



Support workers are the most important resource of an agency and for a family. They dream, plan and work with individuals and families. They are there to help in a crisis and to provide support through good times and bad.

*'One Person at a Time' by Pat Fratangelo*

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### Presentation Outline

- Who am I?
- Who is Jackson?
- Some typical life difficulties
- What I expect from a support worker
- What is a support worker's role
- Using support to build relationships

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### Who am I?

- Mother of 4 young men
- Husband of another not-so-young man
- Teacher
- Trainer
- Advocate
- Present
- Family Leader
- Small business developer

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### Who is Jackson?

- 22 years old
- Son, brother, grand-son, nephew, cousin
- Courier
- Volunteer
- Swimmer
- Cyclist (passenger)
- Profoundly intellectually disabled
- High support needs

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### Some typical life difficulties

- Lack of relationships; unpaid, friendships
- Tends to be invisible; hence ignored
- Takes a long time to know and understand
- Perpetually in the role of 'client'
- Perpetually in the role of 'activity-doer'
- Seen as a passive absorber of many things

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### To be an effective support worker for any person you need to:

- Be doing the job for the right reasons
- Remember that every individual is different and every family is different
- Know the person well
- Know the family well
- Know their goals, hopes, dreams, fears – individual and family
- Know the culture of the family – how do they operate, what do they expect for their person with a disability

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### Supporting Jackson is a job. Like any job it has generic skills:

- Competent and confident
- Reliable
- Punctual
- Responsible
- Effective communication skills
- Work as a team member
- Problem solving skills

I have to be able to totally trust you to do the job without supervision, reminders, checking.

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### We are not interested in:

- Nice
- Genuine
- A strong sense of social justice
- A belief in inclusion/integration

WITHOUT THE THINGS ALREADY MENTIONED.

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### What about qualifications?

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### What I expect from a support worker?

To know your role in Jackson's life:

- Are you a skill-developer?
- Are you a relationship-builder?
- Are you a guard, minder or keeper?
- Are you a protector? Who are you protecting?  
And from what?
- Are you a 'creative ally'?
- Are you good company?

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- Are you filling-in time?
- Are you waiting for the end of the shift?
- Are you waiting for 'something better' to come along?
- Are you having fun?
- Do you feel valued?
- Do you feel listened to?
- Do you feel respected?

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### You can use your support to:

- Build relationships with others
- Link Jackson to people and places
- Find opportunities for him to be known to people through regular, predictable, age and sex appropriate activities
- Present him as a customer, participant, thrill seeker, swimmer, gym goer, music lover, singer etc not as a person with a disability who is being supported on an outing or doing an activity
- Include him in any exchanges with others – do not order, purchase, converse as if he isn't there. Direct conversation towards him.

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### Ask yourself:

- Who did I introduce Jack to today?
- Who greeted him by name?
- How many more people know him this week than last week?
- What did he enjoy?
- What did he learn?

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### What is possible for Jackson depends (in part) on the way you are in his life.

- You can extend and strengthen his network of relationships and roles.
- You can link him to his community
- You can foster and encourage relationships
- You can be an ambassador and role model
- You can make a real difference in his life longer term

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*A large part of each individual's character and outlook is shaped by the nature of the relationships he or she has, for good and ill; a point worth stressing...because relationships can ... stand as a barrier to the growth of gifts and the taking of opportunities, as well as being sources of good.*

*The Choice of Hercules: Pleasure, Duty and the Good Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by AC Grayling

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