Pathways to Leadership: *Pathways to Possibilities* course

– A user perspective –

The Importance of Planning for My Daughter

I attended the Pathways to Leadership *Pathways to Possibilities* course in July 2012 so that my daughter can have dreams and goals, and that we can achieve them together, through planning.

Planning for the future is not only essential for my daughter's quality of life but for mine also. Her disability is extremely complex and involves severe epilepsy, severe intellectual impairment, severe and very challenging behaviours that are impulsive and unsafe for her and those that care for her, significant speech and language difficulties, anxiety, hyperactivity, obsessional behaviours and very low concentration. Managing these challenges requires a relentless amount of time, strategies and energy and, without a detailed plan for now and for the future, it would not be possible for her and I to move forward, to have hope and to have structures in place that give her the opportunity to live a fulfilled, peaceful and productive life. What I discovered in the course is that dreams and planning need to happen before thinking about a budget. It is about the dreams, not the cost.

Planning enables me to ensure that her support staff, family members and dedicated friends are well informed and well trained in order to care for her appropriately. It also gives her choice and ownership of not only her actions but her dreams too. Being in control of situations is very important to her and planning has helped to give her choices, goals and happiness. Much support is required to assist her to make choices, etc but I am hopeful that by owning her own plan she will eventually understand that by choosing well she can achieve.

With support, planning has helped my daughter to begin to understand that she is working towards and can be a productive member of her community.

- Planning has also helped me to ensure she has supports that not only keep her safe but happier.
- She is the central element of the plan and without her circle of friends, family members and support workers understanding our plan it will be impossible to provide her with the opportunities and supports she needs to live a fulfilling life where she contributes to her community.
- Without detailed planning, her needs will not be met and she will almost certainly not be able to contribute to and live in her community. This is the reality of the challenges that her disability creates for her.
- I am hopeful that, with good planning, we can avoid her not being able to live in her own home and in her own community and prevent me from not being able to continue to care for her.
- Inclusive communities benefit everyone – whatever the disability, the person can be supported to live an inclusive life in community.

What Planning has done for me so far:

- Empowered and inspired me to keep going;
- Belief in myself and my daughter;
- Belief that dreams are achievable and choice is possible for everyone;

- Ensuring that I always look and develop the details of our plan – refine the Big Picture into step by step goals in order to achieve the BIG PICTURE;
- To ask for help;
- Strengthening and growth of our support circle;
- To learn from people who have successfully created a good life for their loved one with a disability;
- That I am capable of helping my daughter to have a fun, fulfilling, rewarding life;
- That my daughter can have dreams and goals and that together we can achieve them;
- That having the right supports in place is imperative – support that is tailored to her needs;
- I have a detailed support worker information document that outlines what works for my daughter, what doesn't work, and what you need to know to support my daughter – this is a work in progress.
- To continue to strive for the best possible life I can for myself and my daughter;
- That I have feelings too and that I need to care for myself so I can continue caring for my daughter;
- I have helped other families to begin planning or to think about planning
- I will now be self-managing and self-directing
- My daughter is doing volunteering in the community
- Our support network has grown even more
- I went on my first solo holiday for 5 nights, and will do it again. My whole family was so happy and relieved that I took this step.

Because my Mum did the course with me, she now understands what it is that my daughter and I are striving for and, while she was always so supportive, she now has a higher level of understanding, and this is so amazing for the three of us!!!

Pathways to Leadership can be contacted via: www.pathwaystoleadership.com.au

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