

UBC Anxiety Stress and Autism Program

A Transition to Adulthood Resource Guide for Autistic Youth and their Caregivers



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Using This Resource Guide

This guide is meant to help autistic youth and their caregivers learn more about the transition to adulthood and coping with the changes that can occur during this time. Although the focus of this guide is primarily about the transition from adolescence to adulthood, there are also providers and resources recommended that may also be helpful for other behavioural, emotional, social, and environmental concerns that can co-occur during this transitional period. The first portion of this guide (page 1) provides some background information about the transition from adolescence to adulthood, as well as areas of life that may be impacted or factors to consider during this period. The second portion (pages 2-5) contains resources to help individuals and families deal with transition-related challenges.

What is the Transition to Adulthood?

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a period of time that can bring about significant changes across social, emotional, psychological, and physiological domains. During this transitional time, youth progress towards independence and autonomy, and learn to adapt to new environments, routines, and relationships. Common transitions that autistic youth and their families may experience include accessing new healthcare supports, applying for different funding sources, and making decisions about post-secondary education, employment, or independent living, among others. Transitions can be exciting, confusing, overwhelming, or all of the above; but luckily, there are many resources to help with this process.

Factors to Consider During the Transition to Adulthood

Though not an exhaustive list, below are some common factors that can impact or pose challenges during the transition to adulthood.

Navigating Social Interactions & Relationships

- Developing friendships
- Maintaining and developing a support network
- Joining clubs & activities

Academic Demands

- Time management/multitasking
- Planning
- Organization
- Course selection/workload

Mental Health

- Managing stress
- Autistic burnout
- Sense of belonging/inclusion
- Managing mental health concerns (e.g., anxiety, depression, ADHD)

Coping with Independence

- Leaving home
- Navigating transit
- Cooking
- Budgeting

Adapting to New or Different...

- Places
- Expectations
- Routines
- People

Navigating the Healthcare System

- New healthcare service models
- Seeking different clinicians and health professionals
- Changes in funding eligibility for healthcare and social services

Transition Planning Guides and Toolkits

Listed below are several **transition planning tools** to assist autistic youth and their families in planning for the future and reaching personalised goals— whether that be geared towards furthering education, finding employment, navigating the healthcare system, or seeking out different funding sources.

[Transitioning into Adulthood Q & A](#)

By AutismBC

- A question and answer blog post providing guidance for autistic youth and their families on transitioning to adulthood.
- Autism BC's post also includes links to many helpful resources and organizations geared toward autistic adults.

[Transition to Adulthood Hub](#)

By Autism Community Training (ACT)

- A guide that provides several resources for autistic youth and their caregivers to plan for the transition to adulthood.

[Making Transition Decisions](#)

By the National Autistic Society

- A blog post on how to start making transition planning decisions.

[Find Support BC - Transitions Timeline](#)

By findSupport BC

- An interactive tool to help youth and their family identify and consider various transition needs at different stages of life, from birth to 25 years of age.

[Transition Planning Guide for Students and Parents/Caregivers \(14-19 yrs\)](#)

By InclusionBC

- A guidebook that covers a variety of topics related to transitions such as post-secondary school, employment, funding changes, and housing.

[Launch Into Life Fillable Planning Worksheets](#)

By the Sinneave Foundation

- A fillable worksheet developed to assist autistic youth in preparing and planning for life as an adult.

Resource Guides and Programs: Transition to Adulthood

Below are several resources that autistic youth and their family may find useful in learning about and supporting mental health and well-being, fostering interpersonal relationships, and preparing for future employment and education. These can be important areas to consider as youth enter adulthood and navigate new relationships, environments, and responsibilities with growing independence.

Mental Health

- [Mental Health Literacy Guide for Autism](#). From the Autism Mental Health Literacy Project (AM-HeLP) Group. The guide provides information about factors that affect autistic adults' mental health; the creators also produced an animated [YouTube series](#) focused on autistic adults' mental health.
- **Autistic Burnout**: During the transition to adulthood, autistic young people may experience burnout, which can have an impact on physical and psychological well-being. To learn more about autistic burnout and how to identify and cope with it, [check out this article](#) by Dr. Dora Raymaker on the National Autistic Society website and this [PDF guide](#) by the Autistic Women and Non Binary Network .
- [Depression and Autism: A Youth to Youth Guide to Coping and Getting Help](#). A resource for supporting autistic youth with depression prepared by CAMH | Cundill Centre for Child and Youth Depression. Separate information sheets are available for autistic youth, caregivers, mental health professionals, and primary care providers.
- [Anxiety - guides for autistic adults, parents and carers, and professionals](#). By the UK National Autistic Society. This webpage offers resources for anxious autistic individuals and their caregivers.

Social

- [Peers Program for Adults](#). An evidence-based social skills program designed to help autistic young adults (ages 18-30) make and keep friends and work on conversation skills, navigating conversations with peers, developing friendships/ romantic relationships, and more.
- [Getting Together on the Spectrum](#). From Autism BC. This group provides autistic adults with the opportunity to meet other autistic individuals in a welcoming and non-judgemental environment.

Post Secondary Education/Employment

- [Employment and Community Studies \(EACS\)](#). A program offered through Kwantlen Polytechnic University that helps disabled students prepare for employment, volunteering, or further education.
- [The Canucks Autism Network Skills Training Employment Program \(CAN-STEP\)](#). Designed for autistic youth and adults (ages 15-30) to develop employment skills and gain work experience.
- [Unstuck and On Target](#). Unstuck and On Target is a research-based program that teaches flexibility and organization skills to kids with autism or ADHD and is available for parents and educators. Current versions are geared towards elementary students, but two new versions for students 11-14 and 14-19 years old are in the works for 2023. [Watch this space for an update on their availability!](#)

Webinars, Books, and Websites: Autism and Transition to Adulthood

Webinars, websites, and **books** that autistic young adults and their caregivers may find helpful.

Webinars

[Understanding the Challenges of Young Adults with ASD in Transition.](#)

From the MIND Institute at UC Davis.

- In this webinar, Dr. Elizabeth McGhee Hassrick discusses the important role that social networks play in the lives of autistic youth as they transition into adulthood.

[Thriving in Youth with ASD: What Does it Take?](#)

In a webinar hosted by [Autism Community Training](#)

- Dr. Weiss examines factors that can lead to positive outcomes in youth on the spectrum. The intended audience is educators, parents, and clinicians.

[Mental Health in Post-Secondary Education.](#)

By Autism Training Community and the UBC Faculty of Medicine.

- In this webinar, Dr. Rashmeen Nirmal discusses mental health challenges experienced by youth on the autism spectrum in a post-secondary education setting. The intended audience is clinicians and researchers, but parents may find the presentation informative and helpful as well

Websites

[Transition to Adulthood and Self Determination and Self Advocacy Toolkit.](#)

By AIDE Canada.

- This toolkit explores the transition to adult services for autistic youth and their families and provides information on how to encourage self-determination and self advocacy during this period.

[The Family Support Institute of BC \(FSI\).](#)

By Family Support BC

- This website offers free webinars and support opportunities via Zoom for caregivers who have a loved one with a disability. Topics range from housing, transition to adulthood, assessment waitlists, complex behaviours, and more.

[Dealing with Change.](#)

By the National Autistic Society

- A blog about the difficulties of change and strategies youth can utilize to cope when faced with change.

[Autism and Exam Stress.](#)

By Chris Bonello

- Check out this article on the *Autistic Not Weird Website* for tips on dealing with exam stress in high school and post-secondary school.

Books

[Unmasking Autism: Discovering the New Faces of Neurodiversity.](#) By Devon Price.

- Author Devon Price explores their experiences with masking, neurodivergence and self acceptance.

[Smart but Scattered.](#) By Peg Dawson and Richard Guare.

- This book provides evidence-based strategies and guidance for adults on improving their executive functioning skills such as organization, time management, and emotional control. There is also a [parent version](#) available.

Phone Apps

We have provided a list of mobile apps from [ReachOut! - Tools and App](#) and [Foundry BC](#) that may assist youth and young adults during transitions to cope with stress and anxiety, regulate emotions, track medications, and plan and organise. Keep in mind that mental health phone apps are not appropriate for everyone, but they can be useful for providing daily reminders to practise certain skills, keep track of medications or mood, and “game-ify” activities that might otherwise be seen as boring or anxiety-provoking. For skills-based apps, individuals might consider learning alongside a loved one to practise the suggested strategies together. If your care team thinks that keeping a mood diary, worry journal, or self-care log would be beneficial, consider incorporating a tracking app into daily routines.

Focus

Noisli: Mix different sounds and create your perfect sound environment to stay focused on work, studying or to simply relax.

BeFocused: Get things done by breaking up individual tasks among discrete intervals, separated by short breaks. An effective way to retain motivation and focus.

Plan and Organise

Tiimo: A visual daily planner app, which helps you build routines that work for you, so you can organize your whole day and minimize issues with planning and time management.

My Study Life: My Study Life allows you to store your classes, homework and exams in the cloud making it available on any device, wherever you are.