

PERSON DIRECTED FRAMEWORK – THE PROTECTIVE USE OF FORCE

Being Person Driven suggests that as helpers we need to take our direction from the person, following their lead, accepting the person's goals at face values *without* making any moralistic judgments and reformulation (listening to understand not to change) along doctrinal lines are the most effective or helpful things one can do to establish and nurture the helping relationship. Listening intently and letting the person direct how we can best help, honors the fact that all people are, no matter what their disability or differences might be, full human beings. What is not always clear to people is that being Person Driven doesn't mean we are minimizing or forgetting about safety, health, risks, the clinical issues, the disability or the challenging strategies. Being Person Driven also means supporting the person not to harm themselves or others.

As helpers, we are constantly struggling to find and maintain the balance between everyone's rights and everyone's responsibilities. Looking for safe and respectful ways to share power with someone who at times engages in dangerous and problematic behaviors is not easy and requires introspection and humility i.e., a willingness to learn. Not being able to find that balance with someone you are trying to help is at the core of many problems experienced by people receiving supports and services.

When we are Person Driven, as with the Nonviolent Communication model, we differentiate clearly between the protective use of force and the punitive use of force. The protective use of force is necessary to protect life and protect individual rights. It can be used when there is no time for such dialogue or collaboration i.e., imminent danger or unwillingness to communicate.

The intention with the protective use of force is to prevent injury and injustice. The assumption beyond the protective use of force is that people act as they do because of ignorance, lack of awareness, not knowing any other way, delusions etc. Education and/or treatment is what is needed. We only use protective force temporarily, when and for only as long as it is absolutely necessary to ensure safety. Once the danger has passed, we want to refocus on joining with the person perspective, reconnecting empathically and sharing power towards solutions where everyone's needs are being met.

The intention with the punitive use of force is to cause an individual to suffer for their perceived misdeeds. The assumption beyond the punitive use of force is that people behave as they do because they are "bad or evil." In that context, repenting and correction is what is needed. Even though the punitive use of force might make you believe that your needs are being met in the moment or that this is what the person needs in order to learn and change, it also and always creates resentment, hostility and resistance.

In the Person Driven context, we never want the punitive use of force. We are constantly striving to create conditions where the person we are trying to help is clearly choosing to do something rather than having (being coerced or forced to do something) to do something. There are two key questions Marshall Rosenberg suggests we want to ask and consider to help us clarify our intentions when helping. The first one we usually can answer easily, the second one is critical but much harder for us to figure out:

1. What would we like the other person to do differently?
2. What do we want the reason for the person to do things differently? Do we want them to do something because they have to OR because they want to?

It is critical for everyone involved in the process to understand that being Person Driven is our basic helping stance. Partnering systematically with the person should always be our primary focus. That is always true unless there is an unforeseen or emergency situation where allowing the person to direct what we do and how we respond at that moment would result in serious injuries or death. In a situation where there is an immediate, urgent and absolute need to protect the person and/or others, we always need to use judgment, act responsibly and ensure the safety of everyone.

There is another situation where we may have to consider using protective force. Sometimes we may be involved with someone and a team who are still struggling to figure out what the person's needs are. Because of the strategies the person has been using (to either try to get their needs met or communicate that their needs are not being met) have been so problematic and dangerous to themselves or others that a restrictive procedures plan can be put in place. Until we can create conditions where we can eliminate the preference for the person to engage in these dangerous and problematic strategies, we will be in a situation where we will need to use the protective use of force to ensure everyone's safety.

Being Person Driven first helps us partner with the person to create conditions where we can eliminate the preference for the person to engage in dangerous problematic strategies. Second, it provides us with a way to collaborate with the person in designing and implementing strategies that will ensure everyone's safety while we are striving to create conditions where the person can get their needs met in healthier and safer ways.