

CONCLUSION

Today more and more educators and supported employment providers are beginning to believe that people with disabilities should be provided with the same right to self-determination routinely afforded to people without disabilities. There is less awareness, however, of how to implement that right in a functional and realistic way. Should providers offer individuals with disabilities as many choices as possible and then see what happens? Should providers help individuals with disabilities make a connection between choice and experience so that there is a sense of self-determination in meeting important goals in their lives?

In this book, we have argued for the latter. When individuals with disabilities have opportunities to learn to choose and then to experience the consequences of their choice, they discover for themselves what they like, what they can do, and what works best for them. They learn to be self-determined. The purpose of this book is to show how connections between choice and experience can lead to finding a job, the most difficult challenge facing any adult entering the

workforce. When faced with this challenge, people with disabilities respond much like any person with limited experience. They make choices based on unrealistic expectations, inaccurate information about different jobs, and limited knowledge of what is available. However, when they get the information they need about themselves, about different work conditions, and about jobs that are available, they choose as rationally as any other self-determined job seeker. This outcome was only possible, however, when we used procedures and user-friendly formats that allowed choices and experiences to match during an adjustment process that led to a self-determined job and successful on-the-job problem solving.

SELF-DETERMINATION

The concept of self-determination inspires and revolutionizes those who understand its meaning. Historically, John Locke's discussion of self-

determination inspired early American colonists and helped them to justify seeking independence from Britain (Unterberger, 1996). Today, self-determination still inspires revolutionary change by creating opportunities in educational and employment programs for people with disabilities to make their own decisions and to become actively involved in solving their own problems. Although the institutions being targeted for change are different than those affected by the American Revolution, the situation is not. Far too many people with disabilities lack the opportunity to make their own fundamental choices and decisions.

COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

The idea that individuals with disabilities could obtain and maintain employment in community jobs changed the type of vocational services available to and the quality of life for people with disabilities. No longer are sheltered workshops the primary employer of youth and adults with disabilities. No longer do people with disabilities need to spend their adulthood working in sheltered jobs earning less than minimum wage. Today, increasing numbers of youth with disabilities obtain competitive community jobs while involved in their high school transition programs. Today, many adult employment programs support individuals with disabilities as they secure and work in community-based competitive jobs.

Community employment led to increased opportunities for individuals with disabilities to determine their own future. At first, however, individuals involved in supported employment programs took any available jobs. As workers with disabilities gained experience and enjoyed the freedom of working outside of sheltered workshops, some began asking for other types of work either directly or through their behavior. The opportunities to support individuals in community settings also affected employment staff involved in direct service and support roles, who began thinking about what types of jobs would best match individual workers. As self-determination practices entered schools and employment programs, more individuals with disabilities began asking for specific jobs. Staff also started thinking about ways they could provide opportunities for individuals to learn for them-

selves what they want to do. This led to another simple idea: self-directed employment.

SELF-DIRECTED EMPLOYMENT

The right to express preferences and make decisions about employment is fundamental. When workers have job options and a means of regulating their adjustments in order to act on them, the likelihood of vocational success improves (Martin et al., 2002). Self-directed employment applies this concept to long-term and daily job decisions. It attempts to improve “the prospects for self-determined pursuits by building capacity and improving opportunity” (Mithaug, 1996, p. 239).

DISCREPANCY METHODOLOGY

The SDE procedures described in Chapters 3–9 explain the systematic, data-driven, discrepancy approach we developed to provide individuals with severe disabilities the opportunity to learn how to direct their own employment decisions and problem solving. These procedures create two major types of discrepancy problems, which individuals solve each time they make a choice or evaluate a situation (Martin et al., 1990). First, discrepancies occur when an initially preferred task, setting, or job characteristic does not match what is present at a particular jobsite. Second, discrepancy situations also happen when workers’ self-evaluations differ from evaluations completed by a supervisor. Preference discrepancies disappear when individuals adjust choices so that initial preference selections match those made after visiting at a site. Evaluation discrepancies disappear when workers adjust their behaviors so that their self-reports match supervisor performance ratings (Martin et al., 2002).

These SDE methods provide the opportunity to build each worker’s capacity to engage in opportunities that match their own needs, interests, skills, and desire. The stories in Chapter 10 provide a window into the lives of a few people who became involved with the SDE Program in Colorado. Chapter 11 presents summative data that show that the SDE procedures produced outcomes equal to, and often better, than staff-directed programs.

SELF-MANAGEMENT INFLUENCE

The SDE methods use many powerful self-management strategies, especially self-monitoring, self-evaluation, antecedent cue regulation, and goal setting. Self-management strategies, either alone or in combination, produce generalized behavior change across vocational and other skill areas (Agran & Martin, 1987; Martin, Burger, Elias-Burger, & Mithaug, 1988). Self-management strategies empower self-determined behavior (Wehmeyer et al., 1998).

Implementation

The SDE curriculum, introduced in Chapter 3, contains 6 goals and 24 objectives across two sections (see Table 12.1). The assessment section of the curriculum creates opportunities for each individual to manage his or her own vocational choice making through participation in a systematic, repeated measures, situational assessment. The person first chooses a job, works at that site, and then chooses again. Over time, most individuals develop a consistent pattern of choices after they have learned their likes and dislikes. Accompanying graphic data summaries depict the pattern of choices. The placement and follow-along sections of the curriculum teach on-the-job self-management, by first providing structured support to enable each worker to find a job that matches his or her interests and skills and then by solving on-the-job problems.

Opportunity

Increases in individuals' capacity to act in self-determined ways result from employment programs that emphasize self-determination and implement self-determined procedures. Chapter 3 introduced a Self-Directed Employment Staff Profile, which teachers and employment specialists complete by answering three questions: 1) have I learned this? 2), do I do this? and 3) how important is this to my program? (see pp. 281–284). When all three occur, maximum opportunity exists for individuals involved in employment programs to act in self-determined ways.

Colorado's Example The U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services

Administration awarded the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs a 3-year grant to train rural and urban employment program staff to use the SDE procedures. Supported employment staff from 10 rural and 5 urban areas participated in a year-long training program. All direct-service staff and their administrators from the participating agencies first completed a 1-day training workshop. Next, 71 supported employment specialists attended a 3-day intensive training, which involved seminar participating and completing field internships in the SDE Program. Each program then systematically introduced the SDE curriculum starting with assessment, while receiving technical assistance from SDE staff. After implementing the assessment phase, performance checks found staff implementing an average of 90.8% of the staff profile assessment competencies and 85% of the placement competencies.

Before training began, we did a pretest evaluation on each SDE curriculum objective by presenting the Self-Directed Employment Staff Profile to 94 field personnel involved with the participating employment programs. Those who completed the form included administrative personnel (about 30 people) and employment specialists. Only a few individuals who completed the pre- and posttests forms attended the SDE internships and were involved in the subsequent follow-up technical assistance visits. Using a three-point Likert scale, respondents were asked, "Have I learned this?" "Do I do this?" and "How important is this to my agency?" on each of the 61 items. We summed the responses within the assessment, placement, and follow-along categories.

Only 32 people completed the posttest. This drop off occurred primarily because of job changes and turnover. Still, the generalized effect of intensively training a few employment specialists showed in the data. After training, 30% more staff implemented the assessment procedures, and 27% more implemented the placement methods. Even greater numbers of staff learned how to implement the follow-along methods. Yet, a large discrepancy remained between what was important and what was actually done. After training, the employment programs valued more than 90% of the profile items and implemented 61–71% of the profile items.

Table 12.1. Supported employment curriculum guide

Goals	Objectives
Section I. Assessment: Choice Management	
A. Making Choices	1. Getting Started 2. Completing the Jobs I Want to Do: Form A or B 3. Completing the Characteristics I Like: Form A or B 4. Summarizing Making Choices 5. Constructing a Résumé
B. Exploring Choices	6. Completing Shadowing Skills and Preference Match 7. Completing the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here: Form A or B 8. Doing the Situational Interview (optional) 9. Completing the Shadowing Summary
C. Testing Choices	10. Facilitating Internships 11. Completing the Characteristics I Like versus What Is Here: Form A or B 12. Doing the Improvement Forms 13. Completing the Job Requirements and Accommodations: Form A or B
D. Final Choices	14. Completing the Job Internship Summary Graphs 15. Facilitating Postassessment Staffing
Section II. Placement and Follow-Along: Self-Management	
E. Finding a Job Matching Skills and Preferences	16. Individualizing Job Development 17. Collecting and Evaluating Supervisor Feedback 18. Completing the Do I Have the Job I Like? Forms 19. Completing the Can I Do This Job? Forms 20. Completing the My Employment Plan
F. Solving On-the-Job Problems	21. Checking Supervisor Match 22. Teaching a Problem-Solving System 23. Teaching Ongoing Adjustments 24. Monitoring Changes and Adjustments

**THE CHALLENGE LIES IN
IMPLEMENTING WHAT IS VALUED**

Valuing self-determination is easy. Turning this value into opportunities for individuals with disabilities to develop the capacity to act in self-determined ways requires system change. This requires a commitment on the part of educa-

tors, employment specialists, supervisors, administrators, parents, and individuals with disabilities to implement and follow through with procedures and structures that produce self-determined outcomes. The challenge truly does lie in implementing what is valued! We hope that the procedures in this book will facilitate this process.

