

# Engaging in Social Work with a Focus on “Ability to Observe”

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## Outline of presentation

- Implementation of practical training at a facility for people with relatively severe intellectual disabilities (a daycare facility).
- Lack of student experience ⇒ Concerns/confusion and pressure
- In the limited timeframe of 180 hours (23 days), what abilities is it best to develop and enhance?
- Discussion based on practical training instruction emphasizing the “ability to observe,” actual practical training, and evaluation from the viewpoint of the proprietor of the training location.

## Overview of training location

- 14 users, who have only intellectual disabilities (including autism). Of these, 10 people have difficulty with verbal communication.
- 26 users (in wheelchairs) with both intellectual and physical disabilities. Of these, 18 people have difficulty with verbal communication. The combined total is 40 people who attend the facility.
- Users are aged from 18 to 51 with an average age of 35.
- All users live at home with their families. The facility provides a bus for travel to and from home.

3

## Details of activities at the training facility

- During the pandemic activities like eating out and going shopping were all cancelled.
- Activities were mostly outdoors, including walks and drives.
- Efforts to maintain physical condition, such as stretching and training using other motor exercises and walkers.
- Creative activities such as pottery and weaving.
- Seasonal events like a Tanabata event, and Christmas party.

4

## Impressions of trainees

- Cheerful and lively greetings.
- Active communication with users and with facility staff.
- Notice even the smallest of things.
- Able to ask the staff about the things they notice.
- When asking questions they are also able to talk about what they think themselves.

5

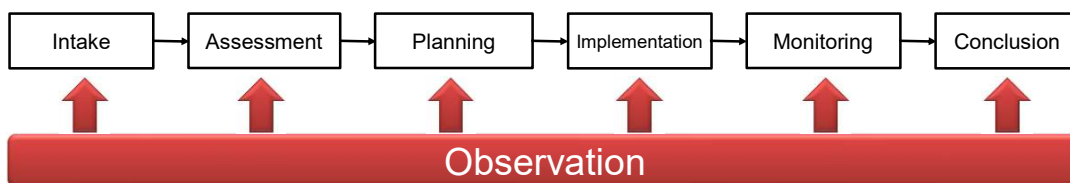
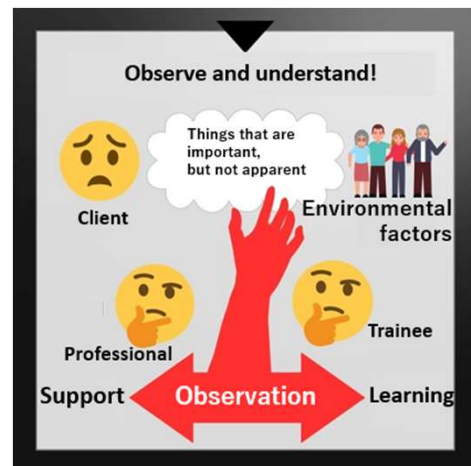
## Points to be learned at this training location

- Competencies required of social workers in assisted living facilities  
= **Points for trainees to learn**
  - Non-verbal communication
  - Understanding users, including their families and background to daily life
  - Assessment, planning and intervention for future living and assistance
  - Community relations and support for clients' participation in society
- The most important points that need to be learned are “difficult to spot” for students.
- In addition, it's necessary to learning through practical experience, not on the basis of one-way teaching alone.

6

## What “observe” means

- “Observe”  
= “Inferring, judging, and constructing ideas from situations”

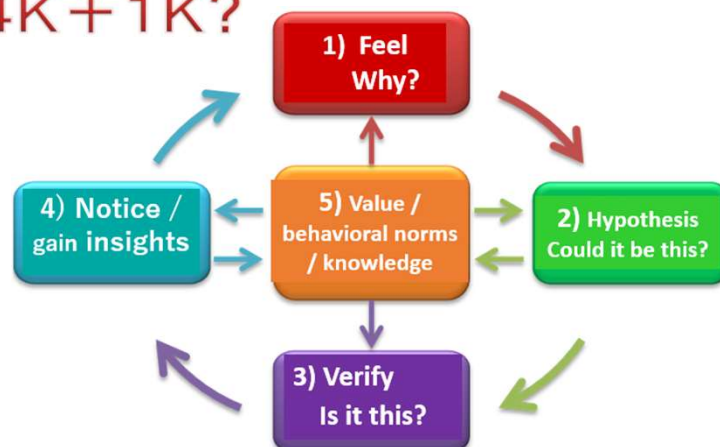


7

## Visualizing “observation” !

Important thoughts, background, intentions, values

What is 4K + 1K?



8

## Practical training: Day 1 (“Observation” by trainees ⇒ Examples of learning)

Theme	Impact of environmental changes for users
Episode	Drinking time. Drinking tea while blindfolded.
Question	Why obscure your vision?
Hypothesis	Won't it make you uneasy?
Verify	<b>【Question to staff】</b> Hiding visual information helps users to concentrate. Plus, I found out that some people's muscles tense up at the slightest change, meaning that the drink could get into their windpipe, instead of being drunk.
Notice	<b>A slight change in environment or their daily physical condition could put some people in danger.</b> This is why the content of support varies greatly. We will continue to pay attention to how users are doing.
Value / Code of conduct / Knowledge	
Memo	Orthodox learning typical of trainees.

9

## Practical training: Day 19 (“Observation” by trainees ⇒ Examples of learning)

Theme	Importance of creating opportunities for community exchange
Episode	Plan to go outdoors. Users are also excited.
Question	What is the significance of going outdoors?
Hypothesis	It will lead to enjoyment and experience for users.
Verify	<b>【Staff members' comments】</b> It provides an opportunity for people in the community to get to know about the facility. If something happens to a user, it's reassuring to know that the community know about the facility in advance.
Notice	Users live in the community. That is why it is necessary for <b>people in the community to know about the users</b> , and to have a <b>connection where we can ask each other for help</b> when something happens.
Value / Code of conduct / Knowledge	
Memo	We were able to gain a perspective on community involvement as well as a perspective on the users.

10

## Practical training: Day 21 (“Observation” by trainees ⇒ Examples of learning)

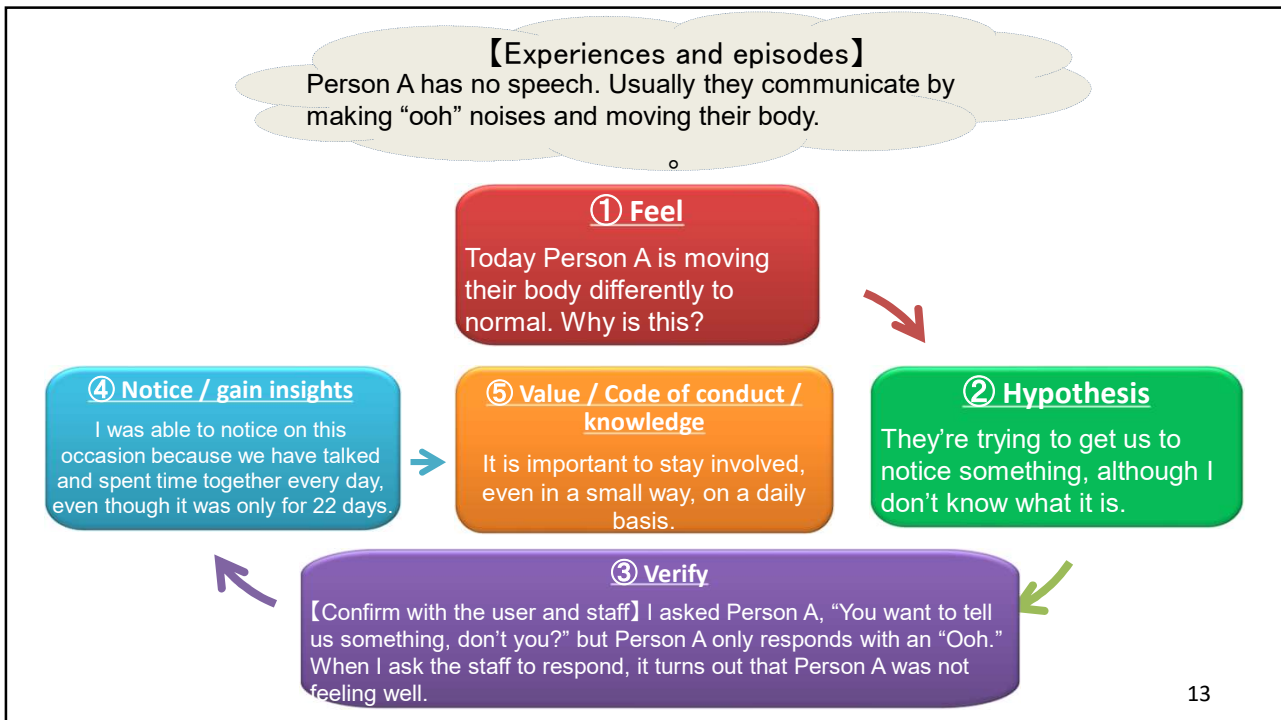
Theme	Importance of trial and error-based efforts
Episode	Implementation of individual support plans
Question	Person A has difficulty closing their mouth. What can you do to help them practice closing their mouth?
Hypothesis	It could help them to practice by having them decorate a bag and breathe into it with a straw.
Verify	<b>[Test the hypothesis]</b> The person seemed to have fun doing the breathing exercises. I honestly don't know how effective it is, but I had a sense of having gained something just by trying it out.
Notice	Even small things can turn into a process of <b>practice⇒correction⇒continuation=support.</b>
Value / Code of conduct / Knowledge	It's important to share the experience with the user and work on it together.
Memo	Practical verification

11

## Practical training: Day 22 (“Observation” by trainees ⇒ Examples of learning)

Theme	Importance of continuing involvement with users
Episode	Person A has no speech. They communicate by making “ooh” noises and moving their body.
Question	Today Person A is moving their body differently to normal. Why is this?
Hypothesis	They're trying to get us to notice something, although I don't know what it is.
Verify	<b>[Confirm with the user and staff]</b> I asked Person A, “You want to tell us something, don't you?” but Person A only responds with an “Ooh.” When I ask the staff to respond, it turns out that Person A was not feeling well.
Notice	I was able to notice on this occasion because we have talked and spent time together every day, even though it was only for 22 days. <b>It is important to stay involved, even in a small way, on a daily basis.</b>
Value / Code of conduct / Knowledge	
Memo	Learning made possible thanks to knowledge gained over time.

12



## What trainees have learned

- Through this practical training, they realized how difficult it is to communicate and build relationships with users.
- Trainees learned that there are many things that can be noticed through continuous involvement with users. They also felt for themselves that support is for the benefit of the users and that it is something that is created together with users.
- Trainees learned that supporters work and interact with users on a daily basis by cherishing the thoughts that come from diverse perspectives and seeing and appreciating those perspectives.
- Further leveraging the experiences they gained on this training, trainees want to deepen learning about social work in the future.

## Evaluation provided by the training location

### 【Evaluation of trainees】

- People capable of questioning even small events or happenings.
- People capable of thinking for themselves and then seeking to confirm those thoughts.
- People who can find new insights through accumulating experience.

### 【Training that focuses on ability to observe】

- Many trainees even come up with their own questions. Trainees who approach staff with their own hypotheses are also a great stimulus to staff.
- Trainees can consciously verbalize values that are important for welfare. It is easy for instructors to understand the depth of student learning.

15

## Conclusion

- Keeping the “4K + 1K” framework in mind, trainees experience and think about things for themselves, and through discussions with training supervisors and teachers, they confirm the validity of their “observations.” This then becomes a learning experience.
- “Ability to observe” is a basic skill that is also required of professionals. It is a key competency for all social workers.

16