

Section 3

Developing a plan

Introducing environmental supports to your relative

As we have discussed in the first two sections of the manual, environmental approaches can provide you and your relative with tools to make important life changes. But like any other tools, these strategies can only do so much. Much of their usefulness lies in how you use them. There is one word that should underlie all of the strategies that you use: collaboration. (For more about introducing the manual to your relative, see Section 7.)

This work will be most effective if you:

- engage the person in a conversation about the project, seek their input and build their motivation to take part
- design the plan collaboratively with extensive input from your relative
- link the work done to the person's life goals.

TIP: Take time at the beginning to engage the person you are supporting in this project—in coming to agree about why it might be helpful and how you can work together to make it happen. This will produce much better results in the end. Throughout this effort, the person should have the sense that you are embarking on a project together.

Here is how you might get started:

- Discuss the program with your relative. Talk to the person about why you want to use this program and how it might be linked to their goals. You may ask such questions as:
 - What do you want to do in life?
 - What would make you happier?
 - What would you like to be doing a month from now, a year from now or five years from now?
- For people who have difficulty coming up with ideas about goals, it can sometimes help to make a general statement about the current situation, and problems the person may be having. For example, you could begin by making one of the following statements:
 - I know that you have had trouble with your illness and you want things to be better. I found this book that talks about ways to get you going again and I hope we can work together on how to do that.
 - I know this last year has been hard for you...
 - I know you have told me that you wanted to have a life more like Jason's...

To get an idea of how you might present these strategies to your loved one, see, the first meetings in Videos 3 to 6 at www.schizophreniafamilystrategies.com, in which the relative introduces the strategies to their loved one.

Other points to consider when talking to your relative about the program:

1. **Consider timing.** The best time to start the conversation is when you are at a good point in your relationship with your relative, or having a positive interaction. You might doom yourself to failure if you pull out the manual in the middle of an argument: the person might think this will just be a new tool to support your side of the argument.
2. **Begin to think through and discuss how the collaboration will work**—asking for your loved one's input throughout. If you are approaching this intervention as a family, you might want to have a conversation with them first about the best strategy before speaking to your relative. Consider questions such as: “Is it best if one person takes the lead in being their support and, if so, who would that be?” “If more than one person is involved, how should we work together?”

3. *Discuss together what specific skills or areas of daily life would be best to work on.* Many caregivers want their relative to do certain things, such as take their medication, shower and keep up their room. If this is true of your family, you can suggest that these are things that are important to do every day. However, whatever you decide to work on, link it if possible to something important for the person you will be supporting. (The next step is one way to do that.)
4. *Tie the specific skills you are working on to one of your relative's long-term goals.* For example, if your relative wants to get a job or have more friends, explain that following a daily routine and showering are important first steps. To get a job, you have to be able to get up every day and look nice. If you want friends, you need to start doing things, so you have something to talk about. For every sign, calendar or other support you decide to use, remind each other that the idea is to help you work toward being able meet a long-term goal.

Customizing your plan

A good environmental support plan builds on a good assessment. Doing such an assessment involves two important steps:

1. Determining you relative's type and level of functioning
2. Knowing where to start.

Step 1: Determining your relative's type and level of functioning

It is helpful to first determine your relative's type of executive functioning (whether they are more on the "trouble staying organized" side or more on the "trouble getting started" side—as discussed earlier) and their level of functioning (minor challenges or major difficulties). This will tell you the types of strategies that will work best with them. If the person you are supporting doesn't fit exactly in a particular category, try to figure out which category they best fit.

Look at the tables below. The first table describes the type of functioning the person has and the second table describes the level.

Type of functioning

Directions: Check the one type of functioning that best fits the person you will be supporting. Do they have trouble getting started? Or is their difficulty more in staying organized? Ideally, you will complete this with your relative and will both agree on the selection. You might also seek input from other family members, clinicians or friends who know the person well.

TROUBLE GETTING STARTED ^{TGS}	TROUBLE STAYING ORGANIZED ^{TSO}
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not complete steps in getting dressed because unable to start and follow through on the tasks involved. <input type="checkbox"/> Has trouble starting or completing tasks. Might not get started, takes a very long time, takes long breaks, or keeps getting stuck and asking “What’s next”? <input type="checkbox"/> May not seek out any fun activities, or turns down offers to take part in leisure or social events. <input type="checkbox"/> Might talk very little, make little eye contact or have trouble keeping a conversation going. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has difficulty picking the right clothes (e.g., chooses heavy coat in summer) because that is what is on top of the pile, or skips steps in getting dressed when distracted. <input type="checkbox"/> Gets distracted by noises or interactions with other people while doing tasks, or gets caught up in unimportant details. <input type="checkbox"/> May begin leisure projects but not complete them, or be disorganized (e.g., forget gym clothes or fees). <input type="checkbox"/> Makes others uncomfortable in social interactions due to odd or impulsive comments or gestures. Makes social plans and then doesn’t show up because becomes distracted by something else.

To help get a sense of whether your loved one has trouble getting started ^{TGS} or trouble staying organized ^{TSO}, see Video 2 at www.schizophreniafamilystrategies.com, which introduces Jules, who has trouble getting started and Maleck, who has trouble staying organized.

Level of functioning

Directions: Again, check the box that best fits your relative's level of functioning. Are the challenges they face minor, or more serious?

MINOR CHALLENGES	MORE SERIOUS CHALLENGES
<input type="checkbox"/> Can plan and successfully complete straightforward tasks such as basic grocery shopping or arranging to get together with a friend. <input type="checkbox"/> Successfully completes tasks that have several steps, such as cleaning an apartment or cooking a meal. <input type="checkbox"/> When completing tasks, will notice mistakes that happen, stop, and take on a different strategy. <input type="checkbox"/> Can be flexible in completing tasks; for example, is able to clean dishes or take a shower at someone else's house and can otherwise adapt routines depending on where they are.	<input type="checkbox"/> Has great difficulty completing tasks with more than one step, such as cooking a meal or cleaning a room. Needs multiple prompts or suggestions to figure out what needs to be done next. <input type="checkbox"/> Gets stuck on and repeats a strategy even when it is not working (e.g., keeps putting keys on a cluttered table where they are very difficult to find later) or lacks flexibility (e.g., will not be able to come up with alternatives when the regular bus is not running). <input type="checkbox"/> Has a great deal of difficulty in new situations (e.g., adapting basic self-care routines in the home of a relative)

The boxes you have checked tell you what kinds of interventions will likely work best with the person you are supporting.

Ideally, you will know if they fit in one of the four following categories regarding the level and type of functioning:

1. Trouble getting started + Minor challenges
2. Trouble getting started + More serious challenges
3. Trouble staying organized + Minor challenges
4. Trouble staying organized + More serious challenges

TIP: Don't worry if, after thinking it through and talking with others, you aren't able to determine the type and/or level categories. Sometimes people just don't fit in the boxes! All that means is that you may be in for a little more trial and error in picking the strategies that you will use. This work is set up with specific approaches based on these categories. If you aren't able to classify the person, you will need to pull approaches from multiple categories to see what works.

Step 2: Knowing where to start

Now that you know the approximate cognitive category of the person you'll be supporting, you'll need to determine the areas where environmental supports are needed and how to put them in place.

Where do you begin? This is an important question. If you try to do too many things at once, the person will get confused and overwhelmed. If you start with something that isn't linked to a goal the person cares about, it probably won't happen. (This is true for any of us.) To understand what your relative needs help with, look at what he or she is doing and not doing. We need to know what parts of the person's living situation are working and what things may need to be changed.

Looking at habits that need changing, we want to identify the problems in how the person organizes their belongings, and behaviours that may make doing everyday things harder than necessary. For example, getting ready for a doctor's appointment is harder when a person can't find their underwear or socks because potato chips, bills, hair care products and clothing are all in the same overstuffed drawer. If the environment is cluttered or dirty, it is usually harder for anyone to function. Make sure the person has all the supplies they need to perform their daily activities. Sometimes when people live on a limited budget, they purchase things like cigarettes rather than soap—but the person will not get the desired result from showering if they are not using soap.

Develop an activity schedule of the person's typical day. This includes information about what the person does from the time they wake up to when they go to bed. Everything gets written down, including naps. You may be able to fill this out based on what you know or, better yet, you can do it together. This can lead to conversations about what in the person's routines they might want to change. Here are some things to consider when getting started:

- How often does your relative do non-day-to-day activities (e.g., go to a volunteer job, do the grocery shopping, go to a church group, go to the movies with friends)?
- Does your relative have safety, organizational or cleanliness problems? (E.g., is the room messy, are dirty clothes mixed in with clean clothes, are sheets dirty, does the person leave a mess in the kitchen, are bugs present, are the person's medications and belongings strewn about?)
- What personal hygiene and household cleaning products does your relative need? (E.g., does the person have soap, shampoo, dishwashing liquid, a mop? Where are these things located? If her toothbrush and toothpaste are in her bottom dresser drawer, she is not going to use them. Does she know how to use the vacuum?)
- How often does your relative carry out basic household chores and personal grooming? (E.g., how often does he shower? How often does he do his own laundry? What about brushing his teeth? How often does he help with chores around the house?)
- What kinds of social relationships does the person have? Does he or she have meaningful and supportive friends and/or acquaintances?

- What does the person do for fun? What kind of productive activity does the person do (e.g., a job, volunteer work, helping around home)? Would they like to have more or better friends?

When you have thought these questions through and spoken about them with your relative and other people in their life, you will be in a good position to get started. You should have a sense of where problems lie and what the person’s goals are.

Use the tables below to document first where challenges exist and second what the person’s goals are. Ideally, you will complete these forms with the person that you are supporting.

Challenges in daily living

Directions: Rank each skill as follows:

0 = no problem 1 = some difficulty 2 = major challenge

SKILL	RANK (0–2)
<i>Basic</i>	
Bathing	
Dressing	
Dental hygiene	
Applying makeup	
Using the toilet	
Keeping the home clean and tidy	
Healthy eating and cooking	
Doing laundry	
Managing medication	
<i>Beyond the basics</i>	
Grocery shopping	
Transportation	
Managing money	
Social skills and communication	
Leisure skills	
Work skills	

Next, if you haven’t already done so, have a conversation with the person you will be supporting about their goals. This can be helped along by such questions as: “What would you like to be doing in one year, or five years?”, “What would you like to change about your life?”, “What would make you happier with your life?” Listed below are examples of goals that could help generate ideas.

My goals

ACTIVITY	GOALS	CHECK
Daily grooming	I want to brush my teeth every day.	
	I want to shower regularly.	
	I want to wear clean clothes and smell good.	
	I want to . . .	
Independent living	I want to keep my room clean and organized.	
	I want to take better care of my things.	
	I want to do my own laundry.	
	I want to live on my own.	
	I want to manage my own money.	
	I want to cook for myself and the family.	
	I want to . . .	
Leisure activity	I want to do something fun every day.	
	I want to take up a hobby.	
	I want to have something to talk about.	
	I want to . . .	
Social activity	I want to meet new people.	
	I want a girlfriend or boyfriend.	
	I want to go places with my friends.	
	I want my friends to come over more.	
	I want to . . .	
Meaningful activity	I want to get a job.	
	I want to volunteer.	
	I want to take a class.	
	I want to complete high school education.	
	I want to follow a routine.	
	I want to help around the house.	
	I want to . . .	

Deciding what to work on first

It can be difficult to decide what to work on first. In general, safety issues and guidelines for taking medication appropriately are good to address first. Then you can move on to grooming and cleanliness issues, care of the home, and leisure, social and work skills. This can be switched around according to your specific situation. For example, if your relative is in danger of losing her job, you may want to focus on work issues first.

To get a sense of how you might introduce supports into the home, see Video 3 for someone needing high support who has trouble getting started, and Video 4 for someone needing lower supports who has trouble getting started at www.schizophreniafamilystrategies.com.

To get a sense of how you might start introducing supports into the home, see Video 5 for someone needing high support who has TGS, and Video 6 for someone needing lower supports who has TGS at www.schizophreniafamilystrategies.com.

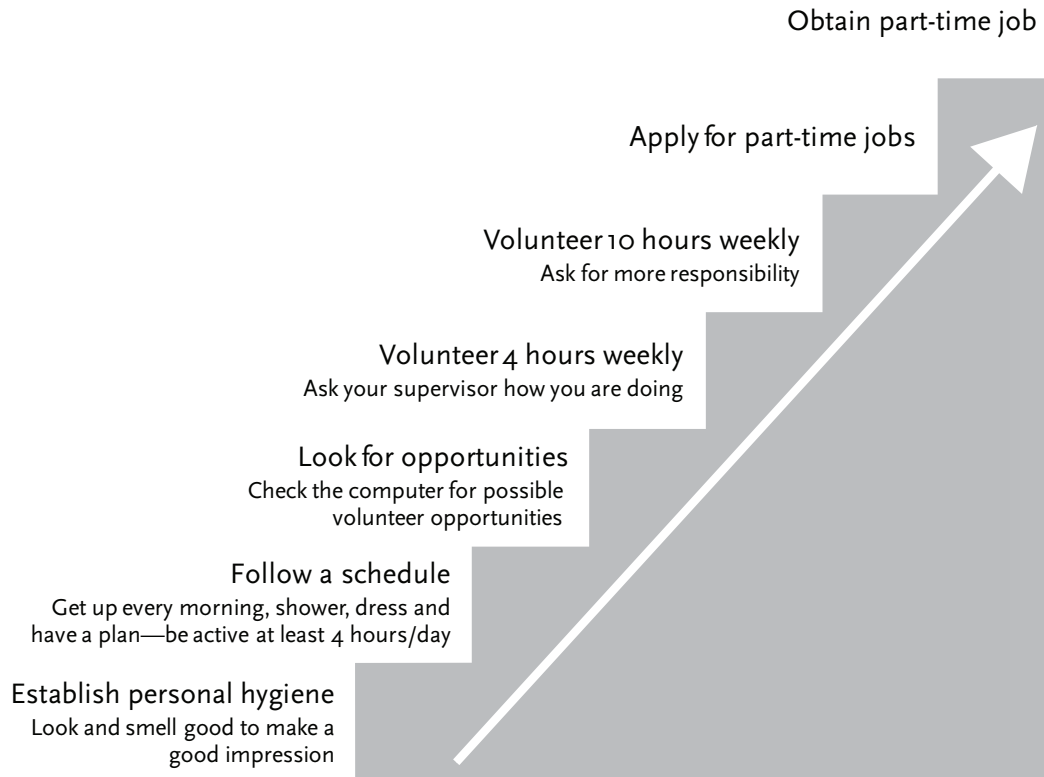
TIP: Sometimes, a person wants to work on an issue that might not seem helpful. For example, he may want to focus on getting a date with someone who is married. In this case your relative may be expressing an underlying desire to date or to improve social relationships. “Focusing on improving relationships” is a good way to restate this goal.

Or your relative may want to find a job even though she is not taking showers and is sleeping many hours during the day. It may be good to focus first on the basics of showering and following a daily schedule, to prepare to go to work.

Discuss the steps needed to reach the goals that are important to your relative. Remember, the key thing to improve your likelihood of success is agreeing on at least one goal before you begin!

If the person needs to work on several steps before working on the goal they selected, it may be helpful to make a stair-step chart (like the one below) that shows how the early steps relate to the goal. This will give you both a simple visual reminder of the ultimate goal, and help your relative to understand that each support will help form the foundation of the goal. The stair-step chart will also help you both to monitor progress toward the goal.

Steps to your goal: Getting a job



Pulling it all together

You are just about ready to get rolling—by now, you will have a sense of what challenges the person faces and what their goals are. Use the following form to map out up to three goals, and the main challenges that get in the way of the person reaching those goals, just like the stair-step diagram did. It's best to start with challenges that are linked to a number of goals, for example, hygiene and safety. It is unlikely that anyone will make headway on any goal if some basic things aren't addressed first.

Challenges to meeting my goals

Goal 1: _____

Challenges getting in the way of Goal 1:

Goal 2: _____

Challenges getting in the way of Goal 2:

Goal 3 _____

Challenges getting in the way of Goal 3:

Starting too many things at once doesn't work as well as focusing on a few key areas first. That is why we suggest starting with two or three areas where the person has challenges that get in the way of their goals. Make sure one of them is an "easy win." Mastering at least one relatively easy-to-fix problem can leave the person feeling hopeful that the larger project will work. Also, remember that this is just the starting point. As your relative successfully overcomes challenges and meets goals, they will then set new goals, which will lead to new challenges.

So now you are ready to start! You know about the types of challenges the person is facing, and their goals, and will have a few agreed-upon areas to start with.

