

Making Quality A Habit

Putting Person Centered
Practices to Work

Resource Notes

2020
April



Support Development Associates LLC

The continued importance of ritual and routines

Michael Smull

March 2020

As I wrote decades ago, rituals and routines are important. They “ease us through our days”. They provide predictability and when they are ours, a feeling of control. Having rituals that I choose, that are followed, is also comforting. For all of us, our rituals have been severely disrupted. New restrictions on where we can go, what we can safely do, add to our anxiety. To cope, we cling to those rituals that remain and establish new rituals within our new reality. We seek ways to comfort ourselves and they are a part of self-care.

We need to apply this to those we are supporting and those who provide the support. A few questions that may help are:

- What are the rituals and routines that are important to each person?
- Can they be maintained in the new environment?
- If yes, who needs to know and what do they need to do?
- If no, what can we do to replace them?
- Where “my” ritual conflicts with “yours” what is the best way resolve the conflict?
- How can we make sure that each person providing the support knows?
- Where and how can we adapt the new routines (reflecting the new restrictions) to reflect what matters to each person.
- Where we have 1 page descriptions can we adapt them to reflect the new reality?

In these difficult and traumatic times, we need to do what we can to address quality of life. This is an important part of that effort.

Some Questions to Help You Discover or Rediscover Your Routines and Rituals and Those of People You Support

Introduction (Michael Smull)

We all have positive rituals and routines. However, the more physical assistance the person needs to accomplish them the more detail you need to learn. You need to explore how much help is needed or wanted and the importance (to the individual) of routines and rituals like the order in which they get help, how the help is given, and how they communicate this.

For many individuals with challenging behaviors there are (or have been) people involved in their lives whose behaviors and/or attitudes result in fewer instances, less severe instances (or even an absence of) the challenging behavior. You need to learn what it is about these people that results in this positive result. This will begin to tell you what is important to these individuals, their routines and rituals, how they are treated and who needs to be present (or absent) in their lives.

Where the people you are planning with have health issues, especially complex health issues what others need to know and what routines and rituals help the person stay healthy have to be learned and described.

The following questions will help you gather information about what's important to and for the individuals you support and give you insight into their routines and rituals.

Discovering Positive Rituals

- What are your morning rituals? How do you brush your teeth, shower bathe?
- Do you have a regular breakfast routine?
- Do you take time alone for reading or studying, spirituality?
- Are there things you do every night to help yourself relax? Get to sleep ?
- What do you do every day when you arrive at work?
- What do you do every day when you get home from work?
- What are your Sunday rituals (if there are a couple of different ways, think about them)?
- What are your regular weekly rituals (friends that always visit, TV shows always watched, etc)?
- How do you like to celebrate when something good happens?
- How do you comfort yourself when something unpleasant happens, how do you make yourself feel better?
- What has to happen in order for you to celebrate your birthday?
- What foods have to be on the table at which holidays?
- What things must you do in order for it to feel like your favorite holiday?

Best week day

- Where would you be?
- What time and how would you wake up?
- Would you be by yourself or would someone be with you?
- What would your morning ritual be like?
- What would you do between breakfast and lunch? Who would you do it with? (Being by yourself is acceptable, just unusual.)
- Would you be at work, in a program or at school?
- What would have for lunch? Where would you eat?
- How would you spend your afternoon and who would you spend it with?
- It is now early evening. Are there any afternoon/evening rituals that would improve your day?
- What would you have for dinner, where, with who?
- How would you spend the evening?
- When would you go to bed? What night time rituals would improve the evening?
- Would you be with someone?
- Would you end this best of days with special dreams? What would they be like?
- Are there other things that would be present? For example, is there music that you would be listening to? What would the weather be like?

Worst week day

- Where would you be?
- What time and how would you wake up?
- Would you be by yourself or would someone be with you?
- What would your morning ritual be like?
- What would you do between breakfast and lunch? Who would you do it with? (Being by yourself is acceptable, just unusual.)
- Would you be at work, in a program or at school?
- What would have for lunch? Where would you eat?
- How would you spend your afternoon and who would you spend it with?
- It is now early evening. Are there any afternoon/evening rituals that you really dislike?
- What would you have for dinner, where, with who?
- How would you spend the evening?
- When would you go to bed? What night time rituals would worsen the evening? Would you be with someone?
- Would you end this worst of days with special dreams? What would they be like?
- Are there other things that would be present? For example, is there music that you would be listening to? What would the weather be like?