

# **All Hands In: A Strength-Based Approach to Activities**



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# Objectives

At the end of the presentation, the attendee will be able to:

- Articulate several ways to uncover participant strengths.
- Identify ways to create opportunities for participants to feel empowered and engage them on a deeper level

How often do our participants hear about their impairments from our team?



What effect might this have on the way they perceive themselves?



“If we ask people to look for deficits, they will usually find them, and their view of the situation will be colored by this. If we ask people to look for successes, they will usually find them, & their view of the situation will be colored by this.”

- Kral



“In **social work** practice, the **strengths perspective** has emerged as an alternative to the more common pathology-oriented **approach** to helping clients. Instead of focusing on clients' problems and deficits, the **strengths perspective** centers on clients' abilities, talents, and resources.”

- Johnny S. Kim  
Graduate School of Social Work,  
University of Denver

# Demographics

- Younger, more able-bodied older adults
- Behavioral health issues
- Demonstrate feelings of hopelessness upon intake assessment.





# With Their Hands

- Woonsocket location open June 2016.
- August 2016: 2 activity programs run by one participant.
- September 2017: 10 ppts running 8 regularly occurring programs with minimal staff involvement.
- Occasional one-time activities run by other participants as well.
- 5 participants engaged independently in self-directed tasks :
  - Crafting decorations for holidays
  - Making centerpieces for tables
  - Assembling furniture
  - Wrapping silverware



# HANDS PROJECT





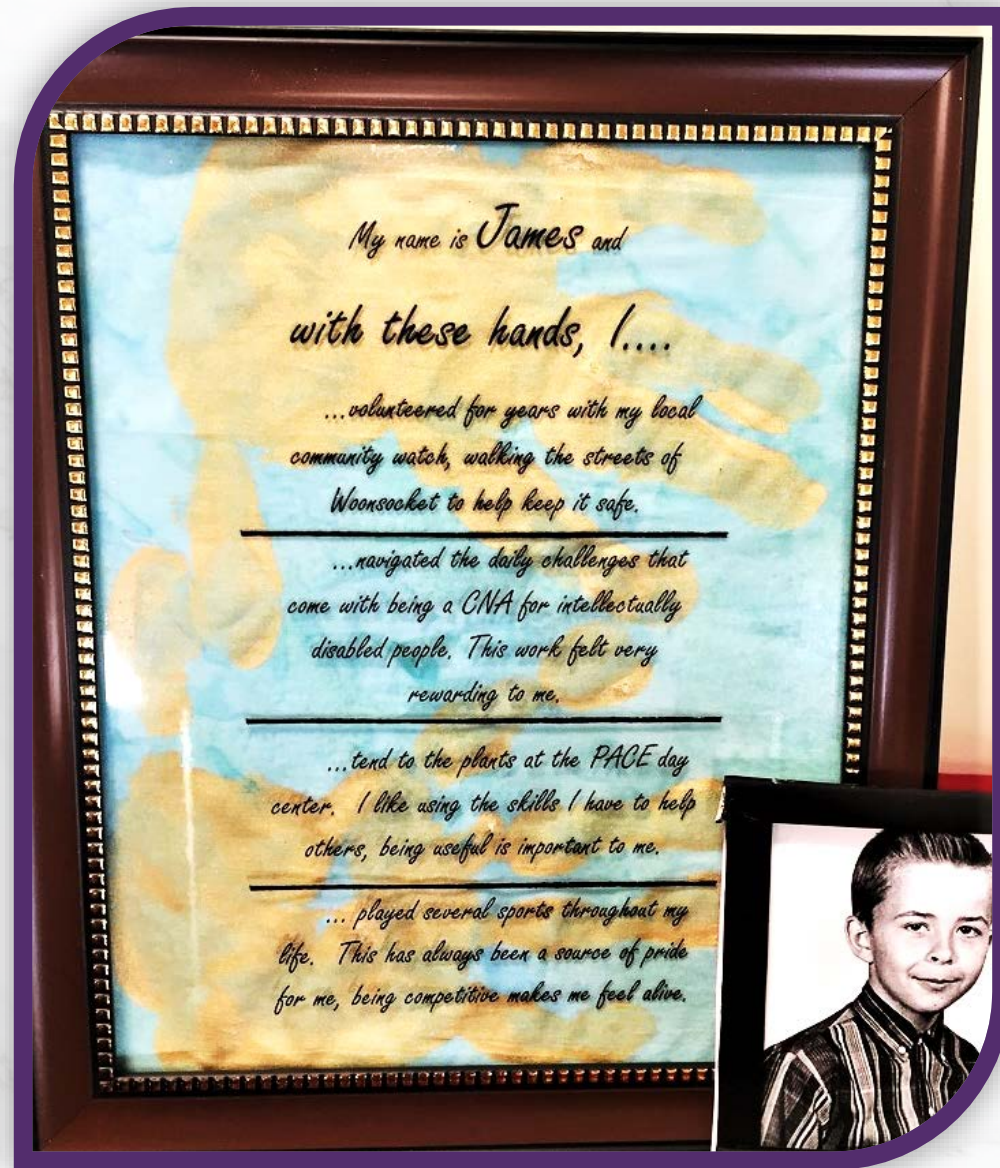
# My name is James and with these hands, I....

...volunteered for years with my local community watch, walking the streets of Woonsocket to help keep it safe.

...navigated the daily challenges that come with being a CNA for intellectually disabled people. This work felt very rewarding to me.

...tend to the plants at the PACE day center. I like using the skills I have to help others, being useful is important to me.

... played several sports throughout my life. This has always been a source of pride for me, being competitive makes me feel alive.



# James

- Running theme throughout his life of service to others.
- Enjoyed working with people.
- Can no longer volunteer for the neighborhood watch due to his chronic health issues but he still has the knowledge, patience, and inherent desire to share his talents with others.



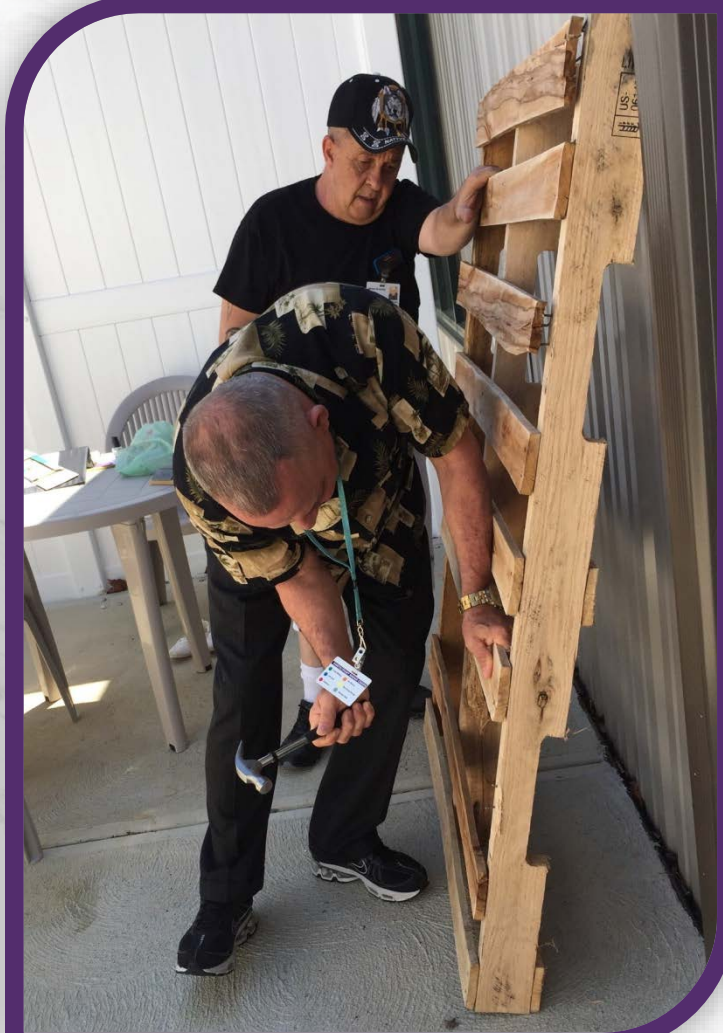




**How can we help our participants utilize their remaining strengths to create a deeper level of meaningful engagement in our program?**



# Meaningful Engagement Created By:

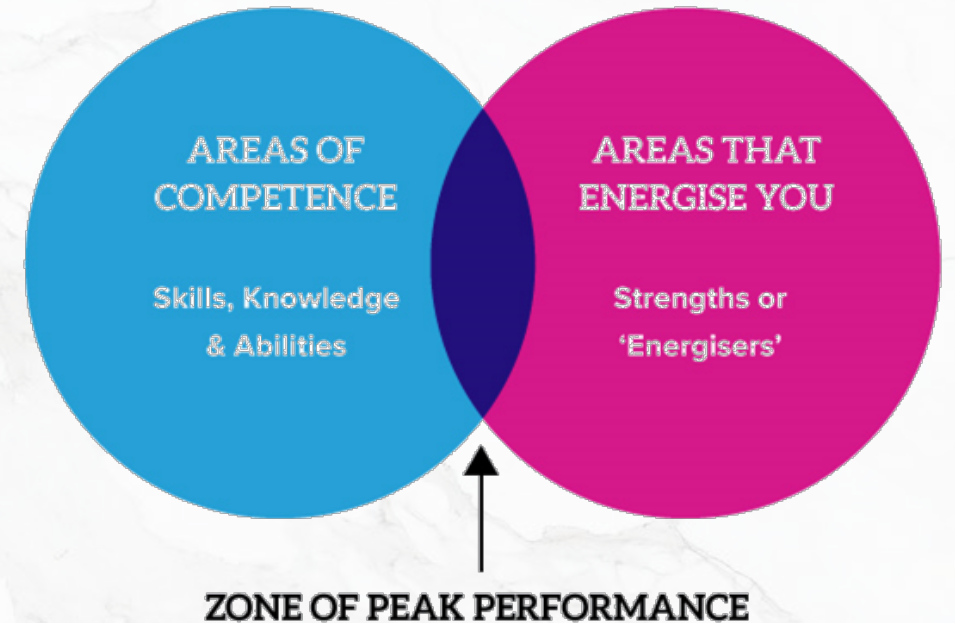


- Asking questions
- Observing participants
- Setting participants up for success
- Program maintenance
- Training for direct care staff

# Asking Questions

## Motivational Interview Techniques

- What do you love doing?
- What things come easy to you?
- What do you look forward to doing?
- What do others say you do well?
- What tasks make you feel good?



The initial assessment should result in a basic understanding of the participant's specific interests; interests used to create plan for meaningful engagement.



# Observation



- Look for moments when the participant is more engaged, energized, and enjoying what they're doing.
- Body language may become more animated, the tone of voice and pace of speech might be uplifted.
- They may linger on a certain subject for longer than others



# Set up for Success

- **Supplies:** Is everything needed to do the activity readily available?
- **Planning:** Does your participant have a understanding of how they will be running the activity?
- **Adapt:** Does this participant need any specific adaptations in order to run the group well?
- **Be available:** Make sure there is someone available during activities to help problem solve should an issue arise.



# Program Maintenance

- Check-in meetings: discuss how the program is going, challenges, triumphs, etc.
- Encourage participation in weekly Calendar Planning Committee
- Public acknowledgement
- Compliments/gratitude

# Giving a Quality Compliment

We have the power to nourish our participants' self-esteem.

- Give the compliment, freely without the expectation of anything back.
- Be specific. Avoid complimenting things that were out of the person's control (i.e., appearance). Focus on things such as character, actions and choices.
- Give compliments often but don't schedule them out! The best compliments are unexpected.
- Consider a thank you card or note. Something for them to keep and remind them of your appreciation.



# Staff Training

Educate your staff

- Strengths based approach
- Giving a quality compliment
- Benefits to participants & center



Our garden is watered, weeded and cared for by three participants daily. Any problems are brought to Activity Coordinator to assist.





Our men's group is completely participant led. They each hold each other accountable for attending and have their own system for score-keeping.





Participants pick up & drop off “works in progress” that are kept in a hanging shoe organizer. One participant runs a weekly yarn crafts group. She invites new people to join, sets them up with everything they need & is able to instruct them on how to complete their projects.



# Rita

- Challenged by group activities; preference for self-directed actions.
- Talented with embroidery & a crochet hook.
- Using observation & information gathering, staff began a yarn crafts group
- Rita was encouraged to help other participants if they struggled with crafts
- Use her expertise to explain how to help a beginner complete a project



# Rita

- After a few weeks, approached about independently running yarn craft.
- Set up with the supplies & skills she needed to be an effective group leader.
- Receives consistent encouragement and reassurance
- Now engaged & connected to community in meaningful way





Taking the time to encourage high level meaningful engagement helps create a strong sense of community.

## Elements of “community”



- McMillan and Chavis (1986)

1. **Membership** – belonging
2. **Influence** – reciprocal; individuals have an impact of the well-being of the group and the group has an impact on the individual
3. **Fulfillment of needs** – shared values
4. **Shared emotional connection** - the importance and strength of the relationships within the group

Look at how those align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Strong Sense of Community....

- Leads to increased desire to share knowledge
- Higher quantity & quality interactions
- Improved behaviors
- Increased attendance rates
- Overall happier population
- Increased sense of ease
- Attracts new members
- Referral gain
- High levels of retention





## All Hands In... to complete Wings project for Older Americans Month 2017

- All day center participants engaged in construction
- Different for each person.
- Variations on paint, cutting techniques and assembly
- Meaningful, individualized contributions



# References



## TED talks:

- Dan Pink: The Puzzle of Motivation
- Dan Ariely: What makes us feel good about our work?

**Please feel free to contact:  
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With any questions you may have.**