

Hanging Out Program HOP



What is the Hanging Out Program?

The Hanging Out Program, or HOP, is a program that I developed in 2007 while working in an adult day service. The program, on its simplest level, involves sitting down with a person with very severe disabilities and interacting with them. I suggest ten minutes. HOP involves writing down what happened, and using this as a way to continue to develop the interactions with the person.

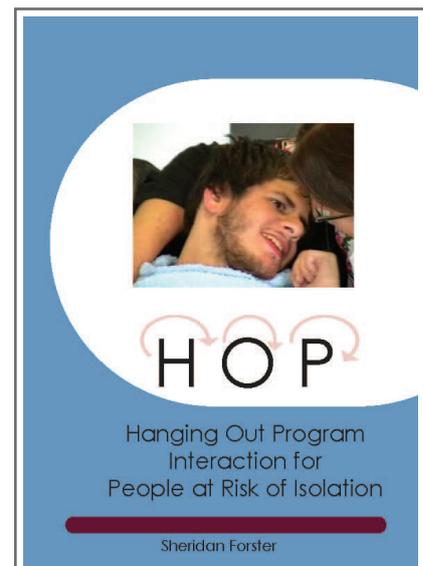
This may sound incredibly simple, and perhaps redundant, however I have found that it has the potential to improve the lives of the people we support for a number of reasons. It is a way of getting to know people better, and can provide a foundation for any person-centred planning.

HOP may be particularly useful when:

- A person does not use or seem to understand speech it can be difficult to know how to interact with them
- People need dedicated time and an attuned interaction partner to read their subtle signals of communication
- The people with the most severe disabilities (who may or may not use challenging behaviours) may be overlooked in services, because of their difficulties starting and sustaining interactions
- Some support workers feel that people may judge them as “not doing anything” if they are sitting interacting with people who don’t use speech.

My research and interactions with disability support workers taught me that many support workers have great interaction skills. Many disability support workers do not need to be taught new communication; which is the focus of a lot of communication training. Instead they need to be given the permission to interact in ways that people respond to best, and celebrate the small, subtle, and often very idiosyncratic wins that they have in their interactions. They may need help to document the skills, or share their understanding with colleagues.

People can learn about HOP by reading the Hanging Out Program booklet. They can also learn about HOP by attending a HOP workshop.



Hanging Out Program Workshop

What's involved in a Hanging Out Program workshop?

A Hanging Out Program workshop can be tailored for your workplace. The workshop suits small groups from 8 to 30 people).

I have chosen the word workshop, instead of training, because the session is very interactive. It is about exploring what a HOP session might feel like as both the person with a disability and the disability support worker.

The HOP workshop is also having robust discussion about the sorts of things that might impact on interactions with people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities. We might talk about:

- What do you do if someone appears to be refusing interaction?
- What does your organisation say about social touch, and what do you think?
- How do you make interacting with the people with the most severe disabilities the responsibility of all staff, not just staff who work in their “room”?

Because the workshops involve lots of discussion, there is no death-by-powerpoint, and a projector is not necessary. If topics come out during the session that I might have further information on, I am happy to email information to you.

The workshops typically run for 2 hours.

Some services have enhanced their HOP workshop by inviting me to meet some of their service users. This is useful for a few reasons:

- I can refer directly to service users throughout the workshop
- I can feel and explore some of the challenges that may be encountered in interactions with some service users
- I can try and model different interaction ideas.



Payment models for a Hanging Out Program Workshop

Contact me for current HOP workshop costs.

I run public workshops throughout the year. I can also run HOP workshops for services on request.

I am able to provide brief after session support through emails or phone calls for no extra cost.

Dr Sheridan Forster

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Sheridan is a Certified Practising Speech Pathologist. In 2011, she completed doctoral studies, looking at interactions between adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities and their support staff.

She has worked in the government and non-government sector in Australia and the UK. Sheridan currently combines research and practice, being aware and contributing to best practice in the communication support of adults with disabilities.

Sheridan is a founding member of Video Interaction Guidance Australia (VIGA), Accredited Supervisor with the Association of Video Interaction Guidance UK.



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