



THE 12 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR  
**Promoting Person-Centered Care**



Person-centered care is all about honoring an individual's unique needs, values, and preferences.

If you work in a care profession, you likely use person-centered approaches every day. This guide will help you discover even more ways to help every person in your care thrive.

As you read these tips, think about:

- What does "person-centered" mean to me?
- What does "strength-based" mean to me?
- What do these approaches mean to each person in my care?
- How do I practice these values in my day-to-day work?

And share your thoughts, challenges, and successes—in team meetings, during training sessions, at lunch and learns, online—anytime you're inspired to teach and learn from others!

## TIP 1

### Help the person in your care manage their own care.

When someone needs your help, make sure they have input. Empower them to be and feel involved with your team. Put the person in the center, with all other players (family, clinicians, caregivers, nurses, teachers, administrators, therapists, etc.) comprising a customized circle of support.

Show the person that their individual needs, interests, passions, likes, and dreams are always the core focus of every effort. Let them know that to the best of your ability, you will minimize what they don't like and maximize what they do like.



## TIP 2

### Ask the person about their preferences.

Offer choices and let the person know you aim to meet their needs. For example, if they don't like to shower in the morning, can you allow them to choose the time of day that feels best for them? If you can offer personalized options and flexibility, you can often avoid unnecessary altercations.

#### → Quick Links

##### **For Dementia Care Professionals**

Our [Life Story Questionnaire \[PDF\]](#) is great for learning about a client's preferences.

##### **For All Professionals**

Our [Trauma-Informed Care Resources Guide \[PDF\]](#) has a handy De-Escalation Preferences Form.





## TIP 3

### Get to know the person.

- » What's their background?
- » What are their interests?
- » What are they good at?
- » What makes them feel supported?
- » What makes them feel happy?
- » What makes them feel scared?

To find this out, talk to the person. Greet them by name in a friendly tone. Use supportive body language. Be calm and rational, and treat them like they're calm and rational—even if they're being anything but. Build their trust. Also talk to others: Ask your colleagues, other professionals, the person's family, etc.

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## TIP 4

### Look for the causes of behaviors.

Behavior is a form of communication. If a person in your care exhibits difficult behavior, seek to understand the function of the behavior. What you might view as a frustrating behavior may actually be a coping mechanism attempt. If your response is understanding and individualized, you can help the person replace problem behavior with positive, productive behavior.

*Common functions of behavior include access, avoidance, and meeting a sensory or emotional need.*



Recognize what the person CAN do with your belief in them and your support of their abilities.

## TIP 5

### Do tasks *with* the person.

Minimize doing things *for* them. Maximize their abilities. Focus on success, de-emphasize errors, and provide support where needed.

To do that, be strength-based. Working hand in hand with person-centered care is being abilities-focused and strength-based. Instead of focusing on deficits and disabilities, look for the person's potential. Help them feel purpose, skill, accomplishment, and self-respect. This will also improve how they feel and act toward you!

## TIP 6

### Offer comfort.

With your person-centered responses, you can make something better and be a part of the solution. Ways to offer comfort and reassurance include giving the person a:

- » Pat on the back
- » Hand on the shoulder
- » Wink
- » Smile
- » Nod
- » High five
- » Thumbs-up
- » Verbal comment
- » Smiley-face sticker
- » Token or badge

Be present with the person in a difficult moment.

## TIP 7

### Celebrate.

Honor things the person likes. Sing along with them to their favorite song. And let them know when they're doing a good job. As they achieve benchmarks—even small steps toward their ultimate goals—celebrate. Be prepared for small steps backward or unanticipated barriers, but work through them and keep moving forward.



People are more likely to stick with something when they feel that they're supported and rewarded for their hard work.

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## TIP 8

### Avoid physical intervention.

If the person you're working with sometimes poses a physical danger to self or others, there may be times when you need to physically intervene. However, in many situations, there are ways to minimize the need for any physical intervention—and to reduce the risk of injury to you and the person.

The very best way to avoid going hands-on is to avoid the need to restrain in the first place. To do that:

- » Be aware of changes in the person's behavior. These can be warning signs of anxiety.
- » Use prevention skills. Focus on proxemics and verbal de-escalation.
- » Learn how to set limits effectively.
- » Get training in how to assess risk.
- » Avoid being drawn into power struggles.
- » Choose the least restrictive option possible in every situation.





## TIP 9

### Debrief.

Be sure to debrief after any crisis. This will help you find patterns and triggers—and prevent the situation from reoccurring. It will also help you help the person foster resilience and develop effective coping skills.

## TIP 10

### Join hands.

A person-centered, strength-based approach is about self-determination, treating people with respect and dignity, and working together to enhance the person's quality of life. Throughout your organization, collaborate as a team to adopt a consistent approach. Work to gain buy-in, not only from all staff departments and all organizational leaders, but from clients and their families as well. This allows everyone to take an active role in promoting their own personal safety, thereby enhancing the safety of others.



When you model person-centered care, you create a cultural shift in how staff and clients interact.

## TIP 11

### Start immediately.

In many environments, you can get your person-centered approach off the ground before the person even comes into your care: During the discovery process, prior to admission, during intake, etc. Being person-centered at every step of a person's journey furthers their inclusion and engagement in their education, care, treatment, recovery, family, community, peer groups, growth, etc.

## TIP 12

### Lead the way.

Model these strategies for your colleagues. Help staff shift from a deficit-based mindset to a strength-based mindset. Show them the results you achieve when you focus on a person's abilities. Teach them how instead of looking at a person as "damaged," they can view the person as a survivor.



#### Quick Links

Here are more resources to help:

- [A Tool to Assess Risk Behaviors](#)
- [How to Avoid Power Struggles](#)
- [How to Set Limits](#) [PDF]
- [The Ultimate CPI Resource Pack](#) [PDF]



# Thank You!

We hope you found these tips helpful. Please feel free to share this resource with a friend or colleague.



Have questions? We can help!

Give us a call at [888.426.2184](tel:888.426.2184) or email [info@crisisprevention.com](mailto:info@crisisprevention.com)

## About CPI

The Crisis Prevention Institute trains professionals in person-centered, strength-based strategies to prevent and manage difficult behavior nonviolently. The strategies in this guide offer a sneak peek into our training programs. Over 10 million professionals trust CPI to help them make a lasting positive impact on the people in their care.

## Connect With CPI

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