

In the Community got determination?

Self-determination is defined as the ability of individuals to make the choices that allow them to exercise control over their own lives, to achieve the goals to which they aspire and to acquire the skills and resources necessary to participate fully and meaningfully in society.

From September 15-17, 2009, Imagine Enterprises working with the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, has planned for a statewide conference on self-determination principles, practices and effective implementation strategies. This conference is for self-advocates, families, professional, advocates, agencies & organizations.

The first two days feature intensive exploration of issues from national experts, federal and state staff, self-advocates and family members. The third day of the conference, September 17th, is dedicated to employment and small business solutions to generate

income and expand opportunities for self-determination. The Self-Determination for Texas project advances the principles of self-determination in the lives of Texans with disabilities.

For more information on the conference and self-determination go to:

selfdetermined.org
nconsd.org
sabeusa.org

Coping with Caregiving continued...

help prevent burnout down the line.

The other thing to understand is your family member and their disability. Ask yourself these questions:

How will this goal affect him/her behaviorally?

How will it affect them physically?

What about emotionally?

This is important – and not always easy. You must be objective about the disability and its affects and limitations. For example, your husband had a traumatic brain injury and now becomes easily enraged. It is hard to remember when he is screaming that this is not your husband, this is his disability.

Distinguishing between intentional and unintentional behavior will help you keep your expectations for him reasonable and realistic. If your goal for your husband is to have him get more exercise, but children yelling set him off, then you probably

shouldn't take him for a walk in a park with a playground.

Being aware of all aspects of his disability will help you avoid stressful situations and make your goals more attainable. Know your loved one and know their disability.

Perhaps the hardest part of all of this is addressing what you expect of yourself. "If only I could do more, then things would be better." Ever said or thought that? This may be difficult to digest, but that type of thinking is unhealthy and will only cause you more stress. Self-expectation is a balancing act between what you want and what you realistically can do. Expecting too much will leave you with constant worry or guilt. Expecting too little will leave you without progress and hope. A healthy and realistic expectation of you as a caregiver will create satisfaction and reduce stress.

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Do you love your attendant? Nominate him or her for Attendant of the Year! Email your nomination (including why you think they should win) to caretx@dsswtx.org or mail them to:

DSSW Attendant of the Quarter
6243 IH-10 West, suite 375
San Antonio, TX 78201

Morgan's Wonderland

where everyone can play

CARE, TX April 1, 2009

This is just plain wonderful. The Gordan Hartman Foundation, a non-profit in San Antonio, will open the world's largest special needs park this fall. It is a 21.5-acre oasis of fun designed especially for individuals with disabilities. One of the greatest parts about this venture is that it will be a place where the whole family can play and relax together. Morgan's Wonderland has the potential to bring about community integration on a grand scale by appealing to everyone, regardless of disability.

There will be so much to explore at Morgan's Wonderland and every effort was made to make it safe and fun. All visitors will be assigned special wristbands that will identify their family or group. These bands provide state of the art security through RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology. The park will have several monitors throughout it, so if a family or group member becomes separated – any other member of their group can scan their own bracelet and see where everyone is. These bracelets guard against the possibility of someone becoming lost, leaving with a stranger, or leaving the park alone.

Once you are in the park you are greeted by the 31' sculpture of hands releasing a butterfly to remind you of the park's theme – the freedom to soar. And soar you will, maybe first you will soar to the Sensory Mini Village. It's a small town with a theater, country vet, hardware shop, and grocery store. Not only does it inspire imaginative play but also offers interactive sensory stimulation through the use



The park covers 21.5 acres

of colors, lights, sounds, and textures. After that you might feel the need for speed, so you can head over to the accessible go-cart racetrack and burn rubber for a few laps. Then it is naturally time to cool down in the water play area or relax on a train ride around the 8-acre lake. Of course we have only explored about an eighth of the park so far. There are too many activities and amenities to cover, so here is a list:

- Large restrooms*
- Train Rides*
- Gymnasium*
- Ball Field*
- Water Play Area*
- Music Garden*
- Sensory Mini Village*
- 2,000 square foot indoor small event & play area*
- Walk and Roll path around lake*
- Swings (several types including wheelchair swings)*
- Over 25 Picnic Areas & Pavillions*
- 2 First Aid Stations & Feeding Room*
- 3 Accessible Playscapes*
- Amphitheater*
- Catch-and-Release Fishing*
- Special Event Center*
- Go-Cart Race Track*
- Sand Spiral*
- Garden Sanctuary*

Did we mention it is free admission? Yep, this is just plain wonderful. For more information on Morgan's Wonderland and the Gordan Hartman Foundation visit these websites:

soarsa.org
hartmansa.org



Pictures of the beautiful park showing a few of the many activities.

Please email questions, comments, or concerns to: caretx@dsswtx.org

Coping with Caregiving continued...

CARE, TX April 1, 2009

But how do you do it? Here are a few tips:

1) Remember that you have control over what you expect from yourself as a caregiver. By setting realistic goals and expecting to meet those goals you can create a pattern of success.

2) Don't degrade the little tasks and goals that you successfully complete, be proud of yourself because those little things add up over time. Putting them down as "not enough" will only make you feel disappointment and disappointment in yourself will not help you become a better caregiver. Disappointment will not help you "do more."

Goals and expectations. They can be dangerous or they can be fulfilling. It all depends on how realistic you are about them. Giving yourself and your loved one attainable goals and healthy expectations is an integral part to coping with the stresses of caregiving and avoiding caregiver burnout.

In our next article we discuss the second solution to caregiver stress, "Establishing Your Limits."



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