

EXPRESS YOURSELF!

**ASSESSING
SELF- DETERMINATION
IN YOUR LIFE**

Determine Your Destiny

UIC NRTC Self-Determination Series

EXPRESS YOURSELF!

**ASSESSING
SELF- DETERMINATION
IN YOUR LIFE**

**Prepared by Judith A. Cook, PhD, Carol Petersen,
MA, and Jessica A. Jonikas, MA**

**With consultants: T Arthur MA,MEd; Harriet
Lefley PhD; Laura Mancuso, MS, CRC; Joan
Nobiling MSEd; Andrea Schmook; and Alan
Van Landschoot, MS, CADC.**

Determine Your Destiny

What is Self-Determination?

Self-determination means having the freedom to be in charge of your own life, choosing where you live, who you spend time with, and what you do. It means having the resources you need to create a good life and to make responsible decisions. It also means choosing where, when, and how you get help for any problems you might have.

This self-assessment is designed to help you discover how much self-determination you have in your life. You are the person in charge of this assessment. To complete it, you'll read a series of statements and think about whether they describe your life. This will help you identify life areas (such as money or relationships) where you'd like to increase your level of self-determination and other areas where you're already satisfied. The simple act of thinking about these things will increase your awareness of the presence of self-determination in your life.

Read each statement and think about whether it describes *your* life. If it does, skip it and go on to the next one. Keep going until you get to a statement that *isn't* true for you. Put a check mark next to that statement and go on until you've read and thought about each one.

_____ I decide whether to live alone or with someone else.

_____ I control who can and can't come into my home.

_____ I can choose where I live.

_____ I choose my own friends.

_____ I decide whether or not to have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

_____ I have people in my life who respect my values and choices.

_____ I decide how to be part of my community.

_____ If I want to go somewhere, transportation isn't a problem.

- _____ I'm able to stand up for myself to get what I need.
- _____ I can deal with abuse, whether it's verbal, sexual or physical.
- _____ My basic human rights are respected.
- _____ I'm free to choose the kinds of goals I want to pursue.
- _____ I'm able to choose my medical doctor.
- _____ I freely choose what kinds of medical treatment I get.
- _____ I decide how involved I want to be in my medical treatment.
- _____ I have the money I need to live the kind of life I want.
- _____ I have the final say over how I spend my money.
- _____ I'm able to control my finances in a way that enhances my life.
- _____ I feel responsible for my financial future.
- _____ I decide whether or not to work.
- _____ I choose what kind of work I do.
- _____ I choose where I work.
- _____ I know how to deal with prejudice and discrimination.
- _____ I'm able to avoid people who show prejudice toward me.
- _____ I have people in my life who accept me for me.
- _____ I choose whether to receive treatment for mental health problems.
- _____ I choose the type of help I want for mental health problems.

_____ If I need one, I'm able to choose my psychiatrist.

_____ I decide how to manage my mental health problems.

_____ I decide whether or not to take psychiatric medication.

_____ I set the goals for my mental health treatment.

_____ I decide what steps to take to recover from mental health problems.

What's Next?

Congratulations for getting this far! It's not easy to think about all these life areas and what they mean to you. Even if you stop here, you've learned a lot about yourself, which is an important part of self-determination.

The next step is to look at the statements you checked and decide which of them really matter to you. Not everything you checked will be important. For example, some people don't want a boyfriend or girlfriend. Also, depending on your circumstances, not everything can be under your control. If you live in a town with only one doctor, choosing your doctor may not be possible. But, if the area *is important to you, put a second checkmark* next to that item. If it's not important, you can ignore it.

In some cultures, people make decisions together as families or larger groups. This may be true for you. Maybe your family decides that everyone should live under one roof. Perhaps you come from a culture where women don't work outside the home. As long as this is OK with you, just skip that item. But if it's not OK, then you should put a second check mark next to the item. The important thing to decide is whether the area is *important to you*.

Action Planning Toward Self-Determination with UIC NRTC Self-Determination Tools and Resources

Now that you've decided what's important, you might want to take the next step. Maybe you'd like to spend some time thinking about what

you've learned. You might want to tell others about the assessment, especially those life areas you checked twice. Or, you might be ready to start making plans in the areas that matter to you.

We've created an action-planning guide that helps you choose, set, and achieve life goals. It's called "This is Your Life!" It takes you through a simple, step-by-step process of how to determine and direct your life goals. If you're ready to do this, click on the link below to go to "This is Your Life!" Once you get there, start by reading the Introduction. If you don't have access to the Internet, call or write to us and we'll send you a copy.

<http://www.psych.uic.edu/uicnrtc/sdlifeplan.pdf>

Some people like to look for information on the Internet. At the end of this booklet, we've listed all the items you read earlier, along with related web sites. You may want to visit these websites to get information about the life areas you checked twice. If you are reading this on-line, simply click on the link under the item. Otherwise, you'll need to enter the link on your Internet browser.

If you decide to work on a new goal, remember that this is a learning process for you and those around you. People may be surprised at this "new you." If so, talk to them about how you'd like to have more choice and control over what happens in your life. Give them time to get comfortable with your new attitude. In addition, be patient with yourself. If taking control of life decisions is a little scary, remember that learning how to make good life choices doesn't happen overnight. Give yourself time to learn and use your new skills.

Whatever you decide, completing this assessment has probably taught you some new things about yourself. Plus, you now know more about self-determination and what it means. Remember that you deserve to make decisions and be in control of your life. That's a basic human right for everybody!

Web Sites With Helpful Information

_____ I decide whether to live alone or with someone else.

<http://www.bazelon.org/issues/housing/infosheets/integratedhousing.htm>

_____ I control who can and can't come into my home.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/ken98-0048/default.2222asp>

_____ I can choose where I live.

<http://www.hud.gov/renting/>

_____ I decide whether or not to have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

<http://www.upennrrtc.org/issues/IntimateRolesFS.pdf>

_____ I have people in my life who respect my values and choices.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/SMA-3716/default.asp>

_____ I decide how to be part of my community.

http://www.upennrrtc.org/issues/issue_socialroles.html

_____ If I want to go somewhere, transportation isn't a problem.

<http://www.ctaa.org/>

_____ I'm able to stand up for myself to get what I need.

<http://www.mhselfhelp.org/training.php>

_____ I can deal with abuse, whether it's verbal, sexual or physical.

http://mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=doc&id=4789&cn=109

_____ My basic human rights are respected.

<http://www.narpa.org/>

_____ I'm free to choose the kinds of goals I want to pursue.

<http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/Disable/MentalRetardationServices/ServiceSupport/003670222.htm>

_____ I'm able to choose my medical doctor.

<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/qntascii/qntdr.htm>

_____ I freely choose what kinds of medical treatment I get.

<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/qnt/qnttreat.htm>

_____ I decide how involved I want to be in my medical treatment.

http://seniorhealth.about.com/library/prevention/bl_med_injury2.htm

_____ I have the money I need to live the kind of life I want.

<http://www.federalreserveeducation.org/pfed/fined/psa.pdf>

_____ I have the final say over how I spend my money.

http://www.advocacycenter.org/FactSheets/PAIMI/PAIMI_Rep_Payee_4-4-04.pdf

_____ I'm able to control my finances in a way that enhances my life.

<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/results.tpl?id1=18&startat=1&--woSECTIONSdatarq=18&--SECTIONSword=ww>

_____ I feel responsible for my financial future.

<http://www.dallasfed.org/ca/wealth/index.html>

_____ I decide whether or not to work.

http://www.psych.uic.edu/UICNRTC/webcast_11_16_04.htm

_____ I choose what kind of work I do.

<http://www.psych.uic.edu/uicnrtc/seekingemployment.pdf>

_____ I choose where I work.

<http://www.reintegration.com/reint/employment/meaning.asp>

_____ I know how to deal with prejudice and discrimination.

<http://www.usccr.gov>

_____ I'm able to avoid people who show prejudice toward me.

http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=In_Our_Own_Voice

_____ I have people in my life who accept me for me.

<http://intotem.buffnet.net/mhw/36dfrecovery.html>

_____ I choose whether to receive treatment for mental health problems.

http://www.advocacycenter.org/FactSheets/PAIMI/PAIMI_INFORMED_CONSENT_4-4-4.pdf

_____ I choose the type of help I want for my mental health problems.

<http://www.mentalhealth.com/>

_____ If I need one, I'm able to choose my psychiatrist.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications//allpubs/ken98-0046/default.asp>

_____I decide how to manage my mental health problems.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/SMA-3720/foreword.asp>

_____I decide whether or not to take psychiatric medication.

<http://www.power2u.org/selfhep/reclaim.html>

_____I set the goals for my mental health treatment.

<http://www.psych.uic.edu/UICNRTC/raisingissues.pdf>

_____I decide what steps to take to recover from mental health problems.

<http://www.mhrecovery.com/>

© Copyright, 2004

University of Illinois at Chicago
National Research & Training Center on Psychiatric Disability
1601 W. Taylor St. MC - 912
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 355-1696
FAX: (312) 355-4189
<http://www.psych.uic.edu/uicnrtc/>

Judith A. Cook, Ph.D., Director

The Center is supported by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education, and the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Cooperative Agreement #H133B000700). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or views of either agency and no official endorsement should be inferred.