

WE NEED TO TALK!

CHANGING OUR LANGUAGE TO
ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE

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The Learning and Working During the Transition to Adulthood
Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (Transitions RTC)

Acknowledgements

The Learning & Working Center at Transitions RTC is a national effort that aims to improve the supports for youth and young adults, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions to successfully complete their schooling and training and move into rewarding work lives. We are located at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, Department of Psychiatry, Systems & Psychosocial Advances Research Center.

Visit us at:

<http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsRTC>

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What is the Transitions RTC?

The Transitions RTC is a national center that aims to:

- Improve supports for the successful completion of schooling and movement into rewarding work lives among young people, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions (SMHC)

How?

1. Conduct cutting-edge rigorous research that tests or informs interventions
2. Develop and translate knowledge to multiple stakeholders
3. Infuse Participatory Action Research (PAR)/Youth Voice into all activities



Overview

“We Need to Talk: Changing Our Language to Engage Young People”

is a workshop that will provide advice about providing an inviting space for young adults in how we write our publications, create our websites, manage our social media, and lead youth advisory councils.

Outline

Changing the Way We Do Things:
Our Experience

Is Plain Language Enough?

Tips for Reaching Young Adults



CHANGING THE WAY WE DO THINGS



We Could've Done Anything

The Ask

A rehabilitation research and training center focusing on research and interventions for young adults with psychiatric disabilities on the path to successful employment lives

What We Did

The Ask



A Participatory Action Research (PAR) Component



Participatory Action Research (PAR)

PAR at the Transitions RTC is the process in which researchers and young adults (the population of interest) collaborate on research projects to help make research more relevant and to improve mental health services. Young adults are actively involved in all phases of the research from defining the research question to the dissemination process.



Successes & Benefits

Research Team

- More authentic/rich interviews
- Engaging youth participants
- Stronger connection to media/technology
- Strengthened relationship with local mental health community

PAR Staff

- PAR staff transitioning into professional roles
- Increased self-efficacy/self-advocacy skills
- Strengthened youth voice



Youth Councils



In Massachusetts

- Statewide Youth Advisory Council
- Child Behavior Health Initiative

Nationally

- NAMI National Young Adult Advisory Group
- Board for the Alternatives Consumer Conference
- The RTC's Youth Advisory Board

And more....



IS PLAIN LANGUAGE ENOUGH?



What is Plain Language?

- **The Plain Writing Act of 2010** was signed into law on October 13, 2010 requiring federal agencies to use "clear Government communication that the public can understand and use."
- Regulations must be "accessible, consistent, written in plain language, and easy to understand."
- Plain Language
 - Is Clear and Concise
 - Avoids Jargon
 - Is recommended to be at a 6th grade reading level



<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/pllaw/index.cfm>

http://ktdrr.org/training/webcasts/webcast33/webcast_051116.docx

What is Plain Language?

Plain Language Writing Checklist - Detailed

SMIT (Single Most Important Thing):

BLAM (Bottom Line Actionable Message):



http://ktdr.org/training/webcasts/webcast33/Plain_Language_Checklist_Feb2016_Learning_Institute_SickKids.pdf


Achieving Plain Language

Measure Text Readability

Go Premium for unlimited use of our text scoring tools!

Text To Score

 Text  Save  Load  History  Help

 Measure Readability


I notice you are reading this sentence right now. There are few implications as to what that could mean. Maybe you are interested in what I wrote. Maybe you want to know what kind language gets this grade level. Who knows?

Visit

<https://readable.io/text/>

Readability Rating

RATING: **A**

 You may have too many instances of passive voice in your text.

Readability Grade Levels

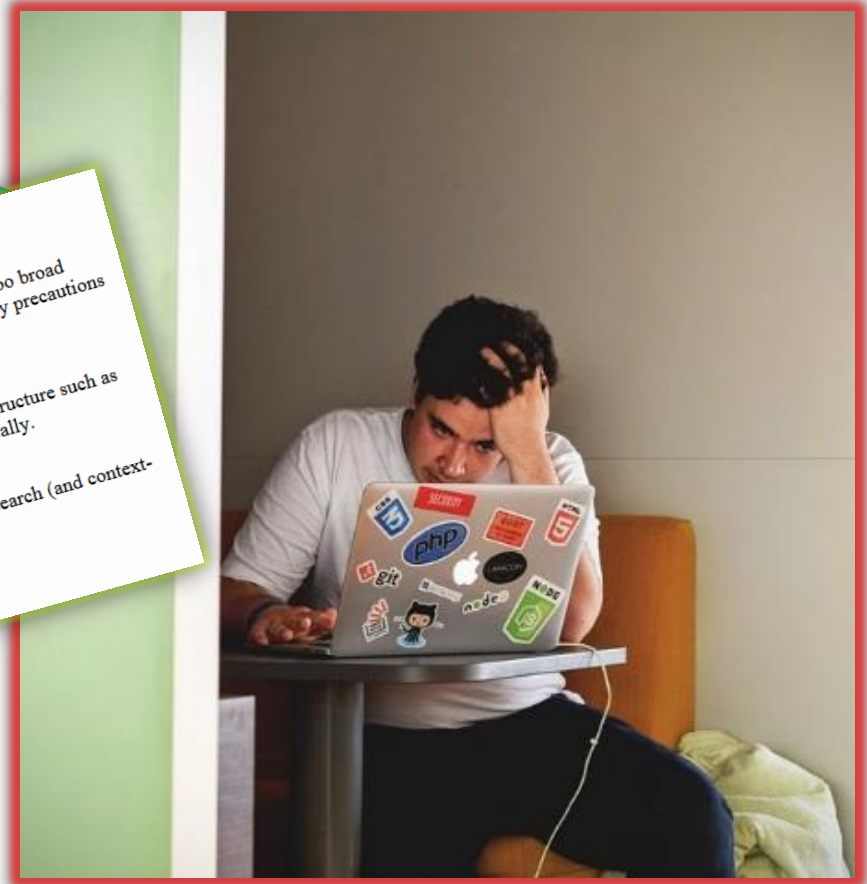
Readability Formula	Grade
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	3.1
Gunning Fog Index	5.2
Coleman-Liau Index	9.6
SMOG Index	6.9
Automated Readability Index	3
Average Grade Level	5.6

Hitting Any Snags?

What happened?!

Knowledge Translation Principles

- ❑ **Written for the reader**
 - Know the range of skills and expertise among your audience. If the range is too broad create different materials for different audiences. Use universal health literacy precautions when writing.
- ❑ **Organized to serve the reader's needs**
 - Organize your content in the order the reader needs it. Choose a logical structure such as putting the most important material first, or arranging things chronologically.
- ❑ **Uses accurate and evidence-based content**
 - Content reflects current best-practices and is well-supported by the research (and context-specific) evidence.
- ❑ **Is actionable**
 - Readers are told exactly what to do and why to do it.



Are we being friendly to young adults?

How's our tone? Do they agree with our language?

TIPS FOR REACHING YOUNG ADULTS



For Anything

- **Engage Them**

- Have you talked with young adults face-to-face?
- Have you studied how they talk?
- Do you ask for their feedback?
- Do you listen and take their advice to heart?

It's all about relationship! No relationship, no authority!



Recommendations from the YAB

- **When communicating to this generation:**
 - Tone is important
 - Convey in professional manner
 - Listen more/take feedback seriously
 - **Cultural Competence**
 - Understand the tools of today
 - How do they affect people today?
 - Is the way mental health viewed any different?



FOR TIP SHEETS



Example #1



Do I Tell My Boss?: Disclosing My Mental Health Condition at Work

The Word on Work, Tip Sheet 7

Transitions RTC

2012

What Should I Say About My Mental Health Condition at Work?

Every young adult with a mental health condition will face the decision of whether or not to tell others about, or “disclose” their condition at work. Typically the reason for disclosure is to ask for an accommodation in order to perform better at your present job. An accommodation is modifying a job, the job site, or the way things are done in order to enable a qualified individual with a disability to have an equal opportunity for employment.¹ The following information can provide some guidance in helping you make an informed decision.



Some Reasons to Disclose Having a Mental Health Condition on the Job:	Some Reasons Not to Disclose Having a Mental Health Condition on the Job:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To obtain protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)¹ Required in order to request job accommodations² To serve as a role model and educate others Reduces stigma Relieves the stress some may feel about “hiding” a disability Makes employers better able to respond to sudden symptoms or hospitalizations Disclosure to a supervisor is kept confidential by law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no need for accommodations Hiring or promotion chances may be negatively affected due to stigma To protect your privacy Fear of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative employer or coworker reactions to you or your work People not respecting your privacy and confidentiality (others in community/ workplace will be told) Being held to a different standard, i.e., less will be expected of you

If I Want to Disclose, How Should I Do It?

- Let your employer know you have a medical disability. Steer clear of medical terms and a specific diagnosis. Instead provide examples of how your disability affects you i.e., “I have a medical condition that affects my concentration.”
- You will need to provide information about the existence and extent of your disability or diagnosis, how your condition may limit your functioning in the job, and the accommodations that address these barriers. YOU DO NOT need to disclose your entire medical record, progress notes or tests, etc.
- Focus on your abilities, not disabilities.
- Prepare and practice what you will say ahead of time.
- List your strengths and qualifications related to this job. You can also give examples of how your experiences with a disability will positively affect your work performance.
- Share what issues you may face in the workplace due to your diagnosis and try to word it in a positive way. For example, “My disability requires me to take frequent breaks in order for me to stay productive.”

• Lessons Learned

- Having a few PAR Staff *does not fully represent* Youth Voice
- Young Adults are very *curious* about what you are going to write about
- Their edits and questions will *expand and enhance* your work

Example #2



Has it ever felt like your money, or the lack of it, is telling you what you can or can not do? If you take control of your money and spending, you can find ways to do more with what you have. This sheet provides tips on how this can be done.

Top Money Tips

Tell your money what to do by following these tips.

- ✓ **Track your money** for one or two weeks to see where your money is going – then develop a basic budget to set goals on spending. You can use the one on this tip sheet.
- ✓ **Monitor your checking account** and make sure you understand your bank's policy on overdrafts. Fines for overdrafts can be costly. You may need a savings account to prevent overdraft fees. You can also ask the bank to deny charges that overdraws your account.
- ✓ **Fees and interest on credit cards** can add up. To avoid this, pay as much of your bills as you can each month.
- ✓ **Emergency funds** can save you if you have a car breakdown, unexpected medical expenses, a traffic ticket, etc.
- ✓ **Start Saving**, 5 to 10% per paycheck is a great start.
- ✓ **Eating out**, though convenient, is VERY expensive – cooking at home can save you a lot of money.
- ✓ **Smoking, drinking and drugs** add up and are expensive. Make sure to include them in your budget.
- ✓ **Borrowing money** from friends or family can add stress to your relationships. If you have to borrow money you may want to put yourself on a payment plan to pay it back.
- ✓ **Lending money** can also add stress to your relationships. Family and friends have financial stress too, so they may not be able to pay it back.

It All Adds Up

One meal out may not seem like much, but if you look at costs over time you see how much it takes from your wallet.

SPENDING

	Average Cost per Item	Average Cost per Week	Average Cost per Month
Energy drinks	\$2.50	7x\$2.50=\$17.50	\$75
Daily Coffee	\$2.00	7 x \$2.00 = \$14	\$60
Cigarettes	\$6.25	4 x \$6.25=\$25	\$100+
Eating Out	\$7.00	2 x \$7.00 = \$14	\$60
Taxi Rides	\$10	1 x \$10 = \$10/week	\$40
Cat	---	---	\$60
Dog	---	---	\$100

A little bit of savings also adds up over time.


SAVINGS

Average Savings per Week	Average Savings per Month	Average Savings per Year
\$5.00	\$20.00	\$260.00
\$10.00	\$40.00	\$520.00
\$25.00	\$100.00	\$1,300.00

• Lessons Learned

- There are many things that we *assume* we know about young adults that we don't know
- Asking young adults what they would want to see in plans (like a budget) and using that knowledge is key for *their acceptance* of your written work

Example #3




Outside-The-Box College Accommodations Real Support for Real Students

Tools for School II


Tip Sheet 11 Transitions RTC March 2017

Students who have a mental health condition may need additional support to help them do the best they can in school and work. The "American with Disabilities Act" (ADA) entitles students with disabilities, like mental health conditions, to get academic help with academic accommodations and other legal rights.

Most schools are used to providing typical accommodations such as: note taker, extra time for assignments, and assistive technology for students of many different disabilities. Yet, the challenges of having a mental health condition are unique.



This tip sheet will help you to think "outside-the-box" to get the educational accommodations that help you with your unique struggles.



What Are Academic Accommodations Anyway?

Academic accommodations are like any other helping tool, like an audio book or a calculator. They are changes in how you participate in your courses. When considering the accommodation, you need think about things like:

- Where you take your test or where you sit in class
- How information is given to you (recorded audio, written notes, visual presentations, etc)
- How you work with students or how you respond to being called upon
- Extended or broken-up time for in-class work, tests, projects, and/or homework

Important to Note

Academic Accommodations are not the same as modifications. This means that they are not a change in the curriculum of the class or how you are graded. They are more of a change in how you do the same work so that you have the same opportunity that everyone else has regardless of your mental health condition or other disability.

Learn about the basics of accommodations and how to get them, see our "Tools for School" tipsheet:

<http://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1066&context=pib>.

Outside-The-Box Educational Accommodations

The following table contains some examples of educational accommodations that may be helpful to the unique challenges of having a mental health condition:

• Lessons Learned

- Make sure you use the right tone when translating knowledge from research work that was not originally intended for a young adult audience
- Learn from previous mistakes!
- Try to use more conversational and gentle language when giving a lot of information

FOR YOUTH COUNCILS



What To Think About

- Money
- Food
- Transportation/Accessible Location
- Young Adult Leadership
- Adults as Silent Supporters
- Presenters listen and don't fight young adults
- Presenters show impact of what they learned from young adults



Ty's Perspective



“Being a part of the YAB, I could see my comments put to good use. My thoughts and opinions felt important and I was treated with respect.”



FOR SOCIAL MEDIA



Recommendations from the YAB

- **The Mighty** – First-person stories from real people with mental health conditions
- **Posts in General** – quick information, language with good attitude (not negative towards young adults, teens, or millennials)
- **Following Pages** – would rather follow a movement that has become popular by word of mouth
- **Celebrities or Allies** – Supportive and Open (Ashton Kutcher, Katie Morton on YouTube, etc)



THANK YOU!

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Any Questions?