

It's All About Us!
Encouraging Self-Determination
in Early Childhood Education and Services

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2BSD: Resources for Self-Determination
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Note: These materials are being made available in draft form on a preview basis. We would appreciate receiving any feedback or suggestions you may have. We can be contacted at sharon@beselfdetermined.com

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide materials that early childhood education, care and support providers can use to infuse an emphasis on self-determination in their program offerings. Self-determination is “the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (Field & Hoffman, 1994). People who are self-determined make well-informed choices about what they want. They know and value themselves, develop and benefit from healthy relationships for support, and they plan and act to live their lives with a sense of intent and purpose. They are active participants in constructing their lives.

Given our focus on *self-determination*, one might expect the title to be *It’s All About Me* rather than *It’s All About Us*. However, that would be contradictory to the research on what promotes and sustains self-determination. The research is consistent. The development of strong, healthy relationships, particularly with those to whom we are closest, is one of the most important factors affecting the degree to which we experience self-determination. As a result, we focus on building self-determination for all participants in early childhood programs, e.g. children, parents, and staff.

A focus on self-determination in early childhood programs can help

- children develop important attributes for emotional wellness and effective learning that will contribute to resilience and well-being throughout their lives.
- parents and caregivers become more responsive and effective in their parenting skills.
- educators and service providers be more effective in the way that they work with children and their families.

The foundation for the information in this manual can be found in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the Action Model for Self-Determination developed by Sharon Field and Alan Hoffman (2004; revised 2016).

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Drs. Edward Deci and Richard Ryan of the University of Rochester, represents a broad framework for the study of human motivation and personality. It delineates innate psychological needs we all have that provide the foundation for motivation and personality integration (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It also examines the conditions that fosters fulfillment of those needs. *Self-Determination Theory* identifies three basic psychological needs that are simply part of being human. These needs include

- ***Autonomy*** refers to an individual having a sense of willingness and choice in his or her actions. Deci and Ryan are careful to note that

autonomy does not mean independence; instead it refers to the degree of personal validation people have for their actions.

- **Competence** is defined as a need people have to effectively manage and control themselves and their environments.
- **Relatedness** refers to the need to be understood, appreciated by, connected to, related to, and cared for by and with others.

Self-Determination Theory claims that the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are innate needs that can be supported or thwarted by the settings in which we live. The degree to which these three needs are met determine the type of motivation a person experiences with a higher quality of motivation being experienced the more that these needs are met. Conditions supporting the individual's experience of **autonomy, competence,** and **relatedness** foster the most volitional and high quality forms of motivation and engagement for activities, including enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity. In addition, *Self-Determination Theory* proposes that the degree to which any of these three psychological needs is unsupported or thwarted within a social context will have a robust detrimental impact on motivation in that setting. (www.self-determinationtheory.org)

Although research has demonstrated that intrinsic motivation is associated with the highest quality experience and performance, many tasks that we need to accomplish are not necessarily intrinsically valuable to us. *Self-Determination Theory* provides an important theoretical framework to guide development of strategies to support and encourage self-determination. It provides the foundation for many of the recommendations we put forth in this book. (More information about *Self-Determination Theory*, including research articles, conference announcements, and questionnaires can be found at www.selfdeterminationtheory.org.)

Self-determination, as described in the **Action Model for Self-Determination** (Field & Hoffman, 2015), is the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself (Field & Hoffman, 1994, p. 164). According to this model, self-determination is promoted, or discouraged, by factors within the individual's control (e.g., values, knowledge, and skills) and variables that are environmental in nature (e.g., opportunities for choice-making, attitudes of others). Although the environmental conditions affecting self-determination are acknowledged, the model focuses on factors within the control of the individual that comprise and promote acts of self-determination. The model does not describe environmental factors that affect self-determination, such as opportunities and supports available in the environment. This is *not* meant to negate the importance of these environmental factors. The *Action Model for Self-Determination* was developed with the goal of identifying what individuals can do to increase their self-determination. The purpose of this model is to delineate traits individuals can further develop to achieve and maintain self-determination in environments of varying levels of receptivity and support.

The *Action Model for Self-Determination* is consistent with *Self-Determination Theory*. All components of the Action Model identify actions that

individuals can take or knowledge and skills they can develop that will help them satisfy the three psychological needs identified by Ryan and Deci (i.e., autonomy, relatedness and competence). As stated above, the key purpose of *Self-Determination Theory* is to identify those needs that, when met, increase internal motivation. The primary purpose of the *Action Model for Self-Determination* is to delineate the skills, knowledge, and beliefs that individuals can further develop to increase their capacity for self-determination. It was designed to identify knowledge, skills, and beliefs that could be taught and supported in educational programs to increase students' and teachers' self-determination in a variety of settings. By developing these personal characteristics, individuals would also be better able to recognize and choose environments that are most conducive to self-determination.

The research to build the *Action Model for Self-Determination* was conducted through the Initiative for Self-Determination in the College of Education at Wayne State University. Over a period of twenty-five years, the Initiative team examined how people can be supported to navigate transitions and found that self-determination was an essential key to helping people successfully navigate changes in their lives. They examined how self-determination can help people be successful on their own terms, as well as what helps individuals be more self-determined and what gets in their way. Most of the team's work was conducted in schools, but activities were also extended to other groups including parents, women, and retirees. The work of the Initiative for Self-Determination was supported through several federal, state, and private grants. As a result, the focus was to conduct work that would lead to the development of practical strategies that could help individuals experience and express increased self-determination.

Much of the Initiative's work was conducted within the field of Special Education, so assuring that all strategies were appropriate for persons with disabilities within a framework of inclusion in typical settings was paramount. A focus on self-determination was initiated in the late 1980s as part of the normalization and inclusion movements within the field of Special Education. Individuals with disabilities, parents, advocates, and educators began to question the lack of opportunity that persons with disabilities often had to make determinations about their futures. Writing about the need for self-determination for persons with disabilities, Ward (1992) stated, "Self-determination, which includes self-actualization, assertiveness, creativity, pride, and self-advocacy, must be part of the career development process that begins in early childhood and continues throughout adult life" (p. 389).

An Action Model for Self-Determination



Field, S. and Hoffman, A. (2015). An Action Model for Self-Determination. Revised from "Development of a Model for Self-Determination," by S. Field and A. Hoffman, 1994, *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 17(2), p. 165. (For permission to reprint, please contact sharon@beselfdetermined.com.)

Creating Early Childhood Services Grounded in Self-Determination

Self-determination offers a framework to create programs that help young children develop a foundation for lifelong resilience and well-being. Given that many of the component skills and beliefs associated with self-determination have their roots in early childhood, a focus on supporting children in development of these competencies can have lifelong benefits. In addition, self-determination provides a vehicle to help parents improve their parenting skills as they learn how to tap into their intrinsic motivation for parenting and model self-determined behavior for their children. Finally, it can help staff increase their effectiveness as they learn how to conduct their work with an increased sense of self-determination.

We believe that the best way to promote self-determination in early childhood settings is to infuse self-determination throughout all aspects of the program, e.g., professional development, parent education, interactions with children. As the adults in these settings become more self-determined, they will be more highly motivated to accomplish tasks and become more effective educators, service providers and parents. They will also serve as role models for children and each other. As the children further develop and express the knowledge, skills and habits that form the basis for their lifelong self-determination, they too will have an impact on others as well as building skills that are important for their own development. At the heart of effective early childhood education is discovering, building and nurturing attributes that will help children lead good lives. So it is with self-determination and we seek to do this by maintaining this focus for all key people in the child's environment. Infusing self-determination into early childhood programming should not be an "add-on" or a separate endeavor. Instead, it should begin with an examination of current practices already focused on elements of self-determination and strengthening them.

How to Use this Manual

To help those in early childhood settings develop activities and supports for self-determination in their settings, we offer two types of resources. Part I offers a series of professional development activities that can be used with adults to help them apply the concept of self-determination in their own lives as they consider how self-determination is expressed and can be supported in early childhood education and care. Part II provides planning tools and resource materials for infusing self-determination into early childhood programs. Some of the resource materials provided in Part II may also be helpful for preparing to deliver the professional development modules. For example, the Part II resource materials include further information on Self-Determination Theory and the Action Model for Self-Determination. If the facilitator is not familiar with the theory or the

model, further reading may be helpful prior to delivering the professional development on that topic.

The professional development activities in Part I provide a core module for helping adults learn about different aspects of self-determination as well as several alternative and extension activities that address the same topic. Objectives are provided for each module, followed by guidelines for a session aimed at achieving these objectives in a group setting. Additional instructional and support activities can be used instead of the group session or in addition to the core module if more depth is desired for the content. It is important that instruction and support is provided for each major component of the action model (Know Yourself and Your Context, Value Yourself, Plan, Act, and Experience Outcomes and Learn) in a manner that helps to achieve the objectives identified for that module. Facilitators may choose to use the core module group session to accomplish this purpose, or they may choose to use the adapted and supplemental activities, or they may choose to use a combination of activities from the core module and the supplemental activities. Modules are provided for each of the following content areas:

- Introduction to Self-Determination
- Know Yourself and Your Context
- Value Yourself
- Plan
- Act
- Experience Outcomes and Learn

The core module group sessions include time estimates for each of the activities included. However, the time taken by groups to complete activities will vary greatly depending on size of the group, their familiarity with each other and other group characteristics.

We have found that sessions are most effective when facilitators fully participate in the modules as co-learners, actively participating in each of the activities. Also, it's important to remember that research has shown that "teachers" can encourage self-confidence in participants by being helpful rather than authoritative and by being supportive rather than competitive.

In addition to the learning that takes place through specific instructional activities, self-determination can also be promoted through the way in which typical teaching or consulting activities are conducted. For example, if providers are struggling with finding a solution to a specific problem, the facilitator or supervisor may help them solve the problem by coaching them through the five step self-determination process (e.g., know yourself and your environment, value yourself, plan, act, and experience outcomes and learn) to develop a solution to the problem.

The core group sessions are set up to be approximately one hour in length. Adaptations listed at the end of each module allow for teaching to the

same concept in a variety of situations. For example, facilitators may choose to do some one-on-one work with a parent during a home visit or send a movie home and then discuss it the next day with a care provider. The important point is that everyone has the opportunity to participate at their own level and pace, so they can benefit from the knowledge and apply the skills of self-determination to enhance their lives and those of their children.

References

Field, S. & Hoffman, A. (1994). Development of a model for self-determination. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 17 (2), 159-169.

Part One

**Self-Determination
Instructional Modules for Adults**

Introduction to Self-Determination

Objectives:

- Participants will become familiar with the purpose and structure of the self-determination instruction and supports.
- Participants will develop understanding of the self-determination concept.
- Participants will increase their understanding of the relationship of self-determination to their role as parent or caregiver.

Introduction to Self-Determination

Core Session

Preparation

- Review and become comfortable with the section guidelines and materials.
- Make plans logistical arrangements to include time, location, snacks, etc.
- Create an announcement for the training session
- Make overheads and handouts from masters
- Practice reading aloud *A Coat of Many Colors*

Materials/Equipment

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Book, "A Coat of Many Colors"

Overview

- I. Introduce and provide an overview of self-determination (20 min)
 - A. Brainstorm activity.
 - B. Discuss the meaning of self-determination.
 - C. Provide an introduction to Self-Determination Theory
 - D. Provide an overview of the Action Model for Self-Determination

- II. Resiliency and self-determination (20 min)
 - A. Read story *A Coat of Many Colors* by Dolly Parton
 - B. Participants complete the story reflection handout.
 - C. Lead short discussion.

- III. Overview of remaining sessions (10 min)
 - A. Give a summary of the self-determination instruction and support that will be provided.

- IV. Summary (10 min)
 - A. Looking forward
 - B. Questions

Introduction to Self-Determination

Content

I. Introduction

A. Discuss meaning of self-determination

1. Ask participants what they think it means to be a self-determined person. Record the words on flip chart paper.
2. Ask participants what benefits there are to being self-determined. Record answers on flip chart. Expand by asking how it relates to their role as educator, caregiver or parent.
3. Share with participants that our work together is intended to help them become more self-determined and to support the self-determination of children and their parents. It will support them in all of the ways that they listed above in their roles as parents and/or caregivers.
4. Discuss handout #1 (objectives of orientation)

B. Discuss the three basic psychological needs identified in Self-Determination Theory, handout #2. Ask participants to consider the relevance of these three needs in their own lives and to their own levels of motivation. Ask them also to consider what they have observed in children relative to these three needs.

C. Provide an overview of the model

1. Hand out a copy of the self-determination model (Handout #3) and go through each section discussing the components. Help participants to consider the applicability of the model in their own lives.

II. Resilience and self-determination, *A Coat of Many Colors*

A. Read story.

Read story as if you were reading it to a preschool class. Use inflection and enthusiasm. (Note: Another book facilitators may wish to use that addresses similar concepts is *The Bob Butterbean Love Story* by Terry Page and Bob Love.)

- B. Complete reflection handout
Hand out the reflection sheet and give participants 5 minutes to complete it either in writing or by discussing it with a peer.

- C. Lead short discussion
Lead a short discussion about the story. Use the following questions to stimulate discussion:
 - What kinds of risks did Dolly face?
 - What things protected Dolly from these risks?
 - Do you think Dolly was self-determined?

Some of the following key points may emerge from this discussion:

- 1) Many of us face risks on a daily basis.
- 2) We all have protective factors both within ourselves and within our environment. We need to recognize and capitalize on these.
- 3) Self-determined behavior is comprised of many different knowledge and skills components.
- 4) Endeavoring to be more self-determined can have positive benefits for our lives.

III. Summary

- A. Summarize learning from today.

Ask participants to briefly review the self-determination model handed out earlier.

1. Ask participants to share any additional thoughts they have about the model after reading and discussing the story.
2. Clarify briefly and explain each topic related to self-determination that you will be addressing. Let participants know that we will be learning about ourselves and will be practicing skills like decision making, goal setting, and communicating with others. Discuss your role as co-learner and facilitator with the participants.
3. Ask participants to consider the potential application of self-determination principles and practices in their early childhood programs.

- B. Looking forward

1. Ask participants to share their thoughts about the session and ask if they have any questions.
2. Provide a brief overview of your plans for your next session with the group.

Core Session 1

Introduction to Self-Determination

Handouts

Objectives

- Participants will become familiar with the purpose and structure of the self-determination instruction and supports.
- Participants will develop understanding of the self-determination concept.
- Participants will increase their understanding of the relationship of self-determination to their role as parent or caregiver.

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) claims that we all have three basic psychological needs, including the need for

- **Autonomy** refers to an individual having a sense of willingness and choice in his or her actions. Deci and Ryan are careful to note that autonomy does not mean independence; instead it refers to the degree of personal validation people have for their actions.
- **Competence** is defined as a need people have to effectively manage and control themselves and their environments.
- **Relatedness** refers to the need to be understood, appreciated by, connected to, related to, and cared for by and with others.

When these needs are met, we will have increase intrinsic motivation to accomplish a task.

An Action Model for Self-Determination



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Handout #4

Story #1 Reflection
“A Coat of Many Colors” by Dolly Parton

1. What kinds of risks did Dolly face?
2. What things protected her from these risks?
3. Do you think Dolly was self-determined?

Introduction to Self-Determination

Alternative and Extension Activities

- To help participants develop a better understanding of the concept of self-determination ask them to review the various definitions provided on the hand-out “What is self-determination?” Then ask them to come up with a “user-friendly” definition as described on the hand-out.
- To help participants better understand the impact of self-determination on work performance and quality of life, invite them to participate in the *Nightmare in the Workplace* and *Nirvana in the Workplace* activities. Hand-out the *Nightmare in the Workplace* sheet and ask them to fold it in the middle of the page on the dotted line. Then ask them to individually reflect on and respond to the questions on the top half of the page. Assure them that they will not need to share their responses with anyone. When everyone has completed this first step, ask them to unfold the paper. Ask them to fill in their responses to the questions on the top half of the page in the appropriate blanks on the bottom half of the page. There will generally be some chuckling as participants imagine what it would be like to work at a job that is not in alignment with their strengths or preferences. Ask participants if they think they would be very effective at the job. The exercise can then be repeated using the “Nirvana in the Workplace” hand-out. Using the participants’ experiences and comments on the exercise to lead a discussion about the importance of self-determination to workplace effectiveness and finding joy in our work.
- Review the information on the Self-determination Research hand-out with the participants. To make this activity more interesting, you may want to ask teams to read through different pages of the research findings. Ask them also to (a) discuss whether or not it makes sense to them considering their own experiences and (b) provide some practical examples that either support or conflict with the research findings.
- To help participants develop awareness of the knowledge, skills and beliefs that lead to self-determination, ask them to think about a time when they were self-determined. Ask them to consider the following two questions related to that instance and then write their responses on a piece of paper:
 1. What skills, knowledge, and beliefs did you have that helped you be self-determined?
 2. What factors outside of yourself helped you be more self-determined?

- Ask them to share the knowledge, skills and beliefs that helped them to be self-determined. Using their responses, construct the model of self-determination in a similar fashion to the model provided in hand-out #1 for the Introduction to Self-determination core session. Provide copies of hand-out #1 to participants and compare the model the group constructed with the model provided.
- Review the definition and model of self-determination provided in hand-out #1 of the introductory core session with the group. Then complete one or more of the following activities.
 - Have participants find pictures of famous people in magazines who they think are resilient/self-determined. Ask them to brainstorm characteristics of these people. Relate these characteristics back to what they would like to promote in their role as parent/caregiver.
 - Have parents do an observation of their child being “self-determined.” See if they can observe all five steps of the self-determination model in their actions.
 - Ask participants to write a paragraph using the story starter, “A time when I felt self-determined as a parent/caregiver was...”
 - Play the Dolly Parton song, “A Coat of Many Colors.” Discuss the same questions in reflection handout # 3.

Introduction to Self-determination
Alternative and Extension Activities
Hand-outs

Nightmare in the Workplace

Answer each of the questions below. Then fill in the answers in the appropriate blanks in the scenario that follows.

1. What type of information are you most likely to forget?
2. What is your worst medical symptom that comes out during stress?
3. What is your least favorite work activity?
4. What kind of problem is most likely to keep you awake at night?
5. What is most likely to put you in a bad mood?
6. What is your worst habit?

Imagine that you are at a new job. An important part of this new job is that you have to spend a lot of your time (#3)_____. It requires you to (#6)_____. In order to be successful, it's really important that you remember

(#1)_____. When you do this job, you feel (#2)_____.

You often find that you have to solve problems that are related to

(#4)_____.

You also find that you often have to (#5)_____.

Nirvana in the Workplace

1. What type of information are you most likely to remember?
2. When do you feel physically at your best?
3. What is your favorite work activity?
4. What is most likely to put you in a good mood?
5. What is your best habit?

Imagine that you are at a new job. An important part of this new job is that you have to spend a lot of your time (#3)_____. It requires you to (#4) _____.

In order to be successful, it's really important that you remember (#1) _____ . When you do this job, you feel (#2)_____. You find that you often have to (#5) _____.

Research On Self-Determination

- Persons who are involved in setting educational goals are more successful in achieving those goals (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne & Ilhardi, 1997).
- Sarver (2000) found a positive relationship between scores on self-determination assessment and grade point average for postsecondary students with learning disabilities.
- Houchins (1998) found a positive correlation between scores on self-determination assessment and academic achievement scores for students who were incarcerated.
- Graduates of special education programs are more likely to be employed and have higher earnings if they are more self-determined (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003).

Why is self-determination important?

Characteristics that lead toward increased self-determination are highly similar to the characteristics that contribute increased happiness, and increased resiliency. A comparison of the factors that lead to self-determination, as defined in the Self-determination Model presented in hand-out #1, and the characteristics that lead to happiness and resilience demonstrates that these three concepts are highly related.

Happiness

Based on research on subjective well-being (a.k.a. happiness) Dan Baker identifies six tools that contribute to greater happiness.

1. Appreciation
2. Choice
3. Personal power
4. Leading with your strengths
5. The power of language and stories
6. Multidimensional living (i.e., living a full life that is well-balanced between relationships, purpose [which is usually work] and health).

Source: Baker, D. (2003). What happy people know. New York: Rodale Press.

Resiliency

To increase resilience, the American Psychological Association advises:

- Have friends and be a friend.
- Believe in yourself and what you know you can do.
- Take charge of your behavior and actions.
- Look at the bright side.
- Set new goals and make a plan to reach them.

Source: Monitor on Psychology, September, 2003, pp. 30-31.

Session Two

KNOW YOURSELF AND YOUR CONTEXT

Objectives:

- Participants will identify and reflect on their day dreams.
- Participants will be able to understand the relationship between their dreams and decision-making based on individual wishes.

Know Yourself and Your Context Core Session

Preparation

- Review and become comfortable with the section guidelines and materials.
- Review Handout #7 for more information on the concept of knowing yourself.
- Think of a personal example of how your own dreams have guided you to what you want in life.
- Complete the Knowing yourself worksheet prior to the session.
- Duplicate any needed handouts.
- Practice reading aloud *The Fish Who Could Wish*

Materials/Equipment

- Large paper
- Markers, crayons
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Magazines
- Chalk
- Book *The Fish Who Could Wish*

Overview

- I. Introduction (5 min)
 - A. Review concept of self-determination (Handout # 4)
 1. Review Agenda and Objectives
 2. Dreaming Big: *The Fish Who Could Wish* (5 min)
 3. Read story
 4. Lead short discussion

- II. Activity: (20 min)
 - A. Complete “Dream” collage
 - B. Participants share dreams
 - C. Participants complete “Knowing Yourself” worksheet

- III. Summary (5 min)
 - A. Looking forward

Content

I. Introduction

- A. Review concept of self-determination
 - 1. Review the self-determination model. Ask participants to think back to the last session and list a few things they learned about what it means to be self-determined. Write major points on the flipchart and clarify.
 - 2. Review agenda

II. Dreaming Big: *The Fish Who Could Wish*

- A. Read story.
 - 1. Read story as if you were reading it to a preschool class. Use inflection and enthusiasm.
 - 2. Have participants complete handout # 6

- B. Lead short discussion
 - 1. Lead a short discussion about the story. Ask the following questions:
 - a. What kinds of things did the fish wish for?
 - b. What did these wishes say about what was important to the fish?
 - c. Why are dreams important?
 - 2. Write answers on the board bring out the following points:
 - 1) Dreams can provide us with important information about what we want and find important.
 - 2) It is not important that our dreams come true *exactly* as we envision but that we learn about ourselves from them and use the information to set goals for ourselves.
 - 3. Explain that one of the most important steps in becoming

more self-determined is by allowing ourselves to dream to help discover what is important to us.

4. Lead a discussion about dreams of young children. Young children often have very expansive dreams, much more than adults. What are some of the best ways to respond to children's dreams?

IV. Activity

A. Make a collage.

1. Ask participants to page through the magazines to find things that are appealing to them and to paste or glue them on a larger piece of paper. Encourage them to be creative and to have fun with this activity. They should not think too deeply about what pictures they choose; just find what is attractive to them. Make a collage yourself along with the participants.

2. Ask participants to share their collages. (The facilitator may want to go first to provide a model)

3. Try to reflect and capture each person's major themes or characteristics. (i.e. "It looks like you are attracted to bright colors, having fun with your family is important and you like the outdoors.")

B. Complete "Knowing Yourself" worksheet

1. Ask participants to reflect on what they just learned about themselves by filling out the worksheet, "Knowing Yourself." Give a few personal examples to help clarify the procedure.

V. Summary

A. Looking forward

1. Ask participants what they learned about themselves today.
2. Explain that next time they will learn how to use their dreams to help decide what is really important to them.
3. Invite them to consider the applicability of this content to their work with young children and their families.

Knowing Yourself Alternative and Extension Activities

The knowledge and skills needed for self-determination within the Know Yourself component are provided in the Action Model for Self-determination. After reviewing these components along with the session objectives (handout 3) with participants through a brief discussion, complete one or more of the following activities.

- Music is an excellent resource for illustration of concepts related to self-determination. There are numerous resources that can be used. One favorite is the soundtrack of the Broadway play *Man of La Mancha*. Provide a summary of the plot or a video of the production, which is available at most video rental locations. Have participants reflect on "The Impossible Dream" and then compare and contrast their personal life experiences with those of the character Don Quixote.
- Purchase individual journals for each participant. Use these journals as a daily connection with parents and caregivers. Structure daily topics centered on the components of self-determination. Respond to participant entries, creating a tool for open communication between participant and facilitator. As participants become more skilled in journal writing, assign them a journal partner with whom they can exchange thoughts and reflections. Return the journals to the participants at the end a specified time period.

Session Two
Know Yourself and Your Context
Hand-outs

Handout # 4

Objectives

- Participants will reflect on and identify some of their dreams.
- Participants will be able to understand the relationship between their dreams and decision making based on individual wishes.

Handout #6

Knowing Yourself

Now that you have taken some time to put together a picture of your dreams and your unique characteristics, reflect on

1. What this means to you in terms of early childhood education and parenting and,
2. What matters most to you in your role as an educator, parent or caregiver?

	Caregiving	Parenting
1.		
2.		

Know Yourself

Self-awareness is fundamental to self-determination. If participants are not aware of their own needs and preferences, they will not be able to establish goals that are meaningful to them. If they do not have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, they will not be able to establish realistic short-term goals, nor will they be able to formulate a plan to accomplish those goals in the most efficient way possible for them.

To have a clear understanding of their preferences, participants need to be exposed to a variety of options. If they have only a limited knowledge of possible choices, they are unable to make an informed choice. For example, if an adult who chooses to work in childcare has never been exposed to any other type of work, the choice of childcare cannot be considered an informed choice, even though the participant states that as a preference. On the other hand, if they have experienced a variety of job explorations and shadowing experiences and then state a desire to work in childcare, the choice is then likely to be an informed one. Informed choice is central to the concept of self-determination.

Encouraging parents and caregivers to examine their daydreams is one way of helping them increase their self-awareness and expand the options they consider. Dreaming allows participants to overcome socialized expectations that often limit their available choices and perceptions of self-efficacy. The most important thing about dreams is not that parents and caregivers necessarily work toward accomplishing them as they are dreamed, but rather that they can derive information from the dreams about what is important to them. For example, if a parent dreams of being a writer, it may be helpful for that parent to consider what it is about being a writer that is so appealing. Is it being creative or famous? Is it being around the written word? Is it performing or the attention? Are there other ways these needs or preferences can be met? The goal is to assist participants in using their daydreams to increase their level of self-awareness and to expand the options available to them. After they have considered an expanded list of goal options and the requirements associated with each of those options, he or she will then be better able to make an informed choice.

Skill in decision making is needed to make determinations about what an individual views as his or her strengths, weaknesses, needs, and preferences. Ultimately, parents and caregivers need to be able to sort through what they know about themselves and what they know about their current or potential environments in order to make decisions about what is most important to them.

Session Three

Value Yourself

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to recognize their strengths.
- Participants will be able to understand the hidden treasures in their weaknesses.
- Participants will recognize what rights and responsibilities are.
- Participants will recognize the importance of taking care of themselves emotionally and physically.

Value Yourself Core Session

Preparation

- Review and become comfortable with the section guidelines and materials.
- Review Handout # 12 for more information on Value Yourself.
- Complete the Valuing yourself worksheet prior to the session.
- Review steps to active listening handout.
- Complete the “Taking Care of Yourself” worksheet prior to the session.
- Duplicate any needed handouts.
- Practice reading aloud *I Like Me* by Nancy Carlson.

Materials/Equipment

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Book *I Like Me*

Overview

- I. Introduction (10 min)
 - A. Review Action Model for Self-Determination
 1. Review Model and where you have come so far
 2. Review Agenda and Objectives
- II. Valuing ourselves:
 - A. Read story *I LIKE ME* (5 min)
 - B. Participants complete reflection handout.
 - C. Lead brief large group discussion
- III. Activities: (45 min)
 - A. Participants complete the Valuing Myself handout
 - B. Participants share results with a peer using active listening
 - C. Participants will learn about rights and responsibilities
 - D. Large group discussion of rights and responsibilities
 - E. Taking care of myself exercise
 - F. Participants complete Taking Care of Myself handout
- IV. Summary and looking forward (5 min)

Content

I. Introduction

A. Review concept of self-determination

1. Review the self-determination model. Ask participants to think back to the last session and list a few things they learned about what it means to Know Yourself. Write major points on the flipchart, discuss and clarify.
2. Review objectives for this session and explain that we will be talking about Valuing ourselves. Go over the major points in the model for this section. Ask participants why they think it is important to value themselves. List responses on flip chart. Be ready to give some examples. Lead into story

II. Valuing Myself: *I Like Me* by Nancy Carlson

A. Read story.

1. Read story as if you were reading it to a preschool class, use inflection and enthusiasm.
2. Have participants complete handout # 8
3. Lead short discussion.
Lead a short group discussion about the story. Ask the following questions:
 - a. Does this character believe in herself? How can you tell?
 - b. What characteristics of self-determination did she show?
 - c. What are some of her strengths?
 - d. What are some weaknesses?
 - e. Which does she focus on?
4. Write answers on the board bringing out the following points:
 - 1) To increase self-determination, we need to believe in ourselves and recognize that we have the right to achieve.
 - 2) Using the uniqueness of our personalities can help us to achieve (e.g. sense of humor), and

3) Understanding that within our weaknesses there are hidden strengths that help us to cope and compensate.

5. Ask participants to identify the ways in which they are currently helping children identify their strengths and weaknesses. How do they help children cope with traits they consider to be weaknesses?

III. Activities

A. Valuing Myself handout

1. Introduce handout #9 and go through your completed sheet.
2. Ask participants to complete the Valuing myself handout #9

B. Active Listening

1. Tell participants that we will share our thoughts with a peer and that we will use **active listening** skills.
 - ✓ Listen carefully
 - ✓ Ask clarifying questions
 - ✓ State back to the speaker what you hear
 - ✓ Accept what they say without challenging

Ask for a volunteer and demonstrate active listening for the group before they get started.

2. Try to reflect and capture each person's major strengths and hidden treasures. Ask participants to reflect back as a large group. Ask if anyone realized anything new about themselves.

C. Rights and responsibilities

1. Share with participants that another important part of valuing yourself is recognizing rights and responsibilities. When we assume responsibility we increase our level of control and by knowing our rights, we are more likely to stand up for them.

2. Review the definitions of rights and responsibilities in handout #10.

D. Read the following scenario and have participants answer and discuss questions as a group.

Sara's mother, Mrs. Smith has trouble with reading. She stays at home with her youngest child and usually doesn't need to do much reading to get by. Today Sara's caregiver told Mrs. Smith that she needs to read the bulletin in the hall and fill out a permission slip or Sara can't be a part of an activity next week. She looked at the bulletin board and the slip of paper, but did not understand what they said.

- What are Mrs. Smith's rights?
- What are Sara's rights?
- What are the caregiver's rights?
- What are Mrs. Smith's responsibilities?
- What are the caregiver's responsibilities?
- How could Mrs. Smith increase the likelihood of getting what she wants by assuming responsibility?

Use flip chart paper to record some of the large group responses.

E. Taking Care of Myself

1. Have participants independently fill out the Taking Care of Myself handout #11.

IV. Summary

- A. Looking forward
1. Ask participants what they learned about themselves today.
 2. Tell them that next time we will be using what we know and value about ourselves to begin planning for our goals.

Value Yourself

Alternative and Extension Activities

The knowledge and skills needed for self-determination within the Value Yourself component are provided in Figure 1.2. After reviewing these components along with the session objectives (handout #7) with participants through a brief discussion, complete one or more of the following activities.

Sample Alternative and Extension Activities

- Ask participants to make a list of their responsibilities and rights as parents and caregivers. Discuss the relationship between the rights and responsibilities. Do the rights they listed enable them to better fulfill the responsibilities they listed?
- Submit articles on a monthly basis to school or program newsletters or local newspapers. Identify a featured "Parent or Caregiver" and invite that participant to write a brief article emphasizing his or her positive strengths and skills. Offer to collaborate with the parent or caregiver if he or she does not have the confidence or ability to write independently. If possible, include a photograph with the submission of each article.
- Participants can create their personal parenting or caregiving autobiographies. Use the components of the self-determination model to identify monthly themes for chapters in the autobiography. Chapters do not need to be lengthy but should represent the persons' ability level. Use a word processor for the entries and save the documents on personal disks. As a culminating activity, print and collate the autobiography. Have participants supplement it with photographs and drawings and finish it with a cover and title page.

Session 3
Value Yourself

Handouts

Handout #7

Value Yourself: Objectives

- Participants will be able to recognize their strengths.
- Participants will be able to understand the hidden treasures in their weaknesses.
- Participants will recognize their rights and responsibilities.
- Participants will recognize the importance of taking care of themselves emotionally and physically.

Handout #8

Story 3 Reflection

***I Like ME* by Nancy Carlson**

1. Did you see any characteristics of a resilient person (someone who easily bounces back from misfortune) in this story? Please list these characteristics.

2. How do you think the character felt about herself?

Valuing Yourself

Part of valuing yourself is accepting your strengths and unique characteristics, including what you consider weaknesses. Hidden within our limitations can be treasures that hold a gift. Take a moment and list your strengths, skills, talents and passions along with any weaknesses that you feel stand in your way. Within each weakness identify,

- a) how that weakness can be a strength for you in some situations and/or
- b) the strength you have developed to cope or compensate for the weakness.

Strengths
Strengths Derived From Weaknesses
Weaknesses

Handout #10

What Are Rights and Responsibilities?

RIGHTS are those things to which we are entitled.

RESPONSIBILITIES are those things for which we are obligated – something that society expects us to do and for which we are held accountable.

Handout #11

Taking Care of Myself

Below, list some important things you do to take care of yourself in each of the following areas. Then list some things you think you need to do in each area.

	Things I do now	Things I need to do
Physical		
Mental		
Emotional		
Social		

Handout #12

Value Yourself

To be self-determined, we need to believe in ourselves and feel that we have the right to pursue what we desire. Affective characteristics such as self-acceptance and self-esteem are critical to developing a sense of belief in oneself. Self-acceptance includes the ability to admire the strengths that evolve from our own unique qualities, including our weaknesses. Self-acceptance, like self-determination, requires an acceptance of the total self, even those aspects we may regard as weaknesses.

The less acceptance we have of ourselves, the more barriers to self-determination we will experience. For example, if a young parent is not able to claim his or her inability to read, he or she will often not be able to access accommodations and support services in education and employment. Furthermore, if we are expending energy trying to hide aspects of ourselves from others, this diminishes our ability to fully believe in ourselves and takes energy away from the pursuit of our goals.

One way to help others acknowledge and accept characteristics they perceive as weaknesses is to help them find the hidden strength they have developed to compensate for or cope with that weakness. For example, an individual may define a weakness as angering easily. If we can find the strength developed in response to that weakness (e.g., anger can help us confront situations we believe are wrong, or we may have developed more self-discipline to compensate for angering easily), we may be better able to accept the weakness, enabling him to work toward minimizing its negative effects.

Valuing oneself includes recognizing one's rights and responsibilities. Believing in one's right to pursue goals and to be treated respectfully is fundamental to self-determination. Equally fundamental is the ability to assume responsibility for one's actions. By assuming greater responsibility, we generally gain greater control in a situation as well.

Finally, demonstrating that we value ourselves by taking care of ourselves emotionally, mentally, and physically is highly important to self-determination. It is hard to imagine successfully accomplishing, or even identifying, important goals if we're overly tired, stressed, or otherwise physically, mentally, or emotionally unhealthy. Helping children, educators, parents, caregivers learn to identify and meet their own needs is an important component of enabling them to become more self-determined in their role with young children and in life experiences.

Session Four Plan

Objectives:

- **Participants will be able to define the term goal.**
- **Participants will generate a list of options for goals.**
- **Participants will select a short term goal.**
- **Participants will write observable, measurable achievable short-term goals.**

PLAN

Core Session

Preparation

- Review and become comfortable with the section guidelines and materials.
- Complete the “Steps to Reach Short-term Goals” worksheet for yourself.
- Duplicate any needed handouts.
- Practice reading aloud, *Begin at the Beginning* by Amy Schwartz. (This book is currently out of print. However, some libraries still have copies. If you are not able to locate this book, any book that addresses the importance of taking small steps toward a goal can be substituted.)

Materials/Equipment

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Book, *Begin at the Beginning*

Overview

I. Introduction (10 min)

A. Review Self-Determination Model

1. Review model and what you have learned so far
2. Review Agenda and Objectives

II. Plan:

- A. Read story *Begin at the Beginning* or alternatively selected book. (5 min)
- B. Lead brief large group discussion

III. Setting Goals

- A. What is a Goal?
- B. Activity: Reflection of Yourself
- C. Activity: Group Brainstorming
- D. Activity: Choose a Short term Goal
Complete steps to short term goal handout

IV. Summary (5 min)

- A. Looking forward

Plan Content

I. Introduction

A. Review concept of self-determination

1. Review self-determination model. Ask participants to think back to the last session and list a few things they learned about what it means to Value Yourself. Write major points on the flipchart and clarify.
2. Review objectives for this session and explain that we will be talking about Planning. Go over the major points in the model for this section. Ask participants why they think it is important to make plans and list responses on flip chart. Be ready to give some examples (It is important because.....it helps us to anticipate outcomes, it helps us to be prepared, planning allows us to be creative, etc.) Lead into story.

II. Plan: *Begin at the Beginning* by Amy Schwartz

A. Read story.

1. Read story as if you were reading it to a preschool class. Use inflection and enthusiasm.
2. Lead short discussion
Lead a brief group discussion about the story. Ask the following questions:
 - a. What was Sara's goal?
 - b. How did she initially feel about the goal?
 - c. How did she finally get started?
 - d. Did she receive any support?
3. Write participants' answers on the board or flip chart. In addition to consensus of the group, bring out the following points:
 - 1) Sara was supposed to paint a picture of the world. Sometimes our goals are overwhelmingly big.
 - 2) When our goals are overwhelming, it can be a challenge to get started,
 - 3) With support and by breaking goals down into manageable steps we can be more successful.

III. Setting Goals

A. What is a goal?

1. Ask participants to define the word goal. Write responses on flipchart. A goal specifies something that we want to achieve, such as obtaining a degree in early childhood education.
2. Discuss the difference between long term and short term goals. Long term goals are those that usually take a year to achieve; short term goals can be achieved in shorter periods of time.

B. Reflection of Yourself

1. Ask participants to look back at their collage or the activity they did to get to know themselves better and their strength and weakness handout. Have them write down one or two things that they might like to achieve based on what they know about themselves.

B. Group Brainstorming

1. Have each participant choose a goal and let the group brainstorm possible steps or ideas for how that goal could be achieved.

Use your own goal as an example to get the group started.

D. Choose a short term goal

1. Discuss how short term goals get us to longer term goals. Explain that short term goals are observable, measurable and achievable in a relatively short period of time. Write these points on the flipchart. Ask participants to review their goals with a peer to check if it has the characteristics listed above. Because actually working toward what we want is one of the best ways to learn about self-determination, share with participants that it is our intention for each participant to have a short term goal to work with for the remainder of our sessions.
2. Have participants take out Handout # 14 "Steps to Reach Short Term Goals." Explain that our next task will be breaking down a larger goal into small achievable steps. Share your completed sheet with the group as an example.
3. Allow time for participants to fill in their plan.

4. If participants are comfortable, have them write down their short term goal and post it on a “self-determination” bulletin board.

IV. Summary

- A. Looking forward
 1. Ask participants what they learned about themselves today.
 2. Ask them to share their plan to reach their short term goal with a friend, spouse or someone that supports them.
 3. Lead a discussion about the applicability of these concepts for educators, support staff, families and children in early childhood settings. The question “Do young children have goals?” may be a good discussion starter.

PLAN

Alternative and Extension Activities

- People who have a difficult time grasping success in long-term goal setting often respond well to "Daily Goals." Ask participants to identify one target goal for the day. It may be helpful to do this in small groups. Then have the participant list three steps to take to achieve the goal. Skills will become refined as participants continue to experience success.
- Encourage parents and caregivers who have demonstrated effective goal setting to mentor others who are struggling with the process. This approach validates the old saying, "Two heads are better than one."
- Place a Solution Box in the room and encourage participants to submit examples of barriers to their success in planning on an index card. Invite volunteers to offer solutions on the backs of the cards.
- The movie *What About Bob?* can provide some interesting examples and discussion points about breaking large goals into small goals or "baby steps."
- Try establishing a group goal and break that goal into small do-able steps that the participants can work on together. This can provide an excellent demonstration of the goal-setting and task analysis process. For example, one center set a goal to take a trip to the library with families and identified the smaller steps they would need to complete in order to reach this goal.

Session Four

Plan

Handouts

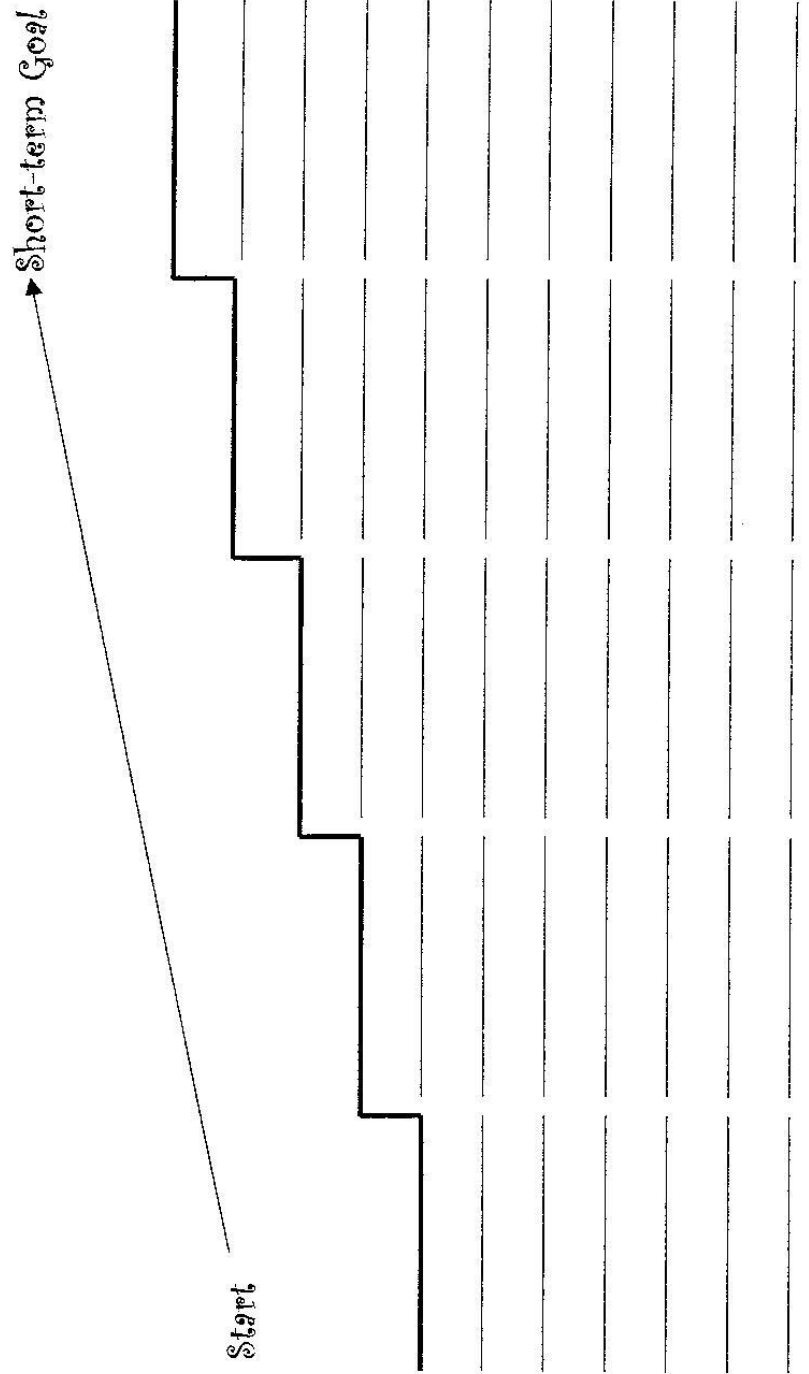
Handout #13

Plan: Objectives

- Participants will be able to define the term goal.
- Participants will generate a list of options for goals.
- Participants will select a short term goal.
- Participants will write observable, measurable achievable short-term goals.

Handout #14

Steps to Reach Short-term Goals



Handout #15

PLAN

Planning and preparation increases the likelihood for success in self-determination. We need to be able to take what we know about and value in ourselves and make a plan for action that will help us achieve what we desire. This involves setting long-term goals, breaking long-term goals into short-term goals, and breaking short-term goals into a series of steps that, when accomplished, will, hopefully, yield the desired result.

The process of breaking large goals into small, achievable steps is critical to success in self-determination. It can also be one of the most difficult tasks to master.

Developing an effective plan to accomplish a goal also requires us to learn to anticipate potential consequences of our intended actions. A reason that people may object to another's self-determination, particularly if that person is a child or young adult, is because they fear that the individual may be reaching to high and get hurt. These fears can be somewhat allayed by helping individuals learn how to assume a more protective role for themselves by anticipating and preparing for the possible results of their actions. As these anticipatory skills are developed, there will be less need for others to provide protection for them.

Creativity is another important element to be addressed in learning to plan for self-determined actions. When we attempt to be self-determined, we often encounter barriers. Sometimes those barriers can be broken down through persistence alone. However, creativity will often be necessary to discover new strategies to maneuver around the barriers.

The final element in the self-determination model related to planning is visual rehearsal. We are much more likely to be successful in our actions aimed toward self-determination if we practice and imagine ourselves being successful as part of our preparation. Sports psychologists have long acknowledged the importance of athletes mentally rehearsing and imagining themselves succeeding before they compete. Rehearsal (actual physical practice, if possible, or, if not, in our imaginations) can help us become more comfortable with and confident in our planned actions.

Session Five

Act

Objectives:

- Participants will learn about anticipating results of their actions.
- Participants will learn about accessing and using supportive relationships in achieving goals.
- Participants will be introduced to empathic communication.
- Participants will be introduced to concepts in coaching.

Act Core Session

Preparation

- Review and become comfortable with the section guidelines and materials
- Review “Clarissa’s Dilemma” handout #17
- Complete the “Anticipating results” handout #18 prior to the session
- Duplicate any needed handouts
- Review the “Goal review” handout #19

Materials/Equipment

- Markers
- Flipchart

Overview

- I. Introduction
 - A. Review concept of Act
 1. Review Objectives
- II. Anticipating Results
 1. Read Clarissa’s Dilemma
 2. Small Group work to complete handout #17
 3. Lead short discussion
- III. Taking Action
 - A. Participants choose a step for the week
 - B. Participants complete handout #18
- VI. Supportive Relationship Building
 - A. Empathic communication
 - B. Coaching
 - C. Review “Goal Review” handout #19
- VII. Summary
 - A. Looking forward

Act Content

I. Introduction

A. Review concepts in Act component

1. Review the self-determination model. Ask participants to think back to the last session and list a few things they learned about what it means to Plan. Write major points on the flipchart and clarify.

2. Review Objectives for this session and explain that we will be talking about taking action on our plans. Go over the major points in the model for this section. Ask participants why they think it is important to make take action on plans. (It may seem obvious, but the array of responses is often interesting. List on flip chart and be ready to give some examples (e.g. “to get things done, to practice our choices, to make progress and feel success.”)

II. Anticipating results

1. Read Clarissa’s Dilemma. Explain that when we make plans we have choices of how we will proceed and we need to examine our options before taking action. Discuss with participants how important it is to anticipate outcomes so that we can be prepared. Provide time to complete handout #17 in small groups.

2. Discuss the groups’ answers.

III. Taking Action

A. Choosing a step

1. Have each participant choose a step from their plan to work on between now and the next time you will be meeting. Ask them to verbalize that step to a peer.

2. Have participants take out handout #18 and complete it for their own step of the week. It may be helpful to offer your completed handout as an example.

IV. Supportive relationship building

A. Introduction

1. As we look toward achieving the goals we set, we need to think about the supports available to us and the barriers we may face. Some studies were conducted at Wayne State University where people were asked “what is your greatest support in being self-determined?” and “what is the biggest barrier you face to being self-determined?” Ask participants to guess the most common answers to the question about what was supportive of self-determination. Affirm the various responses as likely responses. When someone guesses “other people” or “friends” or “relatives”, tell the group that this was the most frequent response to the question “What is your greatest support to being self-determined?” Ask the group to then consider the most frequent response to the question “what is the greatest barrier to being self-determined?” The group will typically guess the correct response (“other people” or “friends” or “relatives”) quickly. From this foundation, lead a brief discussion with the group about the importance of positive relationships to being self-determined.

B. Empathic communication

C. Coaching

1. Although professional coaches have extensive training, there are many coaching inspired techniques we can use with each other to provide mutual support for reaching our goals. Ask the group to think of some effective coaches they have known and then list some of the coach’s characteristics or traits they think contributed to their success. (List these traits on a flip chart.)
2. Many of the examples above will probably be from Sports. However, many people are now using coaching strategies to assist their goals in other areas. In one such coaching model (Whitworth, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 1998), the purpose of coaching is identified as “forwarding the action” and “deepening the learning”. Ask participants to break into small groups and develop a story about an effective coaching relationship that promotes self-determination. Encourage the participants to be specific and creative in their stories. Ask each of the groups to share their stories in the larger group. Identify the major themes running throughout the stories, making a list of good coaching practices on the flip chart.

D. Review Goal planning sheet, Handout #19

1. Have participants take out handout # 19 and let them know that they can use this tool to track their success on their steps toward reaching their short-term goal. Ask each of them to identify a coach

such (e.g., a colleague, a friend, a supervisor) who can assist them in their efforts.

IV. Summary

- A. Looking forward
 1. Ask participants what they learned about themselves today.
 2. Ask them to share their progress to reach their short term goal with a friend, spouse or someone that supports them.
 3. Invite them to consider the ways in which this content could be applied to early childhood programming. A good jumping off point might be to ask what they have noticed about the degree to which children think about the potential consequences of their actions before they act. What do they currently do to help children learn how to do this?

Act

Alternative and Extension Activities

After reviewing aspects of the Act component of the Action Model for Self-Determination, the following activities may help participants further develop their understanding of this component.

--Encourage participants to find a few quiet moments today. Have them make a list of all of the people who support them. Have them make a list of all of the people who can count on them.

--Create self-determination portfolios. Have participants maintain their own portfolios, providing examples of their efforts in self-determination. Review with participants often.

Session 5

Act

Handouts

Handout # 16

ACT Objectives

- Participants will learn about the importance of anticipating results of their actions.
- Participants will learn about accessing and using supportive relationships in achieving their goals.
- Participants will be introduced to empathic communication.
- Participants will be introduced to the concepts of coaching.

Handout #18

Anticipating Results

Planned Action:

Possible Results:

After thinking about possible results, which of the following do you want to do?

_____ **Modify the plan**
What would you change?

_____ **Discard the plan**

_____ **Go for it, without any changes**

Session Six

Experience Outcomes and Learn

Objectives:

- Participants will celebrate their accomplishments in their efforts to become more self-determined.
- Participants will identify what they learned about their interests and preferences from the self-determination process.
- Participants will identify the skills they strengthened through the self-determination process.

Experience Outcomes and Learn Core Session

Preparation

- Do your own reflective writing as outlined in the activities below, including what you accomplished, how you have grown, how you benefited by supporting the self-determination of others, and your next steps for becoming more self-determined.
- Take steps to make the session festive and celebratory. Examples of “extra touches” include planning for refreshments, flowers, and so forth. Use your creativity in planning to make this a special session.
- Make extra copies of the *Action Model for Self-Determination*.

Materials/Equipment

- Markers
- Flipchart
- Paper and pens or pencils
- CD or MP3 player (optional)

Overview

- I. Introduction
 - A. Review concept of self-determination
- II. Celebrating accomplishments and benefits
 - A. Accomplishments
 1. Review “Steps to Short-term Goals”
 - B. Growth and learning
 1. Individual reflection
 2. Paired reflection
 3. Large group sharing
- III. Planning for continues self-determination and learning
 - A. Individual reflection
 - B. Paired reflection
 - C. Share future plans
- VIII. Celebrate!

Experience Outcomes and Learn

Content

I. Introduction

A. Review concept of self-determination. Refer to the *Action Model for Self-Determination* given to participants previously. (Provide extra copies to participants if they do not have their copies with them.) Ask participants what they have learned about what it takes to be self-determined. Lead a group discussion, summarizing and highlighting key points on the flip chart.

II. Celebrating accomplishments and benefits

A. Accomplishments

1. Ask participants to take out their “Steps to Short-Term Goals” worksheet and to identify all of the highlighted activities and steps they accomplished. Reinforce and celebrate the accomplishments of each participant.

B. Growth and learning

1. Individual reflection. Ask participants to individually spend a few moments reflecting on what they learned as they worked toward their goals. Did they learn anything new about what they want in life? Did they develop any new skills? Did they become more aware of anything they need to work on? If they want to, they can write down some of their thoughts. If they prefer, they may just spend the time quietly thinking. (Provide 5-10 minutes for this reflection time. If you like you may play a CD or tape that is conducive to quiet thought.)

2. Ask participants to get into pairs and share their thoughts about what they learned about themselves and about being self-determined.

3. Lead a large group discussion about what was learned from this experience. Summarize key points.

III. Planning for continues self-determination and learning.

A. Individual reflection. Remind participants that on the first day we met together we said that becoming self-determined is a lifelong process. That means becoming self-determined doesn't end with this session. As participants to spend about 10 minutes reflecting on what they would like to do after this session is over to keep

becoming more self-determined. Again, participants may choose to use the written reflection sheet or do this activity mentally. You may also choose to play music during this time if you like.

- B. Ask participants to get into pairs and share their thoughts about what they would like to do to further their self-determination and how to infuse self-determination principles into their early childhood offerings.
- C. Invite participants to share their plans for future activities and goals with the large group.
- D. Develop a plan for next steps participants want to take to infuse self-determination concepts into their early childhood offerings. Ask each participant or group to provide a statement of a concrete step with a specific timeline that they plan to take to apply these concepts in their early childhood offerings.

IV. Celebrate!

Experience Outcomes and Learn Alternative and Extension Activities

- Have participants interview each other, using the questions provided on the reflection sheets. Ask participants to hand these sheets in to you so you can summarize progress, supports and barriers.
- Send congratulations and/or thank you notes to each of the participants as a follow-up.
- Ask participants to find magazine or newspaper articles that describe an individual's self-determination effort. Ask them to read the article carefully to see if they can determine what the individual learned from his or her actions. Ask the participants also to consider, if they were in that same situation, what they think they might have learned.
- Host a breakfast, luncheon or dessert party and informally discuss the questions provided on the reflection sheets. Make notes of accomplishments, lessons learned and goals for the future.

Part Two

Program Planning for Self-Determination in Early Childhood Programs

The most important resource for implementing a self-determination focus in early childhood programming is having adults in the program who understand and act in a manner that encourages self-determination. Therefore, an important first step is to assure that program staff understand the basic principles of self-determination. This can be done using the professional development modules provided in the previous section of this manual. Once staff understand the basic concepts, they can be supported to examine their programs to examine how self-determination can be infused into current activities. We suggest that all aspects of the program be considered (e.g. activities with children, staff supervision, parent training and support) to consider the degree to which they support the fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs delineated in Self-Determination Theory, i.e., autonomy, competence and support. We then suggest that the degree to which the program supports all participants to further develop their ability to develop and express the individual attributes outlined in the Action Model for Self-Determination that lead to self-determination can be investigated. This examination of existing program offerings in comparison to Self-Determination Theory and the Action Model for Self-Determination should yield information about current program strengths and areas for development related to promoting self-determination.

The Action Model for Self-Determination may provide a useful guide for this process of program development. Teams can engage in the self-determination process on a programmatic basis to determine the future they want to create in their programs related to self-determination by asking the following questions:

1) Know Yourself and Your Context

What do we know about our program and ourselves related to our strengths and weaknesses in promoting self-determination? What is important to us and for our program?

2) Value Yourself

What are our rights and responsibilities related to program changes? What are the parameters in which we need to work? Are there certain elements that must be maintained? Who needs to be involved in the process? How can we create change in a way that is sustainable, that honors our needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness? How do we make progress, yet avoid getting overwhelmed?

3) Plan

Develop a written plan with small steps. Visualize success and try to anticipate obstacles that may occur and prepare for them.

4) Act

Take a risk and give a new way of doing things a try. An experimental attitude can be helpful. We're trying a new way of doing things and we're going to see how it works. If it doesn't, we'll learn from it and try something else. Just as young children are often referred to as little scientists conducting experiments, taking an exploratory attitude for our program development efforts can be helpful too. We can minimize potential risks by trying to anticipate potential results before taking action as part of the planning stage and adapting accordingly. In addition, planning as a group can be helpful as some will see potential pitfalls that others don't.

5) Experience outcomes and learn

Examine the results of your efforts to infuse self-determination into your programming. Did you get the desired result? Perhaps you obtained an unexpected result that also was positive. If you were not happy with the result, how could the activity be changed to yield more positive results the next time?

Because the model is cyclical, we're back to Know Yourself and Your Context. We now have new information as a result of our actions to consider related to what we know about self-determination in our programming. The effort to infuse self-determination into our program can begin again at the Know Yourself component utilizing the new information that is now available from our last effort at program improvement. Infusing self-determination into our programs can be best accomplished over a period of time as we use the self-determination process itself to continuously learn and take action to create programs that help all persons within the early childhood setting be more self-determined. We recommend that this process be used in a conscious manner. For example, program planning for self-determination could be a focused part of regular staff meetings, or that regular monthly meetings be established to focus on how self-determination can be built within the program rather than hoping that it will be completed informally. If informal measures are relied upon, it will be too easy for the initiative to be lost among other programmatic demands.

The following section includes information about additional resources that may be helpful to teams engaged in infusing a self-determination emphasis into their programs to benefit young children and their families. As you work to promote self-determination in early childhood programs, we would appreciate hearing any comments, questions, or suggestions you have. We consider this effort to be a work in progress and we would appreciate the opportunity to learn from your experience and possibly share that information with others. Please send any comments, suggestions or ideas to sharon@beselfdetermined.com.

Additional Resources

The list below includes resources that may be helpful for early childhood teams who are working to infuse self-determination into their programs. As you can see, some of these resources are targeted toward age groups other than early childhood, but they still may be helpful as inspiration to create strategies that will benefit young children.

Websites

www.beselfdetermined.com provides information and resources for supporting self-determination with an emphasis on the Action Model for Self-Determination.

www.selfdeterminationtheory.org offers information about the research of Ryan and Deci who developed Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

Professional Resource Books

Self-Determination Instructional and Assessment Strategies by Michael Wehmeyer and Sharon Field provides practical information for educators about implementing educational programs focused on self-determination. The *Self-Determination Quality Indicators Instrument* intended to help teams assess their educational programs related to self-determination and the chapter on supporting family involvement in self-determination may be particularly useful for early childhood educators and providers. This book is published by Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA. [www. https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/home](https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/home)

Becoming Self-Determined: Creating Thoughtful Learners in a Standards-Driven, Admissions-Frenzied Culture by Sharon Field and David Parker (Eds.) provides practical strategies for infusing self-determination throughout postsecondary educational offerings. It includes chapters on coaching, mindfulness, family involvement, resilience and grit, appreciative advising and universal design for instruction. Although the primary target age is college and university students, early childhood educators may find some of the strategies useful in their work with parents and other adults. It is available from

the Association for Higher Education and Disability,
<https://www.ahead.org/>.

Curricula

Early Steps to Self-Determination by Sharon Field and Alan Hoffman is a curriculum based on the Action Model for Self-Determination. It is intended for use with children in grades k-5. A draft copy can be downloaded at no charge from www.beselfdetermined.com. Since it is still in draft form, if you find aspects of the curriculum that are helpful (or not), we would appreciate any feedback you can provide.

Steps to Self-Determination by Alan Hoffman and Sharon Field is available from ProEd, Inc. www.proedinc.com This curriculum is also based on the Action Model for Self-Determination and is designed for use with middle and high school age students.

Self-Determined Learning Model for Early Elementary Students: A Parent's Guide by Susan B. Palmer and Michael L. Weymeyer provides activities that parents can engage in with young children to promote self-determination. The materials can be downloaded from <http://ngsd.org/news/self-determined-learning-model-early-elementary-students-parents-guide>.

Children's Books

Many children's books focus on content related to self-determination. A few of our favorites are listed below.

- *Where do balloons go?* (Curtis, 2000)
- *I Am* (Schick, 2002)
- *Coat of Many Colors* (Parton, 1994)
- *Stephanie's Ponytail* (Munsch, 1992)
- *I Like Me* (Carlson, 1988)
- *I'm Gonna Like Me* (Curtis & Cornell, 2002)
- *A Bad Case of Stripes* (Shannon, 1998)
- *There's a Big, Beautiful World Out There* (Carlson, 2002)
- *Alice and Greta* (Simmons, 1997)