



**PATHFINDING**  
**With Personal Futures Planning**

This booklet is by Connie Lyle O'Brien, Beth Mount, and John O'Brien. It is based on the work of many groups of people with disabilities and families and friends who have helped us learn how to make plans that can lead to positive changes in people's lives.

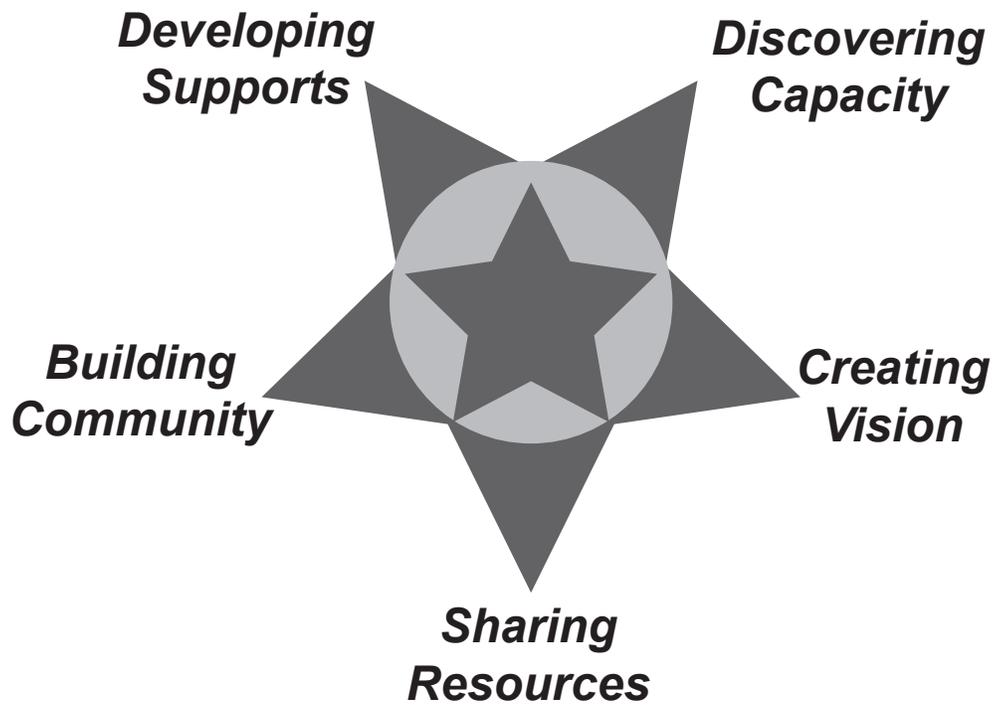
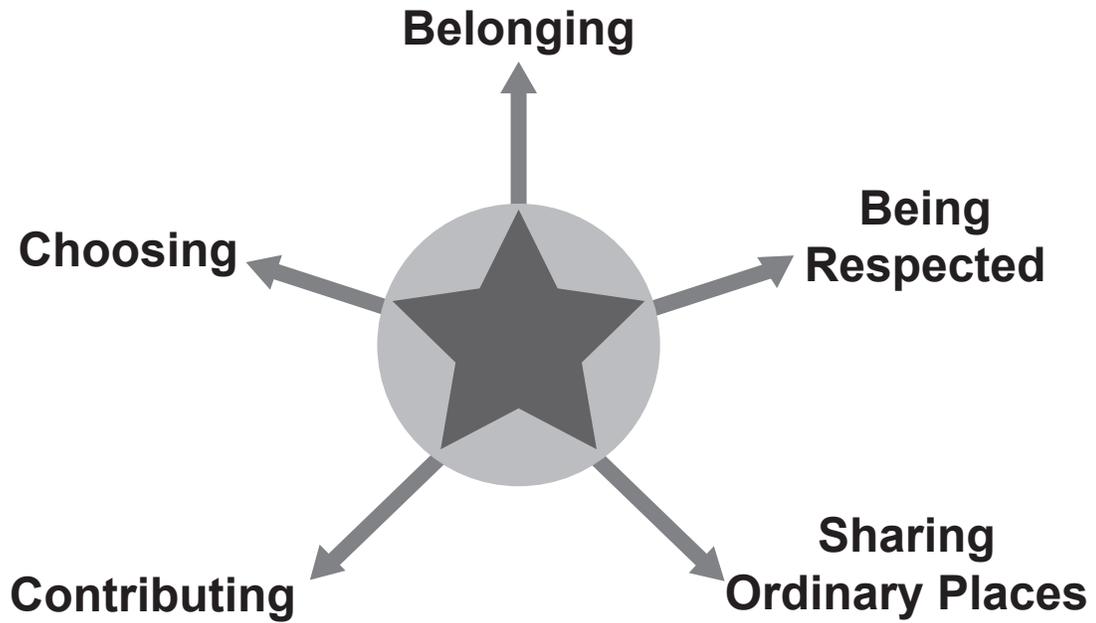
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Today's Date:

My name:

People who are thinking with me today:

We are doing this plan because...



## Team Member Responsibilities

- ✓ Listen respectfully, creatively, and imaginatively for different ideas and points of view.
- ✓ Keep coming back to the person, listening with your whole selves for dreams, desires, preferences.
- ✓ Keep looking for interests and capacities.
- ✓ State clearly what you think, believe and will take responsibility for (don't tell others what to think, what to believe, or what they should take responsibility for).
- ✓ Speak in ordinary language (no "system's speak", including labels).
- ✓ Share the tasks of facilitating and recording.
- ✓ If you feel lost or confused seek help from your team or from one of the facilitators.

# My People

These are the people who can help me find my way. They might be people who will be good company for me, help me think of new possibilities, make contacts for me, and solve problems.

Put people's names in the closest, white circle if they are your **allies**: people who know you and will work with you to make your life better.

Put people's names in the next, light grey circle if they could **become allies**. People who could play a good part in your future if you strengthened your relationships with them.

Draw a heart next to the name's of the people you care most about.

Draw a star next to the name's of the people who know an important part of your life story.

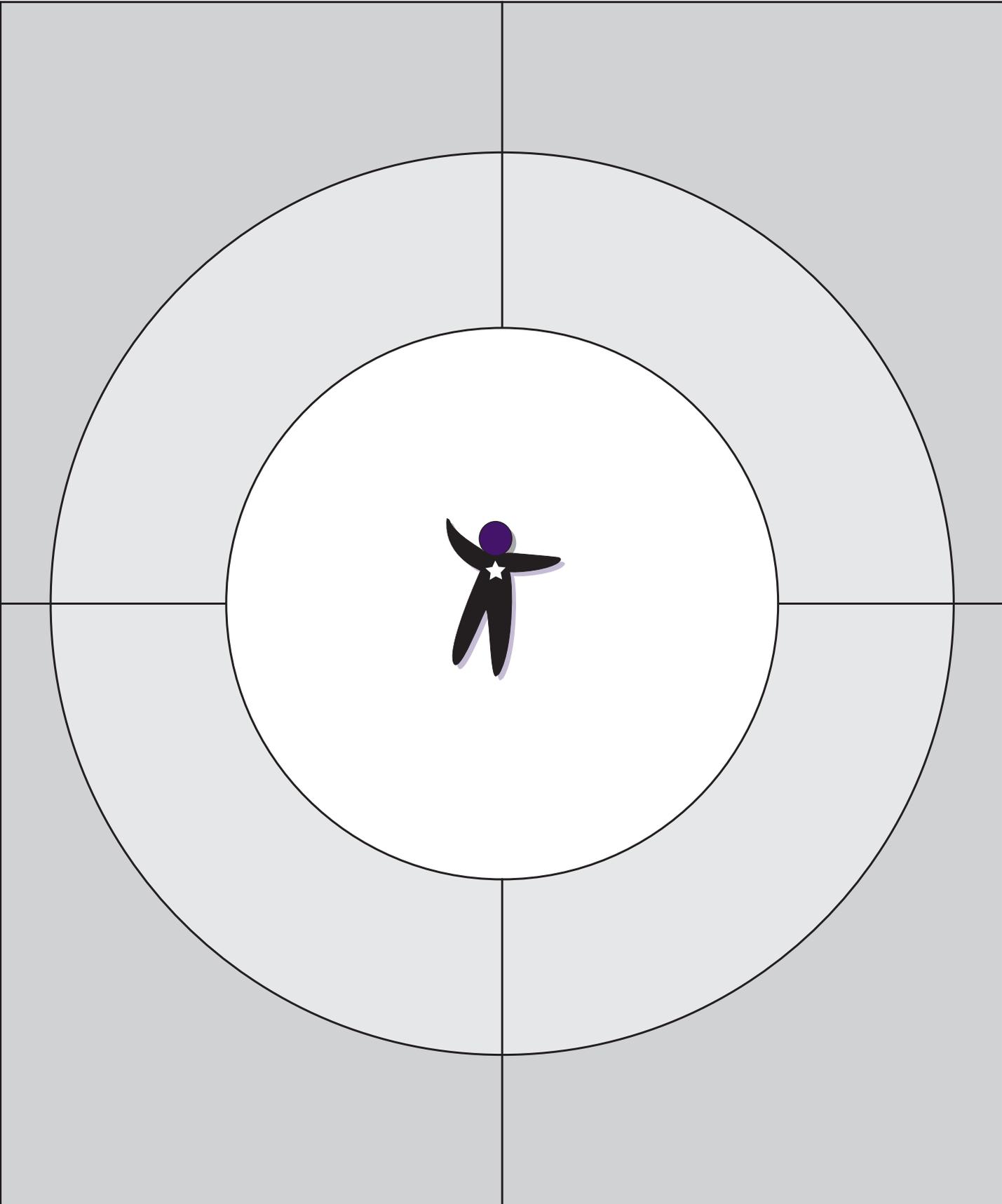
Put a circle around the names of people who know lots of people in the community.

Put a check mark next to the names of people you want to ask for help in taking your next steps.

**Things we can do to make these relationships stronger**

**Service Providers**

**Community Members**



**Friends**

**Family**

# My Places

These are the places that matter to me. Some of these will be everyday places, others might be once-in-a-while places (maybe on vacation or on holiday family visits). Some of these may be community places I go on my own or with my family or friends. Some may be community places I go as a member of a human service group (maybe on a work crew or an outing with special ed classmates or a special recreation program). Some may be human service places (like a special ed class or a day program).

Don't worry about listing every place you go, as long as you get the places that are most important to you.

After you have identified places, think about what you do there.

- Put an “**R**” next to community places where you are a **regular** customer or browser (maybe a coffee shop or a bookstore or a library).
- Put an “**M**” next to community places where your partner is a **member** (maybe a church or an informal “breakfast club” at a restaurant, or a work group, or the place an advocacy group meets).
- Draw a **heart** next to one or two places that you most like to be and feel most yourself (sometimes it helps to be very specific about the place and what you like to do there: “shooting baskets with my brother in the driveway”, “sitting in my favorite chair watching a DVD I got at the library”, “singing in the choir at church”)
- Draw a **star** next to any community places where you think you could make even stronger connections.

Community Life



*Community in Service Groups*

Human Service World

# My Time

This is the way I spend usually my time. There are big blocks (like when I am in school or at work). There are times that are very important to me (like playing on a team, or a music lesson, or watching my favorite show or my regular time to be with someone important). There may be times when I can be by myself or time when it's important that somebody be with me to help me out or make sure I'm ok (maybe times I need personal assistance to get dressed, or eat, or times I need someone who can interpret the way I communicate, or times I need someone to make sure I'm safe).

- Draw in the “big blocks” of time and label them.
- Mark the “usual important times” with a star.
- Shade in the times that it's important for you to have somebody else with you to help you out or make sure you are ok.

**S**

**M**

**T**

**W**

**T**

**F**

**S**

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

# My Style

Each person is different. One way to let people know what matters to me is to say what works for me and what doesn't work for me. Use the worksheet on the next page to list as many things as you can in a few minutes.

After you have filled in the worksheet, use the space below to summarize what's most important for people to know about what works and doesn't work for you (some examples: "morning person", "takes things easy", "high energy", "everything goes better with music").

**What works for me?**

What keeps me interested, energizes me,  
makes me feel alive?

**What does not work for me?**

What makes me mad or upset, puts me off, shuts  
me down, bores me?

# My Gifts

Each of us have things to give others. Our own personal ways of making a difference in the world. There are...

**Gifts of the hand** (and feet and voice) –abilities and skills that I can give (for example: recognizing people and remembering names, dancing, fixing things, singing, typing, drawing, arranging shapes and colors, using a computer, decorating, acting, composing music, figuring out the best way to do a job, sewing, working hard using physical strength, decorating, ability to sign, ability to speak or understand another language)

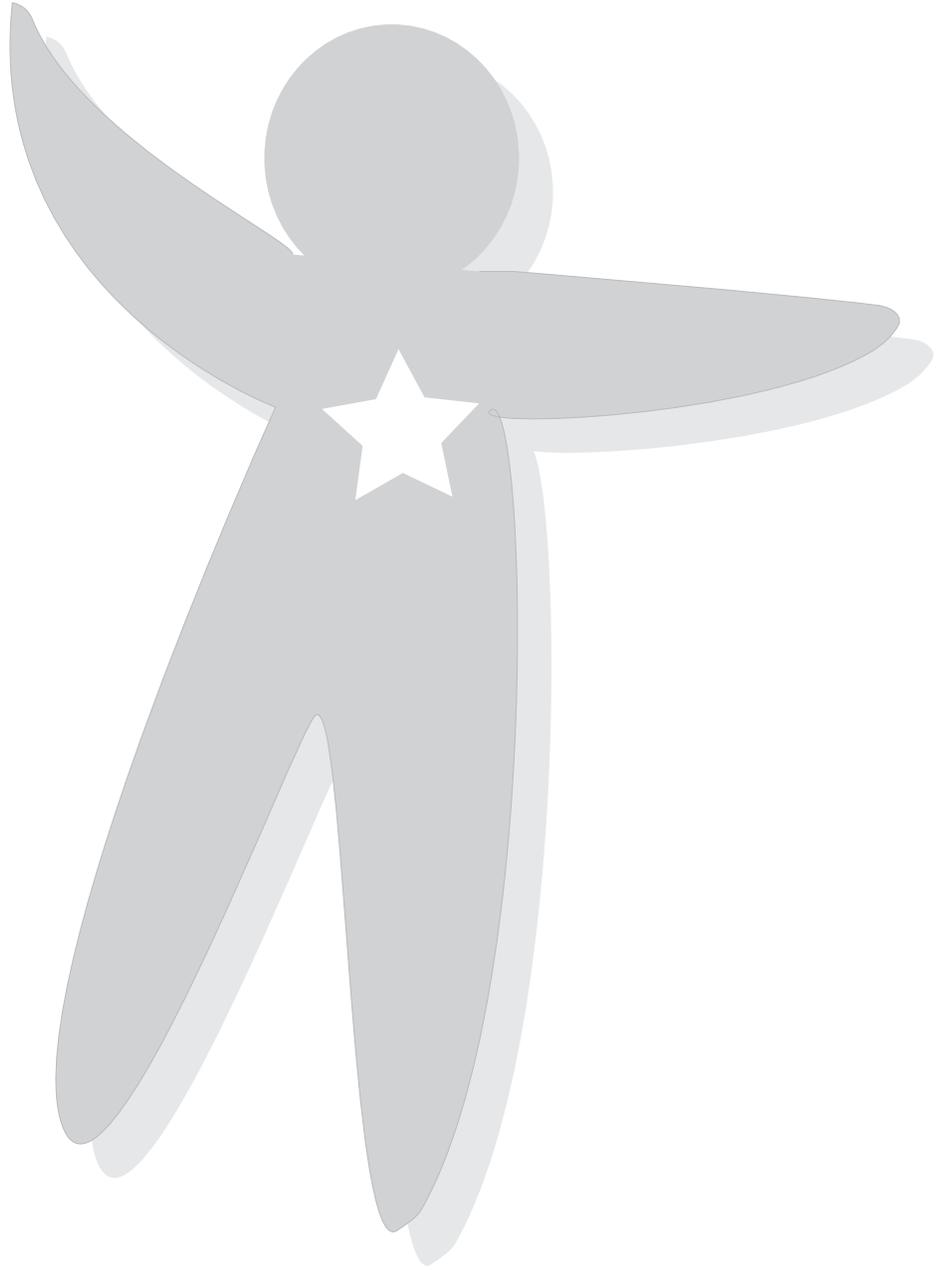
**Gifts of the head** –knowledge, questions, experience, and information that I can contribute (for example, figuring people out, organizing and classifying things, travel routes, sports news, fan information, gossip, local history, ability to spot a bargain, ability to debate, sales ability, creative thinking, math, solving puzzles, interest in politics, desire to think and talk about big questions)

**Gifts of the heart** –interests, enthusiasms, personal passions, and the rewards of relationship that I can bring to others (for example, welcoming people, patience, courage, impatience to move from talk into action, sensitivity to others, high energy, desire for order, ability to listen, passion for justice, love of nature, ability to draw others out, spiritual gifts)

**Gifts of my history and who I am** – experiences, knowledge, duties, responsibilities concerns, types of belonging that come with membership in my particular family, religion, national or ethnic group, citizenship

Use the next page to claim your gifts by putting them on the page. It helps to think about what other people who know you say your gifts are.

**What do I need to give my gifts?** (“I love to help set up and clean up the room for meetings and parties, but I need someone to work alongside me.” “I can sing if somebody coaches me to learn the songs.” “I am a good cook if someone reads me the recipe.”)



# What Connections Am I Looking For?

Think about everything you have learned from working on the other pages.

Think about possible connections that could answer one or more of these questions:

- Which associations and networks of individuals share my interests, enthusiasms and passions?
- Who cares about what I care about and how does their caring show up in community life?
- Where will people identify with my family, nationality, ethnic group, or religion?
- Who would enjoy my company?
- Where could my presence make a positive difference?
- Who would enjoy and add to the knowledge, questions, experiences, and information I have?
- Which community projects and activities would benefit from what I can do or produce?

On the next page...

In column one, summarize the capacities to build on or develop.

Brainstorm as many possibilities as you can in columns two and three by asking “Where would these capacities be welcome?” and “In what role could I contribute?” (Roles include such possibilities as security guard, motivational speaker, organizer, soprano, usher, regular patron, waiter, gardener). The ground rule for brainstorming is, “No judgements” – don’t worry about whether an idea seems “realistic” or not; sometimes far-out ideas lead on to better ideas and real positive steps.

Review the worksheet and circle two or three of the most promising possibilities.

**Describe as clearly as possible exactly what it is that you are looking for in the community** (for example, “We want to connect with a theatre group that does musicals and will give chorus parts to people who can’t read music.” or “We want to find a good place to listen to Irish music.” or “We want to connect with a group that gives volunteers safe ways to help homeless people.” or “We want to connect with an artist who will be a mentor.” Be courageous and optimistic: if you don’t know what you are looking for, you have little chance to find it; if you don’t ask for exactly what you want the chances of getting it are poor.

<p><b>Capacities to Build On or Build-Up</b></p> <p>Gifts of hand, head, heart, identity</p>	<p><b>Potential Community Opportunities</b></p> <p>Places, associations, networks where the person's capacities would be welcome</p>	<p><b>Possible Roles</b></p> <p>How the person can act as a contributing citizen in this place, association, or network.</p>

# Summing Up

Make a poster that shows in words and pictures what you want for your future right now. Make the poster as strong and clear about what you really want as you can.

# And Now...

Good questions I need to find answers for...

I need to talk to...	about...

My very next steps are:

