

SELF-DETERMINATION STRATEGIES

CHARACTERISTICS OVERVIEW CHART

Verbal Skills	Grade Levels	Cognitive Level	Areas Addressed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonverbal	<input type="checkbox"/> PK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classic	<input type="checkbox"/> (Pre)Academic/Cognitive/Academic
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior/Daily Living
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verbal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle/High	Functioning	<input type="checkbox"/> Behavior
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication/Speech
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Emotional

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Children and adults with autism (AU) have difficulties in communication and social understanding affecting their life-planning and self-determination abilities. Self-determination strategies are designed to develop self-directed decision-making ability for people with autism.

DESCRIPTION

The goal of self-determination is to assist children and adults with autism in becoming aware of their strengths/challenges and planning realistic goals for their lives. As such, self-determination encompasses the abilities to understand oneself and life situations, to know current and long-term goals, to develop methods to achieve those goals, to self-reflect, and to make self-directed decisions (Wehmeyer, Field, Doren, Jones, & Mason, 2004). These skills are considered essential and practical for a successful social life (Wehmeyer, 1996).

People with autism need direct teaching and guidance to develop self-determination concepts. For example, they need instructional supports, such as using visual organizers or drawings to understand and make decisions. Therefore, self-determination strategies focus on using structured, visual, systematic narratives, and regular interactions to explain social situations and social roles and responsibilities.

Self-determination strategies are essential in educational programming, but it is equally important to encourage family and parental involvement. Tips and strategies for promoting self-determination skills include parents as models, parent-child interactions, direct instruction, and attending training sessions (Field & Hoffman, 1999).

STEPS

The following steps may be used to establish self-determination:

1. *Know yourself.* A person knows her strengths/weaknesses, needs, preferences, and options.
2. *Value yourself.* A person accepts and values herself, recognizes rights and responsibilities, admires unique strengths, and takes care of herself.
3. *Plan.* A person sets goals, plan actions to reach goals, and anticipates results.
4. *Act.* A person communicates, takes risks, searches resources/supports, and deals with conflicts/criticism.
5. *Experience outcomes and learn.* A person compares results and anticipated results, realizes success, and makes changes according to the outcome (adapted from Wehmeyer, 1996).

Examples of self-determination strategies include:

- Informing about autism
- Teaching communication skills
- Engaging in life planning
- Practicing goal setting
- Using visual organizers
- Providing social information
- Promoting family involvement/parental involvement

Components of self-determination include:

- Choice making
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Goal setting
- Self-advocacy
- Self-control
- Self-awareness
- Self-knowledge

BRIEF EXAMPLES

- Two of the most important skills that Josef, a 3-year-old nonverbal boy with autism, learned were to identify when he was becoming upset and how to self-calm. Josef had an icon on his language board that allowed him to request his favorite toy, a stuffed animal, to self-calm.
- Juanita is an 8-year-old girl with autism. Her daily schedule, including school and home activities, is usually planned for her. In order to enhance her decision-making ability, her teacher initiated a weekly meeting in which students would plan their weekly activities. Juanita's teacher provided information and options and asked Juanita and other students in the group for their opinions. If they did not come to an agreement, the students took turns choosing activities.
- Eighteen-year-old Herve was to attend college in the fall. During his senior year in high school, his teachers taught this young man with Asperger Syndrome how to approach teachers (and his soon-to-be-professors) to ask if he could videotape lectures so that he could listen to them later because he was an auditory learner.

TIPS FOR MODIFICATION

Teachers, parents, and other significant adults may modify goals to meet a specific child's characteristics, current learning levels, and life goals. The purpose is to make realistic plans.

Therefore, it is important to recognize individual needs and goals. Also, the goals are changeable according to the action outcome and expectations.

SUMMARY

Self-determination strategies are important for leading a successful and meaningful life. Self-advocacy strategies include self-awareness, decision making, goal setting, self-regulated, autonomous behavior, self-management, and reinforcement. Teaching children and adults with AU the skills promote better quality of life and greater control of their lives.

RESEARCH TABLE

Number of Studies	Ages (year)	Sample Size	Area(s) Addressed	Outcome
3	15 to adult	27	Self-knowledge, communication, life mapping, goal planning, person-centered planning methods, self-determination curriculum, self-instructional model, technology, exercise goal settings	Mixed

STUDIES CITED IN RESEARCH TABLE

1. Todd, T., Reid, G., Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). Cycling for students with ASD: Self-regulation promotes sustained physical activity. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 27, 226-241.
 This study presents the results of an intervention designed to increase the amount of physical activity (cycling) of three adolescents with severe impairments and ASD (15-17 yrs old). Participants were taught to set activity goals and measure their progress using a picture-based self-management system. In a multiple-baseline-across-participants design 1 of the participants had a clear positive increase in cycling following the introduction of the intervention, another participant showed positive effects, but the amount of cycling was increasing during baseline making the effect of intervention unclear, and the final participant showed no change in cycling behavior as a result of intervention.
2. Held, M. F., Thoma, C. A., & Thomas, K. (2004). "The John Jones Show": How one teacher facilitated self-determined transition planning for a young man with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 19(3), 177-188.
 This action research revealed positive effects of a teacher-facilitated self-determination skills program for a young adult with autism. The intervention combined the strategies of person-

centered planning methods, self-determination curriculum, self-instructional model, and the use of technology.

3. Fullerton, A., & Coyne, P. (1999). Developing skills and concepts for self-determination in young adults with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 14*(1), 42-52.
Twenty-three adolescents and young adults with autism or Asperger Syndrome participated in a self-determination program. The program included knowledge about autism, communication skills, life planning, and goal setting. Results showed increased use of self-determination skills and more initiations of discussions.

REFERENCES

- Field, S., & Hoffman, A. (1999). The importance of family involvement for promoting self-determination in adolescents with autism and other developmental disabilities. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 14*(1), 36-41.
- Fullerton, A., & Coyne, P. (1999). Developing skills and concepts for self-determination in young adults with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 14*(1), 42-52.
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- Wehmeyer, M. L. (1996). Self-determination as an educational outcome: Why is it important to children, youth and adults with disabilities? In D. J. Sands & M. L. Wehmeyer (Eds.), *Self-determination across the lifespan: Independence and choice for people with disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., Field, S., Doren, B., Jones, B., & Mason, C. (2004). Self-determination and student involvement in standards-based reform. *Exceptional Children, 70*, 413-425.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Institute on Independent Living: <http://www.independentliving.org/>
This website is devoted to promoting independent living skills in persons with disabilities.
- Self-Determination Synthesis Project: <http://sdsp.uncc.edu/home.asp>
This website offers multiple resources for families and educators; it includes lesson plans for promoting self-determination in learners.

Self-determination strategies and research in this area are discussed in the books and articles listed below.

- Carter, E. W., Lane, K. L., Pierson, M. R., & Glaeser, B. (2006). Self-determination skills and opportunities of transition-age youth with emotional disturbance and learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 72*, 333-346.
- Clark, E., Olympia, D. E., Jensen, J., Heathfield, L. T., & Jenson, W. R. (2004). Striving for autonomy in a contingency-governed world: Another challenge for individuals with developmental disabilities. *Psychology in the Schools, 4*(1), 143-153.
- Fullerton, A. (1995). Promoting self-determination for adolescents and young adults with autism. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 5*, 337-346.
- Fullerton, A., & Coyne, P. (1999). Developing skills and concepts for self-determination of young adults with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 14*, 42-52.
- Grigal, M., Neubert, D., Moon, M. S., & Graham, S. (2003a). Self-determination for students with disabilities: Views of parents and teachers. *Exceptional Children, 70*, 97-112.
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- Hatton, C., Emerson, E., Robertson, J., Gregory, N., Kessissoglou, S., & Walsh, P. N. (2004). The resident choice scale: A measure to assess opportunities for self-determination in residential settings. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 48*(2), 103-113.
- Mason, C., Field, S., & Sawilowsky, S. (2004). Implementation of self-determination activities and student participations in IEPs. *Exceptional Children, 70*, 441-451.
- Palmer, S. B., Wehmeyer, M. L., Gipson, K., & Agran, M. (2004). Promoting access to the general curriculum by teaching self-determination skills. *Exceptional Children, 70*, 427-439.

- Zucker, S. H., Perras, C., Parette, H. P., & Perner, D. E. (2007). Research to practice in cognitive disabilities/mental retardation, autism, and related disabilities. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 42(4), 383-386.

GENERAL RESOURCES

- Autism Internet Modules (AIM) www.autisminternetmodules.org. The Autism Internet Modules were developed with one aim in mind: to make comprehensive, up-to-date, and usable information on autism accessible and applicable to educators, other professionals, and families who support individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Written by experts from across the U.S., all online modules are free, and are designed to promote understanding of, respect for, and equality of persons with ASD.
- The Autism Web Course: http://cdd.unm.edu/swan/autism_course/about/index.htm. This web course was developed out of materials from the Interactive Collaborative Autism Network (ICAN). The Autism Programs at the University of New Mexico has updated and added information to this web course.
 - Characteristics
 - Assessment
 - Academic Interventions
 - Behavioral Interventions
 - Communication Interventions
 - Environmental Interventions
 - Social Interventions
 - Family Support Suggestions
- Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmain1.html>. The Indiana Resource Center for Autism staff's efforts are focused on providing communities, organizations, agencies, and families with the knowledge and skills to support children and adults in typical early intervention, school, community, work, and home settings.
 - IRCA Articles: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=273>
- Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism www.txautism.net. The Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism in conjunction with the network of Texas Education Service center with a grant from the Texas Education Agency has developed a series of free online courses in autism. Please check the training page, www.txautism.net/training.html, for update lists of courses, course numbers and registration information. Current courses include the following:
 - Asperger Syndrome 101
 - Augmentative and Alternative Communication and the Autism Spectrum
 - Autism for the General Education Teacher
 - Autism 101: Top Ten Pieces to the Puzzle
 - Classroom Organization: The Power of Structure for Individuals with ASD
 - Communication: The Power of Communication for Individuals with ASD

**TARGET: TEXAS GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING
SELF-DETERMINATION STRATEGIES**

- Futures Planning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Navigating the Social Maze: Supports and Interventions for Individuals with ASD
- Solving the Behavior Puzzle: Making Connections for Individuals with ASD