

Helping Teenagers with Autism Transition to Adulthood

For any teenager, transitioning out of school and into adulthood is equally exciting and terrifying. For a teenager with autism, this transition can be particularly challenging. As a mom to three sons with autism, I know how difficult the transition from school to summer can be, so the transition completely out of school feels insurmountable at times. As I've begun exploring this process with my sons, we've learned a few key things to keep in mind.

Start Early

Talking about change early on can help children and teens with autism be prepared for any amount of transition. [Dr. Kristin Sohl](#) with the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends doctors and caregivers start talking about adulthood around age 12.

Practice Soft Skills

One of the first steps in transitioning to adulthood is working on soft skills. This is something you're likely already doing every day. Consider what new skills you can add in as your child gets older. You may already work on problem solving, communicating, and resolving conflict. Think ahead to what types of conflict or communication will be important for a young adult to understand.

Consider Their Strengths

Keep in mind that every child is going to be different. Our three sons have their own strengths and personalities. Considering their strengths can help you both think about what environment would be best in the future. Some children may enjoy interacting with peers, and some may do well with a strict routine.

Explore Work and Education Options

There are several options for teenagers as they approach graduation, and this is where thinking about their strengths comes in. You can consider college, a non-traditional program designed for young adults with developmental disabilities, vocational programs, volunteer and internship positions, and traditional workforce options.

Work with Others

Work with your child's school, therapists, and pediatrician for guidance on this transition. [Got Transition](#) has more specific resources for preparing for adult healthcare.

Explore Community Resources

Look into programs for teens in your community like All Aboard for Kids' adult-readiness workshops. Ask other caregivers in your area about resources they recommend.