

HOPEs & DREAMs

**A Practical Approach to
Developing Potential**

Robin
Dynes

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Developing Potential**

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Alice: 'Would you tell me, please, which way I
ought to go from here?'

The Cheshire Cat: 'That depends a good
deal on where you want to get to.'

(Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland)
2009, Templar Publishing, page 88





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Introduction

Who this book is for

The material in this book is compiled for working with adults who are thinking of making changes in their lives – preparing to move into education, go back to work, change jobs, start voluntary work, take up new interests, become more independent – or simply wanting to lead a more fulfilling life. This includes people who are recovering from mental and other types of ill health, young people who have missed out on opportunities at school, individuals recovering from addictions and people on probation. The aim is to help individuals:

- reflect on their experiences, skills and strengths
- build confidence
- explore their ambitions
- consider the options for their future
- set goals and plan to achieve them
- manage their lives
- gain the skills to make their hopes and dreams a reality.

The material will be a useful resource for employment teams, social workers, health workers, youth workers, tutors, teachers, care workers, probation staff and occupational therapists, or for anyone working with people who want to make changes in their lives or want to develop their potential.

Using the material

The book is designed to provide a range of flexible options. The material is divided into two sections.

Part 1: Six core sessions covering Making a start, Deciding what you want, Setting goals, Making it happen, Learning to learn and What next?

Part 2: Eight optional sessions – Dealing with stress, Coping with change, Being assertive, Overcoming relationship conflicts, Organising your time, Dealing with disappointment, Keeping records and Creating an impression.

If a short course is required the six core sessions can be used on their own. Sessions 1–4 and 6 should always be used, as these cover the essentials for examining current skills, abilities and ambitions, options for the future, setting goals, planning to achieve them and strategies for maintaining motivation to make their hopes and dreams come true. Session 5 can be left out, substituted by any other session or included with all the optional sessions as needed to meet the requirements of participants. You may also wish to insert further options of your own. This makes the material adaptable to the needs of particular groups.

What is in each session?

An overview plan is provided for each session. The aim and expected outcomes are given, followed by instructions on how to facilitate the activities. The purpose of each activity is provided. Checking of learning is very important and repetition enables individuals to retain their knowledge. To facilitate this, the opening activity in each session incorporates a review of the previous session. The final activity provides a check on learning in the current session. It is also good practice to keep checking learning throughout the session.

A time guide for each activity is given. Bear in mind that this is a rough estimate based on groups of 6–10 people. You will need to take into account the number of people in the group and their levels of ability. Extra time will need to be added for larger groups, or when some or all participants are better suited to a slower learning pace. Alternatively, you may choose to leave out one or more of the activities.

Handouts are provided. These can be used as they stand or be adapted to meet the needs of particular groups. Some group members might feel uneasy about doing written exercises. In this instance, approaches you can use include:

- Having the person record their comments. Recordings can be kept in their folders.
- Using small group discussions, with one person acting as reporter and writing down any comments.
- Writing comments on flipcharts or whiteboards and then transferring these to photocopied sheets. Using SMART Boards, if the technology is available, is ideal, as the written comments can be printed out immediately.

Resources required

Resources have been kept to a minimum so the activities are adaptable for use in most environments. You will need:

- flipchart stand, flipchart paper, felt pens. A whiteboard and dry markers are helpful but not essential

- paper and pens
- folders in which participants keep their notes, handouts, etc
- access to a photocopier.

Dealing with emotional reactions

Sometimes an activity or a discussion may provoke an emotional reaction in an individual. They are, after all, being asked to think about and expose aspects of their inner life and ambitions. This can result in tears or someone wanting to leave the room. Different situations will require different responses. Here are a few suggestions.

- Inform the group that it is OK to show emotion within the group.
- Ask group members in the opening session how they would like to be treated if they feel upset. Some people will like a few moments on their own to compose themselves. Others might like to leave the room for a cup of tea or coffee.
- If the group has two co-workers, one worker could take the person out of the room for a chat.
- Create a coffee break to deal with a situation or diffuse tension.

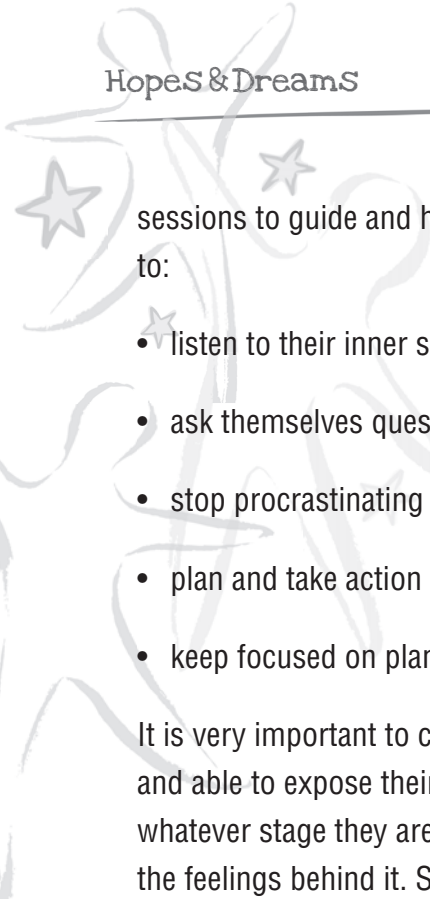
However you handle it, have a follow-up chat with the person. You can then address any support needs the person may require. There may be an issue needing attention that is unrelated to the group. The person should then be referred to an appropriate professional such as a social worker or counsellor.

Making the programme work

Although not possible in all environments, it is best if you can arrange an informal interview and assessment with group members rather than rely on information from referring agencies or enrolment procedures. This provides opportunity to get to know each person, assess their abilities and support needs and adjust the material, activities, timings and so on to suit.

Encourage discussion and participation, rather than lecturing. Remind participants that they are making decisions about their future. They need to be honest with themselves to be able to reach a level of clarity about what they want. This includes identifying blockages and working through them. The group will help them to tune in more accurately and achieve a greater depth of insight and balance in life to help them reach their potential than they would on their own. It is only by working at it and putting effort in that they will achieve the results they want.

It is part of the facilitating role to challenge by asking questions. These are woven into the



sessions to guide and help you collaborate with individuals. Constantly encourage individuals to:

- listen to their inner self
- ask themselves questions to gain clarity about what matters to them in life
- stop procrastinating
- plan and take action
- keep focused on plans and timeframes until they succeed.

It is very important to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which participants feel safe and able to expose their inner lives and ambitions. Accept group members unconditionally at whatever stage they are. Be flexible and responsive; listen to what individuals say and recognise the feelings behind it. Show you have listened. Be open to criticism and feedback.

Last, but not least, relax and enjoy yourself!

★ Part 1 ★

Core sessions



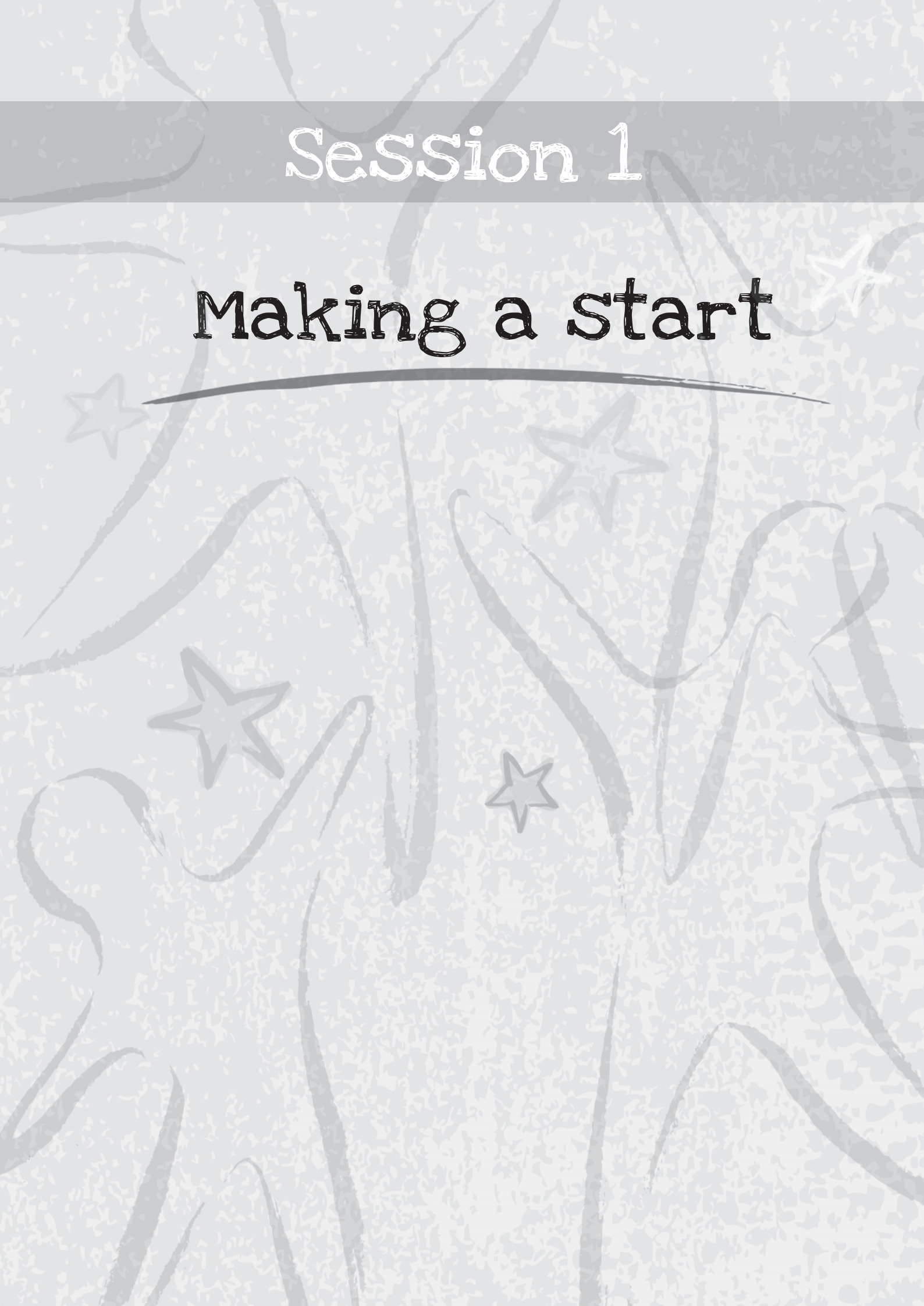
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Session 1

Making a start



Session 1: Making a start

Outline

Activity	Purpose	Time guide
Welcome and introductions	To make everyone feel at ease, clarify practical arrangements and inform participants about the course	10 minutes
Ice breaker	To introduce group members to each other, get them working together and acknowledge some of their abilities	10 minutes
Ground rules	To create an atmosphere of confidence and trust	15 minutes
Self-assessment	To measure current levels of ability and enable each person to assess their own progress	10 minutes

Break

10 minutes

Identifying core values	To encourage individuals to discover what values matter to them and how these values can influence their lives	20 minutes
Measuring self-esteem	To establish levels of self-esteem	20 minutes
Building and maintaining self-esteem	To explore methods to build and maintain self-esteem	15 minutes
What I know	To revise and reinforce what has been learned in the session and check that individuals have understood and know how to apply their new knowledge	10 minutes

Session 1: Making a start

Aim: To introduce group members to each other and promote self-awareness.

Outcomes: By the end of the session group members will:

- have started to get to know each other
- have begun to work together as a group
- be aware of the group ground rules
- have started to become more aware of how they see themselves.

Activity 1: Welcome and introductions

(10 minutes)

Purpose

To make everyone feel at ease, clarify practical arrangements and tell participants about the course.

What to do

Begin with a few words of welcome, introduce yourself and clarify the aims of the course. An example might be:

Aims

To enable you to recognise your current experience and skills, explore your ambitions and options and plan to achieve them.

Outcomes

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- acknowledge your skills and abilities
- decide what you want for the future
- plan to achieve your goals
- develop skills to manage your life

Next, run through practical arrangements for the course. These should include:

- dates and times of sessions
- length of sessions and breaks
- fire procedures and other health and safety issues
- location of toilets
- refreshments (if any)
- outline of the course

- structure of the sessions
- what will be expected from each person – behaviour, participation in activities, discussion, role play, homework, etc.

Also, ask group members to bring up any practical problems they may have. You can ask them to see you afterwards if there is anything they do not feel able to discuss in the group. Give out any folders in which participants can keep handouts and notes.

Finish the welcoming activity by telling them the aims of this first session and what the outcome will be. This will lead into Activity 2.

Activity 2: Ice breaker

(10 minutes)

Purpose

To introduce group members to each other, get them working together and acknowledge some of their abilities.

What to do

Ask the group members to split into pairs. They then spend about two minutes finding out three good qualities or skills that their partner possesses. Reassemble everyone and ask group members to introduce their partner to the group, stating the person's name and the three qualities they have learned about them. An example might be: 'This is Peter Smith. He is loyal, has excellent computer skills and is good at football.'

Activity 3: Ground rules

(15 minutes)

Purpose

To create an atmosphere of confidence and trust.

What to do

Ground rules are usually built around worries and fears that people might have. These may include:

- Confidentiality: should everything said within the group be kept confidential to the group?
- Respect: everyone having the right to express their opinion, even though that opinion may not be shared by others.

- Supporting each other.
- One person speaking at a time without being interrupted.
- Late arrivals and missing sessions.
- Being pressured to talk about something or give personal details about themselves.

Give out some slips of paper and ask group members to write down anonymously anything that is a worry or concern for them. Then collect the slips of paper or get the members to put them in a box or bag. Take the slips out at random and discuss each issue with the group. Write on the whiteboard or a flipchart what has been agreed about each concern or fear. For example:

- Everything said within the group is confidential to the group.
- Nobody will be pressured into disclosing details they wish to keep private.
- Valuing and listening to each other's contribution.
- Being non-judgemental.
- Not interrupting each other.
- Turning up on time.
- Supporting each other.
- Everyone having a right to express their opinion and have it respected.

Sometimes, as a group progresses, additional concerns emerge or incidents occur that necessitate adding additional ground rules, or group members need reminding about what has been agreed. For this reason, state that the rules will be revisited and reviewed as the course progresses. This gives an opportunity for group members to add extra rules or to deal with any issues that may arise.

Once the rules have been agreed they can be displayed at each session as a reminder, or can be typed up and given out as a handout.

Activity 4: Self-assessment

(10 minutes)

Purpose

To measure current levels of ability and enable each person to assess their own progress..

What to do

Give out handout 1 with appropriate chosen subjects (Self-awareness, Deciding what you want, Setting goals, Making it happen, Dealing with stress, etc) filled in. Ask the participants to self-assess themselves in the subjects chosen for the course. Collect the completed forms. Explain that you will keep them safe until the course is finished. Then you will ask the participants to complete a second chart to establish any improvement that has taken place.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **Break** (10 minutes) ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Activity 5: Identifying core values

(20 minutes)

Purpose

To encourage individuals to discover what values matter to them and how these values can influence their lives.

What to do

Explain that values are the deepest feelings and thoughts we have about ourselves and our lives. Our values influence what we think, how we feel and what we do. For example, if you believe that you should be helpful to others (personal value) and you help a friend carry out an act that obstructs someone or does someone a disservice (action), you feel guilty and ashamed (feeling). This is because you have acted in a way that contradicts something you value in life. We are most comfortable when all three aspects of values are in harmony. For example, you believe that you should be helpful to others; you offer to help someone complete a task and you feel good about it.

Ask group members where they think our sense of values come from. Answers should include:

- parents and other family members
- friends
- teachers
- cultural influences

- religious beliefs
- groups
- admired people
- experiences.

Now ask them to call out any values that come to mind and write them on a whiteboard or flipchart. Ask them to think about:

- 1 What is important to them in life.
- 2 How they want their future life to be. (What values does this assume?)
- 3 What motivates them to take action. (What values does this show?)
- 4 What are they doing when they feel happiest. (What values are being honoured?)
- 5 A time when things were not going well. (What values were being dishonoured?)

Examples of values are:

Honesty	Respecting others	Good health
Being responsible	Ambition	Integrity
Enjoying life	Being open-minded	Creativity
Security	Challenge	Helping other people
Physical challenge	Friendships	Routine
Family life	Love	Learning
Risk taking	Having time alone	Sharing
Independence	Variety	Loyalty
Competence	Commitment	Bravery
Freedom	Obedience	Punctuality

When the list is complete, give out Handout 2 and ask each person to list what they consider are the five most important values in their order of importance. Encourage them to take their time and make changes if necessary. It is important that the list truly reflects their values. When they have established these, ask them to complete the section on what they are currently doing that is in tune with their important values, followed by what is out of tune with them.