**Stories showing the rights of people with disability.**

Support worker, Sam, will read Jo’s support plan before he meets up with her to choose her choice of activity for the day. He sees that she has communication difficulties with speaking and reading and would like practice gaining confidence as a customer in cafes and shops. Her plan also says that she is pre-diabetic and needs to avoid sugary drinks, especially Coke. He will encourage her to make healthy choices, but he must respect her right to choose for herself. Jo’s plan also says that she likes staying at home watching television and videos but she can be motivated to go for a walk if it is to get something she likes. He will suggest activities that involve walking and time in the fresh air.

Is it ok for Sam to buy himself a coke when he is out with Jo? How does it look to Jo if he drinks coke?

People with a disability have the same rights and responsibilities as other members of the community.

The challenge is to support people with a disability to be part of the community. A person may need your support to exercise their rights – for instance, to get a drink when they are thirsty. You may also need to give a person support to meet their responsibilities – such as paying for their drink with their own money. A support worker’s manner can teach others – such as café staff - to actively involve the person with a disability – for instance, as a customer.

“Hello,” Sam says to the waiter in the café. “I’m Sam and this is Jo. I will have a peppermint tea. Jo doesn’t talk much but she will point to what she wants.”

If Jo points in the direction of sugary caffeinated drinks that her family would like her to avoid, Sam can try diverting her to a different option.

‘You’re pointing at the top of the drinks fridge. There’s soft drink there, and just below that, there’s some fizzy fruit juice. Wow, there’s pineapple spritzer. Do you want to try that?”

If Jo insists on a Coke, she should have it. She will have a Diet Coke. If Sam can encourage her to have some water first, she can have the opportunity to enjoy quenching her thirst before drinking the diet coke.

“Jo, can you see a water jug and glasses anywhere? Would you like to pour us a glass of water each? Thanks. Let’s drink up to quench our thirst, and then we can enjoy our special drinks, yeah?”

When it’s time to pay, Sam will pay attention to Jo’s individuality and capability. He helps the café staff to respect Jo as a paying customer.

“I will pay for my drink and Jo will pay for hers. If you don’t split bills, then I will give my payment to Jo and she can pay for both of us. Is that OK with you, Jo?’

Each person with a disability is unique and so is their life experience*.*

You need to be aware of the circumstances of each person you support. Familiarise yourself with their unique situation, their culture and their likes and dislikes. You should have their Individual Support Plan, or their personal profile. If not, you will need to closely observe and listen to the person and ask questions of them and/or or their family.

To make a friendly request for information about a person, you might first give relevant information about yourself: “When I’m thirsty,” Sam says to Jo, “I like to drink water. Do you like to drink water?”

Sam can model and possibly influence a healthy choice and also give Jo the right to state her own preferences.

“When I go to a café, I like to drink peppermint tea. What do you like to drink when you go out with your family?”

Sam can discover if Jo has spending money by saying what he is doing with his money: “I’ve got $5 to spend today. That will be enough for my peppermint tea. Shall we check your wallet to see if you’ve got enough money for a drink, too?”

If she says “No!” Sam can ask her again later. It might make more sense to her to ask her about money when she indicates that she wants to go to a café.

It’s important to share information about the plan for the day and what will be needed.

“We might take a train today,” Sam says to Jo. “Here is my Myki ticket. Do you have one too?”

She shows him her ticket. He sees that she also has a companion card. The companion card means he can travel for free as her support person.

The support worker’s duty of care extends to skin protection.

“It’s hot today, so I am taking my hat. Do you have a hat?”

She shakes her head. She doesn’t have a hat.

“We need to wear sun-block or else we will get burnt and sore. We can help each other put on the sun-block. Do you want to squeeze the tube into my hand?”

Community inclusion should reflect the individual interests of a person with a disability. The activity must be relevant to what the person likes. It is fine to ask a person what they like to do.

Jo likes “shopping.” She might be able to tell Sam what she wants to buy. If not, he might be able to tell by looking at how she is dressed. If Jo is wearing costume jewelry, she might like to busy some more. She might like to go to an op shop or a store, depending on how much money she has to spend.

If a person can’t tell you what they want to do, they could look at some options in a picture communication system. They may have one that they regularly use, or you may have to find another way. Sam scrolls through online clip art or pictures to show Jo on his phone. She chooses Trout Fishing.

That is not possible in the few hours that they have together. Now the challenge for Sam is to come up with something similar. First he validates her choice. Then he says why they can’t do it today. Then he suggests something almost as good.

“Trout fishing is awesome!” says Sam. “Have you been before? We don’t have time today to go fishing, but we can go to an aquarium and look at some fish. Would you like that?”

If she says “No”, Sam suggests that they both go to the river and look at some fish.

If she says “No” to that as well, Sam might know of a film they could see about a fish. Or he might suggest going to an Op Shop to look for fishing magazines.

If Jo doesn’t like any of these options, and she is sad that she can’t go trout fishing, Sam can empathise: “I’m really sad that we can’t go fishing, too. But I bet the fish are happy that we aren’t going to be catching them today!”

He thinks of a substitution activity, where Jo would be active and have the excitement of possibly catching a live creature.

“I know what we can do!” says Sam. “We can go butterfly hunting! We will buy a couple of sieves from the 2$ shop and then we will got the park by the lake and see if we can catch some butterflies!”

When Jo says “no” to all of the substitution ideas because she only wants to go fishing, Sam works at moving them on.

He sighs. “I don’t seem to any good ideas. We will both have to think hard. Let’s go and get the tram, now, and maybe we find something as good as fishing that we can do.”

Sam and Jo catch the tram to the park where they go for a walk around the lake, looking at fish. Then they sit in the shade and Sam finds a Youtube video on his phone that Jo watches with him. It is about fishing. They plan how they can go fishing next time