

The International Journal for Direct Support Professionals

Looking Back: Looking Forwards – Celebrating our 100th Issue

Believe it or not, this is the 100th issue of the Journal. We want to celebrate by looking back at a few milestones in the life of the Journal and then present you with a few quotes from random issues that have been published in the past.

The Journal began as a result of a conversation between Dave and Channel, the assistant director of clinical services at Vita. We were talking about how the holidays are traditionally such a tough time for many people with disabilities. We wondered if we could create a resource for staff to provide support in the best possible way for those people for whom the holidays recalled trauma, not joy. So we set about to do that. It was published under the name “Service, Support and Success” and was just print on a white background. No fanfare. The reception was immediate and within days we were getting requests from all over for this article; eventually it was sent to most agencies in Ontario. We followed up that success with another issue the following month and began to understand that there was a thirst for this kind of information. A monthly newsletter was born.

At Volume 1 Issue 7, Angie Nethercott was invited to participate as a co-editor and she, along with Hands TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca, came on board bringing with her mountains of expertise and was just enough of a grammatical fussbudget to clean up and tighten the articles which came in.

Volume 2 Issue 1 introduced the readers to a new masthead and background. It looked like it was meant to look – like a valued publication.

Volume 3 Issue 5 brought a new change ... we had been getting emails from people wanting to cite our articles in papers and chapters they were writing, but the journal had no date on it. Blush. How did we miss that? A date first appears three and a half years after inception. Yikes!

Editors: Dave Hingsburger, M.Ed.
Angie Nethercott, M.A., RP



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Another “Yikes” – we began to get complaints about calling the publication a ‘newsletter.’ A number of our readers felt strongly that the name needed to change. “Grocery stores have newsletters, this is a publication providing information and best practice, not news,” was one comment. The Journal officially became “The International Journal for Direct Support Professionals” with the publication of Volume 6 issue 1.

We added a French version of the newsletter at Volume 5 Issue 5 and a Spanish version followed at Volume 6 Issue 9.

In July of 2016, we began a partnership with the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals, which meant that our authors would appear via a webinar on the topics that they wrote about. It was an opportunity to dig deeper into the article and to hear directly from the authors about topics they were passionate about.

So, that’s a bit of the history. Now take a random stroll through some of the articles. It was not possible to provide a quote from each of the 99 before so, using dice the issues and numbers told us which ones to highlight.

Quotes from the Throw of Dice

Volume 1 Issue 2: Unwrapping the Perfect Holidays: Tips for Staff Serving People with Intellectual Disabilities Part Two

Chanelle Salonia and Dave Hingsburger

Make it a ‘no one left behind’ experience: People with significant disabilities can be so easily forgotten in amongst other activities. Seeing someone slumped over in their wheelchair sitting alone at a table while everyone else is up and dancing is not uncommon at events. Don’t let this happen. You aren’t paid to be at the party, you are paid to facilitate ‘party.’ Make sure that you keep your eyes open for those who are, as the song writer said, ‘so visible, easy to miss.’

Volume 1 Issue 8: Labour Pains: 10 Strategies for Coping When Hurt by Someone You Support

Cathy Cancilla and Dave Hingsburger

The emotions that come from being struck, spat upon, kicked, or having your hair pulled are huge. In fact, you have suffered victimization – through no fault of your own. Let’s be clear, even IF the situation could have been handled differently, no one deserves to get beat on at work. Let’s also be clear that, in human services, we’ve all got to get better at supporting one another and spend less time blaming one another. It’s tough work. It’s good work, but it’s tough work.

Vol. 1 Issue 9: Beaches, Bodies and Barbeques: Cautions and Tips for Direct-Care Staff Supporting People with Disabilities in the Summer

Nicole Cotton-Twigger

When strolling down memory lane, summer is often remembered as idyllic. The summers of our youth were filled with long, hot days and leisurely hours spent in pleasurable activities. In fact though, summers were fun because cautions were taken.

Sunburn and bug bites are as much a part of summer as someone screaming hysterically, 'Don't eat the potato salad; it's been left out in the sun!' Summer for direct-care staff can be full of conflicts – going to the beach to work runs in direct contrast to the urge to go to the beach for fun. Providing support is a job which, when done well, is as invisible as it is functional. Everyone needs a holiday and the job of the direct-care worker is to make summer holidays fun – but also to make it safe.

Volume 2 Issue 1: The Top Ten Strategies of All Time for Promoting Positive Behaviour

Angie Nethercott and Dave Hingsburger

What's the single greatest stressor that people face? You might be thinking of an event, like moving, or death of a spouse, or a call from Revenue Canada. Well, those events have a commonality that results in stress –the inability to predict what happens next. Yep, that's it, that's the single greatest stressor we mortals face... the inability to predict what happens next. We've said that twice because it needs to be remembered. We hear over and over and over again that "He likes routine" or "She gets upset when her routine is changed." Oddly people say this like it's unique or abnormal. The same staff who note, with exasperation, that the person they serve needs routine would become extremely upset if, on the way to work, construction stopped them from being able to get a Tim Hortons coffee – like they do every morning.

Vol 2 Issue 2: The Normal Heart: Supporting Love and Romance within Service Systems

Desmond Bailey

The primary barrier to any kind of change is the way we think. On the other hand, the way we think can also be the road to success. As Direct-Support Professionals, we need to ensure that we examine ourselves keenly. We are trusted to provide support to individuals in our care. We must ensure that we do not allow the influence of our unstated rules, values and personal norms to interfere with the intrinsic romantic needs of the individuals we support. Remember, our thoughts determine our actions and our actions affect the lives of the individuals in our care. It is important that we evaluate ourselves individually and collectively.

Vol 2 Issue 4: Keeping the ME in Media: Thoughts, Ideas and Tips for Supporting People with Intellectual Disabilities to Use Social Media

Donna Lee

Social media are also enjoyed by many of the people we serve, although those in supporting roles often express concern about vulnerability, safety, privacy, and costs. While these can be valid concerns, it's important not to let moral panic about social media restrict people's access to an important source of fun and connection.

Vol 2 Issue 7: Burritos and Cherry Pies: Saying Yes, Saying No: What Direct Support Professionals Need to Think About

Dave Hingsburger

The Burrito Test: With power comes the temptation of tyranny. We can end up saying, “no” because we can... not because we need to.

Every time someone asks for permission, for information, for assistance, the imbalance of power becomes greater. Their need of something from you, therefore, exacerbates the already existing hierarchy that comes with the role of support provider.

Have you ever heard of the ‘burrito test?’ I hadn’t until recently when someone posted a comment on my blog regarding the issues of power, control, and food. The Burrito Test is stated quite simply, again from the comment on my blog: “Can the resident make and eat a microwave burrito at midnight if they so desire?” This comment has resulted in me having several conversations that I would never have had before. Most people I spoke to, from several different agencies, after careful consideration said the answer would be, in most cases, “No.”

‘No,’ for no reason is the mark of domination.

Vol 3 Issue 7: Workforce Transformation: From Caregivers to Direct Support Professionals

Perry Samowitz

Here is a challenge. Select one individual that you support. Think of any task that you might do together. Ask yourself, “What part of the task am I doing that the person could possibly learn to do for him/herself?” Then try to change the way you are supporting the person. The outcome of being a direct support professional rather than a caregiver is that the individual will be better able to think and problem solve, will constantly be learning new skills and, most importantly, have increased self-esteem.

Vol. 3 Issue 5: TEAM! Simple Strategies to Success

Michael Adegoke, Kenny Balogun, Kimberley Beattie, Mark Berko, Dehan Clarke, Kenneth Duncan, Chris Edigue, Andrew Efosa, Esohe Erhun, Joseph Eyiah, Nosiru Folaji, Luke Lynn, Bunmi Okanlawon, Osagie Osarentin, Neshevitha Siripathy

Our immediate team is made up of 15 staff members. We are diverse in many ways: multi-cultural, multi-religious, different sexual orientations, gender, and an age range that spans 30+ years. These differences have turned out to be one of our greatest strengths. The wide range of unique perspectives and our ability to learn how to utilize everyone’s various talents has created our dynamic team.

Volume 4 Issue 2: Families and Staff: How to move from competing to complementary perspectives

Yona Lunsky, PhD

The family knows their family member extremely well. They have been there since the beginning and have done their best, sometimes with fairly limited tools and supports, to do so.

They know about the situation today, but they also know about all the situations that have happened before. They know current staff, and they know past staff. If staff change every year, someone receiving developmental supports for 20 years may have met 20 different primary workers, in addition to all the other staff who also provide some care. So, when it comes to history, family holds that close-up lens.

Volume 4 Issue 8: When Push Comes to Shove

Dave Hingsburger

When I rent a wheelchair van, I discovered very quickly that, when we were driving in the city and came to a sudden and necessary stop, I'd slide forward and, terrifyingly, under the seatbelt. That's because the floor was easy to slide on and so was my chair. We now put down a lovely green and blue striped mat (just because it's utilitarian doesn't mean it can't be pretty) that prevents my feet from sliding and, therefore, I can resist the forward motion when the car stops.

Volume 5 Issue 5: Engaging Insight: Keys to Person-Centred Thinking

Céline Parent

Whose routine is it? Is it the routine of the person that we are supporting? Do they really want to do laundry on a Wednesday or go swimming every Thursday afternoon? Do they really want pancakes for breakfast every weekend? Is this really their routine? Or is it ours? And if it's ours, then we need to take a hard look at it to see if we can make it less about us, and more about the person we are supporting.

Question everything

Once you start questioning routines, keep the momentum going by questioning everything.

Volume 5 Issue 12: The Art of Holding Space

Kevin Alexander

Holding space for another person is being at peace with watching someone struggle. Not laughing at their struggles or feeling sorry for them, but being fully present and compassionate to the struggle of life we all must learn to endure. Holding space is supporting people by teaching tools of how to deal with success and failure, not eliminating failure from a person's life all together. It can be challenging at times to know when to step in and help, or when to let someone figure it out themselves. This is the art of the practice of holding space.

Volume 6 Issue 4: Voices from a Silent Journey

Melodie Cook

Working with people who we struggle to understand takes skill in recognizing context. What is going on? What has happened or is about to happen? What subject have we been talking about? What other things is the person communicating with their gestures and body language? Believe me I understand why people we support want to hit us sometimes. CONTEXT.

Volume 7 Issue 6: The Power in “My”

Heather Hermans

Many people with developmental disabilities have lived their lives owned by others from residential intuitions to community living. The words “my client” and “my resident” take on the ownership of all that this person does and is.

The successes, failures, and everything in-between are no longer their own but that of the professionals who surround them. This small yet powerful word “my” can take over and remove a person’s humanity.

Volume 8 Issue 2: The Alphabet Community

Dave Hingsburger, Virginia Jahyu, Luke Lynn, Ayodele Moffett

The debate was getting heated, and one of the panelists was flustered and looking for a word to describe, with some disgust, the LGBT+ community; eventually the phrase, “That Alphabet Community” popped out. What he said in anger and disgust is something that we, as authors of this article, and as differing letters in that alphabet, embrace. The idea that a community aims to be one community built out of many communities is kind of beautiful don’t you think?

Volume 8 Issue 6: The 21 Lessons for supporting persons with disabilities: Lessons 8-14

Austin Errico, Michael P. Mozzoni, Anthony Giuliano, Duncan Mckenzie, Richard M. Brown, Jeffrey T. Barth, Libby Beals

I once observed a staff member and a participant leave for a lunch outing in the community. When they returned quickly, I inquired why the outing was so short. The staff member innocently replied, “We went to get fast food, and the drive thru is easier than helping him into the restaurant and telling him not to flirt with the wait staff. I just pull up to the window, order for him, and we are home. No muss, no fuss.”

“Easier for whom?” I asked. If the goals of a participant are to practice mobility and interact with his community, then the therapeutic purpose of the outing was not addressed. By doing “more” for the participant, the staff member may risk fostering dependency and social isolation. Our basic therapeutic task is mostly “to do with” and not “to do for” because it is easier for us. Supporting incremental successes in personally meaningful life activities should be among our top priorities.

Thanks so much to all of our readers for taking a stroll down memory lane with us and for continuing to read and distribute the Journal. Thank you to all our authors for contributing your knowledge to the Journal. Thanks also to Vita Community Living Services and Hands TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca for supporting our involvement in this work. We look forward to publishing many more issues.

Previous issues can be accessed at: www.vitacsl.org or <https://thefamilyhelpnetwork.ca/resources/journal-direct-support-professionals/>

Answers to FAQ's about the journal

- 1) The journal is intended to be widely distributed; you do not need permission to forward. You do need permission to publish in a newsletter or magazine.
- 2) You may subscribe by sending an email to dhingsburger@vitacls.org
- 3) We are accepting submissions. Email article ideas to either the address above or to anethercott@handstfhn.ca
- 4) We welcome feedback on any of the articles that appear here.



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