

# Planning Transitions for Young People with Special Needs and Disabilities

A Workbook for Parents and Students



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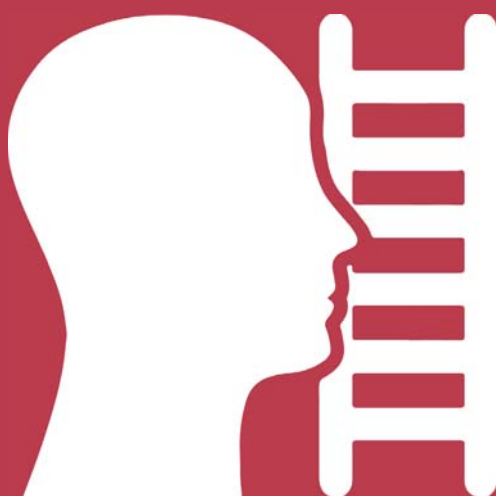
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## Chapter Three

### Unit 1

# Building Personal Skills



Many transition planning programmes focus on acquiring practical skills which might include self-care, learning to drive, managing medication, handling money, and use of technology. Of course these skills are essential, but they are most successful if they are built upon self-knowledge and used with confidence. Research studies agree that self-awareness, self-determination and self-advocacy skills play an important role in future planning, identifying help and supports, living independently, and managing post-secondary settings. They include **resilience or character-building** activities which make a significant difference to coping with negative emotions such as anxiety. Coping strategies increase the ability to manage daily setbacks or stressful events.



**Talking point.** What does self-awareness mean and why is it important?

**Self-awareness.** Everyone needs to know and understand their strengths and challenges, because these affect the difficulty level of tasks or activities. They determine the changes that may need to be made within the environment to help with achieving goals, and they are a critical part of making realistic choices that lead to successful outcomes. Being self-aware helps students to develop strategies to cope with difficult or potentially difficult situations. It helps to build confidence.



**Talking point.** What is self-determination and how is it different from self-awareness?

**Self-determination.** The difference between aspirations and achievements depends upon many things: opportunity, right place, right time, luck, contacts, financial resources .... Being self-determined also plays a significant part in identifying, planning and achieving goals in life. Students who develop self-determination link their interests to their goals, make plans for the future, and are aware of and use their strengths. Developing the skill and capacity to make plans, review those plans, and to adjust them where necessary, is essential. You could say it means "I can, and I will."



**Talking point.** What is self-advocacy and does it matter?

**Self-advocacy.** The ability to 'take action' and 'make things happen' is the outcome of becoming self-aware and self-determined. Throughout their formal education, parents may have advocated on behalf of students, perhaps for exam accommodations, assistive technologies, medical or psychological interventions, or supports in the classroom. Moving from school to college or employment means that, as an adult, your student will need to do this independently. Unexpected things happen, and young people need the skills to respond to such events with confidence.





**Example.** Jack missed the deadline for handing in a written assignment in college. He thought he might get into trouble and wanted to avoid the lecturer, so he didn't attend the next two lectures. Before too long, he found himself skipping lectures altogether. Before he knew it, he had received a zero for his written assignment and a deduction in marks for non-attendance, which would affect his overall end of year grade. If Jack had approached the lecturer when he realised he would not be able to submit his essay on time, he could have negotiated a short extension to the deadline.



**Talking point.** What is disclosure and what is the best way to go about it?

Disclosure involves telling other people about needs, disabilities, health or mental health conditions in social situations, at school or college, or in the workplace. Students need to know about their rights and entitlements, the meaning of confidentiality, the consequences of disclosing a disability or special need, and how to do this in a positive and effective manner. It is important for everyone to be familiar with the language associated with disclosure. This includes understanding and using vocabulary such as accommodate, barrier, enable, adjust, and modify.

An **accommodation** is an action or strategy that makes it possible for a person to participate in the social community, the workplace, college or school. It removes or reduces **barriers** or obstructions that prevent people with special needs or disabilities accessing the same opportunities as everyone else. It **enables** people to demonstrate their abilities and manage the physical environment. It means that the way in which some life activities are achieved need to be **adjusted**, for example, studying for a course and taking examinations over two years instead of one year. It might mean **modifying** equipment, learning materials, or the workplace, for example, making changes to a work schedule or ensuring that printed materials are available in digital or audio versions. There is a legal obligation to do this.

There are advantages and disadvantages to disclosing, but being comfortable about naming and describing physical and mental challenges and strengths reduces stress and anxiety. It isn't always necessary to disclose, that is entirely up to your student, but having the confidence to do so is an essential life tool.

Advantages:

- ✓ Getting reasonable accommodations at work, in school or college, and in the community.
- ✓ Protection of rights to accommodations under the law.
- ✓ Reduction of stress and anxiety caused by worrying about people 'finding out', or making wrong judgements.
- ✓ Finding out that there are other people who experience the same or similar challenges.
- ✓ Building self-confidence and self-esteem by learning how to be a self-advocate.

### Disadvantages:

- ✓ The possibility of being excluded or being treated differently.
- ✓ It can be exhausting to repeatedly explain differences and difficulties.
- ✓ Without practicing how to disclose personal and sensitive information, and how much of this to disclose, it can be distressing for the young person and embarrassing for other people.
- ✓ For people who have limited understanding of medical conditions learning needs or disabilities, they may find this alarming. They may believe that the young person requires far more support than is actually needed.



**Example.** Beth applied for a job as a veterinary assistant in a clinic on the outskirts of the city. She was anxious about the interview because she has difficulties with short term and working memory, which means that she sometimes finds it hard to process and make sense of long or complex sentences. Beth decided not to disclose any additional needs and supports in her application letter. However, when she received an appointment for an interview, she talked about this with her parents. When Beth confirmed her interview by email, she also explained her concerns, and asked if it would be possible to have a printed copy of the interview questions, and to read these before going into the interview.

The planning worksheets in this chapter will assist with thinking about the actions and goals that are associated with developing these personal skills.

- ✓ Complete the planning worksheets together.
- ✓ Photocopy the Transition Goal List and record the initial goals that you need to begin working on.
- ✓ Once these have been completed or achieved, you can make a new list for any outstanding goals from your planning worksheet.

The resource provided for this unit - **Understanding Language Used in College, Work and Daily Living** – supports personal development. To use a well-worn phrase, knowledge is power. Comprehending the multiple meanings and nuances of the vocabulary provided in this list, will ensure that your student can take action, follow directions and complete instructions, avoiding misunderstanding and confusion. For young people who have difficulty with idiomatic language, this is a good time to introduce the concept of phrases whose meanings are different to a literal interpretation. This is not a spelling list, rather, it is a comprehension inventory of frequently used phrases. This is a long list which is intended to span the length of the transition planning period.





The **Make a Plan Template** is a starter resource to assist with thinking about how to make a plan, who and what are involved, and how to communicate the plan to key people. **Making Reasonable Accommodations** lists some of the accommodations that can be expected in school or college, the workplace and the community. However this is not a finite resource and accommodations should always be tailored to the individual. The **Disclosure Script** allows young people to begin thinking about how and what to disclose, in a format that suits their needs and personality.



The **411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for You with Disabilities** is a very comprehensive resource published in the USA, and available to download from the Internet as a pdf.

There are a wealth of apps and software that assist with teaching social skills, jokes, idioms and so forth. The **Social Skill Builder** website showcases a good selection of these.

## Unit 1: Building Personal Skills Planning Worksheet

### Developing Self-awareness

Goals	YES	N/A	NO	DK
Knows which subjects and activities he / she is good at in school.				
Describes and talks about these things to other people using appropriate language.				
Knows how he/she learns best (listening, seeing, reading, doing).				
Uses these strategies at school.				
Uses these strategies at home.				
Has achieved things that he/she is proud of.				
Talks about these things to other people.				
Aware of specific events or situations that create stress in school or the wider environment.				
Aware of specific events or situations that create stress at home.				
Knows how to manage stress at school.				
Knows how to manage stress at home or the wider environment.				
Aware of the difference between wanting and needing something.				
Makes choices or decisions based on likes, dislikes, wants or needs.				
Is aware of sensory factors that affect focus, attention and concentration (e.g. noise, visual stimuli).				



## Developing Self-determination

Goals	YES	N/A	NO	DK
Makes a plan to achieve a goal.				
Would be unsure how to make a plan of action but would ask for help.				
Has a plan of action when under stress at school or within the wider environment.				
Knows how to determine the advantages and disadvantages of choices that need to be made.				
Asks for help at school with making decisions or choices.				
Asks for help at home with making decisions or choices.				
Takes action with tasks that need to be achieved in school.				
Takes action with tasks that need to be achieved at home.				
Waits for someone to offer help with tasks that need to be achieved in school.				
Waits for someone to offer help with tasks that need to be achieved at home.				
Knows who to ask for help with tasks that need to be achieved in school.				
Knows who to ask for help with tasks that need to be achieved at home.				
Organizes tasks and materials in the school environment.				
Organizes tasks and materials at home.				

## Developing Self-advocacy

Goals	YES	N/A	NO	DK
Seeks out help, advice or support in school.				
Seeks out help, advice or support at home.				
Is confident about asking adults for help.				
Feels that people at home or at school take note when asked for help.				
Knows who to go to for help or assistance in school.				
Has someone that he / she can ask for help at home.				
Asks for help with working out the advantages or disadvantages of choices that are required.				
Understands the meaning of 'confidentiality' when talking about wants or needs.				
Understands the meaning of 'disclosure' when talking about wants or needs.				
Expresses wants or needs in an appropriate manner.				
Asks for help or assistance in an appropriate manner.				





## Unit 1: Transition Goal List

Developing Self-awareness	Home	School

Developing Self-determination	Home	School

Developing Self-advocacy	Home	School

## Unit 1 Resource: Make a Plan Template

1. What is the plan for? Give it a name, for example:

Plan for Getting Mum and Dad to Let Me Have My Ears Pierced

2. Who is going to be part of the plan?

Write down a list of ALL of the people who will be involved.

3. How and where will this take place?

Include:

- a) where you will need to go to and from,
- b) how you will get there,
- c) which days / times can this take place

4. How much will this activity cost?

Check the cost of each step of this activity, for example:

- a) transport,
- b) entry fee,
- c) cost of the product or service.

5. Who will be paying for the plan?

Are you asking your parents to pay for all of the plan, or do you have pocket money / savings that you are going to use?

6. Advantages and disadvantages.

You may not think or agree that there are any disadvantages or reasons for not carrying out your plan, but it is always a good idea to show that you have at least thought about them 😊





## Unit 1 Resource: Make a Plan Template (2)

Plan Name or Title

People Involved

Where, When & How

How Much

Advantages  
For  
Positive

Disadvantages  
Against  
Negative



Planning Transitions for Young People with Special Needs and Disabilities is designed to support students with additional needs or disabilities from the age of 15 years upwards. This resource is divided into six skills units, providing parents, families, teachers and other professionals with resources for planning successful transitions from secondary school.

The workbook helps students to identify strengths, challenges, needs and aspirations, and to turn these into achievable goals, focusing on:



- Building Personal Skills
- Developing Learning Skills
- Exploring Post-transition Options
- Using Human and Technological Supports
- Learning to be Independent
- Managing the Transition Bridge

Packed with templates for managing fatigue, study skills, communication, disclosure, identifying options, assistive technology checklists and other resources.

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