who supports you in developing your talents?
- What did you used to have as a hobby?
- Was there someone who supported you extra in this?
- Why did you stop doing it?
- What can you do on your own?
- What do you need help and support with?
- What is difficult for you to do alone?

2. **Self-development**

- What makes you happy?
- When do you want to do something (weekend, week, daytime, evening,...)? Is that feasible?
- Are you going to work during the day? At what time will you be home? ...
- How often do you want to do something (weekly, monthly, occasionally,...)?
- Within what radius of where you live do you want to do something?

3.   Interpersonal relationships

- What do you find most important: meeting people and talking, being able to do something on your own, learning something new, doing something you can already do, …
- Are you quickly at ease in a new environment?
- What is it like for you to meet new people? Do you make contact easily, do you wait until someone speaks to you, are you very nervous, … ?
- Who can you ask to do something with you in your leisure time?

4.   Social inclusion

- How do you get around?
- Do you get outside alone?
- What kind of transportation do you often use?
- Is there someone you can call on to take you somewhere?
- Do you easily learn a road from outside when you have already travelled it with someone?

5.   Emotional wellbeing

- How do you see yourself: quiet, active, athletic, social, on your own, creative, precise, curious, cheerful, sad, likes to be indoors, likes to be outdoors, can/can't stand crowds, persistent, give up easily, patient, get tired of things quickly, get away with something new quickly, wait and see.
- What do you find boring?
- What makes you angry?
- What are you afraid of?

6.   Material well being

- What is the budget you can/will allocate for the leisure activity?
- What equipment/gear do you think you will need for the hobby you choose? Is there any material/gear you already have?

Tool 2. Rapp & Goscha's force model.

1. Answer the following questions

1. What do you want in terms of leisure time (wishes, dreams, desires)?
2. What can you do (competencies, talents)?
3. What do you dare (self-confidence)?

2. Map both internal and external strengths and see where you match.

Internal sources of power

Qualities

- intelligence
- good health
- sense of humour
- attentiveness
- adaptability
- modesty
- willpower
- self-reflection

Knowledge and Skills

- be able to listen to others
- be able to organize well
- stand up for yourself
- knowledge about a subject
- writing skills
- experience expertise
- a study or course you have taken

Pleasant memories

- a pleasant meeting
- a nice vacation
- a good job
- moments in your childhood
- friendships
- a pleasant evening out

External sources of power

- friends
- a pleasant home
- a hobby
- your partner
- walking in nature
- family
- contact with colleagues
- an income
- work/day care
- a pet
- resources

Little exercise

Answer the following questions.

- Why are you an informal local supporter?
- What are the benefits for you as an informal local supporter?

Decision-making support of PWLDs

Importance of personal choices

People with learning disabilities experience limited self-determination and have very little opportunity to take control and make choices affecting their own lives (Stancliffe and Wehmeyer, 1998). In recognition of this, government policy emphasises the importance of empowering people with learning disabilities to take more control and make choices that influence their own lives (DoH 2001, 2009).
We think this is a good start to this chapter.

As mentioned above, during the inclusive team we discussed and looked at what 'making your own choices' meant for the group:

- Doing what I feel like doing.
- Making a compromise.
- Following your gut.

It was also said that it is not a nice feeling when someone else decides for you. Some also found it very difficult to make their own choices. An interesting fact, because here the role of an informal local supporter can become important. (Hubbie Inclusive team, 2022)

We believe that if a PWLD can make his or her own choices to a leisure activity, he or she will experience so many more benefits than when it is chosen for him or her.

We do think and feel that it is important for the person to be well supported in making choices. If a PwLD himself has too little insight into his or her own possibilities and or different leisure options, this will also have a negative effect on his or her well-being.

We do believe that PwLD should be given opportunities to experiment with choices, because opportunities and experiences in making choices are important to promote self-determination in people with learning disabilities (Wehmeyer and Bolding, 2001). Wehmeyer and Garner (2003) found that availability of choices is a primary predictor of self-determined action.

Supported Decision-making approach

But how can we help PWLD? According to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), optimal learning and growth can only occur in situations that meet three psychological needs of people.
If one of these three psychological needs is not supported within the social context, well-being will be adversely affected.

1) **Feeling autonomous** (being allowed to be yourself and make your own choices)

2) **Feeling connected** (being able to establish secure and harmonious relationships with other people)

3) **Feeling competent** (being good at something and getting recognition for it).

The local informal supporter can play a very important role in meeting the process of self-determination:

In terms of autonomy, the local informal supporter can support PwLD in "making their own choices". For example, he can hold up a mirror or tell from his own experiences.

In terms of connectedness, a local informal supporter can also be of great value. During the inclusion team, some clients indicated that local informal supporters listen to them a lot, give tips or are just there during activities.
These little things, we believe, are invaluable for PwLD to feel like they belong somewhere. (Hubbie Inclusive team, 2022)

Finally, in terms of feeling competent, a local informal supporter may matter most. As a nonprofessional, a local informal supporter has an advantage over a professional to
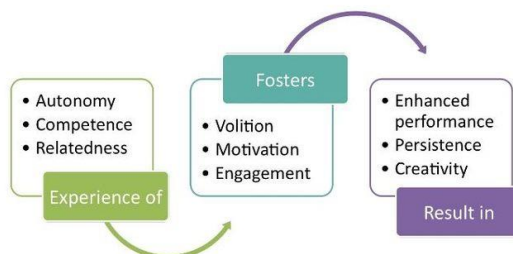
Figure 1: Self-Determination Theory
(Ryan & Deci, 2000)

just not be seen as someone who has studied and been paid to do something. If just then he or she gives recognition to a PwLD, they will see it as extra valuable.

If the local informal supporter can respond to these three major components of self-determination theory, then the PwLD will be more likely to develop, feel good, and consequently make the right motivation and choices to choose the right leisure activity.

Secondly, there are also a few good hints for decision-making support as a local informal supporter:

- You are responsible for monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities.
- You show appreciation and acceptance towards clients.
- You adopt an equal attitude.
- You work in communicative dialogue: you act involved, arrive at open and genuine dialogues with the client, use supportive and total communication, catch signals and interpret them appropriately.
- You provide support, grip and safety.
- You leave as much influence, control and responsibility as possible with the client and fulfil a complementary role. For activities this is done on the basis of the client's degree of ownership, of the degree of risk of harmful consequences.
- You work empowering: incrementally strengthen the client's resilience.
- You create participation at the individual level and at the group level.
- You identify, strengthen and expand social networks.

The role of the facilitator

As mentioned earlier, we see the informal local informal supporter having a great interest in PwLD and their leisure experience.

Their role, as a connoisseur of the neighbourhood, can be an important bridge between the PwLD, their interests and various organizations. They can also ensure that the PwLD becomes embedded in the neighbourhood, and in the future can join leisure activities in this way in an accessible way. As an informal local supporter, you also have more inside information from your own neighbourhood. Maybe you know right away which organizations are approachable, or where you can go for a free first taste of a class, for example.

People experience a higher quality of life when they are embedded in a rich social network. Social isolation and loneliness have an impact on people's participation, self-direction, mental and physical health and development. Strengthening networks is therefore a core task in the pursuit of social inclusion. (Resokit, 2021)

For this we look not only to the social professional, but also to the local informal supporter, just by his knowledge of the neighbourhood.

Example:

One can take a neighbourhood walk. Not only is there time then for a conversation to listen to the interests of the PwLD, but also to see what is available in the neighbourhood.

We also see the power of a local informal supporter as support on an informal, voluntary basis. According to the Flemish vision text on volunteering (Flemish Welfare Association, 2020), volunteers have a different relationship with the organization and the client than a professional. The volunteer is often under less work pressure, comes specifically for that client, can focus on one particular client and/or task. They appear on the floor with experiential expertise (rather than professional training), focus on concrete tasks, and often have more time and space to be close to the users. The emphasis on experiential expertise and personal engagement allows them to approach clients or users more spontaneously and personally. Volunteering goes beyond the remit of the professional. It is about extra hands as well as heart.

From these thoughts, we believe in the local informal supporter having time and space to identify the different interests, as well as bridge the gap between the interests and complementary leisure activities.

SUPPORTING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS OF PWLD IN THE ORGANISATION OF LEISURE TIME

Objective of this module

This module focuses on providing opportunities to learn **the dynamics of partnership-based social interactions related to leisure**. We will look at how we can facilitate access to technology that can be used for leisure engagement.

We will also learn how to **provide opportunities** to learn the dynamics of social interactions related to leisure.

Explanation of words

Social interaction and connectedness

Social interaction is a **communication process** between two or more persons.
It is always reciprocal in nature.

Social connectedness is the **experience of belonging to a community**. A feeling of being supported or **connected to others who provide value and meaning to your life**. According to Derr (2023) social connectedness is proven to be a critically important social determinant of health. Our relationships with family, friends, neighbours, professionals and others directly influence our health outcomes and well-being. The more positive your relationships are, the better you'll be able to face life's challenges.

Take a moment to reflect on your own life and all the people you are connected to. Do they impact your health and well-being?

Examples of social connections for PWLD's:

- Friends
- Family
- Co-workers
- Neighbours
- Professionals
- Local informal supporter
- Co-students
- Acquaintances
- ...

Verbal and non-verbal communication

Communication is the act of interaction and exchanging ideas with other people. The two primary types of communication are:

Verbal communication is using speech or spoken word to exchange information, emotion, ideas and thoughts.

Non-verbal communication is conveying and exchanging messages without the use of spoken words, but by using other methods such as body language including facial expressions, gestures, …

Circle of support

A circle of support is a way of **connecting a PWLD to their community**. A group of people, who are known to the person, is established to support the person to identify things they would like to achieve in their life.

They (volunteers) bring together people who care about the person and have different skills to those of the family (Burke, C. 2006)

Concept of befriending

For PWLD's research shows that to plan their leisure time, they rely primarily on either family or professional help. There are far fewer cases where an informal supporter is present in the supportive position. (Stancliffe et al., 2015). Southby (2019) proposes the concept of befriending: the theory of befriending **provides an opportunity to separate the natural support role**, such as friends and family, **from the paid professional relationship**.

When the local informal supporter **builds the relationship with the PWLD around a common interest and everyday similarities (such as a leisure activity)**, it reinforces the innate nature of the relationship, and it also contributes to the more effective practice of the chosen leisure activity, which also builds a stronger integration onto a wider social network.

As a result of the befriending process, participants of our research reported an increase in their independence from family and professional service, a strengthening of their self-confidence and improvement in their communication with friends.

Developing social interaction skills of PwLDs

Dynamics of social interactions

Social interactions involve different dynamics. As an informal local supporter, it is important to pay attention to the changes that social interactions bring about. The influence a social interaction will have on the people involved cannot be predicted. In what follows, we provide some tools that can support processes of social interaction.

Circle of Support

Circles of Support - Based on the work of Judith Snow, Jack Pearpoint, and Marsha Forest
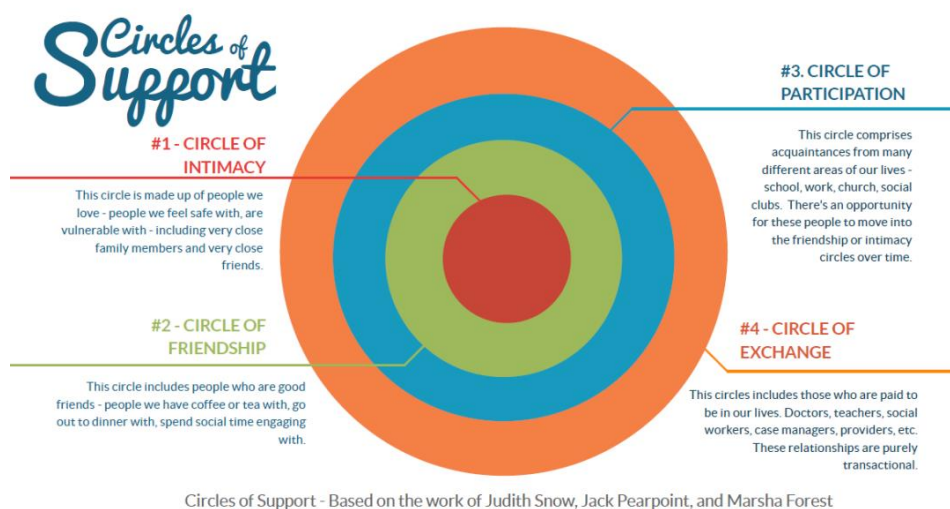
Figure 2: Circle of Support

A circle of support is a group of people who you invite to give you guidance and support and to help you plan for your future. The idea behind a circle of support is to spread the load, taking some of the pressure off the primary carer. Having a good mix of family, friends and professionals in your circle can make things easier. For you, as an informal local supporter, it is nice to know where you are within this circle of support and what other individuals are supporting the PWLD.

Inclusion Web
Looking online, we can make convenient use of the 'web of inclusion'. You can easily use this tool to visually and conveniently map the network. The biggest advantage is that the PwLD is best to do this itself, possibly with the support of a local informal supporter or professional. This strengthens autonomy and self-esteem.

Inclusionweb was developed in 2016 as part of the research project LINK of the Odisee University, which measured the impact of network-enhancing methodologies. Inclusionweb builds on The Inclusion Web by Bates & Hacking, 2008.

Inclusion Web is an online tool and is ideally completed by the person for whom it is created, which is the central figure in the web. If the person needs additional support, it is important to look for a trusted person to do this with him or her.

How to use it?

You log in to inclusionweb.be:
- You can choose a picture about whom the inclusion web is about.

- You enter all the different 'contacts' around the PwLD. This can also be an animal or a place.
- Give persons a name.
- Check whether the contact is deceased or not.
- Find an icon that matches the contact.
- Indicate what kind of support it receives from the contact.
- Discuss what the nature of the relationship is.
- See how intense the relationship is with the contact.
- Finally, you can also add a comment on each contact.
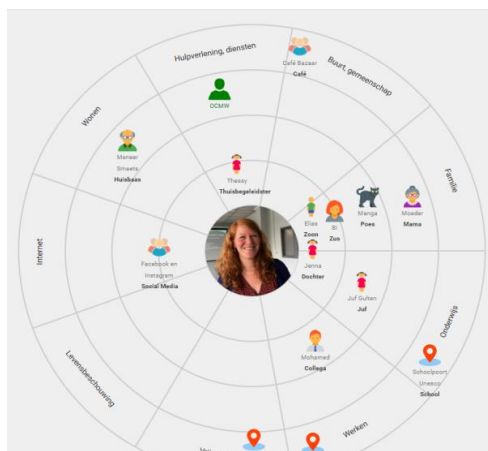
This is what it could look like:

Figure 3: Example of fictional application of the Circle of Support.

Nonviolent Communication

Nonviolent Communication is a mode of communication developed by Marshall Rosenberg that sees empathy as a common thread for getting and being in connection with each other and yourself.

Nonviolent communication forms the basis of how you and the PWLD communicate because implementing nonviolent communication can strengthen the internal communication between yourself and the PWLD. Trust between each other increases, you feel safer during conversations, are more connected to each other and lines of communication are shorter.
Through the steps below, you can communicate non-violently. (www.icoba.be)

1. **Observing without judgment**

Share your perceptions as a camera would actually record them. Say what you literally hear or see. Do not add interpretations. Don't judge.

Nonviolence is: "If I see you slumped on the couch and get no response from you to my question ..." Instead of: "You don't understand me and aren't listening."

2. Feeling

Go over what your feeling is with that observation. Don't make a story out of it yourself or form thoughts about what others do or mean. Say what you feel.
Nonviolence is: ".... then I feel alone." Instead of: "I feel you are not interested." The latter is interpretation.

3. Needs

Once you are aware of your feelings, the next step is to recognize the underlying need. Any uncomfortable feeling tells you that one or more needs have not been met.
Take responsibility for your part. Say which needs are at the root of your feelings.
Nonviolent is: "…because I need your support and perspective."

4. Request

Now consider what action can fulfil your need and formulate it into a request. When doing so, use positive terms. Say what you want, not what you don't want.
Next, give the other the space to respond or not to your request. After all, a request is not a demand or command.
Nonviolent is, "Will you make time for me and give your vision?" Instead of: "Make sure you show a little more interest."

BASICS OF NVC

1. OBSERVATIONS

What I observe (see,hear,remember)? Free from evaluation, say what eye of the camera could have cought. "I see.../I hear... "

2. FEELINGS

How I feel (emotion or sensation rather then thought) in relation to what I observe. Feeling you can show with your body, thoughts are hard to show. *"I feel..."*

3. NEEDS

What I need that causes my feelings. You can use the table with needs to help you define it. *"... because I need... "*

4. REQUESTS

The concrete action I would like to be taken. It is not a demand so be prepared to hear "no". *"Would you be willing to... ?"*

Figure 4: Basic principles of Non-violet communication (Stowarzyszenie Jeden Swiat, 2021)

Paying attention to nonverbal communication

Psychologist Albert Mehrabian once said that "...the entire impression of a message is formed by seven percent of the words, thirty-eight percent of the voice (voice colour and pitch, voice modulation and other sounds) and fifty-five percent of non-linguistic components".

Nonverbal communication is important because it says much more about intentions, feelings and emotions than verbal communication does. Since you will be going out with the PWLD it is important that you learn to "read" the person.

It gives confidence and clarity when a person's verbal and nonverbal communication are consistent with each other. If they are not, it signals to you that something is not right and that you have to clarify what's wrong.

So during interactions, consciously pay attention to

- facial expressions - people, being aware of how much information they can read from a face, often, especially in some unpleasant situations, consciously or unconsciously turn away or look past the face of a fellow human being. Although we sometimes try to hide non-verbal facial expressions, we always fail to do so, especially when stronger emotions are involved,

- touch,

- gestures,

- a dress,

- body posture,

- paraverbal language - the presence of emotions affects paraverbal language, i.e. the pitch, tone, speed of the voice, emphasis on words, and the cultural environment also contributes to its influence.

Conflict management

In the social life and coexistence of people there are extremely many differences. These differences are the result of intercultural, social, psychological, biological differences between people. It is precisely because of these differences that misunderstandings, tension, and inconsistency in relationships can occur.
It is almost inevitable that there will be occasional conflicts between you and the PWLD. Always try to deal with these conflicts constructively. The step-by-step plan below can help you do this. (First Tee, 1007)

1. Communicate

Open communication is key in a dispute. Expressing how you feel about the situation and sticking to the facts will let the other person know you're genuine in your actions. Focusing on the problem at hand and not what the other person did will avoid unnecessary conflict.

2. Actively Listen

Listen to what the other person has to say, without interrupting. Try to be objective. Then, ask open-ended questions to make sure each side understands what the other person thinks and how he/she feels.

3. Review Options

Talk over the options, looking for solutions that benefit everyone. Do not feel pressured to come up with one answer immediately. Bring in objective third party for ideas, if necessary.

4. **End with a Win-Win Solution**

This is the ultimate goal—to agree on an option that benefits both sides to some extent. When one party wins by aggressive behaviour or one party simply gives in, someone is losing. And that means you get outcomes that do not resolve the underlying causes of the conflict.

Figure 5: Visual representation of Conflict management model as described above.

Using digital tools to support safe and effective social interaction during leisure activities

Role of digital tools

Digital technologies play an important role in our lives and can affect our mental health. The use of digital devices has grown dramatically in recent decades, all over the world. The good news is that not all technology use is bad. It **can be used to bring people together**, and this is certainly the case for PWLD's as well. Many report that the use of social media platforms, texting, and other apps allows them to **stay connected to peers** they know in their lives. It can also **foster the development of friendships** with peers around the world who have shared interests and goals. (Beurkens, N., 2020)

Digital tools can help with developing social interaction skills and gain confidence with social communication in a more comfortable way.

To help the PWLD explore and practice their social skills, you can provide some appropriate tools and support them in using them more effectively and safely.

Using digital tools for social interaction

Let's have a look at some of the options PwLDs have for online social interaction:

1. **Social media apps**

 Facebook

You can use Facebook and Messenger on your Smartphone or other device (laptop, tablet, ...). You will need an internet connection for this.

Facebook is a social networking site that makes it easy for you to **connect and share with friends and family**. You can share images of yourself, and look at your friend's profiles at well. You can post comments and follow places/people you are interested in. Facebook also helps you to find events nearby, friends you might know and has groups for people with similar interests, or groups of people from your neighbourhood.

Messenger

Messenger is the app and website for **instant messaging** that connects your Facebook database. You can send text and images to your Facebook Friends on this platform.

Whatsapp

Whatsapp is a free **messaging app** that uses the internet to send images, texts, audio and video's to your phone contacts.

Instagram

Instagram is a free **photo and video sharing app**. People can upload photos or videos to the app and share them with their followers or with a select group of friends. You can also view, comment and like posts shared by your friends. Anyone 13 and older can create an account by registering an email address and selecting a username, as it is the same for most other social media platforms.

TikTok

TikTok is a **video-sharing app** that allows users to create and share short-form videos on any topic. It is mainly mobile based. The platform allows users to get creative with their content using filters, stickers, voiceover, sound effects and background music. But therefore might be more difficult to use for PwLD.

Youtube

Youtube is a **free video sharing website** that makes it easy to watch online videos. You can create an account and upload your own videos or watch video's of others. It is mostly used to listen to music and watch music clips.

2. Dating apps

Tinder

Tinder is an **online dating** and geosocial networking application. In Tinder, users 'swipe right' to like or 'swipe left' to dislike other users profile. When you have a match you can start talking to a person and maybe set up a date.

There are of course a lot of other different dating apps. We used Tinder because it is the worlds most known platform.

3. Computer games

Game community platforms are also a way of online connecting to people. In these chats we can connect to our fellow gamers and make some new friends.

There are many more options of course. We are not discussing all of them now.
All of the above examples are user friendly and very helpful for social interaction. You can try some out with the PwLD and see if you can find some family or friends to start socially engaging with. Later in this manual we will discuss internet safety.

SUPPORTING THE USE OF RESOURCES FOR LEISURE

Objective of this module

This module focuses on the use of resources for leisure, with an extra focus on the digital opportunities. The aim is **to provide participants with the opportunity to learn effective tools and methods to support PwLDs**, to search for and identify local resources for leisure opportunities.

Explanation of words

Local resources (for leisure)

Local resources are actions or measures that **increase the accessibility** of leisure activities, actions that help to **engage people of a community** in leisure activities. These resources help PwLD to have access to the physical and online leisure opportunities, to transportation, to easy to read information and communication, … Resources can be online and offline.

Examples of local resources are community centers, brochures, online community platforms, support of volunteers, support in public transport, …

Online/Offline

Offline space means the physical world.

Online space means the space controlled by a computer and connected to the internet.

Neighbourhood

The area of a town that surrounds someone's home or the people who live in this area.

Community center

A place where people who live in an area can meet each other and find information about leisure activities, sports, classes, … that happen inside the community.

Social media

Forms of media that allow people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones.

Transport

The movement of people or goods from one place to another.

Possible resources

Why are resources important?

We all agree on the fact that everyone has the right to the same quality of life. Part of a good quality of life is **the right to be fully integrated in society.** For most PwLD this is not as easy, but luckily The European Social Charter watches over and protects human rights of it's citizens. The charter also guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of a community.

To be part of a community also means **to engage in the cultural life of that society**. Article 15, paragraph 3, of the revised European Social Charter is especially significant, as it provides that Parties to the Charter are "obliged to promote measures" (Tatic, 2015, p.19):

Even though the parties are obliged to promote measures, it often remains **hard for PwLD to find access to leisure opportunities**. Leisure facilities are not fully adapted to PwLD.

The Council of Europe has made an action plan to try to change this problem. "The key objective in the report 'Access for people with disabilities to culture, tourism, sports and leisure activities – Council of Europe Disability Action Plan' is to serve as a practical tool to develop and implement viable strategies to bring about full participation of people with disabilities in society" (Tatic, 2015, p.23). Action line No. 2 states that appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in cultural   activities.
However, **without access to information and communication** (action line No. 3), **access to the built environment** (action line No. 6) **and to transport** (action line No. 7), one cannot expect persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, tourism, sports and leisure activities in an effective and meaningful way (Tatic, 2015, p.23).

Despite the achievements and progress made in many member states, it is apparent that **a lot remains to be done for a truly equal and meaningful participation** of PwLD in culture, sports, tourism and leisure activities.

In this module we are **going to look at the possibilities that local informal supporters** have to help PwLD to find access to information and communication, the environment, transport, ... on leisure activities.

If we stay in our apartments or houses, nothing will happen. **We have to make an effort to find leisure opportunities** that may interest us. This is the same for everyone. But where to look?

Exploring local community resources

Alright, let's make an effort. One of the big barriers PwLD experience is that they **don't have a clear picture of what possibilities** they have around them. The outside world is sometimes experienced as chaotic and in the inclusive teams in this project it was clear that it is difficult for PwLD to find access to relevant information on leisure. (Tatic, 2015, p.15). There is so much information and they don't know where to look. Let's help them to find the right access, starting with local community resources.

Examples:

1. Local **community centers** are hubs for a lot of information on leisure opportunities in the area. Therefore it is of great value to get to know these places together. Go to the local community or service center, get to know the people who work there and ask how and where one can get the right information.

2. Budget is a barrier for PwLD to engage in leisure activities (Allcock, 2018). A lot of countries/cities make efforts to **make leisure affordable** for everyone, also people with a lower income, disability, ... Discounts are often given, if you have the proper statute. You can find out about these discounts in the city hall or on the internet and arrange this for the PwLD.

3. Find out if there is a central organization who gather **volunteers**. You can go there together and pose your question. You can find a volunteer for all sorts of things, f.e. someone to accompany the PwLD to go together to the activity, someone to help with transport, someone to help with paperwork, homework, etc.

Discovering the neighbourhood

It is crucial to have an **overview of the neighbourhood** or area where we live in, if we want to be able to know what options we have on leisure.

The word 'neighbourhood' contains not only the physical space or immediate environment around the place where we live, but also the people in it, or neighbours, the organizations nearby, supermarkets, hospitals, sport centers, …

Ideas from the Belgian inclusive team

1. Make a '**neighbourhood scan**'
You can do this online via this platform:
Go walking around and write down everything you see, every shop, doctor, institution, school, fitness center, .. you pass. Go inside and talk to people together.

2. Go looking for all the **posters and advertisements** you see in the streets, flyers that are in shops. You may find interesting leisure activities in there.

3. **Talk to your neighbours**. Ask them if they can keep u posted if they hear interesting things about leisure, or other topics that may interest you.

4. Look in **Google Maps**. Search together for your house and see what's nearby.

5. Take part in **community meetings**. You will get to know a lot of people there, make friends nearby.

6. Go to the community hall and ask if there are any information booklets you can subscribe to. Maybe there is a **monthly activity paper** that you can get in the mail.

7. Try a new activity in your neighbourhood that you never did before, you will meet new people like this and get some new information about other leisure options.

8. Number 8 is very simple: **go walking or biking around** several times. Just look around you, look at the people. Maybe the second or third time you see the same person you can have a chat with them.

9. If you are religious, you can get to know the church community, or other **religious community**. You will find a lot of useful information and activities there as well.

10. Take a guided tour of your neighbourhood. You will learn a lot of new things and also about the history of the area.

Figure 6: Photo by Roose, 2019

Figure 7: Photo by Riemer, 2018

Exploring opportunities online

After our physical exploring, let's have a look at online opportunities. The internet is an infinite source that can be used to find access to leisure activities.

Examples **from our inclusive team** for internet resources are:

- Finding/making friends on Facebook or other platforms
- GPS or transport arrangements
- Emails with leisure activity brochures
- Social media events
- Translation app to understand each other
- Post pictures on social media to share leisure time
- List of websites with accessible activities

These are already some good ideas of the possibilities the internet gives us. But as we already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, **it is hard for PwLD to know where to start looking** in this endless platform. Let's focus on the following topics:

1. Social media

In relation to leisure these platforms can be used for **connecting with other people, sharing leisure experiences and finding leisure activities**.

- You can use **Facebook events** for example: set an area where you want to look in, and discover like this new opportunities nearby.
- **Facebook** also has **groups** from the people of a town. You can look if there is one specific for your town, because they often contain a lot of information on events.
- Another method is **looking at friends and their leisure time** and maybe talking to them about it, joining them, trying the same activity near your home.

2. Google search

There is a lot of information on leisure activities nearby available on the internet. You can have a search on Google or another platform and look for activities nearby. In Belgium we have for example a website of the city itself that gathers all the activities, concerts, workshops, sports, … You can select your specific search and discover a lot of new things.

3. Neighbourhood/community platforms

Times are changing and neighbourhoods also find their way to the online world. As mentioned above for example Facebook groups gather people of a community.

But it is also interesting to look at other platforms. They vary from country to country, so we can't give you a specific website.

For example in Brussels we have Hoplr and Helper. **These are online platforms that connect individuals to the social capital of their neighbourhood**, such as materials, knowledge, volunteers and infrastructure. They use the power of the collective to anticipate social challenges. It is advised to search for similar websites in your region, as we are sure exist in a lot of cities.

4. Volunteer platforms

In every country or city you have an organization for volunteers. Most of the time they have a website where you can go to, and if you're lucky they are advanced enough to have an **online database** of on the one side all the volunteers who offer their services and on the other side all the questions of people who need support. If not, you can find an mail address and ask for a volunteer for your specific situation.

5. Subscribe to online newsletters

Most leisure facilities have a **monthly newsletter**, you can subscribe to them easily via their website.

6. Online safety

The internet is a fantastic tool but unfortunately **not always a safe space**. People with disabilities are often subject to online abuse. It is important to watch out with people/websites we don't know and not to give away personal information to strangers. In the next chapter we will look at internet safety and data protection.
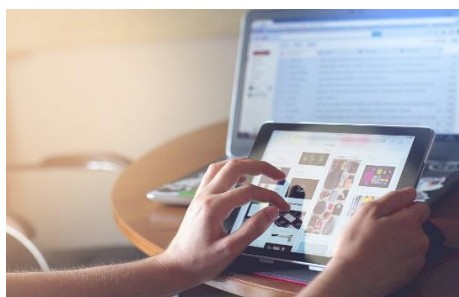

Figure 8:Photo by Pixelkult, 2015

Figure 9: Photo by Fancycrave, 2015

Support in learning transport routes

One of the most common barriers for PwLD to find access to leisure is transport. Often they'll find nice leisure activities which they really want to participate in, but they have no clue of how to get there. Questions rise up like: 'Should I use public transport?', 'Is there an option for private transport?', 'Will it be accessible?', 'Where do I buy a ticket?', 'What if I get lost?', …

Authorities already make a big effort to use clear signs and communication but for a lot of people **going somewhere new also brings anxiety and stress.** We can help PwLD in using transport so the barrier decreases. Let's go over some options.

1. **Learning a particular transport route together**

   When one finds a leisure activity of interest, it will mostly take place in a fixed location. So, we can learn our PwLD how to go from their home to the place of the activity.

   As we know, trying out a new activity also brings stress, so **it is advised to learn the transport route in advance,** so that the first day of the new leisure experience can start in a confident way. It would be too much in a lot of cases to have to learn a new transport route + do a new activity in the same day. Depending on the person, one should practice a new route from 2 up to 5 times. We will focus on going by foot or using public transport, using the following method.

   Preparation:

   - Start by having **a look at the route options** on Google Maps, Waze, Komoot, …
   - Choose the **easiest way** to get there.
   - Look at **ticket options** in your specific situation. (Will it take place a whole year? Are there cards with several tickets? Does the PwLD have a membership?)
   - **Print out a schedule** of route in both directions, make sure to use clear communication and easy to read language.
   - Make an appointment with the PwLD to practice the route **on the same day and time as the leisure activity** will take place.

Training day 1:

- **Have a look at the route** together on a map or phone, look at the printed paper with the route.
- We will take a picture of every important point, so make sure to **have a camera** with you.

- Start with your route. **Let the PwLD take a picture of the whole route**, so for example street names that are important, metro entrances, bus stops, corners to turn into, recognition points such as colourful shops/other landmarks, trams /busses themselves with the right number/destination on them, …
- If you need to take public transport and **buying a ticket** is needed, go over the options and let them try to buy the ticket themselves, with your support.
- When you arrive, **you can already enter the facility** if it is open and discover the place, or have a drink nearby.
- Do the exact same thing when you return home.

Preparation:

- **Gather all the pictures** taken on the route.
- Make a **step by step** visual paper. Use very simple easy to read communication, clear pictures, pictograms, street names, metro lines and

Training day 2:

- **Go over the paper** together in a quiet place.
- This time, **let the PwLD try to find his way himself.** Support where needed.

    You can **repeat this as much as necessary**. Sometimes even the second training day isn't needed, sometimes it takes 10 training days. By letting the PwLD show you the way himself, you can see if you are longer needed or not.
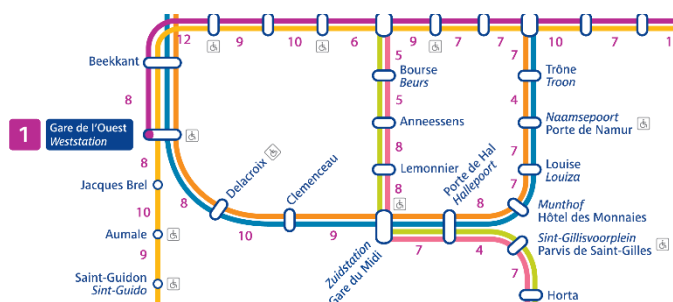

Figure 11: Photo by Skitterphoto, 2018

Figure 10: Photo by MIVB, 2015

1. **Print a list of all possible transport options**

    Of course public transport is not the only way to go from one place to another. Often a city or government takes measures in supporting people with disabilities to get somewhere. Public transport companies from different countries also offer services to support people with disabilities, for example in Brussels PwLD can

book accessible busses at the same price as a normal ride, just for themselves. There are also private companies that offer transport services for people with disabilities. Most of the times they are more expensive, but it is worth finding out which ones there are and how to use them.

Depending on your city you may find different options, so it is advised to have a search for all the options and make a list of them with the contact numbers and prices for the PwLD you are trying to help.

2. **Print a map of the public transport network**

This one speaks for itself. You can ask for a printed version at the public transport office or print it out yourself at home.

3. **Search for support in the transport company**

Ask if there is aid or support for people with disabilities at the transport company. Often there is, but you need to dig for it. The Belgian train company for example has made a very accessible guide for people with disabilities (NMBS, 2018). It is very easy to use and adapt to your specific situation. Other than intellectual support, transport companies also offer physical support. Find out more about it in your city.

4. **Health insurance or mutuality**

In some countries our health insurance funds also offer services for transport for people who need it. For example in Belgium the Christian Fund offers a service of **volunteers who will do your transport**. This also depends from country to country, so it is advised to go to the insurance policy in question.

Internet safety and data protection
Social media

During Hubbie's inclusive team, we discovered that Facebook was the social media most used among the PwLD. We already saw above all the other sources that PwLD use online. Of course, this is not always without danger. But we would like to start to mention that there are also a lot of benefits of using social media.

According to Anne Taylor (2011), one of the greatest benefits of Facebook is that it combats social isolation. In this virtual way, all physical and geographical boundaries are removed, making it can easily connect with others. Think of people with physical disability for whom it is difficult to visit friends who do not live near the door. Also they can keep in touch with these friends very easily through the chat feature. It is also a way to overcome embarrassment or shyness. The threshold to connect with friends or meet new people is much lower since the advent of social networking sites.
A phenomenon that individuals with intellectual disabilities may well may be victims of if they do not receive the proper support. Through Facebook, users can maintain their social contacts in a simple way. Even though Facebook offers a lot of possibilities, of course we should not be blind to the disadvantages. Facebook can be addictive and bullying can also be a problem. With a click a picture can be shared countless times and be available to a very wide audience. So proper guidance or sensitization is needed.

The medium also has numerous advantages in the relationship with the local informal supporter and the PwLD. In a conversation, it can serve as an 'icebreaker': social media is everywhere in this day and age so there is always something to say about it (Van Hecke, 2012).
If you use it as a medium in a counselling conversation, it can also serve to create a better relationship with the PwLD, precisely because you connect with his or her environment.
It also ensures that you are on an equal level: you are not sitting at a table with you on one side and on the other side your client, but you sit together at the computer, side by side.

Dangers of the internet

The internet is more anonymous than the real world; consequently, manners are more direct, facial expressions are absent. This makes it difficult for persons with intellectual disability difficult to assess how a remark is meant. Sarcasm, for example, is elusive for this group. Also, for example, phishing or things like: 'You've won a smartphone, click here!" are difficult to see through. (Mediawijsheid, 2014)

According to the website Wizcase (2022), studies suggest that 34.3% of individuals with a disability do nothing in response to being cyberbullied. Beyond simply avoiding or

preventing harassment online, it's also essential to have strategies on how to react when it occurs.

To prevent some of the potential risks of going online, Chiner (2017) found that caregivers usually talk with PwLD about their activities on the internet and warn them about some specific behaviours like online chatting or flirting with strangers, misleading advertising, and identity and data theft, among others. These prevention strategies are designed to promote the inclusion of PwLD in the digital arena in a safe and responsible way.

Do's & Dont's

The Dutch organisation 's Heeren Loo (2021) created after research a file on Social Media and the internet and how we can support PwLD in this. We can sum it up in these 10 handy tips:

1. Have a positive attitude when it comes to social media use and the internet. Be aware that the opportunities social media and the internet have to offer are more important than the risks you can run by using them.

2. Be involved in the person's social media use, ask questions and be curious about what your him/her are doing online. Do this the same way you ask about other things. And ask him/her to explain or show you something, for instance.

3. Give the person with disability control. Talk together about things you do on social media. Talk about the nice things and the things that are not nice at all. Ask what they do when it happens and tell them they can always come to you if they see or experience something unpleasant.

4. Explain that not everything is really true on social media and internet. Sit at the computer together and talk about what you see. You can then give examples of who/what is not real and what is false.

5. Talk regularly about the importance of privacy on social media and internet. Together with the PwLD, for example, delve into the privacy settings of social media.

6. Talk to the person about the fact that personal data and passwords are private and, if necessary, practice situations in which others may ask for data and/or a password. .

7. Talk to each other about viruses.

8. Talk to the person about using and posting photos and videos. Ask about their experiences and talk together about what can be done with visual material and what the consequences.

9. Talk together about how you behave on social media and internet. On social media (and internet), the same rules of social behaviour apply as in real life: be nice to others, don't just meet up with someone you have never seen in real life. And tell them that they can always come to you if something unpleasant happens.

10. Troubles? Make agreements together about social media and internet use: discussing time (when and how long), about money (can you spend money and how much?), about behaviour (how do you behave on social media) and about how and what the client still wants to learn in this. Try to make the agreements so that both of you can support them.

We are also happy to provide the following, useful and very concrete tips to discuss if needed with the PwLD. Or of course for the local informal support itself, because safe internet and social media is useful for everyone.

- Be careful about the information you put on your profile and think carefully about what you share with others. Never add your home address or phone number. It is important to keep your location secret and your contact information private.

- Things like your birthday, pets' names, and address are not good passwords because others can quickly guess them. If you don't have a good password, your personal information is at risk. People can then get into your account and use your information to find you or pretend to be you. What's a good password then? Use a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, symbols and numbers, and make sure your user passwords are at least eight characters long.

- Use Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) whenever possible. 2FA adds another layer of security to any account you may be logging into. Two Factor Authentication is a security process in which users provide two different authentication factors to verify themselves. Example: you log in to your Facebook, with your normal password + a code sent to your phone.

- The more selective you are about who can interact with you on social media, the safer you are online. Turning off tags, making your account private, and hiding your profile from people you don't know are a few important privacy settings. When you make your social media profile, it's always a good idea to select the most secure settings.

- Don't accept friend requests or follow requests from names you don't recognize or people you don't know. Don't respond to DMs from people you don't know either. While those people might just want to be your friend, there is no way to know for sure. The safest choice is to only add and speak with people you know in real life.

- People can get in trouble for posting things that are inappropriate or hurt others. Don't say anything that might make others afraid, upset, or angry. Your account could get locked, or the hurt person might try to hurt you back. It's always best to keep conversations friendly online.

People make mistakes, and sometimes even when we make all the safe choices, we still run into problems. Having problems online can be stressful, but there are lots of

people who want to help. Knowing what to do if you run into a problem online is just as important as preventing them altogether.

Here are some of the best things to do to get help when something goes wrong online:

1. Get offline. Shutting off the device removes you from the bad situation.

2. Reach out for support. Talk to a trusted friend and caregiver and be honest what happened.

3. Block & Report. Block users who refuse to respect your boundaries, then report the incident.

4. Contact the police.

Fake News

Fake news is written and published with the intent to mislead in order to gain financially or politically, often with sensationalist, exaggerated, or patently false headlines that grab attention. It's important to quickly figure out what is real and what is not. (University of Florida, 2022)

This is important to know and, along with the PwLD, to be attentive to. We encourage discussing this with them as well:

  1. Evaluate, Evaluate, Evaluate

Use criteria to evaluate a source. There is a 'CRAAP Test' to evaluate websites, and these criteria are useful for evaluating news as well. These criteria are:

- **C**urrency: Is the information current? Many times on Facebook, you will click on a story and notice that the date was from a few months or years ago, but your "friends" are acting outraged as if it is happening in the moment.
- **R**elevance: Is the information important to your research needs? This criterion perhaps applies most if you are out seeking information, rather than just stumbling across it. Does the information relate to your question and at the appropriate-level (elementary/advanced)? Have you looked at a variety of sources before selecting this one?
- **A**uthority: Who is the author/publisher/sponsor of the news? Do they have authority on the subject? Do they have an agenda?
- **A**ccuracy: Is the information supported by evidence? Does the author cite credible sources? Is the information verifiable in other places?
- **P**urpose: What is the purpose of this news? To outrage? To call to action? To inform? To sell? This can give you clues about bias.

2. Google It!

If you found out something via social media, you should take 5 seconds and just Google it! More often than not, a Google search will show:

- If other reputable news sites are reporting on the same thing
- If a fact-check website has already debunked the claim
- If only biased news organizations are reporting the claim -- in this case, it may require more digging.

3. Get News from News Sources

One of the easiest ways to avoid the trap of fake news to begin with may seem obvious:

- Go directly to credible news websites for your news!

Relying on Facebook to see what is "trending" or what is being shared across your newsfeed means you have to verify every single meme or news article you come across. Why not rely on news apps on your phone that go to news websites for that?

4. Watch out for red flags!

Does the link end with .co instead of .com? Are there small disclaimers, something that says "satire"? When you click on a story in social media, is it a story that is outdated? Why is it being circulated now? Is it posted by so-and-so? ... We all have that one friend on the internet.

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