



PEER TO PEER

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Self-Determination

Self-determination means setting goals that are important to you and working to accomplish them. A person who is self-determined is able to make choices, set goals, and express their own needs, interests, and wants.



Importance of Self-Determination

Self-determination is critical for achieving success after high school. Individuals who are self-determined are more equipped to handle challenges and are better prepared to transition into post-secondary education and/or employment in adulthood. Self-determination skills are used to accomplish specific goals such as **going to college, getting a job, living independently, and participating in community activities.**



Self-Determination Skills and Definitions

Goal setting: identifying goals that align with your interests and creating a plan to achieve your goals. For more information, please visit [this website](#).

Self-awareness: understanding your capabilities, feelings, and what motivates you. For more information, please visit [this website](#).

Decision-making: expressing your preferences and making a choice out of two or more options. For more information, please visit [this website](#).

Problem-solving: determining the cause of a problem, identifying possible solutions, and implementing a solution. For more information, please visit [this website](#).

Self-monitoring: evaluating your behaviors and deciding how to adjust your behaviors independently. For more information, please visit [this resource](#)

Self-advocacy: knowing when and how to approach others to effectively communicate and assert your needs. For more information, please visit [this website](#). Consider joining a self-advocacy group. See examples on the next page.





Self-Advocacy Groups

Self-Advocacy Group	Link	Description
The Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)	https://www.aane.org/	AANE provides online support groups, information about recreational opportunities, and webinars for individuals with autism.
Autism Network International (ANI)	https://www.autismnetworkinternational.org/	ANI allows individuals with autism to share information, give tips for coping and problem solving, and benefit from peer supports.
The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN)	https://autisticadvocacy.org/	ASAN focuses on public policy advocacy, leadership training, and employment opportunities for individuals with autism.

How Can I Become More Self-Determined?

Young adults can work on building self-determination skills in the classroom, at work, or at home by taking on the role of a self-directed learner, an active learner, and a self-advocate.

Role	Action
Self-Directed Learner	With the support of a trusted adult, set goals about what you want to learn.
Active Learner	Actively participate in the learning process by asking questions, taking notes, comparing what you learned to information you already know, and thinking about how you can apply what you learned in your life.
Self-Advocate	Communicate your interests, preferences, beliefs, and goals with your parents, teachers, or work supervisors.

Key Terms in the Problem-Solving Process



Goal: A goal is something that you set out to do and want to work to make happen.

Example: Enroll at a community college or apply for a job.

Problem: A problem is something that prevents someone from achieving what they want to achieve.

Example: Wanting to enroll in college or find a job, but not knowing where to find information.

Plan: A plan is a detailed set of steps for doing something.

Example: Research information about job openings that fit with your interests and qualifications, or search for information about your local community college by visiting the college's website.

Consider scheduling an appointment with a guidance counselor or speak with a trusted adult for help locating information.

Evaluate: Evaluating something means looking at what you have done and deciding if you have achieved what you wanted to do.

Example: Think about the progress you have made in learning about your local community college or local job openings and decide if your plan was successful.

Goals

Common adolescent and young adult goals focus on engaging in a recreational activity, doing a social activity, or another area based on personal interests. This table provides examples of a variety of short-term goals for adolescents and young adults.

Type of Goal	Goal	Example
Academic Achievement Goals	Improve skills in an academic subject.	Improve skills in math.
	Be prepared for class.	Complete homework and bring all materials (books, pencils, and computer) to class.
	Improve skills that support academic achievement.	Become a more organized note-taker.
Personal Achievement Goals	Build personal skills.	Set nutrition or exercise goals.
	Participate in extracurricular activities.	Join the school band or other clubs.
	Volunteer or get community service experience.	Participate in a school fundraiser.
Post-School Goals	Research higher education.	Learn about college classes and how to enroll in college.
	Work on steps toward employment.	Learn about careers of interest or internship opportunities.
	Participate in community activities and services.	Join a community group or explore resources in the community.

Steps for Goal Setting



Practice setting a goal by processing through these questions. Focus on a goal that can be completed in a short amount of time (for example, 2-4 weeks).

Steps	Guiding Questions	Example
1 - Set a Goal	What goal do I want to work on?	I want to get an A on my next math test.
	What do I know about it now?	Other people take organized notes in class to help them study so that they can get As.
	What must change for me to meet my goal?	I must pay close attention in class and take organized notes to help me study.
	What can I do to make these changes?	I must remove distractions in class to help me pay attention and take better notes.
2 - Take Action	Where do I start? What resources are there to help me?	I will remove distractions, take organized notes, and study my notes for 20 minutes every day after class with support from my parents and teacher.
	What barriers are keeping me from meeting my goal?	I am distracted by my cell phone in class.
	What can I do to remove the barriers?	I will turn off my cell phone in class so that I can focus on the lesson.
	When will I begin working toward my goal?	I will start working toward my goal during math class tomorrow.
3 - Adjust Goal or Plan	What actions have I taken?	I have turned my cell phone off during class to help me pay attention to the lesson. I have taken more organized notes, and I have studied my notes every day after class.
	How have I solved the problem?	I have removed distractions that prevented me from taking notes in class.
	What progress have I made?	I have paid attention in class and taken better notes to help me study.
	Did I reach my goal?	I studied my notes for 20 minutes every day before the test, and I made an A on the test. I met my goal.



Additional Resources

Autism Society of North Carolina

This webpage provides helpful tips for making resolutions and setting goals for individuals on the autism spectrum. URL: <https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/making-resolutions-setting-goals/>

Printable Goal Worksheets

This webpage includes printable goal sheets designed for individuals with autism to use to help keep track of their goals. URL: <https://autism.lovetoknow.com/autism-resources/printable-goal-sheets-people-autism>

Stairway to STEM

This webpage is designed to support college students with autism in setting clear, concise, reachable goals. URL: <https://www.stairwaytostem.org/autism-setting-smart-goals/>

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