Do goals get in the way of good support for choices?

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Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands we meet on today - the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. I pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and to any First Nations people here today.

Aim of the study

To explore why well-meaning workers in disability services for adults with intellectual disabilities either

- support people well to make their own choices, or
- limit their choices.

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Research questions

1. How do disability support workers think and feel about adults with intellectual disabilities having choice and control?
2. How do disability support workers intend to support adults with intellectual disabilities to make their own choices?

Method

- I interviewed 21 disability support workers who did direct support, such as one-on-one workers, day service workers, support coordinators, and students.
- I asked the workers to respond to vignettes / example stories – how would you support this person to make their own choices?
- I analysed what the workers said using grounded theory methods.

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Findings

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The workers wanted to support people

1. **How did the workers think and feel about adults with intellectual disabilities having choice and control?**

   - All of the workers in this study cared about adults with intellectual disabilities. They wanted to support them to make their own choices.
   - They queried people's abilities to do things so they would know how to support them.

The workers used different models of support

2. **How did the workers intend to support adults with intellectual disabilities to make their own choices?**

Even though the workers had similar thoughts and feelings about people making choices (caring, wanting to support choices, querying people's abilities), they put these into practice differently.

There were two distinct models of support workers used:

- The goal focus model
- The process focus model

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Two models of support for choice

Goal focus model

Drawing out the person's choices for where they want to get to, **defining their goals to achieve,** by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals. **Using challenges to limit options for goals. Setting out the steps for the person to take.**

Assigning the steps for the person to take toward their goals **as an action-taker.**

Process focus model

Drawing out the person's choices for **how to take steps forward** to where they want to get to, by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals. **Collaborating with the person to check challenges and options.**

Supporting the person to be a choice-maker over the steps to take toward their goals.

Goal focus model - focus is in the future

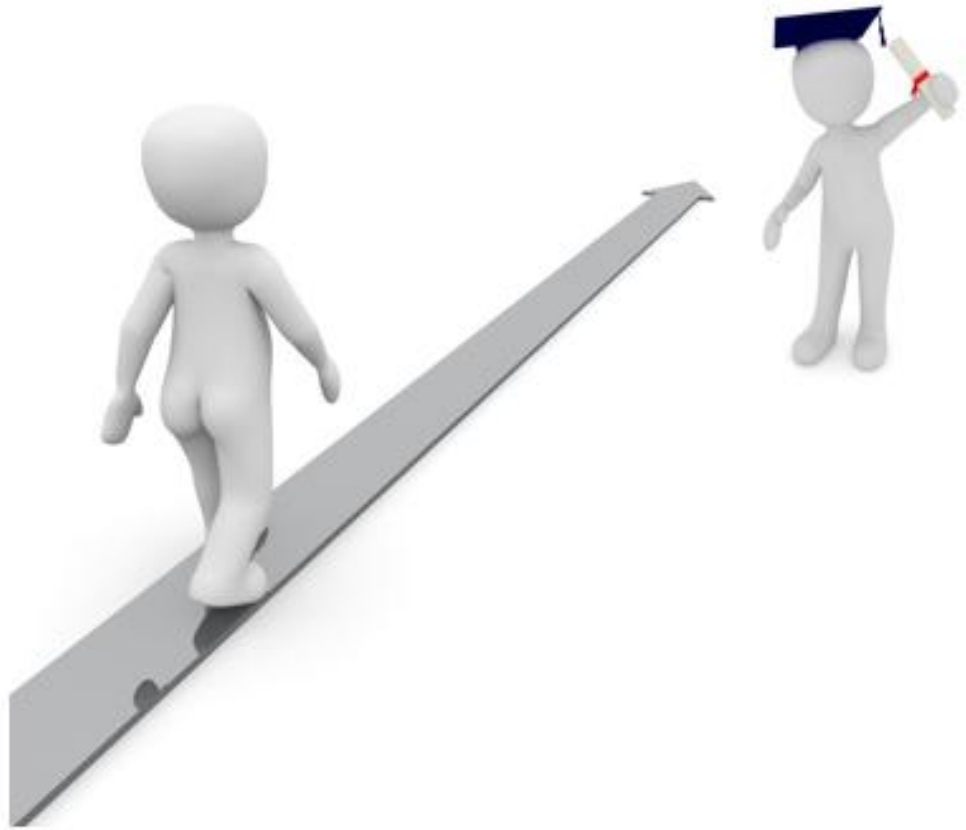
Goal focus model

Drawing out the person's choices for where they want to get to, **defining their goals to achieve,** by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals. **Using challenges to limit options for goals. Setting out the steps for the person to take.**

Assigning the steps for the person to take toward their goals **as an action-taker.**

Goal focus model – up ahead of the person



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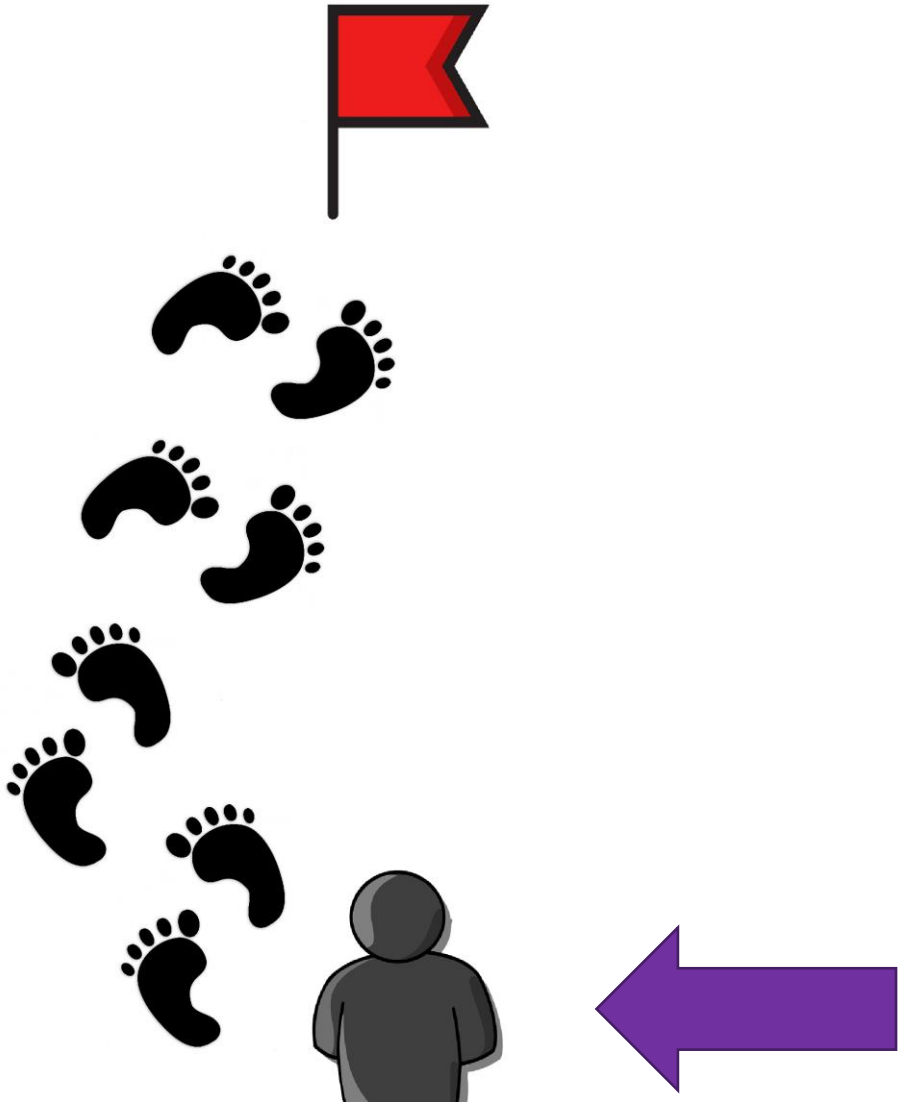
Process focus model – focus is with the person



Process focus model

Drawing out the person's choices for **how to take steps forward** to where they want to get to, by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals. **Collaborating with the person to check challenges and options.**

Supporting the person to be a choice-maker over the steps to take toward their goals.

Process focus model – staying with the person

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Example - John & Trains

John goes to a day service.

He has a book with pictures of trains.

He has been telling support workers he wants to get a job as a train driver.

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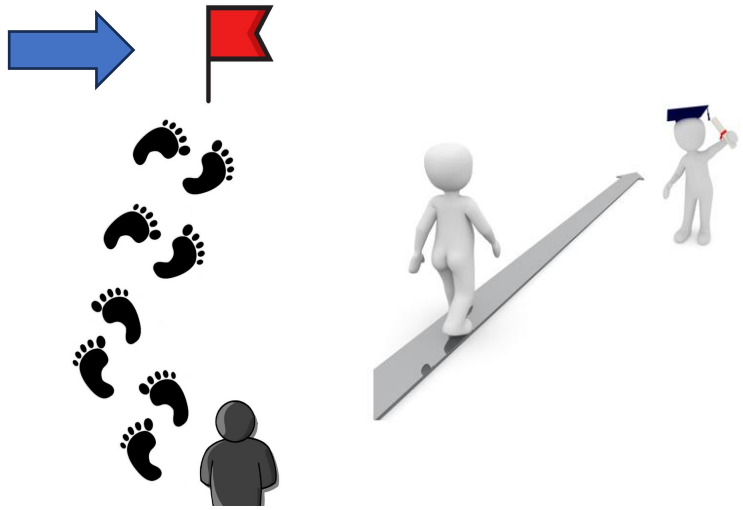
Goal focus model: John (1)



Drawing out the person's choices for where they want to get to, **defining their goals to achieve,** by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Caring about John and wanting to support him to become a train driver.

Getting to know how John communicates.

Looking for John's choices for where to get to, defining his goal to achieve:

- Does he want to drive metro or country trains? How many hours does he want?

Prioritising John achieving his goal safely over his other choices (how to be supported, steps to take)

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Goal focus model: John (2)

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals. **Using challenges to limit options for goals. Setting out the steps for the person to take.**

Is John's goal achievable? Is it safe? Does it fit my role to help him?

Setting out the steps to take based on this review of challenges.

Goal is not safe or not achievable

We'll adjust it to something achievable for John, close to his goal. He could drive the train ride for children.

Goal does not fit workers role

I can't support John with this one. It's not funded. I will refer him to an employment agency.

Goal is safe and achievable

I will support John with this. He will do assessments, learn skills, and I will sit with him to apply for jobs.

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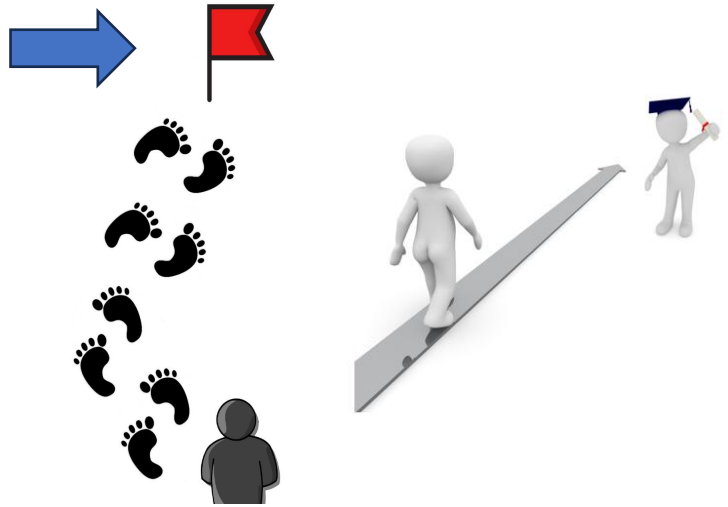
Goal focus model: John (3)



Assigning the steps for the person to take toward their goals **as an action-taker.**

Example – If John's goal is refined to driving the train ride for children, letting John know the steps to do like write an application or make phone calls.

"I'd start with maybe writing an email, but have John with me … he's also participating in the activity of seeing where it can go rather than me just in my own time make some phone calls or type a letter up." (Jeannie)

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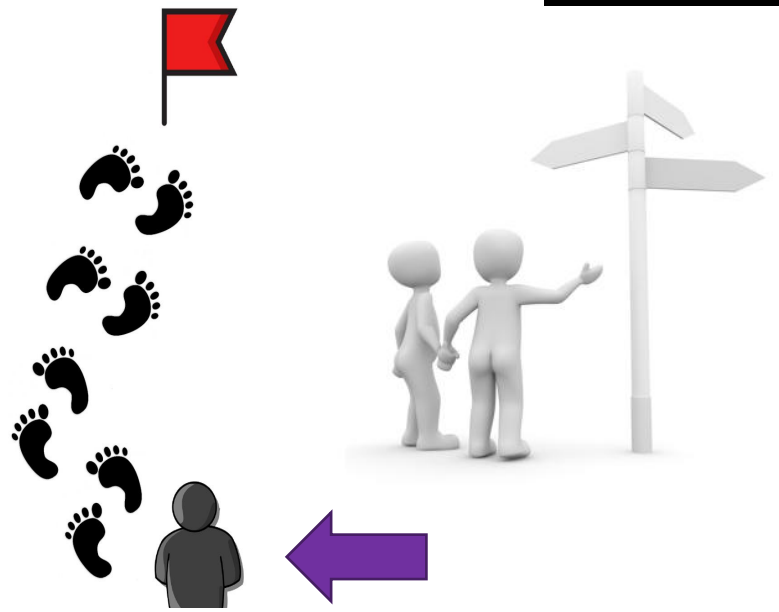
Process focus model: John (1)



Drawing out the person's choices for **how to take steps forward** to where they want to get to, by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Caring about John and wanting to support him to become a train driver.

Getting to know how John communicates.

Looking for John's choices for how to step forward:

- Does he want to drive metro or country trains? How many hours?
- What does John want to do to get started? How does he want me to support him?
- Who else does John want to be involved to help him?
- How does John himself want to be involved?

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Process focus model: John (2)

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals.
Collaborating with the person to check challenges and options.

Is John's goal achievable? Is it safe? Does it fit my role to help him?

Taking the answers to these to bring to John for collaboration.

Goal is not safe or not achievable

What does John want if the job is out of reach? How does he want me to respond?

Goal does not fit workers role

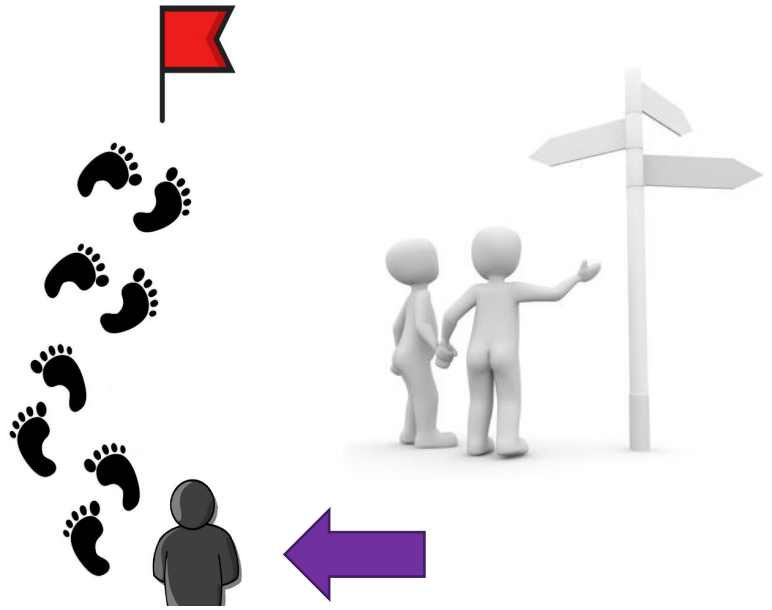
If I can't support John with this, who does he want involved? Is he open to an employment agency?

Goal is safe and achievable

What options will John want to see to get started? What does he want me to do?

Process focus model: John (3)

Supporting the person to be a choice-maker over the steps to take toward their goals.



John chooses the steps to take - what parts he will do and how, what parts he wants workers and other supporters to do and how, and how he wants to be supported.

I would even say, 'How would you want me to support you if that were the eventuality?' (Karen)

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Doing the same things, but in different ways

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What do we mean by supporting choice?

Caring about the person and wanting to support them to make their own choices.

Drawing out the person's choices for where they want to get to, **defining their goals to achieve,** by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Drawing out the person's choices for **how to take steps forward** to where they want to get to, by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

- Is it defining the person's goal and working backward to give them steps,
- Or is it stepping forward with the person and supporting choices over steps?

Saying 'supporting choice' is not clear enough.

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What do we mean by knowing the person?

Caring about the person and wanting to support them to make their own choices.

Drawing out the person's choices for where they want to get to, **defining their goals to achieve,** by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

Drawing out the person's choices for **how to take steps forward** to where they want to get to, by knowing them well in a trusting relationship.

- Is it knowing the person's goals, and using a trusted relationship with them to explain adjustments and steps to take,
- Or is it knowing the person's goals and knowing how they want to be supported, and using a trusting relationship with them to explain the challenges to collaborate on together?

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Querying abilities – different ways

Querying the person's abilities to know how to support them

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals. **Using challenges to limit options for goals. Setting out the steps for the person to take.**

Reviewing challenges and options for the person's goals. **Collaborating with the person to check challenges and options.**

- Is it limiting people's options because of their disability,
- Or is it letting the person know what will be difficult for them so it can be worked through together?

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Implications

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Process focus model supports choice better

The **process focus model** leads to better understanding of the whole of what the person wants. Not just where the person wants to get to but how they want to be supported along the way.

The **goal focus model** involves assuming choices for people about the steps to take toward their goals. People may not want what workers assume, not even to do things as independently as possible. People need choice over how much independence they have, based on what is meaningful to them (Abery and Stancliffe, 2003).

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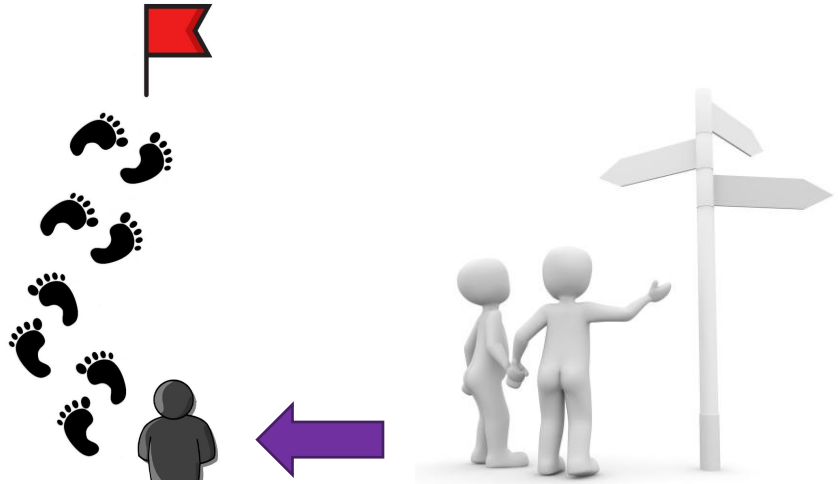
Good support for choices



Use the process focus model:

Looking beyond which thing a person wants to do / achieve

- Looking for how the person wants this to happen
- Looking for how the person wants to be involved and supported

Staying with the person to know how they want to step forward.

The person is at the centre of choosing how things happen.

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Do goals get in the way of good support for choices?

- Not exactly.
- Focusing too much on people's goals gets in the way of good support for their choices.

Do NDIS goals get in the way of good support for choices?

- The NDIS has a big focus on goals – this could be leading support workers into using a goal focus model.
- The NDIS doesn't support all of people's goals – only the types they fund and what people put in their plan earlier.
- People with intellectual disabilities need to get support with their own choices for stepping forward in whatever ways they want to go in life, but the NDIS funding doesn't match this.

References / notes

Abery, B. H., & Stancliffe, R. J. (2003). A tripartite theory of self-determination. In M. L. Wehmeyer, B. H. Abery, D. E. Mithaug, & R. J. Stancliffe (Eds.), *Theory in self-determination: foundations for educational practice* (pp. 43-78). Charles C Thomas.

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Contact

To ask anything about the Process Focus Model:

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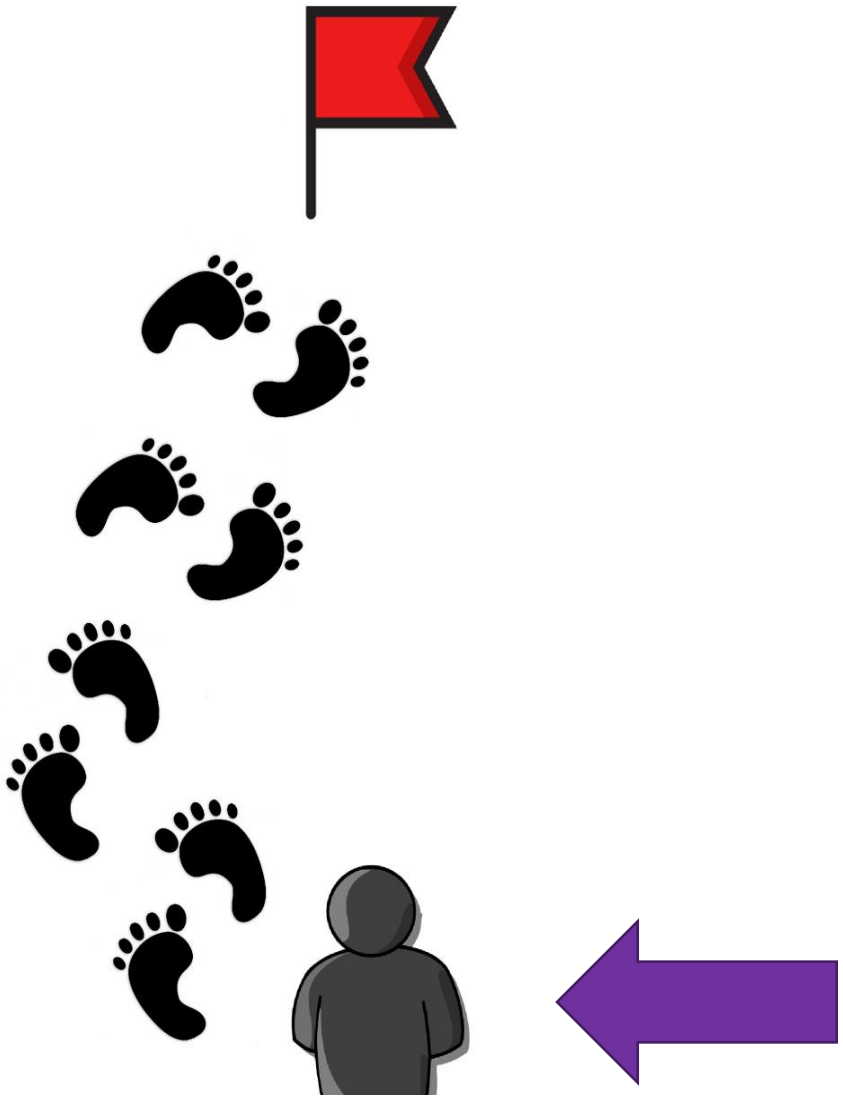

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