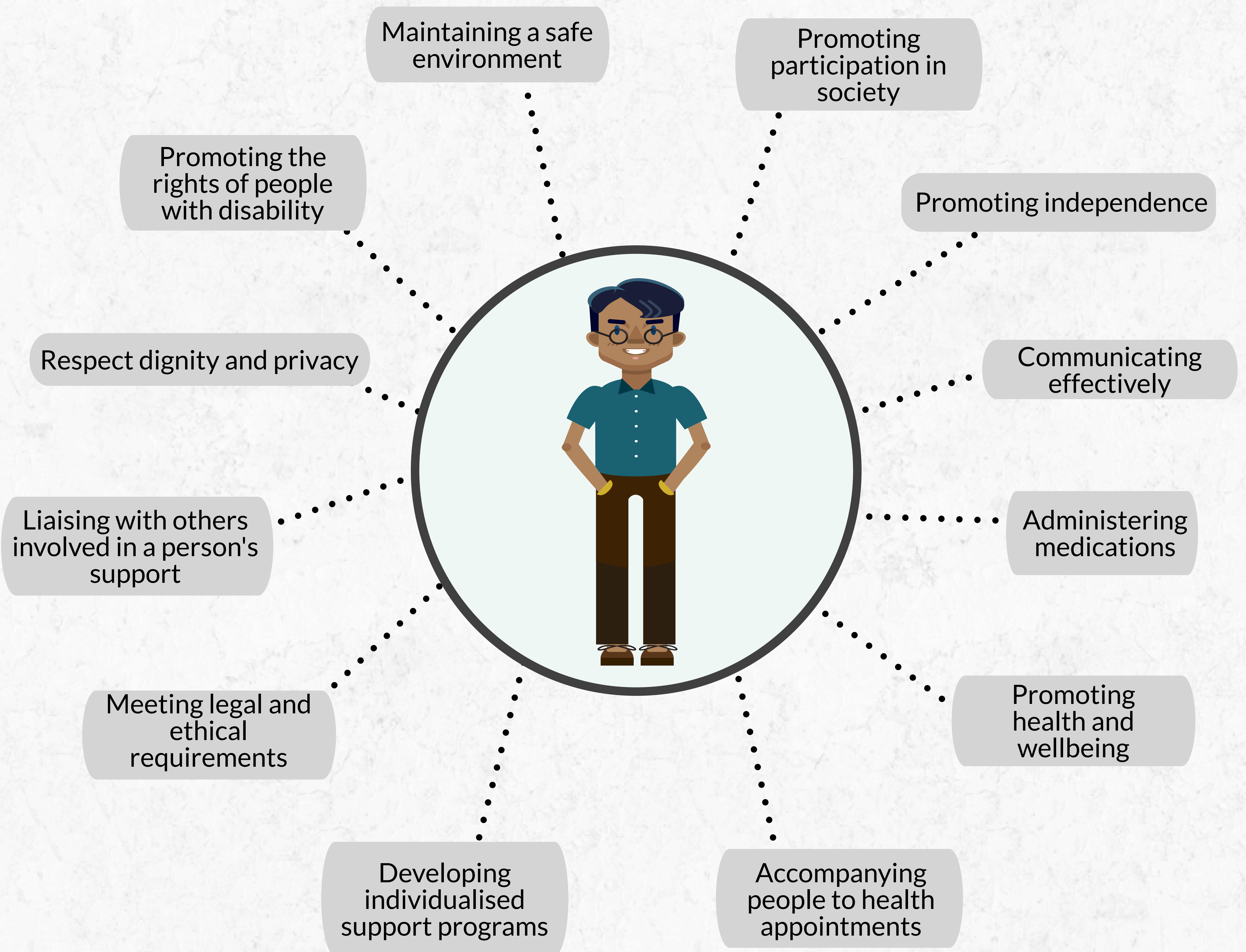


HOW DOES MENTAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE APPLY TO THE ROLE OF DISABILITY PROFESSIONAL?

This worksheet highlights the ways in which a disability professional may apply mental health knowledge in their role supporting a person with intellectual disability (ID). It also shows how the IDMH e-Learning for disability professionals can help to develop these knowledge areas.



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Maintaining a safe environment

- Knowing about mental health will help disability workers to understand how to respond safely when a person with an ID is experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Learning about mental health will help people to understand their well-being and ways in which they can practice self-care.
- The training will assist in identifying potential triggers for mental illness and learn ways to reduce or observe these before a crisis is reached.

Promoting participation in society

- Having good mental health permits people to engage with others. (E.g. participating in social activities, building relationships with others, participating in work or volunteering, and working with agencies to improve opportunities for people with an ID, helping to overcome misconceptions of ID)
- Participating in society can help to lower the risk of developing a mental illness (e.g. by having a support network).
- With an understanding of mental health disability workers can help a person with an ID to better access the community. For example, if a person receiving support experiences anxiety when they are in public places disability workers will be able to plan activities that are appropriate for that person and make sure the relevant supports are provided

Promoting independence

Person-centred support is based on the principle that individuals are at the centre of decisions around their needs and are supported to live life the way they wish to. Good mental health is a significant part of this. Having good mental health allows a person to participate more fully in society and be involved in decisions being made about them. Greater control and independence can also help protect against some mental illnesses such as depression.

Communicating effectively

- Knowing more about mental health will provide greater confidence in talking to people with an ID about mental illness. It will also help in explaining procedures and treatments when preparing a person with an ID for appointments.
- Disability workers will be able to respond to behaviours with a broad awareness of causes (including mental health). This will lead to improved support for the person.



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Administering medications

The training will increase knowledge of medications used to help symptoms of mental illness. It will also raise awareness of possible side-effects and the importance of regular medication reviews.

Promoting health and wellbeing

By completing the training disability workers will be better able to identify risk factors of mental illness and ways to reduce them. The training will highlight how person-centred support can be used to plan activities that lower the risk (e.g. encouraging exercise, healthy eating, relaxation, involvement in social activities etc.).

Accompanying people to health appointments

The training will help disability workers to know what information mental health practitioners need when accompanying a person with an ID to appointments. It will also provide information on how to prepare and support a person with an ID in appointments and treatment.

Developing individualised support programs

The training will increase awareness of addressing mental health needs as part of person-centred support. This will include identifying the person's individual needs, their personal risk factors and also identifying the activities that they enjoy and promote wellbeing.



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Meeting legal and ethical requirements

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires parties to “Provide persons with disabilities with the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care and programmes as provided to other persons”. As we mentioned earlier, people with an ID still have difficulties receiving mental health treatment. This training will better prepare disability workers to be able to help overcome these barriers.
- The training also covers consent and what disability workers need to know in regards to a person’s rights under the Mental Health Act.

Liaising with others involved in a person's support

Becoming familiar with the roles of other professionals involved in a person's care and the way they work, will help build stronger relationships. A good relationship and communication between professionals and services is important for the person with an ID. It helps them to receive the best continuous support.

Respect dignity and privacy

Learning more about mental health will allow disability workers to:

- Encourage people with an ID to ask questions about their supports or care
- Discuss mental health respectfully. (E.g. explaining mental health, treatments, medications, appointments etc.) This may mean using easy English or other communication tools
- Protect confidentiality and privacy regarding mental health

Promoting the rights of people with disability

- The training in ID mental health will familiarise learners with stigma. This will help disability workers recognise the impact stigma has and ways they can address it and provide empathic support in their role.
- The training will provide information on how to obtain a referral to mental health services for a person with an ID. This will help to overcome barriers to treatment and promote equal access.



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