



Module 1: Introduction to Picture My Future

This is the first in a series of five online training modules designed to guide you through Picture My Future. The Picture My Future approach uses pictures to support people with intellectual disability as they explore their hopes and dreams for the future. At the end of these modules you should have an understanding of the Picture My Future approach and how to facilitate it, as well as an understanding of where it fits within the broader planning context.

Module 1 Learning outcomes:

At the end of this module, you should have an understanding of the following:

1. What is Picture My Future?
2. How can Picture My Future help people with disability?
3. Why is Picture My Future important?

What is Picture My Future?

Picture My Future, also known as Image-supported Goal Exploration, uses pictures to help people with disability to explore and express their hopes and dreams for the future. People with intellectual disability and other cognitive and communication impairments can find it difficult to organise and express their thoughts about their lives and the things they want for their future. As a consequence, some people with disability might find it difficult to fully engage with the planning process.

Picture My Future is an approach that can be used to support people with disability as they explore their goals for the future. Through Picture My Future, a person with disability is supported to explore the people, places and things that they like and dislike in their lives, and the things that they would like to have and do in the future, using images and objects that they have chosen to reflect these things.

The Picture My Future approach has been informed by a research technique called 'Photovoice' which was first developed by Wang and Burris (1994), who described it as an enabler in the identification, representation and enhancement of communities using photographs. Research suggests that

'Photovoice' may offer a number of potential advantages for people with disability. The use of pictures offers a way for people with disability to participate in a discussion, as they can use a picture to demonstrate a view or preference. Alternatively, it may be that the picture is a means of communication by itself. Research on the use of 'Photovoice' methodology with people with intellectual disability suggested that the use of photographs to assist people with disability to participate in research was an effective method to assist with data collection. Several studies reported that using images assisted participants with disability to communicate views and served as a prompt to elicit conversation and respond to questions (Dyches et al. 2004; Jurkowski et al. 2009; Murphy and Cameron 2008; Preece and Jordan 2009).

The Picture My Future approach allows people with intellectual disability to take the time to think about the things that are important to them, and to organise their thoughts in a way that makes sense to them. At the end of the process, a person with disability will have a resource that he or she has created that reflects his or her goals for the future. The person can then take this resource with them to their planning meeting, ensuring that his or her voice can be heard.

How can Picture My Future help people with disability?

Picture My Future offers many benefits to people with disability including:

- A way to organise thoughts
- A way to express themselves
- A way to become more empowered and engaged in their planning
- Motivation to explore new avenues and options
- A way to document important things now and in the future

A way to organise thoughts

Picture My Future offers another way for people with disability to organise their thoughts and communicate those thoughts in a different way. Many people with intellectual disability have communication and cognitive impairments that impact on their ability to talk about their hopes and dreams. In addition, abstract concepts can be difficult for people with disability to understand. Using pictures of people and things that are important to them or that they would like for their future can assist people to communicate more effectively with planners. The process of getting people with disability to think about the things that they like and dislike and the things that are important to them, helps them to anchor their thoughts in the present and gives them a context for thinking about the future. Picture My Future encourages people with disability to consider other areas in their lives that they may not normally think about. Choosing pictures that represent the people, places and things that are important to them, then organising those pictures according to their wishes allows people with disability to produce a personalised record of their goals and aspirations.

Sam's Story

Sam has always had a great interest in flowers and regularly looks at pictures of flowers on the internet. Her love of flowers was well known to her family and support staff. Through the Picture My Future process, Sam was able to organise her ideas about what the flower pictures she had collected meant to her. She expressed a desire to paint pictures of flowers and make cards from the photos she had taken for family and friends. She also wanted to learn more about the names of the flowers that she looked at on the internet, and visit a flower farm at least once a year.

A way to express themselves

For people with disability who do not communicate verbally, Picture My Future can be a valuable tool by offering an opportunity to tell their stories through pictures. Several studies have confirmed that using pictures to support communication can be an effective approach to eliciting responses from people with disabilities (Davies and Wilson, 2006; Hewitt, 2003; Lorenz and Chilingerian, 2011, Ottmann and Crosbie 2012). People with disability may be able to communicate their hopes and dreams for the future through pictures where previously their voices might not have been heard. The Picture My Future process may also offer an opportunity for a person with disability to explore difficult or unpleasant things in their life (Booth & Booth, 2003). This may occur through the selection of pictures or through discussion that arises even when pictures have not been selected. Picture My Future offers another option for people with disability to tell their stories.

Belinda's Story

Belinda loves cats and always had them as pets when she lived with her family. However, since moving into supported accommodation, she feels really sad that she no longer has a cat. Belinda uses verbal language in a limited way and the subject of pets has never been raised in her planning meetings.

Through the Picture My Future process, Belinda is able to express her desire to have a cat as a pet.

A way to become more empowered and engaged in their planning

'Photovoice' was originally developed to enable marginalised communities to participate in research. Using pictures to communicate different aspects of their lives allows people with disability control over the picture that they choose and the story that the picture tells. Several studies have reported the successful use of 'Photovoice' as a tool for self-advocacy, with one study reporting that the approach increased participants' communication, expressive language and socialisation (Walton, et al., 2012). Picture My Future empowers people with disability as it gives them control over the pictures they choose and the stories they tell. The resource they create from the Picture My Future approach is a powerful tool that allows them to engage in the planning process to the fullest extent.

Jemma's Story

Jemma loves to travel and goes on interstate trips with friends several times a year. Jemma is frustrated by the lack of wheelchair accessible taxis available at the airport, and the fact that those taxis have to queue with all the non-wheelchair accessible taxis, often making for a long trip home for Jemma.

Through the Picture My Future process, Jemma was able to express her frustration at this situation and advocate for a change.

Motivation to explore new avenues and options

Picture My Future uses pictures that people with disability choose from a variety of sources, including photos that they take themselves. The process offers a number of potential opportunities for people with disability to learn new skills including photography and using new technologies. The Picture My Future process encourages a person with disability to thoroughly explore new options in his or her life as it allows the person time and space to do so.

Alice's Story

Alice had never used a camera before completing the Picture My Future process. She found the process of learning to take photos and uploading them into an online slideshow such an enjoyable process that one of the goals she identified was a desire to do a photography course.

A way to document important things now and in the future

The Picture My Future resource produced at the end of the process is a living document. It reflects a snapshot of a person's life and goals at a point in time, but it is important to remember that those things will change over time. Picture My Future is an approach that can be implemented at regular intervals during the planning cycle and the resource can be updated accordingly. Many people with disability find the process of exploring their goals through pictures to be an enjoyable one, and the production of a pictorial record of their lives to be a valuable experience.

Jason's Story

Jason really enjoyed creating a Picture My Future Resource that documented his goal of enrolling in a TAFE course to learn more about horticulture. One year on, Jason is keen to find a job in a nursery or as a landscape gardener, and he has added new pictures to his resource to reflect this.

Why is Picture My Future important?

As a result of cognitive and communication difficulties experienced by many people with intellectual disability, there is a risk that their opinions, views and preferences may not always be central to the planning process. Picture My Future gives a person with disability time to organise his or her thoughts and to express the things that are most important in a way that makes sense to that person. Producing a Picture My Future resource that can be taken to a planning meeting will offer the planner an insight into the goals and aspirations of the person that may not have been gained through the traditional planning process.

In summary, Picture My Future is an important approach to supporting people with disability as they explore their goals and aspirations for the following reasons:

1. Picture My Future gives the person time: time to think about the things that are important and time to organise those things in a way that allows that person to be heard.
2. Picture My Future allows someone who doesn't know the person well to gain a greater understanding of him or her in a short period of time.
3. Picture My Future enables a person with disability to focus on the things that matter through the process of considering each picture in turn. This reduces distractions as the pictures anchor the conversation in the present and encourage a focus on the future.
4. Picture My Future gives structure to the conversation around goal-exploration.
5. Picture My Future encourages thinking about a broad range of things, rather than just focusing on particular area of interest e.g. cars.

References

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