

Habits for highly effective staff - using person-centred thinking in day-to-day work

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Introduction

To really make a difference to someone's life – and to ensure they have more choice and control – staff supporting them need to participate in an ongoing loop of listening, learning and action.

This can be done through habitually using person-centred thinking tools. These are the foundation of change and they can help staff to learn what matters to an individual; what good support looks like; and how an individual communicates their choices and makes decisions.

Through using person-centred thinking, staff can think about their role in the individual's life and how they can bring about action. They can analyse what life is like for the person now, what is working for them and not working, and what needs to change. Then staff can continue to learn about what is important to and for an individual and how to balance the two.

This short paper for managers and staff offers seven different ways to build good habits that can help achieve the outcomes or changes that people want to see in their lives.

It assumes people have undertaken person-centred thinking training and suggests ways that this training can be embedded into day-to-day practice.

They may not all work for everyone, but are worth trying. This paper also comes with an invitation to give feedback in order to develop a range of free, downloadable resources that help make person-centred thinking a habit for staff.

What do we know about changing habits?

Let's start by thinking about your own life and experiences. Many of us have tried to create new habits like eating healthily, exercising more and daily meditation; or change old habits like stopping smoking or drinking less. Research suggests that it takes a minimum of 21 days¹ to change a daily habit and that we are more likely to succeed when:

¹ Dr Maxwell Maltz, Psycho-Cybernetics, 1960

1 You know your starting point, so that you can see future progress

If you joined a weight loss group, one of first things that would happen is that you would be weighed to know where you are starting.

2 You have a plan

If you wanted to stop smoking, you would think about how to avoid situations where you were more likely to want to smoke, and how many cigarettes you wanted cut back on within the next month.

3 You make a public commitment

If you are changing your eating habits to become a vegetarian, then telling people that this is what you are doing is an important way to embed the change. Weight loss groups have been shown to be more effective than people trying individually. This is about the support that people receive, and that you are making a public commitment by demonstrating that you want to lose weight by attending the class.

4 You have ways to remind yourself of what you want to change

One approach used in Neuro-Linguistic Programming is to have a stone or marble in your pocket. Every time you put your hand in your pocket and touch the stone, you remember what you are trying to change. A more direct approach for people who want to lose weight is to have a picture of them at the size they want to be on the fridge.

5 You are supported by an individual or group

You are more likely to be successful if you are getting support, either from a buddy or a group, like quit smoking or weight loss groups.

6 You record and report back on progress

The other side of making a commitment and telling people about it, is letting people know how you are getting on.

7 There is recognition or rewards for improvements and success

It is encouraging seeing how you are making progress in your new habit or changing an old one. This might be watching your weight decrease on a chart or a jar fill up with the money otherwise spent on cigarettes.

2 You have a plan

Being able to rate your existing level of competence can help you think about areas that you want to improve, or tools that you want to try. This can be captured in a simple action planning format.

In some of the Good2Great sites, people used an action planning template that stated what they wanted to try or improve and what support they needed. Both the person and their manager then signed it.

You could also look at whole-team actions or even whole-organisation actions to focus on or improve competence in a particular tool.

Some teams have 'Person-Centred Thinking Tool of the Week' or month, which they display on notice boards and make an agenda item in team meetings and individual supervision sessions. When this is done across a locality or organisation, you can have email reminders and even text reminders of that month's person-centred thinking tool.

Action plan
The priority person centred thinking tools for me to develop my skills are _____

1	Why?
2	Why?
3	Why?

What opportunities could I have to use them? _____

What support will I need to use them? _____

How can I get/ask for this support? _____

My next steps are _____

1	Target date
2	Target date
3	Target date

How will I know I have been successful? _____

3 You make a public commitment

You can make a personal, private plan to use a particular tool or develop your skill in using it, or you can go public. For most people, going public increases the likelihood that you will make it happen.

At an individual level, commitments to use a particular tool could be shared at 'a round' in a team meeting. If recorded in the minutes, it could then be a standing agenda item where people feedback their progress.

At a team level, a postcard of the tool that the whole team is focusing on could go on the team notice board, in the newsletter or pasted into electronic diaries.

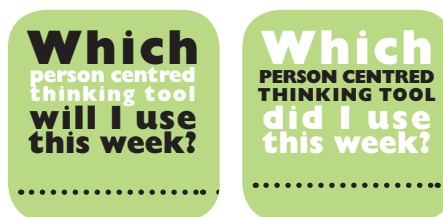


4 You have ways to remind yourself of what you want to change

There are several ways that you can have both discreet and more public reminders to use person-centred thinking tools.

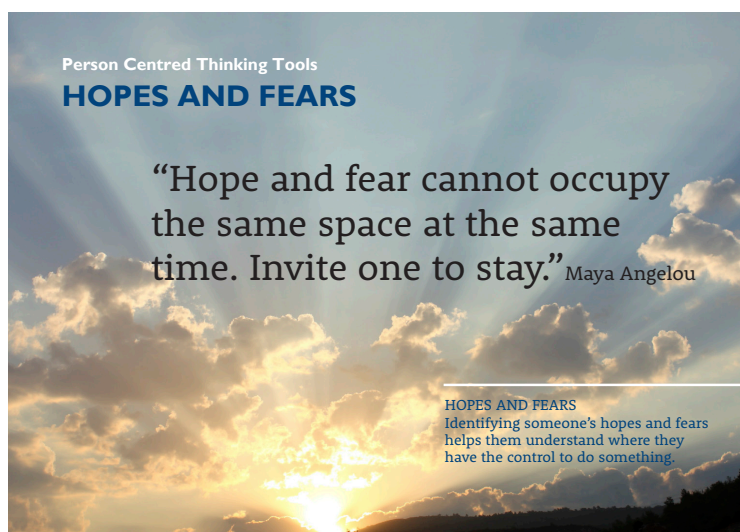
One possibility is to use stickers in diaries, notebooks or on desks. You can have these for forward planning or retrospective reflection, for example:

- Which person-centred thinking tool will I use this week?
- Which person-centred thinking tools did I use this week?

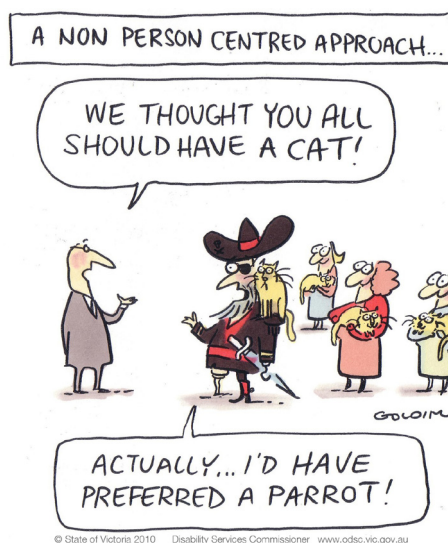


We are used to seeing inspirational posters and postcards in offices. Some people are using 'The Virtues Cards' for reflection. Another possibility is to have postcards and posters or even cartoons that reflect the person-centred thinking tools. Inspired by the Virtues Cards, Helen Sanderson Associates (HSA) has produced a set of cards that have an inspirational quote related to the person-centred thinking tool, and then more detail about the tool on the reverse. These can be used in many ways, for example:

- On notice boards.
- To show the 'Person-Centred Thinking Tool of the Month'.
- In team meetings – people can choose a card and share a success they have had using that particular person-centred thinking tool.



Many people have found the person-centred thinking minibook a useful reminder and quick reference to help them use the tools on a day-to-day basis.

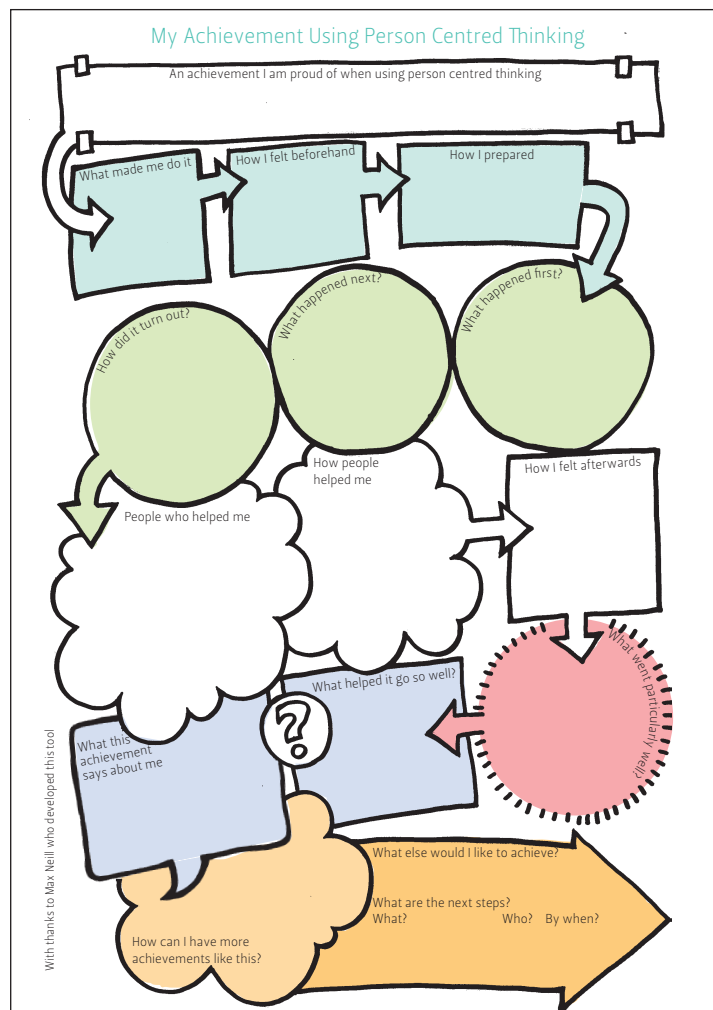


5 You are supported by an individual or group

Getting support is crucial in building good habits and making changes. This could be your manager; a peer who is at the same level of learning and trying as you are, or a more experienced staff member who acts as a coach. You could book regular 'check-ins' with them or agree to call each other if either of you are stuck.

Change may be even more likely if your whole team is working on this together. Here are some ideas of how to integrate person-centred thinking in team meetings:

- Use the person-centred thinking postcards (each has a different tool on it). Put them face up on the table or floor or 'deal' them out. Ask each person in turn to talk about a situation last week when they could have used that person-centred thinking tool or tell a story of when they did.
- Opening rounds where people are asked to share something that is going well specifically in how they are using person-centred thinking.
- Practice crafting and sharing stories about using person-centred thinking and practice for an event or celebration where the team can share.
- Use the 'Achievement exercise' focused on person-centred thinking in pairs and then share with the whole group.



6 You record and report back on progress

Recording progress is both encouraging (when you are doing well) and a learning opportunity (when you are not doing as well as you hoped).

There are different ways to record progress and reflect. Some people find a person-centred thinking journal useful. Some Good2Great sites are starting to use person-centred thinking portfolios where people have blank copies of templates and ways to record their progress, achievements and learning. Of course, there are person-centred thinking tools that are designed for reflecting on progress and you could use 'working/not working', 'four plus one' and adapt the 'learning log' for this purpose. HSA has also created small pads of tear off pages – one a week – to record seven days worth of effort in using person-centred thinking.

Person Centred Thinking Habits Chart								
Person centred thinking tool	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Notes

7 There is recognition or rewards for improvements and success

One possibility is to look at the existing recognition and reward schemes that already exist within the organisation and see if these can be adapted to focus directly on skill and persistence in using person-centred thinking. For example:

- Have certificates of competence for each person-centred thinking tool – given when someone has produced three 'best practice' examples of a tool (for example, three doughnuts for different people or situations, with a filled-in template and 'story' that explains why it was used and the difference made). The anonymised examples and stories can then be shared in training or on the intranet.
- Local person-centred thinking 'awards ceremony' or celebration every six months where people can share their successes in using person-centred thinking with people to change their lives.

Conclusion and next steps

These ideas were tested at the annual UK Gathering of the Learning Community for Person-centred Practices. I would like to invite you to try any that appeal to you and to let me know what you think.

There will be a new section on the HSA website with the downloadable resources mentioned here, and these could be customised or developed alongside other ideas.

As a group, those at the Gathering identified some international 'test' sites and organisations to do more focused work on exploring these ideas and developing the resources.

They are:

- Hull, a local authority in the UK. The work here will focus specifically on people at the end of their life, people with mental health problems, older people and people with learning disabilities and will be led by Michelle Livesley, Gill Bailey and Tracy Meyerhoff.
- EITAS (Empowering Individuals Through Advocacy and Support) in the US with Amanda George.
- Real Life Options, a provider organisation in the UK, with Julie Bray.
- The Mills Community Support Corporation and Community Living Parry Sound in Canada with Jill Faber.
- Care UK, a national organisation in the UK, working with Alison Short.
- The Developmental Services Sector Forum, a collective of service providers in Niagara, Canada, with Julie Malette NorthStar Services in the US with Claudia Bolton.
- IAS, a provider organisation in the UK, with Ruth Gorman.

Please send any comments or suggestions to me at Helen@helensandersonassociates.co.uk. I will keep people informed of progress through the listserv and on Facebook.

Please join us in learning what it takes to really make person-centred thinking a way of day-to-day working that truly makes a difference.