

THE PATH AHEAD

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Let's clear the path ahead.

WISCONSIN'S TOP-RATED
IRIS CONSULTANT AGENCY

STAYING STRONG WITH SELF-DIRECTION



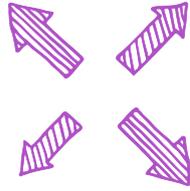
Life has certainly been different for all of us this year. The COVID-19 pandemic has kept people from seeing friends and family members in person. It's caused a lot of us to stop going to our jobs or to stop volunteering. And it's made many people change how they enjoy their free time so they're safely distanced.

All of these changes have taken time to get used to. When the pandemic first started, some people worried about individuals with disabilities and how they would deal with all the changes and uncertainty. But time and time again, people with disabilities have shown the world that with the

right level of support and strong relationships, they can not only survive during tough times, but even thrive.

"I think everybody has been pretty strong [during the pandemic]," says Jenny Felty, Director of Headwaters, Inc.

One of the reasons Jenny believes that the people her agency serves have been okay during the pandemic is because of the power of self-direction. When a person uses self-direction, they know that they have the power to control certain things happening in their lives. They know how to ask for what they need, and self-direction supports them to do so. And when you know your voice is going to be heard, tough times aren't as challenging.



Headwaters, Inc is an organization in Northern Wisconsin that provides supports and services to individuals with disabilities so that they can live the life they choose. Jenny says that having choice and control in their life makes the person feel more confident and stronger. One of her favorite stories is of a woman who first started using services from Headwaters four years ago. At the time, the woman was unhappy that she was living in a group home. She, like most of us, could also get very stressed whenever bad things happened in the world. She felt like she had no real control in her life. So, she told Headwaters staff that she wanted to live in her own apartment. The agency worked with her to get her the skills she needed to make that happen.

“She has all of this control in her life that she didn’t used to have, and she gets through [tough times] a lot better,” says Jenny. “She’s just a different person, because she’s living the kind of life that she wants.”

Another way that self-direction can make us stronger is that it can help us build connections in our communities. If we decide we want to work or volunteer, we can do that and meet people who do the same thing. If we want to go to church on Sundays or a local art class on Wednesdays, we’ll meet other people who love church or art. Every time we choose to get out in the community, we might meet new people who could become new friends. We can also look for

virtual community opportunities, such as virtual book clubs or online exercise classes, which widen our chances of meeting new people who share our interests.

“It helps you feel soothed through the tough times when you have those other [community] connections to look forward to,” says Jenny.

So, as we all make changes to adjust to life during a pandemic, know that self-direction can help us stay strong through it all and that we can use self-direction to take charge of the things that we do have control over. If we need help with things that aren’t in our control, we shouldn’t be afraid to ask others for help.

“We’re all a little stressed because the pandemic is still ongoing,” says Jenny. “But we’re all in it together!”

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: TRYING TIMES WON'T BRING US DOWN!

Find out how some of the people who choose TMG use self-direction to get through trying times, and their advice to others on how to stay strong. **Thank you to everyone who shared their stories with us!**



Ashley Mathy

Muskego, WI

To keep strong during trying times, Ashley says she likes to stay positive in every way. For her, that means taking care of her body with yoga and taking care of her mind with mindfulness sessions and thinking about positive things. She also says that she feels good when she helps other people out. So, she likes to stay connected with friends, family, and other self-advocates and give them compliments.

Ashley's Words of Wisdom:

"Look at all the positive things in your life and have faith that it will get better soon. In the meantime, you need to enjoy every moment and live life to the fullest."



Craig Staszak and Josh Vaughn

Scandinavia, WI

Brothers Craig and Josh know that taking charge with self-direction can make uncertain times less scary. Some of the ways they do this is by keeping active both mentally and physically. They also make sure to have good conversations about their care options so that they can make the choices that are best for them. Most importantly, they understand that things are different these days, and they have to be flexible with schedules and laid-back about the things they can't control.

Craig and Josh's Words of Wisdom:

"Use your resources and think outside the box. Know what you need and don't be afraid to ask others for help."



Dan Spitz

New Berlin, WI

Sometimes life is hard. But Dan says he doesn't let the tough times keep him down. One of the ways he does that is by thinking of all the great things in his life — including his loving wife and three great boys. He also tries to keep his care plans as consistent as possible to help make life easier. And he's not shy about asking for help when he needs it.

Dan's Words of Wisdom:

"Always know that no matter the situation, stay calm and try to remember what you did to get through tough times in the past. It's always been amazing to me that I've been able to accomplish something if I just put my mind to it and try different things."



Doris Turner

Milwaukee, WI

Doris knows that having faith and working hard can lead to many great things. Even when things seem too tough to overcome, Doris never gives up. She knows to advocate for herself to get the changes she needs to live the life she wants. She also loves taking the time to listen and help others — it’s one of the things that makes her proud, especially when she can give someone advice that might help them.

Doris’s Words of Wisdom:

“I use [the gifts] God gave me. Being useful helps me feel better, because maybe that will help someone else feel better! I love to encourage people to never give up.”



Eric Kostrzak

Salem, WI

Before the pandemic, Eric used self-direction to help him run his own small business and was also an active member in his community. Both of these things made him feel confident and happy. While those things are on hold, he’s keeping strong by connecting with family and friends over the phone and through video calls.

Eric’s Words of Wisdom:

“Learn to communicate effectively and bring your ideas to the table. This has helped me [share my needs] with my friends, family and [other supports].”



Joe and Mindi Frenette

Greenwood, WI

Husband and wife Joe and Mindi love being able to help others. So, when the pandemic hit, they put their talents to use. Mindi is a quilter and has been making masks for the community. Joe lends a hand as well, ironing the masks so that they look crisp and beautiful. Both Mindi and Joe are happy they’re helping people stay safe. They’re also happy they have each other and their parents — it’s a lot easier to get through hard times when you have a loved one nearby.

Joe and Mindi’s Words of Wisdom:

“We tell people to stay safe, to stay home, and to wash their hands. We also tell them ‘We love you!’”





RESOURCES FOR STRENGTHENING SELF-DIRECTION

Self-direction is a great way to keep us feeling strong. Even when times are tough, self-direction reminds us that there are a lot of things in our life that we can control. It can make us realize how much we're capable of doing. Of course, sometimes we need a little bit of help and the right tools to support us as we self-direct.

Below are a few resources that can build self-direction skills and community connections. For links to these resources, visit the online version of the Summer/Fall 2020 issue of The Path Ahead at tmgwisconsin.com/the-path-ahead.

Center for Healthy Minds: The Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin–Madison wants to make the world a kinder and wiser place and understands the importance of a strong mind. To help people get through the pandemic, the Center for Healthy Minds has created a COVID-19 Well-Being Toolkit and Resources webpage. There you'll find ways to keep your mind calm; webinars on meditation and how to find purpose; and other resources that can make it a little easier to deal with uncertain times. Visit centerhealthyminds.org and find a link to the Well-Being Toolkit and Resources at the top of the homepage.

Independent Living Centers: These consumer-directed, non-profit organizations provide four core services:

peer support, information and referral, independent living skills training, and person and systems advocacy. There are eight Independent Living Centers in Wisconsin. To see which one serves your county, visit the DHS webpage at dhs.wisconsin.gov and search for Independent Living Centers.

TMG Partner Links & Resources Page: Did you know that TMG has a Partner Links & Resources page that provides links to many great disability resources both in Wisconsin and nationally? There's even a section called Self-Determination Advocacy, where you can find out about organizations that can help you feel empowered and improve your self-advocacy skills. Visit tmgwisconsin.com and click on the TMG Resources tab in the menu to find the Partner Links & Resources page.

TMG Presents Zoom Made Easy: Want to use Zoom video calls to connect with your friends and family, but aren't sure how to do it? TMG has put together three videos with simple instructions that can help you learn how to download Zoom to your device, how to join a Zoom meeting, and how to use Zoom during a meeting. Visit TMG's homepage at tmgwisconsin.com and scroll down to the TMG Zoom Made Easy Videos section. There, you'll find links to all three videos.

DISABILITY VOTE COALITION

Your right to vote is one of the most important rights you have. It's your opportunity to support individuals who represent the issues that you care about.

The Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition website has everything you need to be prepared to vote. It has resources about accessibility at voting locations, tips for safely voting, questions to ask your candidates, and how to get an absentee ballot.

Everyone's voice deserves to be heard. Make sure you take time to vote. You can learn more at **disabilityvote.org**.



ELECTRONIC VISIT VERIFICATION UPDATE

This fall, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is planning to launch **Electronic Visit Verification (EVV)**. You can learn more about EVV and check out the EVV Information Video by going to **dhs.wisconsin.gov/evv**. You can also visit the EVV Frequently Asked Questions page at **dhs.wisconsin.gov/evv/faq.htm**.

SELF-DETERMINATION CONFERENCE 2020

VIRTUAL
& FREE

Even though we can't meet in person this year, we're excited that the 2020 Wisconsin Self-Determination Conference will be happening virtually! Join TMG, self-advocates, and others that support people with disabilities from **October 26-28**.

The theme of this year's free, virtual event is **Turning Vision into Reality**. From the comfort of your home, you can meet other self-advocates, learn how to turn your dreams into action, and celebrate all the amazing things that make a great life possible. TMG is proud to sponsor and present at this conference. Through our sponsorship, we are helping to make the SD Conference accessible to all. We hope you can join us!

Learn more and register at **wi-bpdd.org/index.php/wisconsin-self-determination-conference**.

Interested in attending the Wisconsin Self-Determination Conference, but not sure how to use Zoom to join the conference? TMG has created three short Zoom videos that you can find on the TMG homepage under the Zoom Made Easy Videos section at **tmgwisconsin.com**.



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FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A lot has been happening on TMG's Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter pages! Have you visited them lately?

There, you can read important news and events, learn about others who are living self-determined lives and see what TMG has been up to throughout Wisconsin. Be sure to share your favorite posts and become part of the broader self-determination community in Wisconsin!



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