



World Autism Day

Toolkit for Self-Advocates/Autistic Adults



World Autism Day
Journée mondiale de l'autisme



celebratethespectrum.com



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Introduction to World Autism Day

World Autism Day

Autism Ontario's World Autism Day campaign unites families, schools, communities, government, and professionals in recognizing World Autism Day on April 2nd and brings to light the triumphs and struggles of people on the autism spectrum.

Autism Ontario is excited to have you participate and celebrate with us throughout April. Through this initiative, we are building stronger, more inclusive communities for people on the autism spectrum. We are highlighting ongoing work happening across the province and the work that still remains to remove systemic barriers and help autistic children, youth, and adults live their best life.

If you have questions, comments, or feedback, connect with us at celebratethespectrum@autismontario.com. Thank you for being part of this important day and celebrating with us!

Celebrate the Spectrum

Celebrate the Spectrum is our theme for World Autism Day 2023 celebrations. It is an opportunity for positive action to provide spaces of support and advocacy for our diverse communities while learning about autism and how to make our communities better for people on the autism spectrum.

The campaign is flexible, and there are many great ways to get your students involved, including:

- Hosting your school's own World Autism Day third-party fundraising event
- Creating a 'strengths link' with your class
- Writing an article for Autism Matters magazine
- Donating to Autism Ontario

Learn more at celebratethespectrum.com

Please take photographs and share your stories and celebrations with us using the hashtags

[#WorldAutismDay2023](https://twitter.com/WorldAutismDay2023) and

[#CelebrateTheSpectrum](https://twitter.com/CelebrateTheSpectrum).

What's Next?

Check out celebratethespectrum.com to find videos, supplementary activities, and information to help enhance your World Autism Day celebrations with Autism Ontario! These resources are available in French and English and are suitable for elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students as an orientation to autism.

Don't forget to share your classroom or school experiences with us! Visit celebratethespectrum.com to learn how.



Introduction

As we approach World Autism Day 2023, we can think about what ‘celebrating the spectrum’ really means and consider what this ‘celebration’ may mean for us as individuals. Synonymous with the word ‘celebrate’ are words like commemorate, honour, acknowledge, and recognize. We acknowledge that not every autistic adult chooses to celebrate World Autism Day. This day can be emotionally challenging because it may remind us of difficult experiences or feel frustrating that “advocacy” is highlighted as a once per year event. As an agency, we are working towards honouring, acknowledging, recognizing, and accepting autistic children, youth and adults all year round. Our aim is a better quality of life for all and an end to discrimination and ableism.



For most of us, we live the longest period of our lives as adults, and yet the challenges present during different life transitions aren't often discussed. When you turn 18, the laws that govern your life and the societal expectations of you change. Even if you don't notice these changes right away, they still happen and some of these journeys don't have a reliable “map” or guide.

We have brought together a variety of resources and ideas that you may utilize at different times or in different ways, depending on where you are on your journey. This toolkit has been developed alongside and for autistic adults, newly diagnosed autistic adults, and allistic allies.

Part I: Wellness and Self-Care Resources

Wellness and self-care are complicated topics because they mean something different to everyone. You can look through these resources to find tools for exploring your unique strengths, needs, and interests. The resources also provide information on how to ask for help and seek support from others when you need it.

Self-Reflection and Check-In

It can sometimes feel overwhelming to identify what we need and how to ask for support or accommodations. Reflecting on your skills and strengths, as well as where you might need help, can be a good place to start. Thinking about all the different areas of your life (for example, work/study, relationships, finances, sleep):

- **What are you good at?**
- **What comes easily to you?**
- **What do you find most challenging?**
- **Where could you use some help or support?**



For more practice in self-reflection, click here: [SupportandAccommodationWheelWorksheets.pdf](#)

If you find these worksheets helpful, you may want to access the full workbook designed for neurodivergent people: [livedexperienceeducator.com/store](#)

Sensory Needs Assessment

Another thing to consider are your sensory needs. This means learning how your body and brain respond to your sensory environment. You may want to connect with an Occupational Therapist who can help you complete a sensory assessment — or you can access this online tool designed to help you figure out how you might respond to certain aspects of your sensory environment:

[\(See page 16 in the Aide Toolkit\).](#)

Accessing Your Support System

Identify people who can help. Once you have identified areas where you may need support or accommodations, it can be helpful to identify people who can help. The people in your support network can offer advice, support, and/or a listening ear.

You can complete this worksheet by thinking about how you can strengthen your present relationships and make new connections.

[\(See page 32 in the AIDE toolkit\)](#)

Additional Resources



Autism Ontario Resources

- Building Positive Futures for Adults with Dale Munro: autismontario.com/node/462
- Wellness and Self-Care with Stephanie Moeser: autismontario.com/node/552
- An Autism-Informed Approach to Mindfulness with Sue Hutton and Lee Steel: autismontario.com/node/792

Other Online Resources

- Mental Health Literacy Guide: yorku.ca/health/lab/ddmh/wp-content/uploads/sites/407/2021/04/Mental-Health-Literacy-Guide-for-Autism.pdf
- Autistic Women who Mask: tiimoapp.com/blog/art-of-masking-women-with-autism/
- Autistic Men who Mask: tiimoapp.com/blog/masters-of-masking-autistic-men-who-camouflage/
- What is Autistic Burnout: awnnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/autistic-burnout.pdf
- Aide Canada Autistic Burnout Toolkit: aidecanada.ca/learn/health/autistic-burnout-toolkit
- Anxiety Canada: anxietycanada.com/
- Wellness Together: wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA
- BounceBack Ontario: bouncebackontario.ca/

Part 2: Exploring Post-Secondary Education

Life after high school can feel overwhelming and difficult to think about. One option that may be available to you is continuing your education by attending a post-secondary institution (i.e., University, College, Trades program). It's important to remember that post-secondary education can be full-time or part-time. This means that it can be one piece of what you choose to do. You can also choose to do part-time employment, volunteering, or attending a day program. This resource is to support you in considering your options and planning next steps.

Navigating Post-Secondary Education

- 1) Identify things you are interested in or good at
- 2) Look into options for community engagement
- 3) Explore your options for post-secondary institutions
- 4) Submit applications
- 5) Search for financial supports (if applicable)
- 6) Inquire into your school's accessibility office



If this all feels like too much, that's ok! You may want to complete a course that will prepare you for this process: transitionresourceguide.ca/plan-your-journey/eyes-pse-post-secondary-prep-course

What to Consider

Identify things you are interested in (or good at):

Make a list of your hobbies, interests, and strengths. This can give you ideas of things you might want to study at school or courses you might be interested in.

Hobbies	Interests	Strengths

Look into options for community engagement:

It can be helpful to try out some opportunities in your community to see what you like (and what you don't like).

- Volunteer: You can choose to volunteer with an organization (like a food bank or library) or you can help out a family member or friend. Volunteering can help you gain job and life skills, practice working on a team, and let you try out different types of jobs. Finding volunteer opportunities can feel stressful. One place where you can start looking is through a local volunteer centre: ovcn.ca/volunteering/find-my-volunteer-centre
- Community Recreation Activities: You can learn to be a part of your community. You can start to visit community centres that are of interest to you. This can be places like gyms/wellness centres, libraries, museums, parks, etc.



Explore your options.

- The [Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities](https://transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/files/School%20Checklist%20%28fillable%29%201.pdf) (2023) created by the Regional Assessment and Resource Centre (RARC) was written to support you “to gain the knowledge and tools that you need to choose the post-secondary program that is right for you”. They created various resources to help you find the right school and program for you. One thing they created is a checklist to help evaluate programs. You can use this tool to assess whether you should apply for a certain program: transitionresourceguide.ca/sites/transitionresourceguide.ca/files/files/School%20Checklist%20%28fillable%29%201.pdf



One specific program you may want to consider is the Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE) program, designed specifically to support adults with disabilities in attending post-secondary education. The goal of the program is to build independence and life skills, encourage social relationships, and provide an opportunity for adults with disabilities to experience “college life”. For more information on the program you can access their website:

ontariocolleges.ca/en/programs/education-community-and-social-services/inclusive-education

Other resources for exploring options:

- Skilled Trades: ontariocolleges.ca/en/apply/skilled-trades
- Ontario Colleges Recruitment: ontariocolleges.ca/en/colleges/college-recruitment
- Ontario Universities Fairs: ontariouniversitiesfair.ca/

Submit applications.

Now comes the part where you need to complete the online application process for your chosen schools:

- To apply to universities: ouac.on.ca/
- To apply to colleges: ontariocolleges.ca/en/apply
- To apply to the skilled trades: ontariocolleges.ca/en/apply/skilled-trades





Search out financial supports (if applicable):

Once you have been accepted into your program of choice, you may want to explore financial supports to help with tuition and your costs of living. There are various sources of support for people with — and without — neurodiversities.

- Autism Ontario Scholarships: autismontario.com/programs-services/adults/awards-and-funding/scholarships
- Government of Canada Education Funding for People with Disabilities: canada.ca/en/services/benefits/education/student-aid/grants-loans/disabilities.html
- Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP): ontario.ca/page/osap-ontario-student-assistance-program
- OSAP Bursaries for Students with Disabilities: osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/A-ZListofAid/PRDR019233.html
- Government of Ontario Student Loans, Grants, Scholarships and Bursaries: ontario.ca/page/student-loans-grants-scholarships-and-bursaries
- ScholarshipsCanada: scholarshipscanada.com/
- StudentAwards: studentawards.com/

Inquire into your school's accessibility office.

All post-secondary institutions have offices that you can register with for support and information once you're at school. It can be helpful to investigate this ahead of time and let the staff know that you will be attending and what supports you may require. They may ask you for information and documentation on what supports you have benefited from before and what are hoping to receive at their school. More information on the role of accessibility offices can be found here: transitionresourceguide.ca/learn-about-accessibility/accessibility-services



Additional Resources

Autism Ontario Resources

- 5 Tips to Ease Transition to Adulthood: autismontario.com/node/502
- Tips for Building Community Connections: elfsightcdn.com/43cd4e5b-d7d4-4fe6-8e3c-9968aa47e130/1bc563ad-984f-43f1-9819-0509a4228da4/Community---Tips-for-Connecting-to-Community_.pdf

Peer Advice Videos

- How Can I Access Higher Education? vimeo.com/540774209?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=96098539
- How Can I Pay for Post-Secondary Education? vimeo.com/541714527?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=96098539
- Can I Get Support in Higher Education Settings? vimeo.com/541776670?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=96098539
- Journey to Adulthood – Post Secondary Education: youtube.com/watch?v=y7d-y7-GS3c

Other Online Resources

- Transition Resource Guide: transitionresourceguide.ca/plan-your-journey/getting-started
- Surrey Place- College/University Pathway- Accompanying Family Guide: surreyplace.ca/media/College-University-Accompanying-Family-Guide.pdf
- Surrey Place- Transition to College/University: surreyplace.ca/media/Transition-to-University-and-College-Checklist.pdf
- Planning for Beyond Graduation Toolkit: planningnetwork.ca/resources/planning-for-a-good-life-beyond-graduation-toolkit-overview



Part 3: Seeking Employment

For autistic people, finding, securing, and maintaining employment can be difficult. If you're looking for a meaningful long-term career, you're not alone! Most people on the autism spectrum want to find meaningful paid employment. However, it can be tough getting in front of employers.

Inherent hiring biases and a lack of understanding can be barriers to gaining employment. Your talents are sometimes overlooked! This section of the toolkit has helpful tips and resources to support you on your employment journey.

Autism Career Connections

Autism Ontario and Apex Academy Online have launched [Autism Career Connections](#), which offers free, online and on-demand programming for autistic youth and adults at the beginning of their employment journey, as well as for employers interested in learning more about hiring autistic talent. It is the result of consultation and work alongside autistic self-advocates and professionals with years of experience supporting youth and adults seeking and maintaining employment.

Autism Career Connections is a self-paced online program, so you can come back at any time to continue where you left off and revisit important modules as often as you'd like.

You will have unlimited free access to Autism Career Connections. This means that you can review these resources with a friend, parent, or teacher if you require any help.

Here's what to expect from the [Job Seekers course](#):

- Discover your skills and identify your strengths
- Learn to write a resume and cover letter that will get you noticed
- Understand how to apply for jobs, including what works and what doesn't
- Prepare for interviews, including etiquette, the questions they might ask, and transportation
- Review a post-interview checklist
- Learn how, if, and why to disclose information about your disability or need for accommodations

Here's what to expect from the [Personal Finance course](#):

- Learn about your own finances
- Learn about banking and opening a bank account
- Understand what to expect when you get paid
- Prepare to create, and stick to, a budget
- Understand debt and borrowing
- Develop an awareness of some of the financial scams to avoid



Additional Resources

Autism Ontario Webinar and Resources

- Employment Readiness series with Sarah Southey: autismontario.com/node/582
- Disclosure, Job Searching, and Being Social at Work: autismontario.com/node/556

Other Online Resources

- Employment Ontario: ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario#find-a-job
- Employment Works: employment-works.ca/
- The Inclusive Workplace: theinclusiveworkplace.ca/en/home
- Ontario Job Bank: jobbank.gc.ca/jobsearch/?sort=M&fprov=ON#results-list-content
- Ready Willing Able: readywillingable.ca/job-seekers/get-connected-autism-support/
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Employment Supports Page (must be a recipient to apply): ontario.ca/page/ontario-disability-support-program-employment-supports
- Specialisterne Canada: ca.specialisterne.com/
- Autism and Advanced Manufacturing: sperocareerscanada.ca/autism-and-advanced-manufacturing-participants/
- Journey to Adulthood – Employment: youtube.com/watch?v=yVDq_JneSNE



WELCOME TO AutismONTARIO

WHO WE ARE

A charitable organization founded in 1973. We have a history of 50 years supporting, representing, and advocating for all autistic individuals across the province regardless of race, ethnicity, income, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

WHAT WE DO

We provide information on autism, support autism research, and implement programs and services for the autism community to address the issues that affect Ontarians with autism, their families, and their caregivers.

OUR MISSION

Creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism

OUR VISION

Best Life, Better World, Making Autism Matter!

SERVICES WE OFFER

- Community events
- CommunityConnect Portal
- OAP Provider List
- Provincial newsletter
- Regional newsletters
- Adult programs
- Caregiver support groups
- French Language Services
- Regional supports
- Learning and positive advocacy resources
- Webinars and workshops
- Child and family supports
- March Break funding
- Summer support funding



We are guided by a Board of Directors with 12 diverse members – people on the autism spectrum, parents, caregivers, siblings of autistic people, and professionals.



We are Ontario's #1 source of information and referral on autism and one of the largest collective voices representing the autism community.



7 regions supporting people on the autism spectrum and their families across the province

OUR CARE VALUES

COLLABORATION

We believe in the power of working side by side with individuals, families, and communities to make informed choices about autism.



ACCOUNTABILITY

We hold ourselves and others responsible for achieving successful outcomes through high standards of integrity and fiscal responsibility.



RESPECT

We value equity, diversity, and inclusion, and we listen to understand.



EVIDENCE-INFORMED

We use and create knowledge to guide our decisions and work.



About Autism Ontario

Autism Ontario and its regions support people on the autism spectrum and their families across the province. We offer information and resources and support autism research while implementing programs and services for the autism community. Here are some examples of services we offer:

Family Events

Designed for autistic children, youth, adults, and their families and caregivers, these events provide access to a supportive environment in local communities. From movie mornings to recreational and social programs, they allow time for families to come together and connect in autism-friendly environments within the community.

autismontario.com/events

CommunityConnect

CommunityConnect is a centralized community portal home to our service listings, learning resources, and events. You can search for autism services and Autism Ontario resources and events.

autismontario.com/communityconnect

Webinars

Autism Ontario webinars are designed to be an interactive, easy-to-understand resource for parents/caregivers, professionals, and educators. Webinars are presented in either English or French by subject matter experts in a discussion-based format. Webinars are a convenient way for viewers to stay on top of current research findings; learn about educational advocacy; build resources to support a child on the autism spectrum at school; gain tools to keep children and youth safe, and learn strategies to navigate the lifespan of people on the spectrum and their families.

autismontario.com/programs-services/webinars

Provincial Newsletter

A free online newsletter in English and French to stay connected with Autism Ontario.

autismontario.com/newsletter

To learn more about the programs and services offered by our provincial office or our local regions, please visit our website at autismontario.com.