



# National Center on Advancing Person-Centered-Practices and Systems

## Transcript for a short video “Michael Smull Explains Important To and Important For” a video from our Pandemic Wisdom series

To learn more about this work, visit the website for [The Learning Community for Person-Centered Practices](#) or [Support Development Associates](#)

Hi, this is Michael Smull, chair of the Learning Community for Person-Centered Practices, and a Senior Partner of Support Development Associates. I want to talk to you about the use of person-centered thinking skills in a time of crisis. We all seek to have our own lives in balance, and the impact of COVID has made us all feel out of balance. There are new boundaries of what we can and cannot do, and new expectations of behavior. Within the framework that we use, what is important for us, has dramatically impacted what's important to us.

We immediately sought to regain some of what is important to us, and we began with the obvious. Relationships and routines. This has helped, but we still have what's been termed quarantine fatigue.

When we look at the lives of the people who are in the groups that we see as being at risk, we see even greater impact. Their lives have been impacted even more by the need to stay where they live, the need to restrict visitors, and social distancing.

Well how can person-centered thinking skills help?

First, it gives us a structured way to look at what's been impacted, what's been effective, what has helped us cope, restructure and replace. It can help us see what is working, what we need more of, and what we need to seek to change.

What are those skills? They begin with important to and important for.

And as you can see important for is health and safety. But it's also being valued.

Important To begins with relationships that goes on with purpose and meaning, status and control, things to do, places to go; routines, pace of life and things to have. And what we want to do is seek to rebalance? And how do we do that?

First we help make sure that everyone understands what we mean by important to and what we mean by important for, and then have ways to discover what it is and how to help it be in balance. So people need to have ways of learning. And those learning skills are called discovery skills or listening skills. Then we need to know how it's working. So we need to be able to have ways of looking at what is working and not working. How are we learning, what are we doing with what we've learned, and what are our expectations of the people whom we expect to do it.

We also want to be able to target what we want to learn. So we might want to be looking at what is a good day like, what's a bad day like. Break the time up and say what's typical, what's better, what's worse, and use it to describe what's important to and how to best support.

And when we put that together, we can get one page descriptions and multiple page plans. We can see what people like and admire so that they meet the person rather than the disability. Know what's important to the person, how to best support them and how they might want to live.

But it also lets us focus in; lets us zero in on what somebody needs to know if Jim gets hospitalized. What are the things that we'd want those health care professionals to know.

And we can keep the learning alive and keep the learning going by looking at things like learning logs where we record learning as it happens. Looking at what's working and not working from multiple perspectives, so we can get a snapshot in time. Look at what's happening over time, by asking what did you try, what did you learn, what are you pleased about, what are you concerned about. So we can learn about people in ways that will help us as life reopens.

We can make sure that we're thinking about what we're learning as we replace and restructure.

We can use the everyday learning skills to help us capture the learning, so that we can truly individualize how we support people, as we reopen.

And you can go to the Learning Communities website. You can go to the SDA website, and you can learn more about each of these issues, or you can contact me directly. Thank you very much.