

Life Vision Workbook for Your Child with Autism/ADHD

**Dream about your child's future
to take steps today to help them
have a successful life**

FUTURE

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Creating a Life Vision for Your Child with Autism and ADHD



Even with the day-to-day activities, challenges and emotions that many parents and caregivers of a child with autism and ADHD go through every day, they have the child's future in the back of their minds. What will my child be like when they are an adult? Will they be able to live independently? If not, where will they live? Will they go to college or vocational school? Will they be able to work a full-time job? Get married? Have kids of their own? Will they continue to struggle to have friendships? Can they handle "adulting" like paying bills, grocery shopping, managing a home, and even driving?

We read the statistics about adults with autism, and we become more concerned about our children's futures. Sadly, the numbers are not in our child's favor.

- About a third of adults with autism are non-verbal, or minimally verbal, which means they do not speak or have significant speech impairment.¹
- Most of autism's costs in the United States are for adult treatment and services, estimated between \$175 and \$196 billion a year. That is compared to \$61 to \$66 billion per year for children.²
- More than a fourth of adults with autism suffer from depression.³
- More than 50 percent of adults with autism are unemployed and not enrolled in vocational school or college within two years after high school, which is a lower rate than other disabled adults, including those with an intellectual disability or speech-language impairment.⁴
- Almost 50 percent of 25-year-olds with autism have never had a paying job.⁵

While these statistics are not hopeful, we as parents and caregivers can take steps now to help our children with autism and ADHD not be part of these statistics. No matter

Autism Spectrum Disorder is just that – a spectrum. Many people with autism are able to have successful careers, get married, have children, and live completely independent lives. Some will have more difficulty with “adulthood,” and others are truly disabled and will need to live with their parents/caregivers/family or in an autism community with government assistance during their adult years.

Developing a life vision and then adjusting it as your child grows can help you prepare for their future.

How to use your child’s life vision



A life vision is a useful tool to help you with planning for your child in the next one to five years. For example, you can use it as part of your discussions with your child’s school about their individualized education plan (IEP) each year and also look ahead to the following year. You can use the life vision to determine what you need to teach your child at home. What changes in chores do they need to help them learn more skills around the house? Can they start learning to cook? How about doing grocery shopping with you and learn to meal plan, make a grocery list, and keep track of how much you’re spending each month for food? Do you need to find a driving instruction program that caters to people with autism? Can they start doing odd jobs for neighbors to earn money and understand what it means to do a job they are paid for? What personal hygiene tasks do they need to master? Do you anticipate that your child will need lifelong assistance and that you may need to speak to an advisor about a special needs trust fund and ABLE account for your child?

Having a life vision for your child is key to helping you and your child take steps now to plan for their future.

How often should you update your child's life vision?



Ideally, you should revisit your child's life vision every one to two years. When your child becomes a teenager, show them the life vision and ask how the two of you should work together to update it. Your child changes so much each year as they grow. With autism, their special or "focused" interests tend to change over time as well. Many times, their special interests can play a role in what they want to do for a career as an adult. Treat your child's life vision as a "living document" that grows with your child.

Creating a life vision



So how do you create a life vision? It is really dreaming on paper. This workbook will walk you through a series of questions that will help you envision your child's future and what you want for them (and what they want for themselves as they grow older). When they become teenagers, this life vision should be driven by your child because it's their future. You will become their support partner in helping them figure out how to achieve it.

This workbook is set up as a fillable PDF. Feel free to complete it on your computer and save it with this year's date and then update it each year. You may also want to print it

out and fill out the answers to the questions by hand, or you may want to use a journal or notebook to write out the answers to the questions and draft the life vision. Do whatever works best for you. Just make sure you revisit it as your child grows older and their skills, capabilities and interests change.

Create a Life Vision for Your Child

Below are a list of questions to help you dream about your child's future. Complete the answers, which will help you draft a life vision statement at the end of the workbook.

In an ideal world, what would your child's adult life be like – even with having autism and ADHD?

What are your child's interests?

What is your child good at?

What are your child's capabilities?

**What do you anticipate your child's capabilities to be when they are an adult?
(Don't worry if your child is young, you will update this over time.)**

Do you believe your child can live independently in the future?

What do you need to do in the next year and five years to help your child learn to be independent?

List the skills you need to teach your child in the next year and 5 years to be as independent as they can be.

What can you advocate to be in your child's IEP for school in the next year to three years to help build capability in your child?

What type of part-time jobs or volunteer activities do you think your child will need in high school and post high school to develop their capabilities?

What type of activities can you get your child involved in the next couple of years to build skills, friendships and support their interests?

Draft a vision statement for your child's life below. Let it sit for a day or two, then edit it for more final version.

Congratulations on creating a life vision for your child! Revisit your life vision for your child each year and adjust your vision and plan. Print this workbook again and refresh your answers as your child grows. Once your child is a teenager, involve them in this process and let them help create their own life vision.

Your child has a bright future. You can help make that a reality by helping them to grow in their skills and abilities and doing what you can to set them up for success.



References:

- 1. Tager-flusberg H, Kasari C. Minimally verbal school-aged children with autism spectrum disorder: the neglected end of the spectrum. *Autism Res.* 2013;6(6):468-78. doi:10.1002/aur.1329.
- 2. *Autism Speaks*, retrieved from <https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-statistics>.
- 3. *Ibid*
- 4. *Ibid*
- 5. *Ibid*