

University of North Carolina
TEACCH Autism Program

TEACCH for Transition Age Youth
Autism Independent UK, Kettering 2024



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THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL





Ground Rules


 Let me know if I should slow down, speed up, or repeat something.

 Ask questions (or make a note to yourself to ask later) when something is not clear.


 Lead with compassion and assume best (or neutral) intentions.

 Take a break if/when you need.

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Objectives of Presentation

- Understand the challenges and current status of transition aged youth with autism.
- Identify tools and strategies to support challenges associated with a successful transition to adulthood for youth with autism.

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Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is an approach to learning and mental health that argues various neurological conditions are the result of normal variations in the human genome⁽¹⁾, with neurotypical development being the most prevalent. Some less common forms of neurological development include those labeled with dyslexia, ADHD, and autism.

Individuals may prefer to use the term “neurodivergent” when describing themselves.

⁽¹⁾Uppstrom and Wells, *Autism as a Natural Human Variation: Reflections on the Claims of the Neurodiversity Movement*

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The Complexity of Neurodiversity

“Neurodiversity is not a denial of the very real disabilities conditions like autism can present. Rather, we recognize that these conditions are ways of being, not diseases, and they are best met with acceptance and support at whatever level is appropriate”.

The Neurodiversity Initiative at WJLiam & Mary: <https://www.wjliamandmary.edu/sites/neurodiversity/about/index.php>.

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Neurodiversity

- How people **experience and interact** with the world around them
- No one “**right**” way of thinking
- Differences are **not deficits**

“The neurodiversity movement aims to **increase acceptance and inclusion of all people while embracing neurological differences.**”

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Design Methodology

Universal Design

Human-Centered Design

Inclusive Design

Design for All

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Build Capacity for All

- Skill-building for all
 - Individual with autism
 - Everyone else
- Antecedent/proactive approach
 - Less reactive
 - Time/energy on "front end"
 - Saves time/energy
 - Benefits more students
- Accommodations/Environmental changes

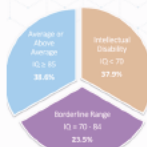
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- 2) Tell me when something is unclear.
- 3) Let me know if you need a break.

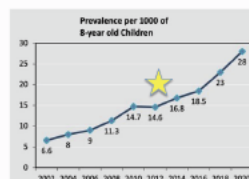
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Autistic Young Adults: Changes



Decrease from 50% with an intellectual disability from the 2002 cohort.



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Research

ASD without ID—less likely to receive services
(Roux, et al., 2017)

National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (Roux,
et al., 2015)

- 37% disconnected after high school
- Part-time jobs with low wages
- 26% without services
- 2-year colleges identified as a gateway

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Research – Post Secondary Education to Employment

- Autistic individuals with PSE--
more likely:
 - Employed in competitive
integrated settings,
 - Earn greater weekly
wages,
 - Working more weekly
hours
- Vocational services for
autistic students with PSE
were both cost-effective and
cost-efficient.



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Risk Factors

- Impairing **social anxiety** related to awareness of
social differences. (Hedden & White, 2021)
- Vulnerability related to feelings of **isolation** and
challenges with **executive functioning**. (Hatchcock & Mandile, 2022)
- Lack of autism **awareness and acceptance**. (Mertzelius, et al., 2022)
- Camouflaging, Masking, **and** Autistic Burnout (Arnold et al., 2022)
 - Around 90% self-report camouflaging (Cassidy et al., 2020)

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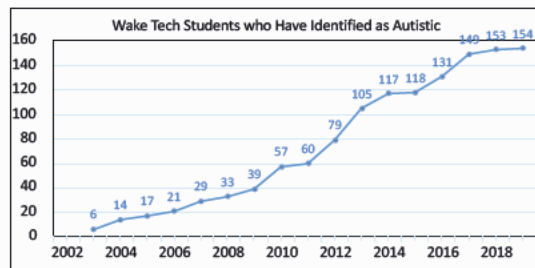
Mental Health Challenges

- Disproportionate risk of **mental health comorbidities** (Hollocks, et al., 2017)
- **More than half** autistic adults struggle with mental health problems (Maddox, et al., 2020)
- Increased **susceptibility** to substance use disorder (Haastbroek & Morojko, 2021)

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Increase in Autistic Students Attending Community Colleges



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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND ADULthood

Creating Transition Services to Support Learning Styles, Social Communication Skills, and Emotion Regulation

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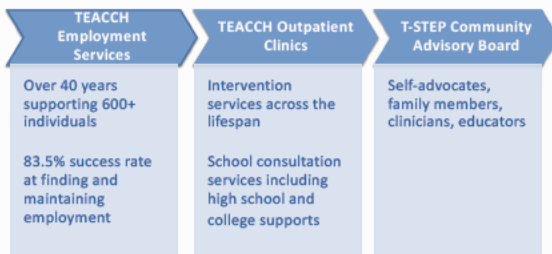
Intervention Targets for Autistic Students: Structured TEACCHing via T-STEP

- Learning Styles
 - Focus attention on relevant information
 - Teach organization skills (time management, organizational skills)
 - Teach explicit routines (how to accept corrective feedback)
- Social Communication Skills
 - Teach effective social skills (professional social skills for adults)
 - Teach strategies to ask for help
- Mental Health Challenges
 - Teach emotion regulation/coping skills that can be used at college, work, or home.

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Creating the T-STEP: A Collaborative Effort



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T-STEP Program Overview

Overall Goals

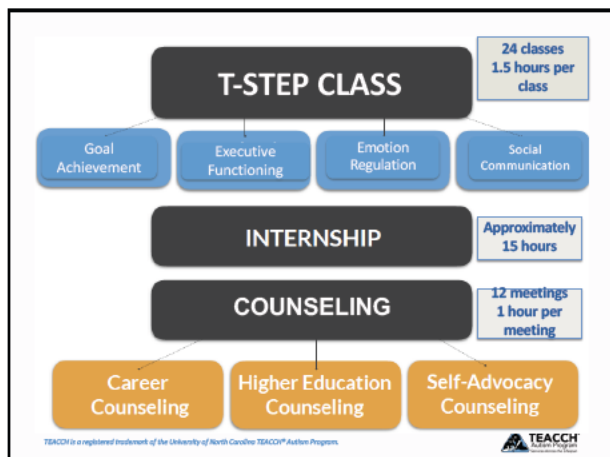
- Students create and implement tools and strategies to help reach **their** goals
- Student learn to seek support from parents/mentors, college advisors, employers, and community to help reach their goals.
- Students practice tools and strategies at home, class, and community internship.

Explaining T-STEP to Students

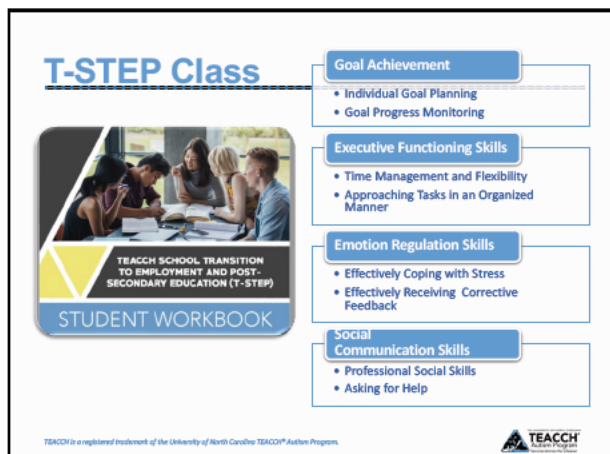
- We want to help you reach **YOUR** goals.
- Provide insider information or behind the scenes information about adulting.
- Learn how to work smarter, not harder.
- Importance of being mindful/alert/aware.
- Learn the power of practice.

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T-STEP Counseling Meetings



TEACCH SCHOOL TRANSITION
TO EMPLOYMENT AND POST-
SECONDARY EDUCATION (T-STEP)
COUNSELING NOTEBOOK

Self-Advocacy

- Understanding personal strengths and challenges
- College supports including Disability/Accessibility Services

Career/Job Exploration

- Career Assessments
- College Career Services

Higher Education

- Academic Advising
- Student Success Services

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T-STEP Tools



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T-STEP Tool #1: Self-Monitoring

Self-Monitoring is thinking about (or being mindful) of and controlling your behavior. Rather than a teacher or parent doing this, in adulthood, you do this for yourself.

Research shows that people who use self-monitoring strategies have improved school and work success, such as higher grades and better salaries, and they accomplish their goals



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T-STEP Tool #2: Visual Reminders

Visual Reminders can help you keep track of important information. You will have many more things to keep up with as an adult. Strategies you have used in the past may not work.

Remember!

Visual Reminders can help you understand information in your home and in the community.



Effective use of Visual Reminders can help you reach your goals.



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T-STEP Tool #3: Routine Strategies

- What is a Routine Strategy?

- A regular, consistent activity that becomes a habit.
- A predictable sequence of steps that can be followed to complete a task.

Work smarter not harder!

...repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act but a habit.

-Will Durant



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T-STEP Routine Strategies

- Goal Achievement Routine Strategies (monitor goals)
- Time Management Routine Strategy (planner)
- Asking for Help Routine Strategy (list of questions)
- Calming Routine Strategy (regulation routine)
- Partnering-up Routine Strategy (steps for work with partners)
- Flexibility Routine Strategy (steps)
- Organization Routine Strategies (set of routines)
- Professional Social Skills Routine Strategy (list of 4 skills)
- Dealing with Corrective Feedback Routine Strategy (steps)



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T-STEP Tool #4: Self Reward

- **Self-Reward** is about **perseverance** and **motivation**. Rewarding yourself as you work to reach your goals can keep you motivated so you can persevere when faced with difficulties.
- **Self-Reward** may sound self-indulgent or frivolous but when we treat ourselves, we feel **energized, cared for, and content**. This boosts **self-confidence** and helps us feel **accomplished**.



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Long Term Versus On the Go Self-Rewards



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T-STEP Class Logistics



TEACCH SCHOOL TRANSITION
TO EMPLOYMENT AND POST-
SECONDARY EDUCATION (T-STEP)

STUDENT WORKBOOK

Group setting

- College setting
- High school setting
- Clinic

Two facilitators

Seminar class

- interactive
- frequent discussion

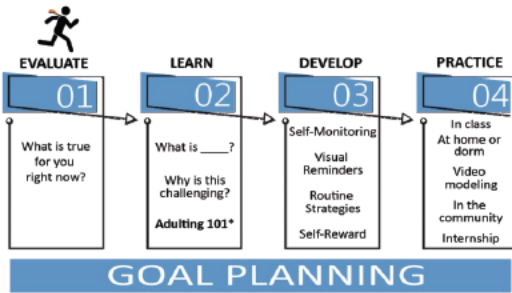
90 minutes

4 to 15 students

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Sequence for Teaching New Routine Strategy



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Evaluate

Evaluate: My Distress
What is True for You Right Now?

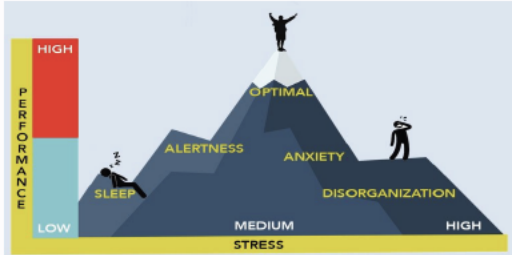
What are things you can do without your family's and teachers/instructors' help and support?
 There are no right or wrong answers.

Question	Never 1	Some times 3	Very Often 5
1 Do you feel unable to handle your personal problems? I feel this way...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2 Do you feel like you can't control the important things in your life? I feel this way...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3 In the last month, how often did you feel things were not going your way? I felt this way...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4 In the last month, have you felt angry or upset because circumstances were unfair? I felt this way...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Learn: What is Stress?



What is distress?
 What is eustress?

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Develop a Personalized Calming Routine Strategy

At least 1 Mental Distraction	At least 1 Breathing Tool	At least 2 Tense & Release or 1 Energy Release
<input type="checkbox"/> Count to 20 <input type="checkbox"/> Count backwards <input type="checkbox"/> Sing a song in your head <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on environment <input type="checkbox"/> Recite the alphabet <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 count breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Elevator breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Clench both fists <input type="checkbox"/> Touch shoulders <input type="checkbox"/> Shrug shoulders <input type="checkbox"/> Wrinkle forehead/raise eyebrows <input type="checkbox"/> Close eyes tightly <input type="checkbox"/> Press teeth together <input type="checkbox"/> Push head backward <input type="checkbox"/> Push head forward <input type="checkbox"/> Arch your back <input type="checkbox"/> Take a deep breath <input type="checkbox"/> Suck in stomach <input type="checkbox"/> Flex thighs <input type="checkbox"/> Point toes upward <input type="checkbox"/> Curl toes downward
At least 1 positive thoughts tools (Positive Self- or Visualizations)		
<input type="checkbox"/> "Relax" (say it slowly 5 times) <input type="checkbox"/> "I am calm" (say it slowly 5 times) <input type="checkbox"/> "I am safe" (say it slowly 5 times) <input type="checkbox"/> "I can do this" (say it slowly 5 times) <input type="checkbox"/> "Everything's fine" (say it slowly 5 times) <input type="checkbox"/> "_____ " (say it slowly 5 times)		

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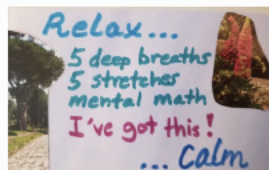
Develop a Personalized Calming Routine Strategy

- After trying different calming tools, which may be most effective for you?
- Regular practice of the technique over time makes it effective.
- Create a Calming Routine Strategy or Calming Routine. This is a Routine Strategy you could use any time and/or anywhere.



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Remember: Keep Calm and Carry On

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Practice: Variety of Opportunities

- Class
 - Partner Activities
 - Small Group Activities
 - Role-play
 - Video Modeling
 - Team Activities
- Internship
- Practice with Mentors Outside of Class



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Strategies for Supporting Parent/Family Involvement

SKILL WORK FOR HOME AND FAMILY NEWSLETTERS

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Skill Work for Home

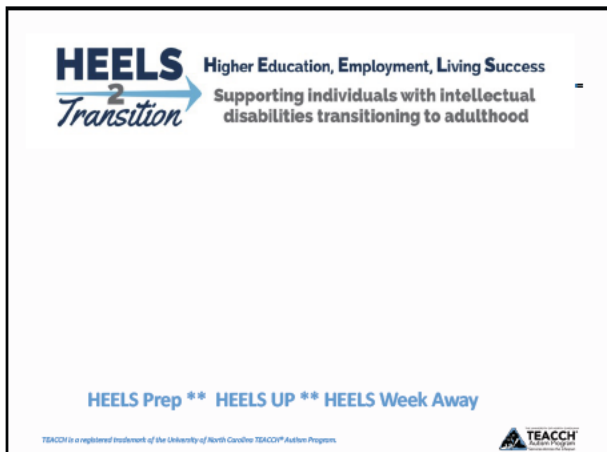
1. Choose mentor
2. Describe changing role of parents/family with student
3. Activities:
 - Ask about adulting mishaps
 - Encourage sharing stories, to highlight normalcy of challenges during transition to adulthood, to foster communication between family and student
 - Share information from class: explain Routine Strategies to mentor
 - Ask for mentor's opinion—no right or wrong answers, helpful to get other's perspective
 - Ask for mentor's support with learning Routine Strategies

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HEELS –2-- Transition

HEELS Prep

- 4-week, hybrid format for Summer 2023
- Applicants must be interested in setting goals and building skills for the transition to adulthood

HEELS UP

- Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) program
- Summer semester hybrid format for summer 2023
 - 1 summer school course, 1:1 coaching, and social/recreational activities with peers on campus

HEELS Week Away

- 1 week in-person format
- Individuals from either HEELS program lives on campus and practices skills learned in classes/coaching

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Interventions to Support Transition Aged Youth with Autism

T-STEP

- Ages 16-21 (Funding)
- autism w/out ID
- Components:
 - Class
 - Counseling
 - Internship

HEELS Prep

- Ages 18- 26
- ID w/ and w/out autism
- Components
 - Classes
 - Goals & Self-Management
 - Life Skills
 - Career Development
 - Safety Skills
 - Mental Health
 - 1:1 Coaching
 - Social Events

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Activity

What is something *new* you can do to support learning in each of these areas?

Write your ideas on a sticky note and post it on the chart for each area.

- **Learning Styles**
 - Teach organization skills (students younger than 10 and/or ID: seasons, picture schedule, waiting: students over 10 and/or no ID: time management)
 - Teach explicit routines (play, school, work)
- **Social Communication Skills**
 - Teach effective social skills (students younger than 10 and/or ID: greetings, goodbyes; students over 10 and/or no ID: professional social skills)
 - Teach ways to ask for help
- **Mental Health Challenges**
 - Teach emotion regulation/coping skills that can be used at school, work, or home.

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