ELICIA: Now I would like to introduce our presenter Debbie Hindle who has had a variety of roles in the tertiary disability sector through the University of Tasmania including as an NDCO and a Disability Advisor. Debbie is currently coordinating a specialist peer mentor program for students on the autism spectrum and is an ADCET Project Officer. Just as I hand over to Deb, I’d also like to thank our interpreters and our captioners for captioning and interpreting this session today. Over to you, Debbie.

DEBBIE HINDLE: Thank you, Elicia. Greetings from lutrawita and I’d like to acknowledge our traditional owners of the land and the traditional owners of the land on which you are all meeting or sitting in front of your Zooms. What an honour to be here as part of one of the first little workshops for Pathways 15. I want to start with a confession. The other day a couple of things didn’t go well at work in the afternoon. Someone said something and it kind of was stewing away in my stomach and then at the end of the day at 5 o’clock, and these days I just turn off my computer and Zoom and tried to get on with my evening, but it just was sitting there and I was going around and around about the issue in my mind, why did they say that, did I do the right thing, oh, I should have done that instead, all of those self-criticisms, negative messages that we give ourselves. You know what, I kind of knew what I needed to do was go for a walk, clear my brain or do a bit of a mindfulness practice or think about all the good things that actually also happened in the day because overall it wasn’t that bad a day but I just got caught in what didn’t go well and we can. I think with wellbeing whether it be our thoughts, our physical wellbeing, our emotional wellbeing, what we eat, how much we move, generally we know what’s good for us, what we could be doing or should be doing instead but we don’t and we find it really hard to make those changes that we need. I’m going to share with you this presentation about how do we make those changes easily. Can making change be as easy as ABC and this is to help you with your wellbeing but also to kind of be a little bit more nuanced and understanding about how you might be able to help others too in their challenges with making change. It’s based on the work from BJ Fogg from Stanford University who’s had hundreds of hours of working out what helps people change. It’s based on the work of BJ Fogg and his work from the behaviour lab at Stanford Uni coaching others and working with students and his book Tiny Habits: The Small Changes that Change Everything. I want you to think for a minute how often do you have lots of great ideas for positive change and new habits like you get so enthusiastic, yes, I’m going to do this, I’m going to do that and you set good intentions that start well but then they just gradually peter out over time or you make New Year resolutions and somehow those New Year resolutions don’t even make it past the 2nd January let alone to the end of January. I’m going to ask to launch the poll now and if you’ve ever failed at any attempts at making positive change I want you to vote “yes” and if you’ve kind of got it right all the time then you can say “no”. We’ll launch that poll, have you ever failed in an attempt to make some positive changes in your life. Oh, I ended there too quickly. I’ll relaunch it, have you ever failed at an attempt to make some positive changes in your life. It looks like I’m not the only one. We’ve got about 100% in agreeance with us. Sometimes it’s this kind of ultra amazing person that goes “No”, but generally yes. One way or the other despite knowing what’s good for our wellbeing we all make – we just find it difficult to get over the line. So, what goes wrong or what’s the impact actually, what’s the impact? We start with good intentions and it doesn’t quite happen. Actually, what it does it leaves us feeling that we’re no good at change, “Other people can do this all right but yeah not me. It might be I just might be too slack, I’m never organised enough, I’m just too lazy, there’s always something good on the TV that seems a better idea, I’m not motivated enough, I just don’t have the willpower.” How often do you hear people say or hear yourself say, “I just don’t have the willpower I need to make that change.” But what if it’s not the willpower that’s the problem, what if it’s not us that gets in the way of us making change. Maybe what we need and what we lack is a good technique and some skills and a bit of a formula, especially one that’s backed up from science. That’s what I will share today. We can often think it’s us but maybe it isn’t, but before we do that let’s just think about what goes wrong. We often rely too much on our willpower and our motivation. We can set our intention when our willpower and enthusiasm is really high, “Yes, I am, I’m going to run 10 kilometres every day, no problem, I can do that.”, and we set that intention when it’s really high or, “I’m going to meditate for 20 minutes in the morning. I’m going to get up, have breakfast and then meditate, yes I want to do it.”, so our motivation is high then but it may not last the distance, or we aim too high too fast. We go, “Yep, I’m going to meditate for 20 minutes after breakfast. I can find 20 minutes in my morning, easy.”, or, “I’m going to run 10 kilometres a day, I can do that, that’s fine. I want to make these big changes.” We think that actually if we want to make changes and we need these massive actions, we need to make these things really big because that’s the only way that we’re going to get to our goals, but actually it’s the small things that matter and especially when we’re making change or we don’t anchor the changes into our day, so “Somehow in the morning I’m going to meditate. I haven’t really actually said quite where.”, or, “I’m just going to run 10 kilometres a day. Somewhere in my day that will happen.” I don’t anchor it into an existing routine so there’s nothing to prompt me or remind me that I need to do that. That’s one of the other things. I’ll go into what happens when we don’t anchor it because if we don’t anchor it it doesn’t happen. That first point, we rely on our motivation and willpower. The trouble is with our motivation and willpower, as I started to say before, we can be really enthusiastic, can be high like on the crest of a wave but actually our motivation and willpower is pretty unreliable. It goes up and down like a wave and it gets torn and worn out. In fact our willpower is like a muscle and it does get worn out and the more we use it the more it gets worn out or the more tired we are, so if you want to introduce new changes it’s probably better off to do it early in the morning or at a time of the day when you are less tired because if you’re trying to do something new at night and using your willpower to get that happening it’s going to be harder to do it. The other thing is that we often set goals for change that are really vague, “I want to get healthier.” That’s nice but you don’t actually get up the next day and get healthier. You might get up the next day and you might walk 5000 steps, you might eat fresh fruit and vegetables and you might actually get up after eight hours sleep but you don’t get up and be more healthy. We actually set goals about our aspirations, about things that we want to happen and sometimes, which makes it even harder for us, we set our goals for change around things that we think that we ought to do but we don’t really want to do it, “I think I should actually eat more vegetables even though I don’t like vegetables but I’m going to set a goal and then I’m going to do it.” Our motivation and willpower find it really hard to help us achieve those changes when it’s too vague and/or we think we ought to do it rather than want to do it.

ELICIA: Sorry, Deb, it’s Elicia here.

DEBBIE: Are you seeing my notes?

ELICIA: We are. Are you able to change your presentation to the slide show mode?

DEBBIE: That’s really unfortunate that you’re seeing my notes. It should be on the slide show. That’s what it is normally when I do it, but we just have a Pathways presentation. I’m going to stop sharing and then I’ll try sharing again.

ELICIA: Thank you.

DEBBIE: Hello, everyone. I’m going to try and share again, share. Did that work?

ELICIA: Perfect, thank you.

DEBBIE: Thank you and that’s all I did, stopped sharing and shared again. So, what’s that magic formula that I mentioned before, what has BJ Fogg about making change through his behaviour lab? He’s come up with this really easy formula to remember, well I can remember it. It’s actually B equals MAP. B is behaviour and behaviour only happens when our motivation, so our willingness to do something and our ability, so that’s how easy it is to do and a prompt, something in our environment, some routine or some trigger from what we think or what we see or what we hear prompts us to do the behaviour and all of those three things need to be there at the same time and if they’re not then chances are the behaviour won’t happen, in fact not chances are but he suggests that behaviour will not happen, so the motivation, the ability and the prompt they all need to be there at the same time. For example, the other day I thought I need to get out and go for a walk and clear my brain. That in itself, the prompt might have actually been me thinking that and going okay, whenever I hear myself say, “I need to get out for a walk and clear the brain then I’m going to take action.”, but maybe I just didn’t link hearing myself say that thought as a prompt so I didn’t act on it. My motivation could have been pretty low, it was the end of the day, I was tired, I was winding down so that was really low and the ability or how easy was it to go out for a walk. As this slide suggests there’s an image of three circles in a cylinder and all pointing down to behaviour at the bottom, so the three circles in the cylinder one is motivation, one is ability and one is prompt and they all need to get together at the same time or happen at the same time for us to make behaviour, firstly change our behaviour. Behaviour equals motivation, ability and prompt. When our motivation is high, so when we just set that intention, “I am going to go out for a walk and I’m going to do it at 5 o’clock every day.”, so we’ve got that prompt, that really specific prompt, 5 o’clock, our motivation is really high. In this image it’s those three circles again in the funnel pointing down to behaviour but this time motivation is the biggest circle by far, ability is still the same size circle and prompt is a little bit bigger. That would lead to behaviour change when our motivation is really high but remember our motivation ebbs and flows, it’s a bit like a wave, it goes up and down, so we can’t rely on it. It’s terribly unreliable especially when we do things like a little bit vague. Behaviour equals motivation, ability and prompt and what we can do to cope with that motivation monkey is to make ability as big as it can be. We’ve got the same funnel of three circles in this image all with an arrow pointing down to behaviour but the motivation circle is quite smaller and the ability one is huge. The prompt is the same size. If we make that ability circle as big as we can which means we make it as easy to do as possible then we can take into account our motivation circle may not be very big. I like to give the example of donating to the Koala Wildlife Fund. Say you go to your local shopping centre and there’s a table sitting outside by the entrance and they’re asking for donations to the koala fund. You’re pretty motivated to donate to the Save the Koala Fund. You remember seeing images on the television of koalas with burnt paws and their habitat had been devastated so it’s something that resonates really strongly. You go up to the table and they say, “Thank you for wanting to donate. The only way you can donate is to go to the Commonwealth Bank in the neighbouring town. It’s about 15 minutes in the car. It’s only 15 minutes in your car. You can get there and just make the donation of cash across the counter and thank you for your donation.” You might donate but you might not because they’ve actually just made it really hard for you, so if you revisit that scenario, you’re visiting your local shopping centre there’s a Save the Koala Fund table out the front. You go up to it, you’re really motivated to donate and they say, “Yes, that’s so easy. We’ve got an iPad that we use to take electronic donations or if you want to give us cash we’ve got a receipt book here as well.”, so they’ve made it very, very easy and chances are you’ll donate to the Save the Koala Fund. Just in that way how we design behaviour change, we’re more or less likely to do it or not. We often think that our repetition creates change and creates habits like the more things that we’re going to do, the more times that we repeat something then the more likely it is to become a habit. BJ Fogg says it’s not repetition that creates habits, actually we change best when we feel good not when we feel bad. That making it easier to do for us helps us feel good and wanting to do things that we want to do. We actually change best also when we help ourselves feel successful, when we turn the behaviour into super tiny and simple habits that means that we can do it without thinking about it, we don’t need to rely on our willpower and it just happens when we get that prompt. When you’re making something, we’re increasing the ability, our ability to do something make it super tiny and when you’re trying to make it super tiny consider if it’s tiny enough. The mental effort, how much do we have to think about it. If we have to put in a lot of mental effort it may not happen. What about the physical effort? If we’ve got to take a lot of physical effort it may not happen as well. The time, you know, we’re all time poor. We’ve got lots of things happening in our lives so if we make it really quick and easy to do then we’re more likely to do it if it makes it easier for us at least when we’re starting off that way and if it doesn’t take much money too. If you’re considering making change is it tiny enough, how much mental effort, physical effort, time and money might it take. That’s the ability part of it, so remember behaviour is motivation, ability and prompt. This slide now looks at the prompts and consider what prompts do you already use and it’s best to find one that fits into the new habit, somewhere that makes sense where you want to aim for it so it fits into your daily routine really well or say maybe you’re reminded by something coming on television, the news coming on television or you’re reminded when it’s 9 o’clock and you need to start for your day or you’re reminded by an internal mind trigger, the way that you think about something triggers, “Okay, I’ve had a bad day. I feel really kind of low. I need to re-energise, therefore I’m going for a walk. The internal mind trigger is noticing that I’m feeling low.” There are lots of things in our day that we can use as prompts if we think about it. This next slide looks at some prompts. It could be turning your computer on, sitting down at your desk, starting your lunch break, filling the kettle with water. The people I work with find filling the kettle with water is a good way of introducing a new change because you fill the kettle with water, then you’re turning the kettle on. That’s the next one I want to talk about. Then you’ve got about two or three minutes where you can do change, you can do some squats by your benchtop or you can do some lunges or you can do mindfulness practice, do lots of different things. Arriving at work, brushing your teeth in the morning, ordering your morning coffee, noticing that you’re feeling worried, all sorts of different prompts in our day that you could use to introduce a new change. Think about a prompt that suits the new behaviour. It’s no use wanting to introduce a behaviour of walking 5000 steps before work if the prompt is when you arrive at work or when you sit down at your desk then you’re going to do something towards that and doesn’t quite work, but it might work if you’re sitting down at your desk and setting the intention of how you’re going to be that day or setting your intention of which strength that you want to play with that day. That’s the new behaviour that fits with that prompt. Remember emotions create habit, so the other thing that’s really important to BJ Fogg’s tiny habits things is to create some really micro celebrations that you do right at the moment to celebrate, to wire a new behaviour into your brain. Often one of the mistakes we also make with creating change we’ll go, “Okay, well, if I’ve walked 3000 steps by Friday then I’m going to go out for tea to celebrate or I’m going to go to the movies to celebrate or if at the end of the week I’ve lost one kilo then I’m going to ring up my best friend and boast.”, so that delays it. What we need are those little micro celebrations that happen whenever you do a new behaviour to really get it into your brain. Some of those micro celebrations, even clicking your fingers or giving yourself the thumbs up or humming a favourite tune or telling yourself, “Well done, you.”, or wink at yourself in the mirror or imagine a fireworks display or saying to yourself, “Whoo-hoo.”, or high five in the air or a huge stretch. All those things sound really simple but they get a whole mixture of really positive neurotransmitters happening in our brain and just rewards us for that good behaviour. That good behaviour is the behaviour that we want to introduce and if you think about it sometimes even your bad habits will have been introduced with some kind of feel good consequences for doing them. One of my little tiny habits is, regardless of what else is happening, I will always have three mindfulness breaths in the middle of my dog walking time, when I sit on the bench taking in the view, doing some appreciation of where I’m at and then do some really nice three deep mindfulness breaths, do my little mantra which is I have life and I give life. Then when I finish, I get up from the bench and I go, “Got it.”, and I did that quite markedly when I first introduced it but now I don’t have to do it all the time because that habit is so wired into my brain I can’t even pass by the bench without thinking of sitting there and doing some mindfulness breaths.

ELICIA: Five minutes.

DEBBIE: Thank you. Has anyone got any ideas for some good little micro celebrations that they could introduce into their day to reinforce a habit, to create a new habit, put them in chat. I can’t see any chat. That’s okay, I’ll move on. Just think about it. I think take away that principle that if you’re doing change think about teeing it with a little micro celebration in the moment, it will be much stronger.

ELICIA: We’ve got some lovely suggestions in the chat. I’m not sure if you can see them but everything from quick happy dances to keeping chocolate at people’s desks.

DEBBIE: Yeah. I don’t think I can see them. Thanks for sharing that, Elicia. Chocolate is a good one. You’ve got to be careful then that you don’t create a habit. The happy dances are really good, Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, a little heel click together. Bringing that all together there’s this really lovely ABC recipe and hence the title of this presentation, Can Making Change Be as Easy as ABC. When you’re looking at a prompt it’s really important to get it very specific and one way to do that is to say “after I”, so the “a” is the “after I”. This is a habits ABC recipe, “a” after “I”, so “after I do something” and that will anchor your new behaviour into an existing routine in your life that will remind you to take the action, so “after I clean my teeth I’ll remind myself of five people that I need to say thank you to.”, or, “after I close my diary at the end of the day that will remind me to think of three people that I’m going to say thank you to.”, or, “after I see the bench seat that reminds me I’m going to go over there and do three mindfulness breaths.” The B is the “I will”, so it’s the behaviour. B is for the behaviour, so “after I clean my teeth” then there’s new behaviour, the new habit that you want but you scale it back to make it super tiny and super easy so you’re more likely to do it. I start with three mindfulness breaths but of course I’ll do more mindfulness breaths through that and I want to do it but at the moment I’m making it super tiny and super easy and then I celebrate. C is for celebrate, celebrate is immediately what you do after you do your new change or your new behaviour to create positive emotions, to wire it into your brain and make it a habit so you don’t have to think about doing it, it will just come naturally. Just imagine looking after our wellbeing with something that consisted of a whole series of habits because after all we’ve got lots of habits in our lives. What you do is you design your habit for your toughest days, the really hard days when you’re really busy, when you’re at your most stressed and you feel you’re least motivated and if you design it for those kinds of days then you’re more likely to do it when you’re better, when the days are good. If you design your days and you make it super tiny so it fits into those days and then you can just stretch it out and they will grow. Just to recap, we actually change best when we help ourselves do what we already want to do, so it’s a good reminder for ourselves when we’re making change but also when we’re trying to support others to make change or wanting others to change, that really we change best when we want to do what we already want to do. We help ourselves to feel successful along the way by putting in some micro celebrations and also making it super easy and super tiny to do, so we change best when we create super tiny little habits. If there’s a new wellbeing habit that you’d like to create whether it be mindfulness practice, looking at what you eat, getting exercise more or doing some wellbeing interventions to look after yourself, a bit of self care, you can take the free tiny habit five day challenge that BJ Fogg has on the tiny habits website. That’s https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/OcOWCD1jB7fkz1M4f5bVlq?domain=tinyhabits.com. You register there, five days, put it in. You’ll even actually get a coach contact you every day saying, “How are you going?” You put your ABC recipe in and see how it goes.

ELICIA: We’ll have to leave it there. We’re right on time. I think that’s pretty good timing from you.