

Supporting Teens and
Young Adults on the
Autism Spectrum

Setting and Pursuing Self-Determined Goals



VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER
TREATMENT & RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Additional resources can be found in the online version of this toolkit. Register for a free account at triad.vkclearning.org and access the information in the **Caregiver** folder.



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» Purpose Of This Guide

This toolkit is designed to help people* who support teens and young adults on the autism spectrum as they set and pursue self-determined goals. For brevity, throughout the toolkit, when we refer to young adults, we are also including teens. Teens and adults on the autism spectrum may also find this toolkit helpful. This toolkit may also be beneficial to people who support individuals with a range of disabilities.

**The use of the word “people” includes: parents and caregivers, teachers, siblings, service providers and others.*

The key element of setting and pursuing self-determined goals is that the individual finds these goals important and meaningful. Examples of these goals include those related to employment, health, independence, daily living skills, relationships, and leisure, recreation and hobbies. Steps to setting and pursuing self-determined goals include:

➤ What do you want to do? Brainstorm ideas for goals **STEP 1**

➤ Choose several goals **STEP 2**

➤ Break goal into smaller subgoals **STEP 3**

➤ Take action..... **STEP 4**

➤ Track progress..... **STEP 5**

➤ Revise goals **STEP 6**

We will discuss each of these steps in detail. But first, let’s define and discuss what self-determination means.

»» What Is Self-Determination? Why Pursue It?

Self-determination can be defined as the act of making up one's own mind about what to think or what to do. Self-determination covers many different aspects of life such as planning and decision-making. People with more self-determination report that they are more satisfied with their lives. Children and teens who are taught self-determination skills do better in school and are more organized and self-directed. As adults, they are more likely to live on their own, do better at a job, be more secure with their finances, and be more involved in their healthcare. Working on self-determination skills can also help teach and strengthen skills related to executive functioning, including planning, prioritizing, and organization.

Everyone can benefit from learning self-determination skills as they transition from childhood to adulthood. While all individuals experience a change in responsibilities related to decision-making when they transition from childhood to adulthood (**see Box 1**), the process of self-determination may need to be even more structured and defined for young adults on the autism spectrum. These adults may have less experience in learning how to make decisions on their own and may benefit from a highly structured teaching approach in order to be successful.

Box 1: The Process of Self-Determination Changes for Young Adults

<u>Children</u> Others help manage and direct:	<u>Young Adults</u> (Ideally) The individual self-manages and directs:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Emotion and Behavior✓ Education and Career Goals✓ Social Skills and Social Opportunities✓ Social Relationships✓ Leisure Activities✓ Health and Wellness	

People with more self-determination
report higher life satisfaction.

The Difference Between Independence and Self-Determination

Independence is the ability to act without assistance. Self-determination is the ability of making up one's own mind about what to think or do. Everyone needs help from others in different ways, and all people are at different levels of independence and self-determination at different points in their lives. Regardless of how independent they are, young adults on the autism spectrum can and should set goals for themselves.

Box 2 provides examples of different combinations of independence and self-determination levels.

Box 2: Independence and Self-Determination Levels

	High Self-Determination	Low Self-Determination
High Independence	<p>Some young adults live on their own, choose their jobs or what they want to study in school, and manage most parts of their own lives, including finances, relationships, and routine self-care.</p> <p><i>Maria lives on her own, found a job she likes, and makes her own friends. She would like a romantic relationship.</i></p>	<p>Some young adults are independent but have choices decided by others, with many skills for independence, but fewer skills for self-determination.</p> <p><i>Luke lives in an apartment and pays his rent. His mother found his job and he does it well. Luke doesn't enjoy his job but hasn't considered the possibility of getting a different one.</i></p>
Low Independence	<p>Some young adults might live at home, and not be working. However, they may be able to make decisions in other areas, such as their health care. Encouraging self-determination in health care may improve success with treatment and satisfaction with care.</p> <p><i>Tyrone was struggling with his sleep and his mother brought this up at a doctor's appointment. He was diagnosed with sleep apnea. He met with his doctors and after discussing the pros and cons of multiple treatment options, Tyrone chose continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). He has been using the CPAP for six months, but often relies on his mother to remind him to wear it.</i></p>	<p>Some young adults might live at home, not be working or in school, and depend on others for most things. In addition, they may have little opportunity or motivation to make decisions free of the expectations of others, such as hobbies they would like to pursue.</p> <p><i>Sarah lives with her parents, is not working or in-school, and has trouble remembering to clean her room. Sarah's mother cleans her room. Sarah does not seem to be motivated to become more independent. Sarah really wants a cat, but her mother feels Sarah won't take care of it. Sarah also wants to be a veterinarian, but her mother feels that is not realistic.</i></p>



See back of booklet for printable "Additional Practice: Independence and Self-Determination Levels." Download additional copies in the online version at triad.vkclearning.org.

» Setting Self-Determined Goals

What do you want to do? Brainstorm ideas for goals **STEP 1**

The process of setting and pursuing goals for young adults begins with them thinking about what they want to do. Some people may think about parts of their lives they would like to change or improve. Additionally, they may feel excited about trying to achieve a goal but are unsure how to get started. Regardless of communication style or cognitive ability, supportive people can help translate those thoughts and feelings into goals. As you support a young adult in setting and pursuing goals, it is important to keep in mind barriers, as well as tips that may be helpful (**Box 3**).

Barriers to Setting Self-Determined Goals

Many young adults have challenges setting goals for reasons such as:

- They feel anxious or worry about what might happen
- They feel tired or unmotivated
- Their thoughts freeze up or they can't remember information
- They can't imagine the good that might happen
- They feel that their goals don't fit in with what their family or culture expects
- They may have had things not turn out well in the past and feel discouraged

Goal setting may be harder for people with autism if they feel that the decision:

- Has to be made quickly if they get more anxious when rushed;
- Will create a change in routine they may find unsettling;
- Involves talking with others, especially new people if they struggle with social conversations;
- Involves understanding abstract concepts if they struggle with ideas that aren't concrete and explicit; or
- May prompt criticism from others.

Box 3: Tips for Talking with Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum

Do:

- ✓ Create a safe and accepting setting.
- ✓ Speak with respect.
- ✓ Ask one question and wait, then follow-up based on their response.
- ✓ Ask questions to clarify.
- ✓ Slow down to allow time for them to process what you say.
- ✓ Expect they may correct you or ask questions.

Don't:

- ✗ Ask multiple questions at once.
- ✗ Assume a response is negative because of lack of eye contact or body language, or a pause in a verbal response.

Many young adults benefit from setting goals with others. However, some young adults on the autism spectrum may struggle with the social or communication skills needed to talk about goals. Supportive people can step in to help the young adult set and achieve goals. Specifically, they can help manage emotions, problem solve, and coach how to bounce back when things don't turn out as expected.

Separating *Goals Others Want* from *Goals that are Self-Determined*

Everyone needs to meet the expectations of others and work on skills in some areas of their lives that may not be completely chosen by them. These might be the expectations of parents, employers, teachers, friends, and significant others. One example is that a young adult may need to complete certain chores in order to live with a parent or roommate.

Everyone also needs opportunities to identify and pursue goals that are free from the expectations of others, even supportive people! One example may be learning to play the piano or learning to garden. Through setting and pursuing these goals, young adults with autism learn important skills, including how to manage time and deal with setbacks. When a goal is successfully attained, they build confidence that they can pursue the next goal.

It can be hard for supportive people to separate what they expect the young adult to do from the goals the young adult has for themselves. Examples of "life goals" supportive people often set for young adults include doing well in high school, going to college or trade school, securing employment, living on one's own, and improving social skills. Supportive people may prioritize these goals over other goals the individuals have set for themselves due to the immediate consequences or longer-term benefits of pursuing these goals.

A supportive person may have many different feelings about a young adult's goals, such as:

- ① They aren't motivated enough for the goal.
- ① They aren't ready for the goal.
- ① The goal is too simple or unimportant.
- ① They should be working on different goals, like getting a job.
- ① The goal is unrealistic.
- ① They haven't identified the "best" steps to achieve the goal.
- ① They aren't attaining the goal fast enough.
- ① They must attain, or "stick with" the goal.

Supportive people often want to "protect," "comfort," "keep safe," "take care of," and "watch" the young adult they are supporting, and this is a natural reaction that is typically being done with good intentions and seen as in the best interest of the individual. However, doing so often fails to take into account that the individual has a right to self-determination. This means young adults deserve to have the chance to make and learn from mistakes. Taking risks and learning from mistakes is a lifelong process that allows people to become active and engaged in society.

Similarly, young adults may have goals that match with the goals of others, but they may want to take different, or smaller, steps to achieve them that may not meet the expectations of others. This may cause the supportive person to feel frustrated.

These are natural feelings, but these feelings should not get in the way of helping the young adult work on their goals. *As you will see below, even working on “unrealistic” goals can be beneficial!*

Active Listening: A Tool to Assist in the Goal Planning Process

Active listening is a critical skill that supportive people can exercise to encourage young adults to form and define goals. It allows the speaker to share thoughts or ideas, talk about things more in-depth and build trust with the listener. Active listening shows that the listener hears and understands what the speaker is saying, and helps the person feel valued and more comfortable sharing ideas further.

The process of active listening is very simple. It requires you to listen carefully, repeat what you heard in your own words, and then check in with the person you are listening to. It’s important to encourage, clarify, restate, reflect, and validate through both verbal and nonverbal means. **Box 4** shows examples of using these skills when speaking with a young adult and how they can be adapted for those who are less verbally fluent.

Box 4: Examples of Active Listening Skills

Encourage	“I’m glad you are talking to me about this. I want to hear more.” Paired with a thumbs up or other understandable nonverbal cues.
Clarify	“When you said it was ‘hard to do it,’ do you mean it was hard to get yourself <i>to start</i> , or that you thought it was hard <i>when you tried it?</i> ” Or providing more detailed visual choices as a follow up to a statement made.
Restate	“From what I understand you are saying, you want to create a video game app and you’ve tried it before, but it was hard because you didn’t know how to get started. Did I understand correctly?” Or restating in less words paired with gestures to ensure understanding or having the individual draw out or write what they are trying to communicate.
Reflect	“As I’m listening, it sounds like you tried this a long time ago and were afraid to ask for help—was that how you felt?”
Validate	“I can understand how scary it can be to try something new! It can be tempting to give up before you even start!” Paired with a head nod or other nonverbal cues understandable to the individual.

When you actively listen, it is important to be accepting and non-judgmental. The entire process of self-determination is focused on the young adults making their own plans and solutions. Try not to give advice, problem solve, minimize or dismiss their concerns, make excuses or explain, argue, or find weaknesses—even if you don’t agree with what is being said.

Choosing goals and steps to achieve them is hard work! Few young adults can choose a goal and create a plan in one sitting. It can be very helpful to talk about how to make goals and their actionable steps clearer. This may take time. It is helpful to use active listening while the young adult works through this process. You can also help by writing down ideas the young adult has. Make notes of anything that isn’t clear, questions you might have, and goals you hear.

The act of goal setting involves **brainstorming**. It can help to have a pen and paper to jot down ideas or draw out concepts. Some people benefit when a supportive person poses questions to help them think through their goals (**Box 5**). People with limited verbal skills can still do this brainstorming but may benefit from picture examples of goal areas to help the young adult visualize what kinds of goals are possible and select those that they are most interested in working on.

Box 5: Questions for Brainstorming

If you could choose anything, what goals would you choose to set?

What area of your life are you excited about?

Are there areas of your life you are not happy with or would like to change?

Five years from now, how would you like your life to be different than it is now?

Have you tried this goal before? What happened?

If you were to try this goal again, are there things you would like to do differently?



See back of booklet for printable “Goal Sheet 1: Developing a Goal.”
Download additional copies in the online version at triad.vkclearning.org.

Helpful Tip: Avoid starting with closed-ended questions. These are questions that have a “yes” or “no” answer.

Open-Ended, Not Closed-Ended Questions

If you ask the question, “Do you have any goals?”, the young adult might respond with “no.” They might give a different answer if asked, “What goals do you have?” Even if they say, “I don’t know,” you can followup with, “It doesn’t have to be a big goal, it can be about anything. Look, here is a list of many different kinds of goals other people have set! What looks interesting to you?” Then, if they need more support, you can then structure the question in less open-ended ways such as, “Which of these two goals would you be interested in?” while pointing to two options on the list of common goals in **Box 6**. For those with limited verbal skills, you can refer to the pictures of common goals used during brainstorming to help the individual communicate preference for goals. They may find it helpful to choose from smaller groups of goals, to sort the pictures into a “yes” and “no” pile, or to rank the pictures.



When it Comes to Goals, Three Is the Magic Number!

You might wonder why three goals are suggested. It is important to have more than one or two goals, but also not to have too many goals! It can be very hard if a person only has one goal and is not able to make progress on it. This can also happen with two goals, but it is least likely to happen with three goals. More than three goals, however, can be too overwhelming to keep track of. Remember, they will be giving these three goals a lot of attention by planning and tracking progress.

Choose several goals..... STEP 2

To become familiar and comfortable with the goal setting process, the young adult should pick about three goals they want to work on and take the “driver’s seat” on these goals.

When first starting out, the young adult may have a hard time identifying goals. Some young adults on the spectrum find it helpful to see goals others have set (**Box 6**).

Box 6: Goals Other Young Adults Have Set

Daily Living Skills	Clean up bedroom	Do laundry	Cook meals	Learn to drive
Employment	Practice job interview skills	Meet with a counselor to discuss job opportunities	Review job postings	Fill out a job application
Health	Listen to relaxation recordings every day	Drink more water	Eat more vegetables	Exercise more
Independence	Get a driver’s license	Live independently	Take the bus to a friend’s house	Fly to visit grandparents on the East Coast
Leisure, recreation and hobbies	Read books	Bake desserts for the holidays	Play guitar	Create art
Relationships	Find a girlfriend/boyfriend	Network and meet new people at work	Visit relatives	Plan a fun weekend with friends

What Is a “Good” Goal?

A good goal involves something that matters to the young adult. The goal does not have to be realistic, but all of the steps taken to achieve the goal must be realistic. Both the goal and the steps taken to achieve it (referred to below as smaller goals) must be legal and safe! **Box 7** explains why “unrealistic” goals are okay. The goal process steps are described below.

Box 7: “Unrealistic” Main Goals Are Okay!

It is common for young adults to want goals that appear “unrealistic” to the supportive adult. The goal can seem “too big” or uncommon, like becoming President of the United States or a rock star. The supportive person might not feel the young adult has the skills for the goal. Regardless of whether the young adult can gain the skills needed, the process of setting the goal can be motivating and exciting. An “unrealistic” goal can lead them to a more fitting goal as described in the example below.

Sinan wants to be an NFL star. His coach asks him, “How does someone become an NFL star?” Sinan replies, “I don’t know.” His coach asks, “How could you find out?” Sinan says, “Maybe I could try the library, or do an Internet search?” Sinan’s coach encourages him to write a goal to find more information. After two months of learning how to become an NFL star, Sinan realizes he just likes to go to the games and learn about football. Sinan says what he really wants is a job that lets him go to the games. After more research and making lists of possible jobs, Sinan thinks he might like to become a sports reporter or, maybe, a sports photographer.

As you can see from the example, “unrealistic” goals can become important chances for learning about oneself. And some people just might accomplish an “unrealistic” goal—most goals are just a long series of ordinary steps.

Supportive people may also want to make sure that the young adult works on goals needed to earn a living or live on one’s own. This example shows that even an “unrealistic” goal can lead to a job or other necessary goal.

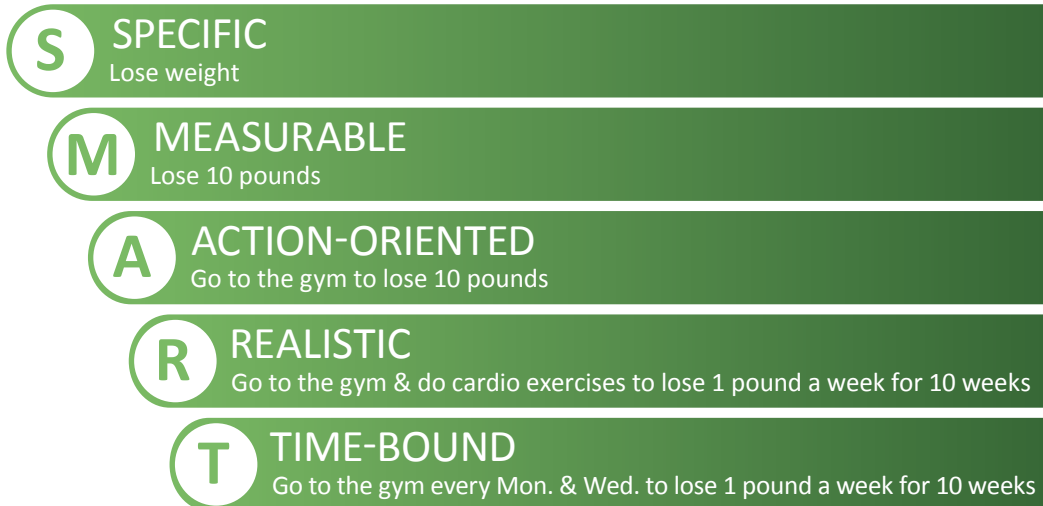
Supportive people often want to protect the young adult from the failure that might occur from “unrealistic goals.” However, failure can be a key part of the learning process. Supporting them in becoming self-determined is not about simply removing limits and structure, but about **providing chances** for them to make **meaningful decisions** about their own future.

Unrealistic goals can become important chances for learning about oneself.

Once goals are identified, it is important to structure them as SMART Goals: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, Time-bound

This helps keep goals manageable and progress trackable and helps people know when to act on their goal.

Example:



See back of booklet for printable “Goal Sheet 2: Creating SMART Goal.”
Download additional copies in the online version at triad.vkclearning.org.

Break goal into smaller subgoals..... **STEP 3**

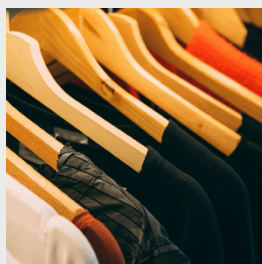
Achieving the goal involves achieving many smaller subgoals.

Smaller goals set the goal into action by breaking the goal into bite-sized pieces that aren’t as overwhelming to think about (see SMART Goals). Going to the gym might involve a smaller goal of locating gym shorts, shirts, and sneakers and finding a gym to go to, along with finding a time to go and figuring out how to get to the gym.

For example, an overarching goal of going to the gym might involve the following subgoals:



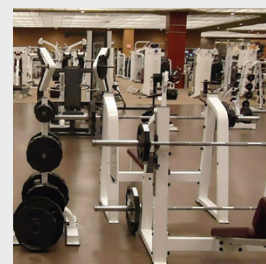
1. Getting Gym Shorts



2. Getting Gym Shirt



3. Finding Sneakers



4. Finding Gym

Take action..... STEP 4

Any action is better than no action. Even if a smaller goal seems very small, achieving small goals can build confidence and be exciting. This can build the motivation needed for larger steps. There's really not much more that needs to be said for Step 4 than this. The previous steps provide the readiness so that you are now set to get started.

Track progress..... STEP 5

Goal progress often happens through several small steps. Small steps can lead to big journeys. Tracking this progress can be very motivating! You can use the goal sheets 3-5 to create a scale for measuring goals and to track progress. There are also smartphone apps that help you track goals. You can search for these apps online. [See back of booklet for printable documents:](#)

MORE INFO

- Goal Sheet 3: Goal Attainment Scale & Examples
- Goal Sheet 4: Applying Goal Attainment Scaling
- Goal Sheet 5: Goal Tracking

Download additional copies in the online version at triad.vkclearning.org.

Revise goals..... STEP 6

A great way to learn from failure is to try again with a different approach. Sometimes it is acceptable to let go of a goal totally. Avoid pushing the individual to achieve a goal they no longer find desirable. Consider setting up regular goal tracking meetings as described below. Boxes 8-10 provide helpful guides for structuring those meetings.

Many young adults prefer to have regular meetings to review goals.

These meetings can help young adults with motivation, clarifying what they want for their own lives, planning a path toward achieving a goal, and receiving encouragement regarding the goal attainment process.

In order to help young adults who want to “get something done” before their next meeting, people can discuss progress, barriers to meeting goals, and emotions, such as being frustrated with the pace of meeting goals or pride in goal progress. These meetings can help find solutions to barriers preventing them from achieving a goal, figure out what is working or not working, and what new steps should be taken.

Box 8: Questions to Guide Meetings

When the young adult:

Seeks advice or suggestions, ASK

- What has worked for you in the past?
- How might you find out what other people have tried?

If someone is really stuck, it's okay to then provide more direction.

Is being too general or vague, ASK

- How can we make this more specific?
- What day this week will you try this?

Reports one or more weeks of making little to no progress on a goal, ASK

- What is keeping you from your goal?
- What have you tried?
- If you tried again, what would you do differently?

Expresses frustration or uneasiness towards attaining the goal, ASK

- Can you tell me more about what has happened or how you are feeling about this? *(Let them vent)*
- What helps you when you are feeling this way?
- Would it be helpful to break the goal into smaller pieces?
- Would it be helpful to try a different step?
- Would you rather continue with this goal or set a different goal?

Reports making progress/is excited about their progress, ASK

- That's great! Why do you think this method is working so well for you?
- Good progress! What is the next step you are thinking about?
- What an accomplishment! So, what new goal are you thinking about? *(Encourage them to set a new goal!)*

Consider providing answer options for the individual to choose from, writing out/drawing the questions, or other visual supports (depending on skill level).

Box 9: Sample Responses to Common Goals

In response to:

I want to handle my stress better, ASK

- How do you cope with stress?
- What makes you feel relaxed?
- How can you learn about ways to handle stress?

I want to get good grades this semester, ASK and/or draw out

- What are you graded on?
- When are assignments due?
- How much time will you need?
- When do you need to start on your assignment?
- What things could get in your way?

Box 10: Things to Remember and Things to Avoid During Meetings

Help them keep their strengths, talents, and interests in mind when making a plan.

Ask simple, short questions and pair with visual supports when appropriate.

- Avoid saying: "Is there something holding you back, or stopping you, from going to the gym, or is it you feel like you don't have the time?"
- Ask instead: "Is there something stopping you from going to the gym?"

Your primary goal is to motivate rather than to teach or advise.

- Avoid giving advice as a question like, "Have you tried _____?"
- Instead, say, "Let's think of ways to tackle this goal." "How can you break this goal into smaller pieces?" or, "Great job with the first step! (while checking it off a list in front of them) Let's think about how to do that again with the second step! (while circling it on the list)"

Avoid

- Criticism: "I think 30 minutes a day isn't enough time, you should aim for an hour."
- Advice-giving: "You should ask your parents to go with you to look at apartments."
- Dismissive statements: "You shouldn't worry about that."
- Closed-ended questions: "Will you be able to achieve this goal?"
- Problem-solving: "You could plan to work out between classes."
- Making excuses or explaining: "Well, I don't know much about computers."
- Arguing or finding weaknesses: "That doesn't make sense. You won't be able to do all of that in one day."

A supportive person's role is to provide encouragement and to highlight the successes of the process.

» Final Thoughts

Focus on Process, Not Attainment

Sometimes young adults don't make the progress they want to. As a supportive person, do not focus on whether or not they achieve their goal. Your role is to provide encouragement throughout the process and to highlight the successes of the process that may not be tied to achieving the goal, such as working together to identify goals. If the person doesn't achieve goals this week/month/year, they may be more ready the next time around. If they don't seem motivated this year, they might become very motivated next year.

Failure and the Dignity of Risk

The key value of dignity of risk is respect, which goes along with the right to self-determination.

Allow room for them to take risks in a safe and legal way. All risks are not created equal, and supporting small risks is a good place to start before moving on to bigger risks. This will help them develop self-determination. Even in young adults who require high levels of support, self-determination is possible.

We hope this toolkit is helpful to young adults on the autism spectrum, and the supportive people who know them. Thank you for taking the time to review. We wish you success on your journey toward self-determination and goal setting. If you have any comments, please email spectrum.forLIFE@vumc.org.

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ADDITIONAL PRACTICE: INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION LEVELS

	High Self-Determination	Low Self-Determination
High Independence	Some young adults live on their own, have jobs or go to school, and manage most parts of their own lives, including finances, relationships, and routine self-care.	Some young adults are independent but have choices decided by others, with many skills for independence, but fewer skills for self-determination.
Low Independence	Some young adults might live at home, and not be able to work. However, they may be able to make decisions in other areas, such as their health care. Encouraging self-determination in health care may improve success with treatment and satisfaction with care.	Some young adults might live at home, not be working or in school, and have to live up to others' expectations, such as performing their share of household responsibilities. In addition, they have little opportunity to make decisions free of the expectations of others.

DIRECTIONS:

Draw a line to match the independence and self-determination levels to the following scenarios.

**High Independence
High Self-Determination**

**High Independence
Low Self-Determination**

**Low Independence
High Self-Determination**

**Low Independence
Low Self-Determination**

Sarah lives on her own and manages her own finances. She talked to her doctor about ways to manage her diabetes. She decided to purchase a continuous glucose monitoring system.

Zack lives at home and is currently unemployed. His mother has enrolled Zack in a medical coding class although Zack isn't interested in coding. He hasn't thought about whether he wants to get a job or go to college.

Josh lives at home with his parents, who provide meals for him and clean his room. He had been working as a super-market cashier for the last five years. He has always wanted to work with computers and decided to take classes at a community college so he can obtain more skills and get a more interesting job.

Candace currently has a job and lives alone. Her mother recently set up a profile on an online dating app for Candace and is screening potential dates for her.

ANSWER KEY:

Practice examples of independence/self-determination

High Independence/High Self Determination:

Sarah lives on her own and manages her own finances. She talked to her doctor about ways to manage her diabetes. She decided to purchase a continuous glucose monitoring system.

Sarah's example illustrate both high independence and high self-determination. Sarah is living on her own and managing her finances (high independence). In addition, she is an active participant in her health care, talking with her doctor and making decisions on how to best manage her diabetes (high self-determination).

High Independence/Low Self Determination:

Candace currently has a job and lives alone. Her mother recently set up a profile on an online dating app for Candace and is screening potential dates for her.

Candace has a job and lives on her own—this represents high independence. Having her mother set up her dating app and screening potential dates for her represents low self-determination. If Candace set up her own profile on the dating app and screened for her own dates, that would be an example of high self-determination.

Low Independence/High Self Determination:

Josh lives at home with his parents, who provide meals for him and clean his room. He had been working as a supermarket cashier for the last five years. He has always wanted to work with computers and decided to take classes at a community college so he can obtain more skills and get a more interesting job.

While Josh lives at home, with his parents providing meals and cleaning his room (low independence), his decision to take classes to enhance his employment potential represents high self-determination.

Low Independence/Low Self Determination:

Zack lives at home and is currently unemployed. His mother has enrolled Zack in a medical coding class although Zack isn't interested in coding. He hasn't thought about whether he wants to get a job or go to college.

Zack's example illustrates low independence in that he is living at home and does not have a job. In addition, he exhibits low self-determination in that his mother is enrolling him in classes that he isn't interested in. Zack hasn't thought about next steps for employment or education.

GOAL SHEET 1: DEVELOPING A GOAL

1. What do I want to learn or improve on?



2. What do I know about it now?



3. What must change for me to learn what I don't know?



4. What can I do to make this happen?



What is my goal?

Adapted from Shogren KA, Wehmeyer ML, Burke KM, & Palmer SB. (2017). The Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction: Teacher's Guide. Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities. https://beach.ku.edu/sites/default/files/SDLMI-Teachers-Guide_4-2017.pdf

GOAL SHEET 2: CREATING SMART GOAL

S SPECIFIC:

M MEASURABLE:

A ACTION-ORIENTED:

R REALISTIC:

T TIME-BOUND:

GOAL SHEET 3: GOAL ATTAINMENT SCALE & EXAMPLES

Score	Predicted Attainment
1	No progress or change, or decline
2	Some progress or change, or current level maintained
3	Sufficient progress or change
4	Greater than expected outcome
5	Much greater than expected outcome

Example: In this situation, the individual is interested in setting a goal of attending baseball games. He has an available mode of transportation, but needs to let the person in charge of said transportation know in advance (as soon as possible) to ensure a ride. Although he has not attended any games up to this point, the individual is a big baseball fan and is relatively familiar with checking for the schedule. In this case, the mentor has elected to use a rating scale with a possibility of deterioration (to account for the possibility that the individual does not take the time to check the schedule as he usually does).

Score	Predicted Attainment
1	Individual forgets or is unwilling/unable to check the baseball schedule for the week.
2	Individual knows the schedule but forgets to notify transportation in advance.
3	Individual makes it to the game by notifying the transportation the day prior to the game (not very early, but still in advance).
4	Individual makes it to the game and notifies transportation two days in advance.
5	Individual makes it to the game and notifies transportation three days in advance.

Blue is goal not attained
 Yellow is goal attained

GOAL SHEET 4: APPLYING GOAL ATTAINMENT SCALING

Describe goal:

What is the first (least desirable) level of the goal?

What is the second level (some progress or maintenance, but not enough for goal attainment)?

What is the third level (just enough to say the goal was attained)?

What is the fourth level (this is a more desirable level of attainment)?

What is the fifth level (this is the most desirable level of attainment)?

GOAL SHEET 5: GOAL TRACKING

Level of Attainment	Goal 1:	Goal 2:	Goal 3:
	Start date: _____ End date: _____	Start date: _____ End date: _____	Start date: _____ End date: _____
Much less than expected 1			
Somewhat less than expected 2			
Expected level of outcome 3			
Somewhat more than expected 4			
Much more than expected 5			
Comments:			