

## WHAT MATTERS?

# Relationships

**Lisa**, 35, is a spirited, capable woman who has landed jobs in food service and cleaning, and yet would frequently lose those jobs shortly after getting hired. Lisa has some mental health challenges and an intellectual disability, and she has struggled with the deaths of both her mother and sister. Her support staff believed she was self-sabotaging because she wasn't motivated to work.

"At first we thought, maybe, when she felt better, we would find her a lasting job," says Jamie, the provider agency's director of outreach. "But we're all motivated by something, and we, as Lisa's team, needed to figure out what that was."

So Lisa's entire support team – her job coach, job developer, director of outreach, and case manager – met with Lisa to figure out what was important to her. They gave Lisa a "Charting the Lifecourse" questionnaire to explore what kinds of experiences she liked, and what mattered to her. "This was life changing," says Jamie. **"We discovered that Lisa craved meaningful relationships and she liked helping people. She's a natural caregiver, and we found a job that fit her needs."**

Lisa now works in a school for children with disabilities in Harford County, where she helps students who cannot feed themselves. She loves her work and is engaged with the children, paying close attention to their needs and taking responsibility to meet them. "I love the kids," says Lisa. "They make me happy. It's fun working there."

Lisa adds that her job is so fulfilling she is encouraging her boyfriend to get a job, too. She is excited about saving money so they



*Lisa caring for a child she works with in a school for children with disabilities in Harford County.*

can move in together. For now, she spends weekends with him and his family, and loves going to fairs and riding the ferris wheel.

Lisa was not motivated by money alone. She needed work and goals that felt good to her. Now she never misses a day of work, and she even trains others to help children at the school. According to her case manager, Madicella, "Lisa has developed strong relationships with the students and is genuinely concerned about them. She's able to give back to her community and is thriving being employed again."

Jamie adds, "We had to stop making assumptions about what Lisa should do and learn to listen to her. Finding work that fit what matters to Lisa turned her life around. She is now 100 percent successful in her job."

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What matters? That our days be spent with purpose. Services are changing to help people with disabilities lead the lives they want. Ensuring they have opportunities to work and spend their days in other meaningful ways, alongside people without disabilities, is one of the ways change is happening. Learn more at: [www.md-council.org](http://www.md-council.org)