Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)

A Strengths-Based Planning Process

Heyne & Anderson 2018
Overview

1. What is PATH?
   - Strengths-based planning process
   - Person-centered planning process
   - PATH principles and roles
2. PATH overview
3. Implement PATH process (*create your own PATH!*)
4. Share PATHs
5. Applying PATH to TR practice

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What is PATH?

- A person-centered team assessment and planning process based on a person’s hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future
- Designed for individuals with developmental disabilities, yet beneficial for anyone at a crossroads in life
- A process that helps people design a life of meaning and engagement

Jack Pearpoint, John O’Brien, & Marsha Forest (2001)
Inclusion Press [www.inclusion.com](http://www.inclusion.com)
PATH Principles...

1. The “Pathfinder” is at the center of planning
2. Start where you are; use what you have
3. It’s important to see the *whole* person
4. People with disabilities should live like people without disabilities

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PATH Principles (cont’d)

5. PATH is a team process

6. Team members need to make a personal commitment

7. Organizations need to respond to people’s needs; workers must be helpers

Holburn, Gordon, & Vietze (2007)
Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)

“When we dream alone it is only a dream, but when we dream together it is the beginning of reality.”
~ Dom Helder Camera

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PATH: Roles of Group Members

- Pathfinder
- Facilitator
- Graphic recorder
- Other potential group members:
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Co-workers or classmates
  - Health and human service providers
    (recreation therapist, teacher, social worker, residential staff, etc.)

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Role of Facilitator

- Assists the pathfinder through the steps
- Encourages participation
- Empowers the team
- Supports the memory of what occurs
- Provides occasional summaries
- Keeps the process on track – looks after time and pace

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Role of Graphic Recorder

- Listens intuitively
- Captures pathfinder’s words and images on paper
- Helps pathfinder find emerging themes
- Summarizes, as needed

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Role of Other Group Members

- Support the pathfinder’s dreams and goals
- Engage in the process
- Provide differing viewpoints
- Be solution-oriented
- Commit to action, act as a catalyst for change

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Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

THE 8 STEPS OF PATH:
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Step 4. Inviting people to enroll
Step 5. Recognizing ways to build strengths
Step 6. Charting action for the next few months
Step 7. Planning the next month’s work
Step 8. Committing to the first step

Adapted from Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)
PATH Example: “Jeffrey’s PATH”
When I first met Jeffrey, he had just moved into a home that was built for him and five other young people, coming from a facility that was home to 48 people. I was just beginning my career working in human services, and therapeutic interventions based on strengths were a few years away. The human services system dealt with deficits. There was something wrong with people and it was our job to figure out what those things were and how to “fix them.” We dealt with people in terms of their vulnerabilities, their negative target behaviors, and their failures in their cognitive and physical abilities. A few years later that would all change for me, as my life would again intersect with my friend Jeffrey.

As fate would have it, I would begin to pursue my career in therapeutic recreation, and I needed a job that would allow me the flexibility to finish my degree. That job would lead me to being the Program Coordinator of the home in which Jeffrey lived. By this time, Jeff had lived at a group home of one kind or another for approximately 10 years. Jeff was diagnosed with significant physical and cognitive disabilities, but I saw someone very different; I saw a sports fan, a wrestling fan, lover of music, and a practical joker. As was the norm, all of Jeff’s assessments and subsequent programming dealt with his deficits and disabilities. He had a behavior program that collected data on all of the “bad” things he did. He had a program to correct his management of his wheelchair. He had therapy programs to correct range of motion deficits and effects from his spina bifida, and his community programs consisted of shopping at the local discount store. He was 18 years old.

Jeffrey was blessed in more ways than one, and I was subsequently blessed to be working with him. He had an incredibly supportive and loving family. Much of what was lacking in his programming and structure in his group home was made up for by his family. He was surrounded by “professionals” for so many years of his life, yet it was his family who was the most educated about how to offer him quality of life. It was from their lead that a group of new and dedicated staff and I began the course to assist Jeffrey with reaching his dreams. We worked to offer him the opportunities in his life that were most important to him, not the service system in which he had fallen for half of his life.

In October one year, a new phase in Jeffrey’s life began. His team meeting occurred that day, but it was a process in which none of us had ever been involved. Instead of reviewing and filling out forms that evaluated progress in deficit areas, we began on a PATH that talked about dreams, adventures, and the things that Jeffrey felt were important in his life. This PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) process was a new tool in our organization that focused on the person and what they saw as important. It focused on positive planning, positive outcomes, and positive supports to reach the dreams that Jeffrey had never been asked to dream of before. It was October 9th, 1996, and Jeffrey’s life was about to take on a whole new meaning, not just to him, but to those involved in his life as well.

**Jeffrey’s PATH**

Of course, as with any type of gathering, you must have rules. But these rules were quite different than we had experienced in the past. They were simple, yet effective.

- **Rule #1**: The right people are here.
- **Rule #2**: It begins when it begins, and ends when it ends.
- **Rule #3**: Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
- **Rule #4**: The Golden Rule: Be nice or get out!

Once the ground rules were established, the process began. Jeffrey was joined by those in his life who he felt meant the most to him. He was in charge of the invitations, and if he did not want you there, you were not there. Not surprisingly, there were no doctors present, no therapists present, no psychologists present, and no behavioral analysts present. He wanted those people there who he knew would help him dream: his mother, his teacher, and the direct support professionals who had recently joined him to make positive changes in his life. He had set the stage, and we were now ready to make his dreams come true.

We began with his North Star. What would he do in a perfect world with no limitations, no disabilities, and no barriers of any kind? We asked Jeffrey to dream. We asked his mother and his friends to dream. His dreams were positive. His dreams were about getting away from his disability, about soaring above it. His dreams were about family, recreation, travel, and friends. Not one of his dreams involved a behavior support plan, adaptive equipment, learning to unload the dishwasher, or put away his laundry. He wanted to go to college, travel to Florida for Spring Training, go to as many sporting events as possible, own his own house, be a father, build a greenhouse, own his own car, own his own dog or cat, remain close to his family, and last, but one of his biggest dreams of all, meet Celine Dion!
Jeffrey had several other dreams as well. Once he was asked about his own life, the floodgates opened. Soon he was not just talking about his dreams, but demanding them! All the years of being told what to do, being programmed according to his deficits and disabilities, all those walls that had been placed in front of him were starting to come crashing down. From his dreams, he began to take First Steps. He talked about what he could have accomplished from his dreams in one year’s time. We all focused on what was positive and possible for Jeffrey, and how we, as those he had chosen to join him in this process, would help him to reach his North Star. Everyone used words to describe the process that were rarely heard in annual planning meetings for people. We used words such as “thrilling,” “positive,” “doable,” “meaningful,” “complete,” “fun,” “ambitious,” “groundbreaking,” “pioneering” and “all about Jeffrey”! We could not remember the last time we had heard the word “groundbreaking” describe a planning meeting for someone with a disability. But that is what this was for Jeffrey. It was groundbreaking. It was about him, about his dreams and focusing on the positive outcomes that would take Jeffrey all the way to his North Star and beyond.

Positive and Possible

The key to the success of this process was to have commitment from the team that had come to support Jeffrey. Working on a PATH takes a great deal of commitment; commitment beyond paper, beyond assessments, and beyond collecting data. Jeffrey had chosen people that he knew would follow through on his dreams. What we did not expect was that other people, those who had not been involved in the process, wanted in on Jeffrey’s dreams. When we began to work with people focusing on positive outcomes and not negative deficits, everyone wanted to be involved. Jeffrey was excited about his plan for the first time in his life. And along with that excitement and the progress towards his North Star, we saw something that none of us expected. We saw the negative aspects of Jeffrey’s disability begin to disappear. It seemed that when the focus was on the positive and not the negative, the negative began to fade. And his dreams were coming true!

The beauty of the PATH process, and other processes that focus on people and their strengths, and the benefits that it brought to Jeffrey’s life, could never have been imagined with the old system’s negative focus. The PATH simply took the therapeutic recreation process and based it on positive outcomes. The PATH itself was the initial assessment; the First Steps the programming; the 3-month, 6-month, and 1-year follow-up required documentation; and his 1-year celebration the evaluation of the process. While several more steps were involved on a daily and monthly basis, it was not surprising that when people were asked to dream, their dreams focused on recreation and relationships—the very core of what therapeutic recreation could bring to their lives.

Jeffrey’s life was cut short in January of 2000. But the last 4 years of his life were filled with his dreams. He created his own garden in his backyard; he attended more sporting events than we ever thought possible; he redecorated his room, purchased his own car, and most importantly saw Celine Dion not once, but twice! The last day of his life he spent surrounded by family at a favorite restaurant. He reached for his North Star, he dreamed and helped all of us around him realize that dreaming was a necessary part of helping people to become everything they wanted to be.
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Step 7. Planning the next month’s work
Step 8. Committing to the first step

Adapted from Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)
Step 1: Touching the Dream

Locate the North Star

- Hopes
- Dreams
- Aspirations
- Values
- Ideals

Imagine there are no barriers to achieving your dream!

Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)

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Linda’s North Star
Step 1: Touching the Dream

Locate the North Star

- What key words and images express your dreams?
- What words and images capture your “North Star” direction?
- What values help you evaluate your choices as you travel on your PATH?
- What are you passionate about?
- What gives your life meaning?
- Where do your interests and talents lie?
- What nourishes your soul?
- What ideals do you most want to realize on your PATH?

What key FEELING WORDS are associated with your North Star?

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What key FEELING WORDS are associated with your North Star?

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Step 2: Sensing the Goal

Generate a vision of a positive possible future

- Choose a date by when you want to have important results
- Imagine the date has arrived and sense your accomplishments – what have you done to get there?
- See, hear, taste, smell, and touch your accomplishment(s)
- Translate accomplishments into goals that represent your North Star
Sensing the Goal

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Do the FEELING WORDS from your North Star match your goals?

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Step 3: Grounding in the Now

- Provide a “snapshot” of the present
- Where are you now?
- Describe the current situation as accurately and honestly as possible
- Be objective and factual

What key FEELING WORDS do you associate with the NOW?

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- Where are you now?
- Describe the current situation as accurately and honestly as possible
- Be objective and factual

What key FEELING WORDS do you associate with the NOW?

Adapted from Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)
Step 4: Inviting people to enroll

- Identify/invite people to join you in the PATH process
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Significant other
  - Staff and service providers (recreation therapist, teacher, social worker, aide, personal fitness trainer, etc.)

Adapted from Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)
Step 5: Recognizing ways to build strength

- What are your strengths (internal and external)?
- What knowledge do you have/need?
- What skills do you have and what skills do you need to develop?
- What relationships do you need to maintain or develop?
- What community resources can help you achieve your dreams?
- How can you stay healthy and well as you work toward creating a better future?
Internal and External Strengths

External Strengths and Resources
- Home resources
- Community and environmental resources

Internal Strengths
- Interests and preferences
- Talents and abilities
- Skills and competencies
- Knowledge
- Aspirations and goals
- Character strengths/qualities
- Physical strengths

Recreation as a context to build strengths
- Opportunities for participation and contribution (inclusive communities)

Recreation as a strength
- Family support and involvement
- Friendships and social support
- High expectations and positive attitudes

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Recognizing your strengths and ways to build strengths

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Step 5: Recognizing ways to build strength

- What are your strengths (internal and external)?
- What knowledge do you have/need?
- What skills do you have and what skills do you need to develop?
- What relationships do need to maintain or develop?
- What community resources can help you achieve your dreams?
- How can you stay healthy and well as you work toward creating a better future?
Step 6: Charting action for the next few months

- Take action (do it) and learn from it (reflect)
  - Review Step 1 (North Star) and Step 2 (goal image) and consider all aspects
  - What are the most important steps to take in the next 3-6 months?
  - Identify specific action(s) toward goal
  - Are actions consistent with the dream (North Star)?
  - Identify actions that seem most possible to do first

Adapted from Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)
Charting action for the next few months

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Step 7: Planning the next month’s work

- Specify who will do what, by when
  - What needs to be done to accomplish the goal?
  - Who will do it?
  - By what day of the month?

- Create SMART goals

Adapted from Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)
SMART Goals

- Take 2 bags of clothes to Salvation Army by Sept. 30
- Meditate 10 min./day 4 x week
- Call friends to do something fun 3 x week
- Ride my bike for 30 min. 4 x week

- S = Specific
- M = Measurable
- A = Achievable
- R = Relevant
- T = Time framed

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Goals that Promote Well-Being

- Intrinsic
- Authentic
- Approach rather than avoidance goals
- Harmonious
- Flexible and appropriate
- Activity-based

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Step 8: Committing to the first steps

- Identify a first step(s)
- What is the biggest barrier to taking this step? How can the barrier be removed?
- Who can support you in taking the first step?
- How will they support you?

"Change is inevitable; growth is optional”
~ Marsha Forest & Jack Pierpoint

Adapted from Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest (2001)
Closing the Session

Options:

- Facilitator or group member summarizes entire process
- Pathfinder creates an image that represents the journey
- Facilitator or group member presents pathfinder with the PATH chart

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Share your PATH!
Application of PATH to TR/RT Practice

- How could PATH be used in your practice?
- What kinds of people could benefit from PATH?
BREAK!
Be Back at 2:15pm