



Create the Vision: Planning for the Future Guidance for Parents* of Young Adults with ASD

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What we really want for our children with ASD is that they are happy and safe as adults, just as we want this for ourselves or for our other children. We want them to have a life rich with meaning, purpose, productivity and people! Even if it is hard to imagine how it will all work, we want our children with ASD to grow up to be part of our community and have great experiences like others their age. We want to help them achieve their own goals and dreams.

Creating the Vision needs to be a first step in transition planning: Picture and describe what this happy, safe, good life will look like! Whether or not the person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder can express his ideas, be sure he gets what everyone else wants: a high quality of life that includes the most independent possible living arrangements, with dignified supports as needed, meaningful work and income, satisfying relationships and a sense of belonging, a way to make a contribution to the community, activities for fun and leisure, a healthy mind and body, and transportation, a way to get where they are going! The vision of the future is a guide to create an effective transition plan to reach the goals, connect with resources, and make the vision a reality.

Parents can create the first version of the vision on your own, or with your young adult. Whether or not the young adult with ASD seems to understand or respond, make and talk about the plan with him, as you would with anyone else. Let him know that you have high hopes for a good life for him, and will be doing everything possible to help make it happen. Write it down. Draw pictures and diagrams to show it. Talk about it.

You will then want to continue to discuss and refine the vision with teachers, staff and other professionals who are involved in transition planning and other practical aspects of the transition to adulthood. Share the vision as it evolves with other family members and important "others," so that they can see where they would like to fit in to the picture. Sharing the vision gets everyone on the same page, working for the same outcomes.

Where is the person with ASD going in life?

We can compare planning for “life’s journey” like planning for a vacation. Where do we want to go? What do we need to get there? What do we already have? What else do we need? How and where will we get it? The transition plan for a young adult with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (or any other disability) considers what skills and abilities the person has, what he or she needs to learn to be “ready for life,” and how/where to get needed services and supports to create a safe and happy future!

Considerations in the PLAN= Quality of Life

To **Create the Vision**, think about the kind of life you want for your child or family member with ASD. Think about the kind of life your child or family member with ASD wants for himself. Ask, and perhaps he can tell you. Consider where the person will live, what work he will do (or how he will be financially secure), who will be the important people in his life, what he will do for fun, and how he will contribute or give back to the community. Revisit and tweak as needed!

Consider, discuss and plan for these points in each domain:

LIVING: Picture and describe of the type of home living situation that would work for the person and meet his needs.

- What kind of environment or location would be best?(rural vs. urban, apartment vs. house with a yard, close to public transportation, walking distance to a swimming pool or family member, etc.)
- Who will he live with? (People with or without disabilities, of the same or different age, relatives or non-relatives, one person or several others, etc.)
- What strengths and abilities can the young person bring to a household?
- What social expectations, social/communication skills and boundaries will he need to learn for the living environment?
- What other skills need to be taught to help the person live comfortably, cleanly, and safely in the household?

WORK: Picture and describe options for work that he could learn to do.

- What kinds of workers are needed in the community?
- What jobs (volunteer or paid) would contribute to the well being of the community?
- What skills and interests does he already have?
- What jobs are a good match to his unique skills and interests and can generate an income?
- How can some favorite or “highly focused” interests become employment skills?
- What social expectations, social/communication skills and boundaries will he need to learn for the workplace?
- What other skills need to be taught to help him be productive, safe, and successful in the workplace?

- What opportunities and training are needed to help prepare him for work? (meaningful career exploration, job shadowing, internship, training programs, etc.)

RECREATION and LEISURE: Picture and describe activities and interests the person has or an develop for fun, fitness and friends

- What are his current interests? Who else can he share these with? What places do others go who share the same interests?
- Who in the young adult's life would be willing to expose him to new recreation and leisure activities?
- What safety rules will he need to learn in order to participate in leisure time activities?
- What social expectations, social/communication skills and boundaries will he need to learn in order to participate in leisure time activities?
- What other skills need to be taught to help him be successful and have fun in recreational environments?

IMPORTANT PEOPLE: Picture and describe relationships with people who want to be part of this person's life, and those who need to be part of the person's life in the future

- Who are the people who want to remain connected to the person with ASD, throughout their lifetimes?
- Who might become "natural supports," people are interested in the person but are not currently involved in his life on a regular basis?
- What kind of paid staff might be needed to support the person, and where/how can we find them?
- What social skills does he already have that can help create a successful social life?
- What social expectations, social/communication skills and boundaries will he need to learn in order to form and maintain relationships?
- What social or behavioral characteristics may be preventing the development of social relationships? Make a plan to teach alternate social behavior.
- How can we help others understand and accept the person's social, communication, behavioral or sensory differences?
- How can we educate family members, school peers, etc to encourage friendship and social inclusion?

Contribution: Picture and describe ways the person can give to the community and contribute to the well-being of others

- What work that needs to be done in the community or neighborhood?
- What areas of interest and skill does the person have that would be helpful to others?
- What organizations or groups need volunteers to do work that is matched to the person's interests and skills?
- How can he help others at home, school and in the community on a regular basis?
- What safety rules will he need to learn in order to participate in community service activities?

- What social expectations, social/communication skills and boundaries will he need to learn in order to participate in community service activities?
- What other skills need to be taught to help him be successful community service environments?

NOTE: The words “he,” “his,” and “himself” are used here for simplicity. Think “she,” “her,” and herself as appropriate! We know that there are many types of families, so when we say “parent,” think caregiver, grandparent, sibling, etc., as fitting to your situation. When we say “young adult,” we are discussing those who are still in the planning process for transition to adulthood. It is clear that the considerations discussed here may also apply to adults of all ages, including those who are already living outside the family home. Finally, the information may also be helpful in planning for adults with other diagnoses or conditions as well as “typical” young people and adults.