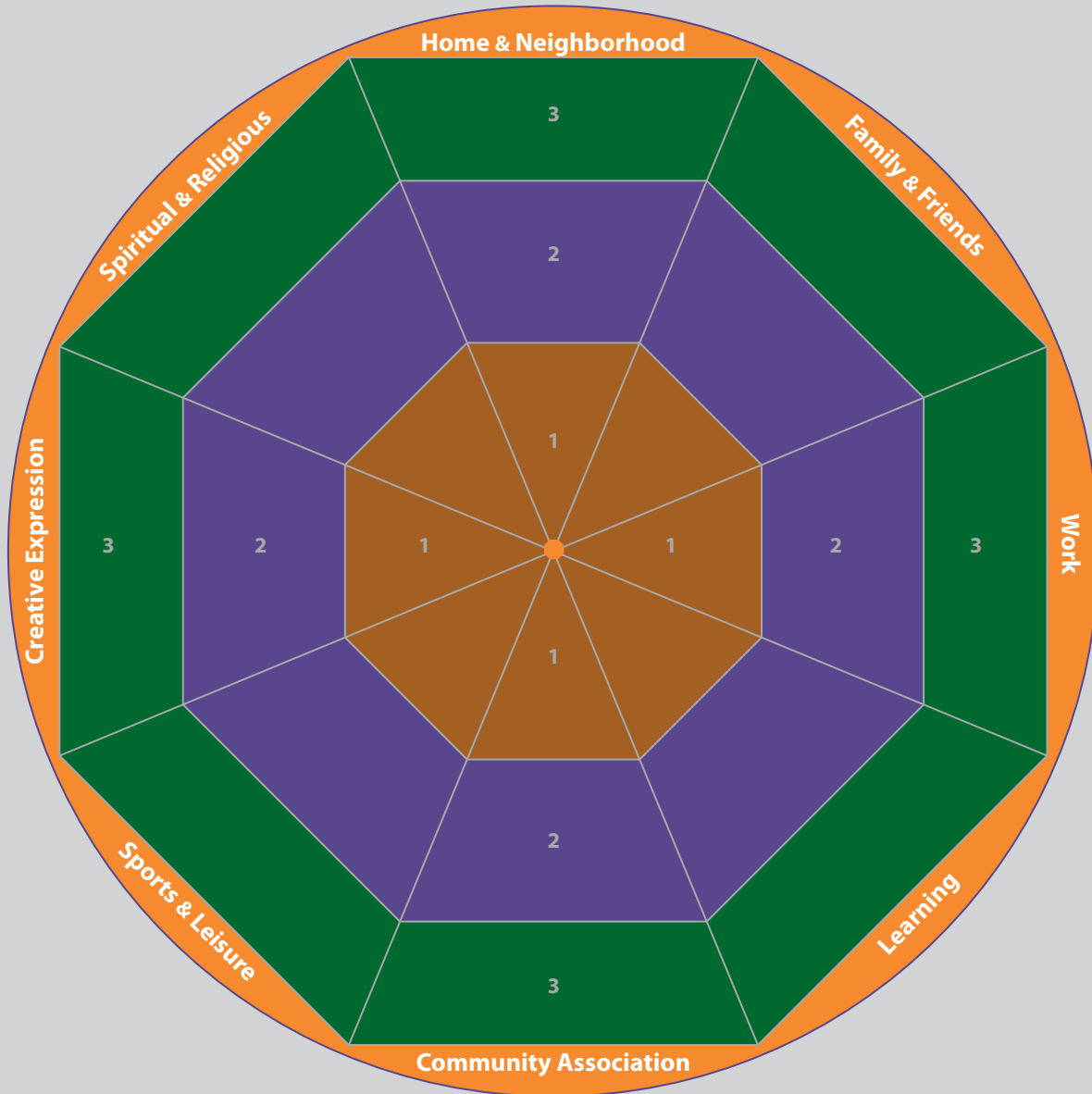


SSR: Supporting Social Roles

A Second Bottom Line for Services to People with Developmental Disabilities



John O'Brien

Test Version 0.1



Thanks

To Marcie Brost, Peter Leidy, the DD staffs of Outagamie, Shawano, and Winnebago Counties in Wisconsin, and the people and families who tested *Reflecting on Social Roles*, an earlier approach to profiling valued social roles.

July 2010



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Valued social roles offer the opportunity for development & contribution

Home & Neighborhood	Active in the work & activities of the household, perhaps with assistance or through partial participation strategies. Recognized in the neighborhood as belonging & participates in neighborhood life in ways that make sense to the person and the person's neighbors.
Family & Friends	Maintains contact with other family members, participates in family events and rituals & calls on and is called on by other family members for emotional & practical support. Initiates & responds to invitations to share time & to exchange with friends.
Work	Performs a task in exchange for a wage or, as an owner, invests resources in the expectation of a return. Usually expects that the worker will interact productively & regularly with other people: e.g. customers, co-workers, supervisors, employees.
Learning	Studies or practices for a purpose. Study may be formal or informal and the purpose may be personal pleasure, exploration, social contact, or advancement toward some goal that is meaningful to the person such as a qualification, certificate, degree, or license.
Community Association	Recognized by other members as one of them and actively contributes in some way to the association's activities. The association may be formal or informal.
Sports & Leisure	Participates in athletic, fitness or other leisure activities or may be a worker who makes events possible, or an active member of a fan group.
Creative Expression	Creates art, music, drama, dance, crafts, writing, media; does or discusses creative work with others; participates in making cultural events happen.
Spiritual & Religious	Recognized as a member & participates in service, study, or social activities related to their membership.

A second bottom line

Service organizations that survive pay attention to the financial bottom line. Services that make a difference in the life of their community keep an eye on a second bottom line that lets them track what the organization supports people to accomplish. SSR offers one way for an organization to identify what it is accomplishing by describing the social roles played by the people it supports.

SSR's values proposition is simple. Over time, effective organizations will support a growing proportion of people in valued roles in a growing number of settings outside the boundaries of disability services. Roles are valued when they attract respect, facilitate contribution, engage and expand capacities, and hold the possibility of belonging.

SSR is an appreciative process focused on organizational learning (Cooperider, Whitney, Stavos, & Fry, 2007). It builds on what is already working. A number of people served by an organization agree to an interview that profiles their roles in eight sectors of life. Inquiry into the ways the organization promotes and supports engagement in valued social roles forms the foundation for designing improvements that will benefit the people the organization serves.

Work
Learning
Community association
Sports & leisure
Home & neighborhood
Family & friends
Creative expression
Spiritual & religious

What are social roles?

Mother. Police officer. Boyfriend. Teacher. Coach. Social roles name the parts people play in the social settings and relationships that make up their lives.

Social roles identify the different ways that people relate to one another, belong to each other, count on each other, and are responsible to each other. They point to the ways a person can contribute and make a difference in other people's lives. Some social roles describe complex and long lasting relationships, like father and daughter; others are more circumscribed, like restaurant patron and server.

Social roles locate people in social space, structure the ways a person who makes a particular contribution usually shows up and acts and signal what others can expect from them in that role. Some roles have distinctive signs: the chef's hat or the police officer's uniform. Social roles offer cues about how to treat another person and the status they are likely to have in other's eyes. People expect the doctor to help and she expects them to do their best to cooperate.

People learn to play social roles by watching others play them and from the spoken orientation and the unspoken cues they get from others and from the setting. Children in preschool learn the rules and practices that structure their roles from the way the teacher organizes their activities and the ways the other kids act.

Social roles are not straightjackets. There are many ways to play a role because each social setting has its own qualities and each person brings a particular personality and capacity to their role. Different schools have

different traditions and teachers have their own identities, but almost every teacher can be recognized in their role, and someone who acts outside what usually goes with the role of teacher draws attention –and often generates some discomfort– just because they don't fit typical expectations.

The expectations attached to social roles are powerful. A shy person often becomes more outgoing when he takes the role of greeter for his congregation or best man for his brother's wedding. Aggressive people often quiet down when a police officer arrives and asserts her authority. Many fire fighters say that they do courageous things because it's expected on their job.

A famous and disturbing social psychology experiment shows how powerful social roles are. In 1971, Phillip Zimbardo divided a group of university student volunteers into guards and prisoners and assigned the students who played the role of guards to run a pretend jail in a university building filled only with the students assigned to play the role of prisoners. The social role of guard strongly influenced the way the guards saw themselves and their prisoners and the way they treated their prisoners. The social role of prisoner strongly influenced the way the prisoners saw themselves and their guards and how they acted and felt. Very soon the guards began to treat the prisoners badly and the prisoners began to show signs of stress. Things got so bad for both the students playing the role of prisoners and the students playing the role of guards that the experiment was called off. Zimbardo (2007) thinks that the roles and related expectations in a social setting can be powerful enough to lead ordinary people to do evil things.*

Devalued social roles that reinforce expectations of incompetence, separation with "their own kind", & need for extraordinary control & restriction:

Menace

Eternal child

Sick

Object of charity

Human service client

"Special" person

History shows that people with developmental disabilities can get trapped in a lifetime of the experience that Zimbardo's role playing prisoners lived for two weeks. To guide efforts to overcome the horrible institutional conditions of the mid-20th century, Wolf Wolfensberger (1975) used the idea of social roles to describe the way that good people could support settings that insulted people's human dignity and limited their development. The process is simple. Those the person counts on have a perception of difference that casts the person into a devalued social role. This role shapes and is reinforced by the way that people are grouped, the physical settings that people are placed into, the activities that people are given access to, the power that people have, the terms in which people are understood and explained, and the images and symbols that surround them.

An example: An adult who is seen and treated as if his developmental disability were a sickness that made him incompetent is controlled by a hierarchy of medical personnel and their assessments, prescriptions, and practices. When this regimen fails to cure, pessimism can take over and powerful people may doubt that he can have a life of quality or even that he is worth what it costs to keep him alive. This puts people with the most obvious impairments at risk of being seen and treated in an even more devaluing way, as less than human. When everyone that the person counts on relates to him

*Zimbardo (2007) has researched ways that people can resist these bad influences. For more see *The Lucifer Effect* website: www.lucifereffect.com/

in the social role of an incurably diseased person, his world can shrink to fit inside this single dead-end role.

Social roles not only provide a key to understanding how bad things happen to people with developmental disabilities, they also open a way to increase the chances that good things will happen to a person (Wolfensberger, 1998): see and treat people as developing, contributing citizens. Because people with developmental disabilities are vulnerable to being stuck in devaluing or limiting social roles, as if nothing better were possible, a good sign that the work of pushing back discrimination and exclusion is succeeding is the active presence of people with developmental disabilities in more and more different valued social roles in more and more different community settings. Supports, technology, and treatments can improve people's life chances, and a good sign that these investments are working is people showing up in positive roles in community places.

Why choose social roles as the second bottom line?

Assisting people at risk of the discrimination and exclusion into valued social roles isn't easy, but it's desirable and possible. Research shows that performance of a variety of social roles in community settings correlates strongly with measures of other valued outcomes (especially measures related to choice, developmental growth, health, and safety), but that it is among the most difficult outcomes for service organizations to attain (Gardner and Carran, 2005; Flynn and Aubury, 1999; Lemay, 2005). Research and experience also show that a service organization can assist people to make a meaningful increase in the number and variety of valued social roles that they play if its staff act with purpose and its assistance is individualized (Gardner and Carran, 2005; Klees, 2008 O'Brien & Mount, 2005; Ramsey, 2005).

There are other good candidates for a second bottom line, and SSR can supplement them. Some are simpler, like asking people or their families about their level of satisfaction with the services they receive. Some measure and summarize many aspects of a service like PASSING (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 2007) or The Personal Outcome Measures (CQL, 2005). Some assess multiple dimensions of quality of life (Shalock, Braddock & Verdugo, 2002).

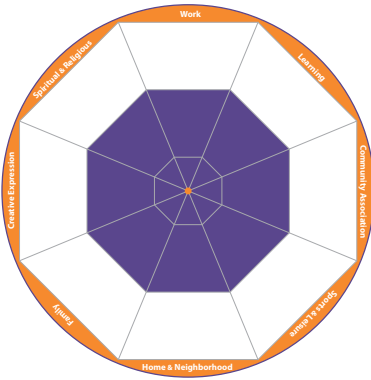
SSR sets a higher bar than a satisfaction survey because people can be satisfied even when a service could do far more to assist them to overcome social exclusion. SSR doesn't pretend to be a research instrument: it's an organizational learning exercise. It is less complex than a multi-dimensional assessment because it asks for a judgement about one aspect of good quality that is demanding to attain and sustain: the social roles a person plays.*

Some people see the degree to which an organization does what the person or family tells them as the most important measure of quality. Respect for people's choices is fundamental to good support, but SSR values tracking one of the consequences of the choices made by those an organization serves by asking about the social roles that engage them. The purpose is not to second guess thoughtful choices but to discover how an organization

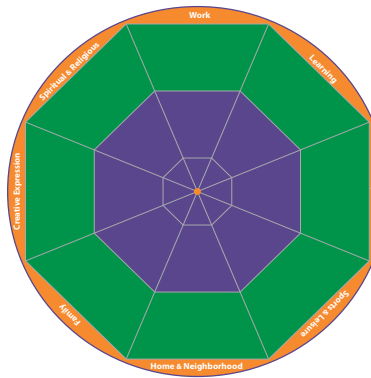
Over time, effective organizations will support a growing proportion of people in valued roles in a growing number of community settings.

* PASSING and The Personal Outcome measures both provide very helpful ways to figure out what may have to change in order to move people into active engagement with valued social roles.

Valued social roles in disability service settings



Can be a springboard to valued social roles in community settings



Most people find some sectors of life more engaging than others, so most profiles will be irregular. A person may be a keen athlete with little interest in investing her time in other community associations or a person whose work & leisure time is consumed with his art.

assists people with developmental disabilities to confront and overcome the discriminatory patterns that keep them at the margins of society.

Beyond low engagement roles like shopper, diner, or spectator, some people are satisfied in a smaller social world with other service clients, staff, and perhaps family. They may see little reason to risk engaging more actively on a wider community stage. It is possible and desirable to play valued social roles in disability service settings: a sheltered workshop employee, a client representative on a day center committee, a Very Special Artist or a Special Olympian can grow and contribute through those roles when they are well developed and competently supported. Many service organizations have multiplied available roles within their boundaries, to the benefit of all involved. The intent is not to deprive people of valued roles in disability service settings. It is to use these experiences as a springboard to roles that can build more competent communities.

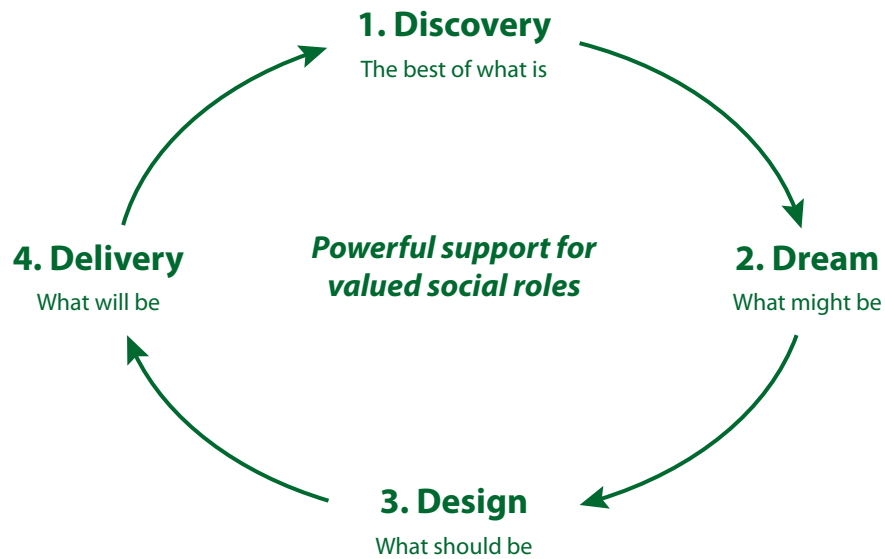
The more diverse communities outside the human service world offer an even greater range of opportunities to connect, develop and make a difference. And evolving approaches to support, such as customized employment, bring valued roles in community settings within the reach of more and more people. Progress toward a more just and inclusive community is marked by the numbers of people with developmental disabilities who bridge the gap created by discrimination and play valued parts that involve positive interactions with other citizens.

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How to use SSR

SSR follows the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D cycle on the topic of powerful support for valued social roles.*



0. Preparation

- Create a team that represents a cross-section of the organization.
- Enlist the support of people the organization serves who are willing to participate in the discovery step by doing the SSR Profile. Invite people who are most engaged in a variety of social roles and look for people who require intensive support as well as people who use less support.
- Assign pairs of team members to complete the SSR Profile with each person and those who are involved with his or her support. The goal is to learn as much as possible about the organization's best support, so including a person's friends and allies, including support staff, in creating the profile is important.
- Pairs practice by completing the profile with each other, figure out how they will explain the process to the people they are interviewing, and decide on what each will do in the interview.
- Find out if people will need any particular accommodation or assistance to do their profile and arrange whatever is necessary for each person.

1. Discovery

Purpose: to discover the organization's best current practices in supporting people in a variety of valued social roles.

- Prepare by forming a clear intention to learn from this interview about what is best in support for valued social roles.
- Orient those you are interviewing.
- Work through the guide from page 12 to page 26 of this booklet. Review each sector with people to insure accuracy.

*For a more detailed description of this approach, see Diana Whitney & Amanda Trosten-Bloom (2010). *The power of appreciative inquiry: A practical guide to positive change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

- Rate the level of engagement in each of the eight sectors and shade in the profile on page 29.
- Review the interview and add any lessons that come up for you.
- Repeat with another person if possible.

2. Dream

Purpose: to vividly imagine a future in which everyone the organization supports has access to the support necessary to engage in valued social roles that encourage their development and contributions.

- Gather the team and any others who can help, including interested people interviewed.
- Each pair tells their story of discovery, focusing on the lessons from the best of what is.
- The group constructs its dream of a future when everyone the organization serves can choose powerful support for engagement in contributing social roles. If the group is large, small groups produce their dreams in story and image and the whole group identifies and expresses powerful images and themes.

3. Design

Purpose: to thoughtfully specify changes that will much better align the organization with the best of what is and the potential expressed in the dream.

- Consider the possibilities for re-designing each dimension of the organization, including how supports are organized (program or model definitions); how staff are assigned and trained; how staff understand and relate to the community outside the human service world; systems of accountability; routines; the mental models expressed in the organization's relationship to people and their friends and families, etc.
- Imagine and describe the structures, systems, and practices of an organization able to offer powerful support to valued roles.

4. Delivery

Purpose: to make specific commitments that will increase the organizations' capacity to powerfully support people in valued social roles.

- Identify issues that require a significant shift in strategic direction or major shifts in investments and ways to move these issues on the organization's agenda.
- Define specific actions that are within the scope of influence of those involved.
- Make commitments to intentions, actions, and time-lines.

Home & Neighborhood

Around the house: Tenant or home-owner • Host, cook, house cleaner, handy-person, gardener, decorator, collector, hobbyist, etc.

In the neighborhood: Good neighbor, regular customer, shopper, neighborhood watch member, participant in neighborhood clean-up or other improvement projects, etc.

A person with valued roles at home plays an active part in the work of the household, perhaps with assistance or through partial participation strategies.

A person with valued roles in the neighborhood is recognized and recognizes others as belonging and participates in neighborhood life in ways that make sense to the person and the person's neighbors.

Name the most socially interactive role the person fills in this sector. Describe...

... **what** the person does in this role

... **where** the person enacts this role

... **with whom** the person interacts

... when & how frequently the person plays this role.

What strengths & capacities does this role allow the person to use & develop?

Role

1

The person does not actively perform any valued social roles in this sector.

2

The person performs at least one valued social role in this sector, in settings or groupings that are identified with developmental disability services & their participants.

3

The person performs at least one valued social role in this sector in places & ways that promote positive recognition by and satisfying interaction with other citizens outside developmental disability services.

Supports

Describe any **accommodations or supports** that the person requires to fill this role. Identify those that are provided by staff.

Identify what it might take to make this role even more satisfying & integrative.

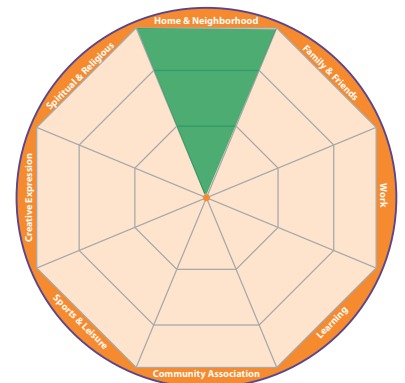
What lessons can we learn from thinking about...

... how the person's interest in this role was identified

... how opportunities to perform this role were created

... how accommodations & supports for this role have developed

Lessons



Family & Friends

Wife, husband, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandson, granddaughter, uncle, aunt, cousin • Girlfriend, boyfriend, fiancé, significant other • Friend, soulmate, kindred spirit, pal, confidant, buddy

A person with valued family roles is typically expected and expects to maintain contact with other family members, to participate when possible in family events and rituals, and to call on and be called on by other family members for emotional and practical support.

A friend typically expects to initiate and respond to invitations to share time and to exchange with the other person.

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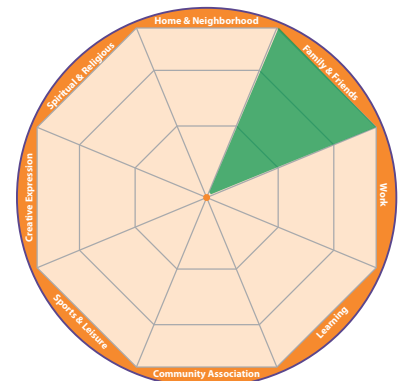
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Lessons



Work

Work roles are usually named by a job title: for example, receptionist, produce clerk, baker, nurse's aide, machine operator
• Co-worker • Union member • Owner • Intern • Trainee, apprentice • Trainer • Supervisor • Employer

A person with a valued work role performs a task in exchange for a wage or, as an owner, invests his or her resources in the expectation of a return. Most work roles also include the opportunity and the expectation that the worker will interact productively with other people: e.g. customers, co-workers, supervisors.

Name the most socially interactive role the person fills in this sector. Describe...

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... **where** the person enacts this role

... **with whom** the person interacts

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What strengths & capacities does this role allow the person to use & develop?

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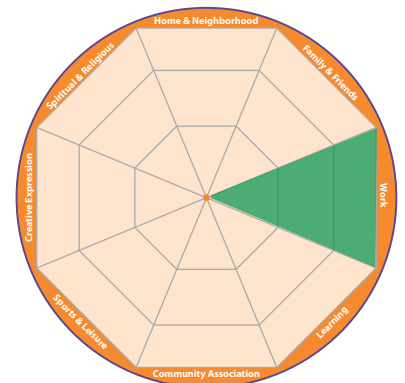
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... how accommodations & supports for this role have developed

Lessons



Learning

Student, learner • Teacher, instructor, trainer, mentor, tutor, guide • Researcher • Enthusiast, independent scholar

A person with a valued learning role engages in study or teaching for a purpose. Study can be formal or informal and the purpose may be personal interest, research & exploration, skill development, social contact, or advancement toward some goal that is meaningful or useful to the person such as a qualification, certificate, degree, or license. Teaching can be formal or informal, paid or for other rewards.

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... **where** the person enacts this role

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... when & how frequently the person plays this role.

What strengths & capacities does this role allow the person to use & develop?

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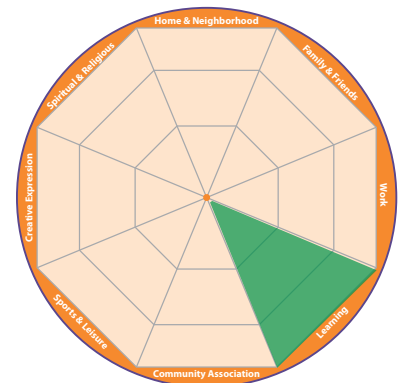
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Lessons



Community Association

Member, office holder, committee or task group member • Political activist, party member, public office holder • Volunteer

Community associations may be formal or informal. People join their efforts to create them for service; for mutual help and support; for political purposes; for the promotion of a cause; for the protection of members' interests; to celebrate a person, a people, a place, or thing important to members; or for enjoyment. A person with valued roles in a community association will be recognized by other members as one of them and will usually contribute in some active way to the association.

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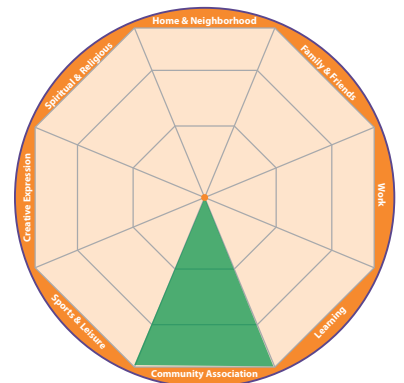
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Sports & Leisure

Athlete, player, competitor, champion • Sport or leisure activity specific roles: halfback, pitcher, striker, center • Coach, manager, trainer, referee, scorekeeper • Cheerleader • Fan club member or organizer, booster • Gym member, exercise partner, instructor.

People may play valued roles as participants in athletic or fitness activities, as workers who make events possible, and as active fans.

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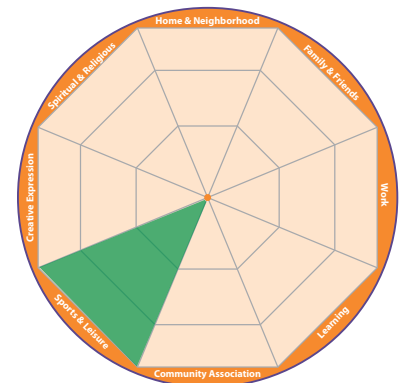
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Creative Expression

Artist, actor, chorus member, musician, singer, composer, dancer, weaver, quilter, poet, writer • Coach, teacher, director, choreographer, conductor, stage crew member • Producer, promoter, agent, publicist • Patron, subscriber, discussion group member, collector, connoisseur, critic

People may play valued roles as creators, as workers who make arts events possible, and as publicly active supporters.

Name the most socially interactive role the person fills in this sector. Describe...

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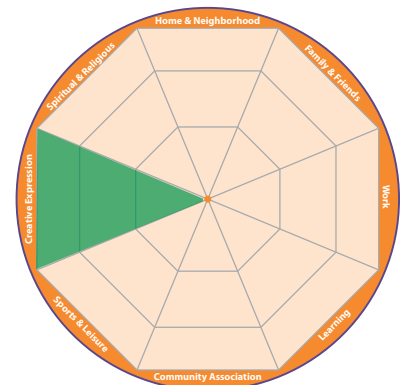
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Lessons



Spiritual & Religious

Member, parishioner • Deacon, elder, trustee, prayer leader, bar (bas) mitzvah, confirmand, usher, choir member, reader, server, greeter, religious education student, religious education teacher, committee member, small group member.

A person with valued spiritual and religious roles is recognized as a member and often participates in some additional service, study, or social activities related to their membership..

Name the most socially interactive role the person fills in this sector. Describe...

... **what** the person does in this role

... **where** the person enacts this role

... **with whom** the person interacts

... when & how frequently the person plays this role.

What strengths & capacities does this role allow the person to use & develop?

Role

1

The person does not actively perform any valued social roles in this sector.

2

The person performs at least one valued social role in this sector, in settings or groupings that are identified with developmental disability services & their participants.

3

The person performs at least one valued social role in this sector in places & ways that promote positive recognition by and satisfying interaction with other citizens outside developmental disability services.

Supports

Describe any **accommodations or supports** that the person requires to fill this role. Identify those that are provided by staff.

Identify what it might take to make this role even more satisfying & integrative.

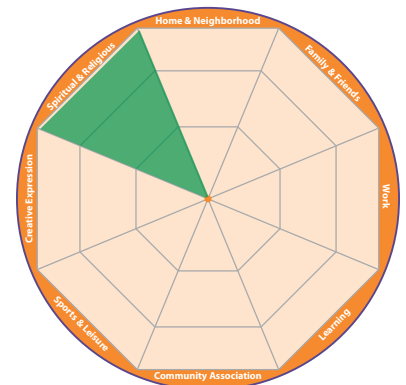
What lessons can we learn from thinking about...

... how the person's interest in this role was identified

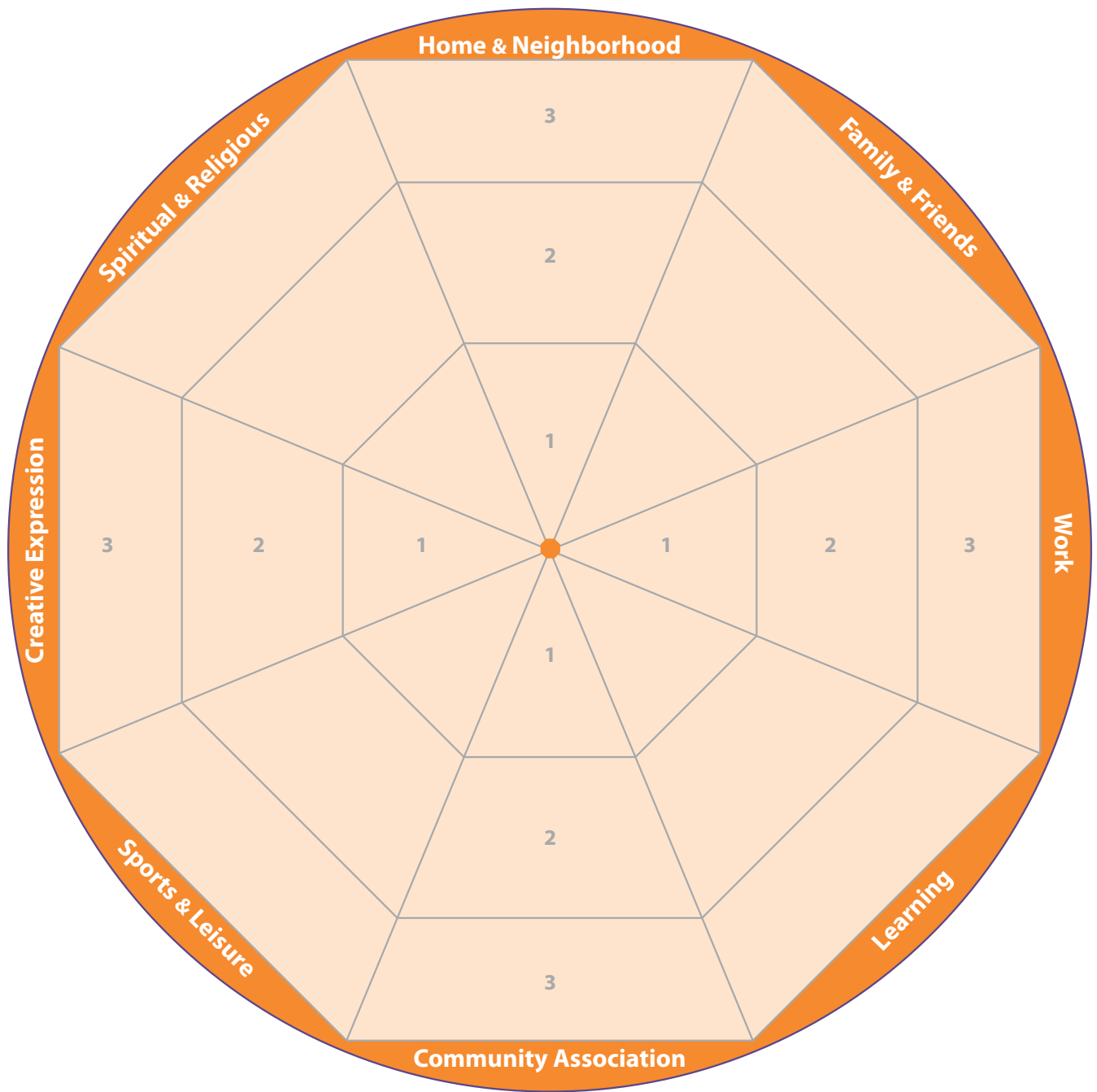
... how opportunities to perform this role were created

... how accommodations & supports for this role have developed

Lessons



		1	2	3
Home & Neighborhood	Active in the work & activities of the household, perhaps with assistance or through partial participation strategies. Recognized in the neighborhood as belonging & participates in neighborhood life in ways that make sense to the person and the person's neighbors.			
Family & Friends	Maintains contact with other family members, participates in family events and rituals, calls on and is called on by other family members for emotional & practical support. Initiates & responds to invitations to share time & to exchange with friends.			
Work	Performs a task in exchange for a wage or, as an owner, invests resources in the expectation of a return. Usually expects that the worker will interact productively & regularly with other people: e.g. customers, co-workers, supervisors, employees.			
Learning	Studies or practices for a purpose. Study may be formal or informal and the purpose may be personal pleasure, exploration, social contact, or advancement toward some goal that is meaningful to the person such as a qualification, certificate, degree, or license.			
Community Association	Recognized by other members as one of them and actively contributes in some way to the association's activities. The association may be formal or informal.			
Sports & Leisure	Participates in athletic, fitness or other leisure activities or may be a worker who makes events possible, or an active member of a fan group.			
Creative Expression	Creates art, music, drama, dance, crafts, writing, media; does or discusses creative work with others; participates in making cultural events happen.			
Spiritual & Religious	Recognized as a member & participates in service, study, or social activities related to their membership.			



1	2	3
<p>The person does not actively perform any valued social roles in this sector of community life.</p>	<p>The person performs at least one valued social role in this sector of community life, in private or in settings or groupings that are identified with developmental disability services & their participants.</p>	<p>The person performs at least one valued social role in this sector of community life in places and ways that promote positive recognition by and satisfying interaction with other citizens outside developmental disability services.</p>

