

PBS Helpline Resources

Active Support

Active Support is about the importance of supporting people to be meaningfully engaged and actively participating in all areas of their life.

This is about doing things with people, not for them. It's really easy to slip into doing things for people, but it can be really detrimental; it affects how we see the person, and then how they see themselves. So aspirations become really low, and the person may just wait for support or to see what's happening next. Active Support counters this by providing the right level of assistance.

There are four important principles to Active Support

1. Every moment has potential: Active Support is not just about certain activities or set times, but is about looking at the potential of every moment for the person to be fully involved in their life (whether it's having a shower or going to the pub)
2. Little and often: Any activity can be broken down into small steps, and doing this helps us see where people can be involved. For example, there are many steps involved in making a slice of toast (getting the bread out, putting it in the toaster, pressing the lever down, getting a plate out of the cupboard etc). If we look at it like this we can see which bits the person might be able to manage independently, where they might need some help, and which bits they might need us to do for them for now. It's ok to dip in and out and start small, particularly if this is new to the person. We wouldn't expect someone to do everything right from the start
3. Graded assistance: This is about providing the right level and type of support. Some people might prefer physical assistance or prompts, where others might respond to verbal prompts, gestures or pictures. All of these may be faded over time. We can also set the environment up to make it easier for people to succeed: for example a washing machine can have coloured stickers indicating the right settings to make it easier to use
4. Maximise choice and control. Any activity, whether it's a chore or something for fun, carries opportunities for the person to make choices. For example, just in making a meal, there are choices about what to eat, where to prepare it, what seasoning to use, how to cook it, where to eat it and with whom