



The Power of Empowerment!

By Kelly Berg

Just what is EMPOWERMENT? Empowerment is defined as the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. ENABLING, or giving someone the means to do something, is actually a SYNONYM of empowerment, but as you'll soon learn they are actually quite different, at least in the way we will be talking about them today.

SPELL: DEFINED SPELL: SOMEONE SPELL: DIFFERENT

What are we talking about today? EMPOWERMENT

How was empowerment defined? THE PROCESS OF BECOMING STRONGER AND MORE CONFIDENT, ESPECIALLY IN CONTROLLING ONE'S LIFE AND CLAIMING ONE'S RIGHTS

What was defined as giving someone the means to do something? ENABLING

Enabling is a _____ of empowerment. SYNONYM



VAKT: Let's copy this empowering pose! Imagine you're wearing your cape, and hold your fist high up in the air! Raise it up and down a few times!

Question Type Key

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What's the difference you might ask? Well, it's difficult to talk about empowerment and enabling without first discussing AUTONOMY and INDEPENDENCE. Autonomy is defined as the quality or state of being SELF-GOVERNING. A person who is AUTONOMOUS is acting according to their own preferences, interests, and/or abilities, free from undue external influence or interference. Independence, on the other hand, is defined as not requiring or relying on something or someone else.

SPELL: QUALITY SPELL: PREFERENCES SPELL: EXTERNAL

What do we need to talk about before we get further into empowerment and enabling? AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

What was defined as the quality or state of being self-governing? AUTONOMY

A person who is autonomous is doing what? ACTING ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN PREFERENCES, INTERESTS, AND/OR ABILITIES, FREE FROM UNDUE EXTERNAL INFLUENCE OR INTERFERENCE

What was defined as not requiring or relying on something or someone else? INDEPENDENCE

Are any of us truly independent of anything and everything around us? Most people, while they may be independent in many ways, still rely on their job for a paycheck, on their family and friends for support, perhaps even on their father for information on how to fix their garbage disposal. What these people DO have, however, is autonomy. They are able to decide what they want to study in school, how they want to DECORATE their SURROUNDINGS, how they spend their free time, and what personal goals they want to pursue. Autonomy is what is truly important!

SPELL: PAYCHECK SPELL: GARBAGE SPELL: PERSONAL

What is one way mentioned in which most people are not independent? THEY RELY ON THEIR JOB FOR A PAYCHECK, ON FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOR SUPPORT, ON THEIR FATHER FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO FIX THEIR GARBAGE DISPOSAL OR:

Relying on family and friends for _____ is an example of how people are not independent. SUPPORT



What was one example of autonomy given? DECIDING WHAT TO STUDY IN SCHOOL, HOW TO DECORATE THEIR SURROUNDINGS, HOW THEY SPEND THEIR FREE TIME, WHAT PERSONAL GOALS THEY WANT TO PURSUE

OR:

Deciding how to _____ your surrounding is an example of autonomy.
DECORATE

Do you think that anyone is truly independent of anything and everything around us? Why or why not?

What do you think is more important, independence or autonomy, and why?

The BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS THEORY (BPNT), one of the mini-theories within the SELF-DETERMINATION Theory, argues that optimal functioning and psychological well-being are predicated on three things, one of which is autonomy, and that autonomy is ESSENTIAL to wellness. As humans, we need autonomy for life satisfaction! So, the first question is, how can you, as a speller, be more autonomous, and how can we as your COMMUNICATION AND REGULATION PARTNERS (CRPS) help you to be more autonomous?

SPELL: THEORIES SPELL: QUESTION SPELL: COMMUNICATION

What does BPNT stand for? BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS THEORY

The BPNT is one of the mini-theories within what? THE SELF DETERMINATION THEORY

What does the BPNT argue? THAT OPTIMAL FUNCTIONING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING ARE PREDICATED ON THREE THINGS, ONE OF WHICH IS AUTONOMY, AND THAT AUTONOMY IS ESSENTIAL TO WELLNESS

As humans we need autonomy for what? LIFE SATISFACTION

Do you think that being more autonomous would make a difference in your life? Why or why not?

There is certainly a benefit to working on life skills so that there are things that will allow you to be as independent as possible. However just like **all of us**, there are things that you may be unable to do without support. For example, you may need someone there for communication and regulation support. It is important to recognize that even if total independence is not possible (which it rarely is, even for us as NEUROTYPICALS!) you can have autonomy over your own life. Perhaps even while doing this lesson, you are working on building the skills for SPELLING



TO COMMUNICATE (S2C) so that once you have a reliable means of communication, you can share your thoughts, opinions, preferences, and you can make your own decisions and set your own goals! You can have AUTONOMY over your own life!

SPELL: POSSIBLE SPELL: REGULATION SPELL: RECOGNIZE

There is a benefit to working on _____ to be as independent as possible. LIFE SKILLS

While doing this lesson you are building the skills for what? SPELLING TO COMMUNICATE

What was an example given of what one can do once they have a reliable means of communication? SHARE THOUGHTS, OPINIONS, PREFERENCES, MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS, SET YOUR OWN GOALS

What is something you need support to do?



With RIGOROUS practice on the letterboard and lots and lots of PURPOSEFUL MOTOR practice, you will be able to build your independence, and more importantly, your autonomy. But as your CRP, I want to EMPOWER you to build up your own confidence in your skills, on and off the letterboard, in pursuit of your own personal goals. I want you to act of your own will, and to communicate

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that will, while receiving supports that MEANINGFULLY support and enhance your ability to act of your own will.

SPELL: LETTERBOARD SPELL: RIGOROUS SPELL: ABILITY

With rigorous practice on the letterboard and lots and lots of _____ practice, one can build independence and autonomy. PURPOSEFUL MOTOR

What do I want to empower you to build up your confidence in your skills on and off the letterboard? TO PURSUE MY OWN PERSONAL GOALS

I want you to receive _____ that meaningful supports and enhances your ability to act of your own will. SUPPORT

What is a synonym for meaningful?

So back to that enabling part. Empowerment is great, but support without overstepping should be the focus of CRPs. Enabling is helping, which of course is not a bad thing! But for the purpose of this lesson, enabling is help that instead of solving a problem, PERPETUATES it. It's tying someone's shoes instead of working to help them do it themselves. It's keeping the training wheels on that bike way too long, instead of encouraging someone to finally learn to ride on their own. Enabling can mean doing too much for someone, when we need to be giving them more time and opportunities to be SUCCESSFUL and more CAPABLE with their bodies.

SPELL: FOCUS SPELL: WORKING SPELL: OPPORTUNITIES

Support without _____ should be the focus of CRPs. OVERSTEPPING For the purpose of this lesson, enabling is what? HELP THAT INSTEAD OF SOLVING A PROBLEM, PERPETUATES IT

What was an example given of help that perpetuates a problem? TYING SOMEONE'S SHOES INSTEAD OF WORKING TO HELP THEM DO IT THEMSELVES, KEEPING THE TRAINING WHEELS ON THAT BIKE TOO LONG INSTEAD OF ENCOURAGING SOMEONE TO LEARN TO RIDE ON THEIR OWN

We need to give more time and opportunities to be what? SUCCESSFUL AND MORE CAPABLE WITH THEIR BODIES

What is something you would like to be more capable doing?

It's HUMAN NATURE to step in and help someone who is struggling to do something. Sometimes it comes down to PATIENCE, because it can be done in less



time with assistance. Sometimes people are just in a hurry...it's a busy world we live in! Letting someone do something themselves may take longer. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves to slow down, to support someone to do it themselves, or to let them do it themselves...not only because they can, but because that's going to be empowering!

SPELL: STRUGGLING SPELL: ASSISTANCE

SPELL: REMIND

It's _____ to step in and help someone who is struggling to do something.

HUMAN NATURE

Sometimes it comes down to _____, because it can be done in less time with assistance. PATIENCE

What is another reason people step in? THEY ARE IN A HURRY, LETTING SOMEONE DO IT MAY TAKE LONGER

What would be the empowering thing to do? SUPPORT SOMEONE TO DO IT THEMSELVES, LET THEM DO IT THEMSELVES

What is something you would like to do yourself?

So how, can all of us as Communication Partners empower you, our students! Let's take a look at a list, and hopefully add to it together!

First of all, as a CRP we have to acknowledge that there are days where we WILL be more impatient, exhausted, or in a hurry, and those are days we will be more likely to step in. We are ALL guilty of this, and it happens! Next, we should be aware of overstepping and give you, our students, the chance to try. We should break down the steps and support your motor to make that sandwich, put on that t-shirt, fold the laundry...WHATEVER it is that you want to do, allowing you the time to do it.

SPELL: ACKNOWLEDGE SPELL: GUILTY SPELL: WHATEVER

As a CRP we have to acknowledge that there are days where we will be more what? IMPATIENT, EXHAUSTED, OR IN A HURRY

These are the days that we will be more likely to do what? STEP IN

We should be aware of _____ and give students the chance to try!

OVERSTEPPING

What was mentioned that can be done to help you do something? BREAK DOWN THE STEPS, SUPPORT THE MOTOR



What was one of the tasks mentioned? MAKING A SANDWICH, PUTTING ON A T-SHIRT, FOLDING THE LAUNDRY

What is a common lunchtime sandwich for kids?

What is a daily task you would like to receive a breakdown and motor support to accomplish?

VAKT: Watch this video demonstrating hilariously the importance of accurately breaking down the motor steps to do a task! Click the link below or search “This Exact Instructions Challenge Is So Hilarious” on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct-IOOUqmyY>

We can encourage you to make decisions that affect you...even the little ones, the things that we often take for granted! It is empowering to choose what you have for breakfast, what shirt you wear, what game to play, or what subject to learn about next! I want to give you a voice in what relates to you and your daily life. Those little things add up! Also, I want to encourage you as my student to follow your interests! We can recognize the moments we have when we can empower you and take advantage of those moments! Extra time this morning? Instead of me putting on your coat let me prompt you through it, because you can do it!

SPELL: GRANTED SPELL: INTERESTS SPELL: PROMPT

We can encourage you to make _____ that affect you. DECISIONS

What was an example of a small daily decision that is empowering to make?

WHAT TO HAVE FOR BREAKFAST, WHAT SHIRT TO WEAR, WHAT GAME TO PLAY, WHAT SUBJECT TO LEARN ABOUT NEXT

Students should be encouraged to follow their _____. INTERESTS

We can recognize the moments where we have extra time and take _____ of them. ADVANTAGE

What is something you are interested in studying?

Next, I want to encourage you to think and do for yourself. Everyone is allowed to disagree...so establish your personal viewpoints, even if you are the only one in the room who feels that way. That’s okay, because you should feel empowered to be able to be confident to share those opinions!



We should be ENCOURAGING, and provide emotional support to build up your confidence and resilience. I KNOW that you can do it, whatever “it” may be! And I will celebrate your success every step and even half-step along the way!

SPELL: ALLOWED SPELL: CONFIDENT SPELL: OPINIONS

Everyone is allowed to what? DISAGREE

What should be provided to build up confidence and resilience? EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

How do you prefer to celebrate big accomplishments?

How would you feel expressing your opinion if you were the only one with that opinion in the room?

It’s in our nature as humans to help others, ESPECIALLY those who we are closest to. People don’t enable others with the intent to do a DISSERVICE to them. But when we as CRPs can give you, our students, a chance to do things FOR yourself, and support you in making your own decisions, and choosing your own goals, we allow you to have autonomy over your own lives...and that is truly empowering!

SPELL: CLOSEST SPELL: STUDENTS SPELL: CHOOSING

It’s in our nature as humans to do what? HELP OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WE ARE CLOSEST TO

People don’t enable others with the intent to do a _____ to them. DISSERVICE

What happens when CRPs give you a chance to do things for yourself, and support you in making your own decisions and choosing your own goals? ALLOW US TO HAVE AUTONOMY OVER OUR OWN LIVES

VAKT: Listen to this empowering song! Search “David Guetta - Titanium ft. Sia (Official Video)” on YouTube or click the link below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRfuAukYTKg&feature=emb_logo

How does the song make you feel?

Creative Writing:

What is something you would like to feel empowered to do? Develop a plan for support you will need, and a list of things you can celebrate along the way as you get closer to your goal!



Sources:

Growing Kids Therapy Center Parent Cohort, Empowerment vs. Enabling Seminar (with thanks and acknowledgment to former contributors to the GKTC Parent Cohort – Janine Abalos, Bryana Williams, and Roxy Sewell)

<https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/the-theory/>



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The mission of I-ASC is to advance communication access for nonspeaking individuals globally through [training](#), [education](#), [advocacy](#) and [research](#). I-ASC supports all forms of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) with a focus on methods of spelling and typing. I-ASC currently offers [Practitioner training](#) in [Spelling to Communicate \(S2C\)](#) with the hope that other methods of AAC using spelling or typing will join our association

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