

Patience Is Not Simply the Ability to Wait, It's How We Behave While We're Waiting.

Before I moved to St. Cloud in 2012, I was living in Mankato, and while there, I had my own social worker from Blue Earth County. When I told her I had landed a job as a peer mentor, helping clients with varying disabilities achieve more independence in their lives. She then said something which I thought sounded strange at the time. She said, "Just make sure you don't work harder than your clients." At the time, I didn't know what she meant by this, but after working at Independent Lifestyles, for a time, I quickly found out what she meant. After I left Independent Lifestyles in 2018 and came to the IRTS, it was implied I don't work harder than the clients. I agree with this approach because I feel like everyone can do things to make themselves more independent in their lives. But this approach was challenged when I came to the ACT team in 2022.

At the ACT team, it seemed to me we often, at times, work harder than the clients by taking them to appointments, grocery shopping, etc. At the time, I was frustrated because I felt everyone should take part in their own independence and do some simple things alone. I talked to my supervisor about it, and she said that often on the ACT team, we help the clients by strongly encouraging them to take care of tasks. She made me realize that while it is our job to encourage them to help themselves whenever possible, it's also essential to meet clients where they are and recognize the small victories when clients have them.

While some of the clients' victories may seem small to most people, they are sometimes huge to the clients. While I still struggle with not working harder than the clients' thoughts, I must remind myself that I also had my own personal struggles I have had to deal with. I must remind myself that while I might perceive something as small, it can be life-changing for the client. It's taught me that while I might have to patiently wait for a client to change their ways, it's also important to meet them where they are at.