



Session 6: Deciding my goals and planning for the future

Session 6

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Introduction



Figure 6.1

Your goal may be to learn a new skill or do something that you know will improve your situation. It might be a course of study or even a new career.

In Sessions 4 and 5 you found out about different options for starting something new, and explored your own learning needs. You might be trying something you've never done before, like creative writing, or you might want to find out more about a specific health-related condition. Perhaps you have clear ideas about a career you'd like to work towards? Or you may be thinking about picking up from where you left off many years ago?

Whatever feels right for you at this stage of your life, it helps to think through your ideas so that you can take the right steps toward achieving your goal.

As you work through this session make a note of any points that you feel you need more information on, such as study skills and how much a course or qualification might cost and what financial support is available. You might want to refer back to Session 5, or to the useful websites listed in the Resources section of this course, to find answers. Keep your notes safe because these will help you with your future plans and in completing this course.

Learning Outcomes

After working through this session you will have:

- an idea of the directions carers might like to go in
- an idea of what's possible for carers to achieve in their immediate future

- an understanding of the learning options open to carers
- an idea, or ideas, about possible learning paths
- as a learner, how to go about finding out what you need to know
- the ability to use information technology (IT) to carry out reflective activities in writing and communicating
- the ability to use the internet to find information useful to you.

Deciding my goals

Before you go on to explore and clarify your own goals it might be helpful to hear how others have approached this task.

You heard Katrina in Sessions 3 and 5. You can now listen to her talking again about how she moved towards her goal of returning to nursing. She started by signing up for an Open University access course that eased her back into studying. But as you will hear, she wasn't clear about her end goal at this point: she just decided to give it a go.

Video content is not available in this format.



You first heard from Dean in Session 1. He enjoyed computing at school and later at college and he knew he had a flair for IT. It then took him some time to develop the idea further before deciding to enrol on maths and computing courses with The Open University.

I've always kept my hands in a bit of IT, taking computers apart, putting them back and fixing software problems. It's always been a hobby of mine that I

thought that I could turn into a career because it was something that I was quite passionate about.

This was his first step towards thinking about a potential area of employment that would involve a possible change of direction from his present job in retail. In contrast to Katrina he spent time weighing up the risks. Here's what he says about making that decision:

I'm not a big risk taker at all. It took me nearly a year and a half to sit and say 'I'll go for Open Uni' because I was going through everything that could go wrong in my head ... if I've got one clear path, then I can consider it, and if it's still an option for about three to four months then I can sit and say that's maybe an option then. It has to go through a rigorous amount of all the bad situations that can happen.

You've just got to go through all the situations and all the scenarios that could happen ... because this is the biggest jump I've taken – to go part time, doing that, and then doing uni.

And you can listen to Dean talking about his plans for the future.

Video content is not available in this format.



Listening to Katrina and Dean, did you notice whether they were always sure about what they wanted to do exactly, and whether that they had different feelings about starting something new?

How do *you* feel about starting something new? Your long-term goal might not be quite clear yet, but you may feel ready to start something now. Or perhaps you would like to make sure that you are really clear about where you're headed before you take on a new commitment?

Activity 6.1

Activity 6.1 Clarifying my goals through visualisation

We suggest spending around 15 minutes on this activity.

It's time to think about your own goals!

Go to Activity 6.1 in your Reflection Log or consult your notebook if you have been using one.

Now take some time to visualise yourself in the future. Where are you? What are you doing? Allow yourself scope to consider that there are possibilities open to you. What are your hopes and plans for the future?

You should just capture an impression of your thoughts and ideas at this stage.

A good way to do this is to try creating a picture of what your future life might look like: either by drawing a picture or a spider-diagram using pen and paper, or by creating a poster – a montage of images and key words. You can do this by tearing images out of newspapers and magazines to add to your drawing. What are you doing in the picture?



Figure 6.2

Or if you prefer, jot down some ideas – a sentence or two – about what your hopes are for your future, saving your notes in your notebook or Reflection Log. Alternatively, you can use this document for your notes.

You can share this or keep it to yourself.

Factors that might help or hinder me

What do you feel are the factors in your life at present that might help you to achieve your goals? What might make it difficult?

Lesley, whom you met in Sessions 2 and 3, experienced a number of difficulties. These included:

- no appropriate childcare for her son during the school holidays
- her back and joint problems made returning to nursing impossible
- her financial situation had worsened.

While she was not able to fix these problems, she was able to find a way through them to make some decisions about her future and improve her situation in a way that felt right for her at the stage of life she was at.

Lesley is now studying part time and managing to combine this with her caring role. She has gained confidence and is about to take up a post on the board of directors with her local carers centre.

It can be helpful to look at how you have made decisions and choices in the past, or how you have coped in difficult situations. This is especially important if you have made a few 'false starts' or things have not gone as well for you as you had hoped. How do you make decisions and choices? For example, do you research on the internet, speak to a friend or colleague, or contact local colleges or training organisations? Do you have the support of staff in your local carers centre? Can you speak to other carers who may have had similar experiences to you?

Your timeline might have highlighted some points where, on reflection, you may have chosen differently if you had been better informed or better supported.

Table 6.1 sets out a range of positive factors and possible difficulties that carers might face. Are any of these factors affecting you?

Table 6.1 Factors that might help or hinder me

Positive factors	Possible difficulties
More time available	Lack of time
Good health	Poor mental health, poor physical health
Communication skills	Unpredictability of caring role
Flexible	No childcare
Resilience	Lack of confidence
Adaptability	Lack of transport
Knowing what I want to do	I don't know what I want to do
Maturity	No space to study
Ability to manage and juggle different activities	Financial worries
Supportive employer	Inflexible employer
Open to try new things	Don't know where to go for help
Good support network	Lack of support networks – family live far away

Activity 6.2

Activity 6.2 Thinking about my goals: factors that might help or hinder me

We suggest spending around 20 minutes on this activity.

Go to Activity 6.2 of your Reflection Log. Once you have completed the activity, make sure you save the document again.

Or use this document to fill in a table listing your goals and the factors that may help or hinder you in achieving them.

You will need the notes you made for Activity 6.1 about your goals. Write these in the first box; then list the factors that will help you and those that might give you difficulties as you try to achieve your goals.

In the first column you could include, for example, whether you:

- are well organised
- have time available
- communicate well
- have enthusiasm.

In the second column, as well as your caring responsibilities you might include:

- financial issues
- time constraints
- transport difficulties
- qualification gaps or no qualifications.

My support network

You have just reflected on factors that might help or hinder you in achieving your goals. Now it's time to think about your support network.

We all need some help to get to where we want to be in life.

Are there people you know who can help you and support you: family members, friends, colleagues or fellow carers you have met through your local carers centre, or other organisations you have had contact with or activities you have taken part in?

Look at the spider diagram in Figure 6.3. This shows a full range of possible supports a carer might have. Can you think of any factors to add?

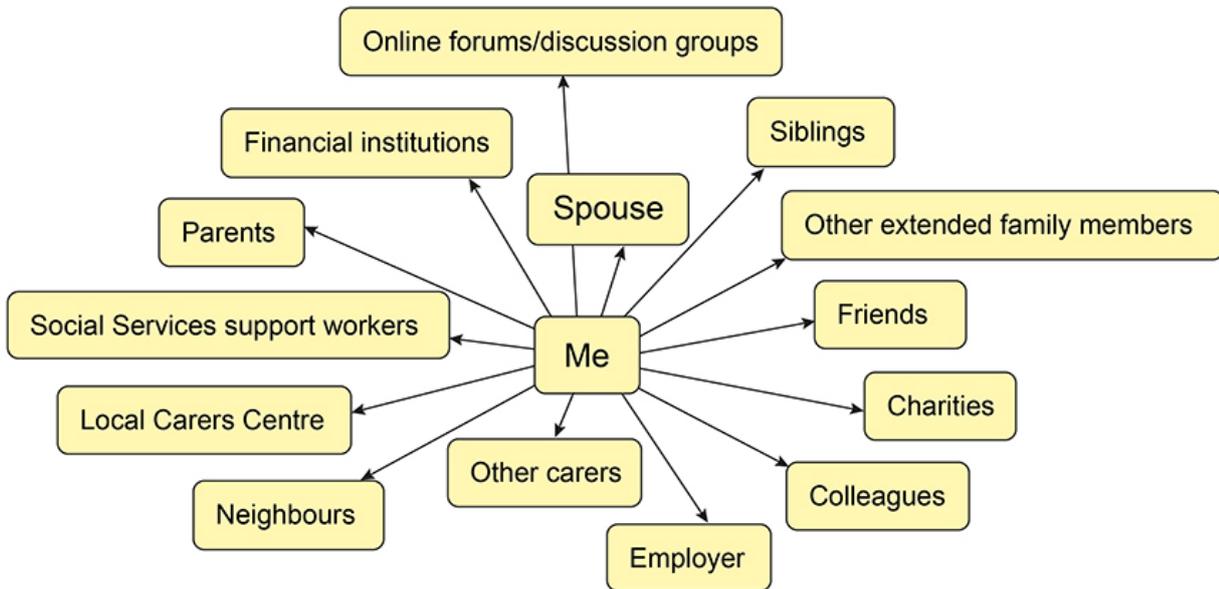


Figure 6.3 Map of carers' potential support network

Listen to Jade talk about the help she has received. What would her network of support look like?

Video content is not available in this format.



Have you experienced help in the same way as Jade? Are there people in your life now who you think will help you move towards achieving your aims? Think about the people and organisations that have helped you or who might help you in the future with any plans you have, before going on to the next activity.

What does your support network look like?

Activity 6.3

Activity 6.3 My support network

We suggest spending around 15 minutes on this activity.

Go to Activity 6.3 of your Reflection Log. Once you have completed the activity, make sure you save the document again. Alternatively, use this document we have provided.

Try drawing your own spider diagram to illustrate the support you already have and what other support might also be available.

You can use the online tool www.bubbl.us or you can do this with pen and paper if you prefer (see Activity 2.2).

If you think you'll need further support to achieve your goals, find out who can help you. Discuss your ideas and plans with the important people in your life. Check the list of websites given in the Resources section of this course, noting the details of any organisation you will ask for help.

Then, if you want to, share and discuss your diagram with your mentor or if you are working through the course with a group the others in your group.

If you are doing this course as part of a group or with a mentor then you can share your answers and discuss your notes with others.

Summary

You have now completed Session 6. This session focused on how to start working towards your goals, how you can help yourself while at the same time recognising that sometimes we need the help of others, and to know where to find that help.

There are many ways to get help to overcome difficulties or to find ways around them and to find the best way to achieve your goal. You can go to websites and search for the help you need online or you can get advice face to face from some of the organisations listed in the Resources section, which you might find helpful. Many of the carers who have contributed to this course have found the support of other carers vital.

You have almost finished the course! Session 7 asks you to set out your goals with the steps you are going to take to achieve them.

Quiz

To conclude this part of the course and consolidate your learning you may like to complete the practice quiz.

This quiz provides evidence that you are achieving the following learning outcomes:

- a clearer understanding of the experiences that carers could reflect on, including their roles, actions and decisions
- an appreciation of personal qualities developed through a caring role
- an idea of the directions carers might like to go in

- an idea of what it is possible for carers to achieve in their immediate future
- an understanding of the learning options open to carers
- an idea, or ideas, about possible learning paths
- as a learner, how to go about finding out what you need to know
- the ability to use information technology (IT) to carry out reflective activities in writing and communicating
- the ability to use the internet to find information useful to you
- the ability to explore and use new ways of expressing ideas.

If you need a reminder about the quizzes and the criteria for getting a badge, visit [How to complete the course quizzes](#).

Session 7: Creating my action plan

Acknowledgements

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