



# **My Life, My Decisions!**



## **A Guide for Planning a Meaningful Life**



# INTRODUCTION

Preparing for adulthood is an exciting time in your life! There are many important decisions to make about your future, especially about what you want to do during the day.

In order to obtain the supports and funding needed for a meaningful day, it is essential that you develop a personal plan. A plan is important for everyone, regardless of the complexity of your disability. Everyone has goals and dreams and something to contribute. While achieving goals may appear quite challenging, considering your strengths and interests is crucial to ensuring that you will get the support you need.

Do you want to continue to learn and go to school? Do you want to focus on recreation and leisure activities? Perhaps you want to get a job or do some volunteer work. Actually, your day might be a combination of many different things. Regardless of what you decide, it is really important to do something you are interested in doing and that it is meaningful to you.

This booklet is a tool designed to help inspire healthy discussion with you, your family and your support team. It was written to help all of you get to know what is important in your life, what you are interested in, what you are good at, and setting goals to make it happen. There is a section on relationships and the importance of social connections in your life and how to develop an action plan to move forward.

Your future is important, which is why it is essential that you take the time to seriously consider what you want to do, who can provide support and assistance and how together, you can turn your goals and dreams into reality!

# ANDREW'S STORY



Andrew Banar has Down syndrome and packs a lot of fun into his life. He attends Cardinal Carter High School, is a member of a bowling league, takes drum lessons and volunteers after school at Kingsville Court retirement home watering plants for the residence.

Andrew was speaking to his mom one day about wanting to go to college and how he had an idea of how to raise some money. Although he originally wanted to have a lemonade stand, his mom Karen noticed one of Andrew's rock n roll inspired drawings. He's a serious fan of music and playing the drums. She thought it would be neat if he sold t-shirts featuring his artwork, so she helped him buy some t-shirts and have them printed with one of his drawings, a stick figure with a sort of "faux-hawk" hairstyle who's beating a pair of drums, accompanied by the slogan "Rock On".

They turned out great and have become a big hit. Andrew is having a great time and meeting lots of new people. Andrew had the opportunity to meet the Barenaked Ladies at St. Clair College. He presented the entire band with his "Rock On" shirts and Ed Robertson wore Andrew's shirt on stage during the concert that evening.

Andrew donates part of the proceeds from his t-shirt sales to various children's charities. He loves giving back to the community and helping others.

Some of the groups that Andrew has supported are: The Children's Miracle Net Work, We Care For Kids, London Sick Kids Hospital, Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital, Windsor Regional Hospital, Community Living Essex County, and T2B.

Andrew has a web site and he sells his cool shirts all around the world. To find out more about Andrew and what he has been doing, go to [www.grouphugapparel.com](http://www.grouphugapparel.com).

# PLANNING

Planning is about exploring your goals and dreams, discovering your strengths and interests, establishing relationships and making decisions. Planning is about you, your life, and your future!



## Why is planning important?

Planning will help you develop a way to put your thoughts, ideas and dreams into action. Planning is important because:

- ✓ It can help you decide or think about your life and to set goals.
- ✓ It can help you think about relationships and who can help you.
- ✓ It can help you think about what changes you would like to make in your life.
- ✓ It can help people to get to know you and understand how to support you.
- ✓ It can help you be a part of your community.
- ✓ It can help you do the things you like and want to do.

Traditionally, people have planned according to what is available to them. Today we encourage people to develop a plan according to their interests. This helps to ensure that:

- You are in control of your life
- You are satisfied with your life
- Support is provided according to what you have asked for
- All opportunity and possibilities are explored

# GETTING STARTED

## What are your dreams?

Planning begins with exploring your dreams! Exploring your dreams can open up possibilities that you have never thought of before.

List your three main dreams/goals:

- 1) .....
- 2) .....
- 3) .....

What is it about your dream that you really like?

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## Who Am I?

The next section is about reflecting upon your strengths, interests and goals. This is a start to creating a vision for what the future can hold. Be specific in your answers and provide as much detail as possible.

### By Answering:

**What?** - will help you get basic information about your goals.

**Where?** - will help you to figure out where you want to pursue your goals.

**Why?** - will help you to understand the reason for choosing your goals.

**Who?** - will identify people who can assist you with achieving your goals.

# What is important to you?

(Example: family, money, having friends, fitness, good health etc.)

What? .....

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Where? .....

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Why is this important? .....

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Who can help? .....

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## What do you like to do for fun?

(Example: list hobbies, sports, activities like watching movies etc.)

What? .....

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Where? .....

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Why is this important? .....

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Who can help? .....

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## What are your strengths? What do you think you are good at?

(Example: following building instructions, making friends, stacking shelves, solving math problems, making people laugh, etc)

What?

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Where?

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Why is this important?

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Who can help?

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# What do you want to do after you finish high school? How do you want to spend your day?

(Example: get a job, volunteer at festivals, travel)

What? .....

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Where? .....

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Why is this important? .....

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Who can help you plan? .....

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# Would you like to continue to learn new things?

(Formally or informally)

What? .....

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Where? .....

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Why is this important? .....

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Who can help you plan? .....

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# Where do you want to live after you finish high school?

(Formally or informally)

What type? (house, apartment, condo, other) .....

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With Whom? .....

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Where? .....

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Who can help you plan? .....

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# SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Through research, it has been found that by increasing the amount of our social connections, networks and relationships, we can also improve our health, happiness and overall well-being.

More studies have revealed that while individuals benefit from social connections, so do communities. People become more aware of the many things they have in common and



how they are linked to one another. Together people can solve community issues and strengthen acceptance of diversity

**“The more social connections you have, the healthier you are, the happier you are, the longer you live and the better the outcomes are in your life”.**

Al Condeluci, Professor, University of Pittsburgh

## Why is it important?

Building a strong network of social connections is important because it helps offer more opportunities and keeps you safer. When you look out for someone, they will be more likely to look out for you. Building these friendships and relationships is absolutely essential to a safe and secure future.

Who are the people that you feel connected to?

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How do you stay in touch with the people in your life now? How can you stay in touch with people after high school? List ways to stay in touch with family & friends...

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## Steps for making social connections

Here are 4 steps to follow for increasing your social connections:

**Step 1:** Start with your interests. Ask yourself, “What do I like to do”. Is it photography, camping, swimming, electronics, or art? Each of us has one or two hobbies or activities that we like to do.

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**Step 2:** Find out where you can go in your community that offers an activity or job related to your interest. For example, if you wanted to focus on photography, is there a group, business, club or photography class that you could join?

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**Step 3:** This step involves learning about any equipment, clothing, supplies, language or other things that can help you become familiar with and part of the group. Who can help you to find out if you need any equipment, clothing, supplies etc?

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**Step 4:** Is there someone who could introduce you to the group? This person may be someone who is already involved in the activity. Is there someone who can help you, your son or daughter or someone you support to get connected?

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## Other considerations

You have thought about your interests, goals and dreams. There are a few other things for you to consider for putting you plan into action. Here are some questions to answer:

How often will you need paid support?

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How much will support cost?

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Cost of activities, supplies & equipment?

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Do you require transportation? How often? Do you need accessible transportation? How much will transportation cost?

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Other?

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# YOUR PLAN



You have had the opportunity to express your skills and talents, to explore your dreams, and to identify your goals. Now it is time to put your plan into action. This involves breaking the goals down into simple and realistic steps and adding time frames to make sure you reach your goals when you want to!

Goal	Action Steps / Activities	Who can Help?
<p>Example: I want to volunteer at the local library because I like meeting new people and making new friends</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Find the phone number for the library.</li> <li>2) Call and ask the librarian who I should speak with about volunteering</li> <li>3) Make an appointment to speak to the library supervisor</li> <li>4) Ask for a ride to the library</li> <li>5) Dress appropriately</li> <li>6) Arrive on time for my appointment with the library supervisor</li> <li>7) Meet with the library supervisor</li> <li>8) If he or she approves, start making a new plan for how I will be able to get to the library regularly.</li> </ol>	

You can make copies of this page so that you can continue to making goals and meeting them!

Goal	Action Steps / Activities	Who can Help?

# RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

## Everyone has rights!

- Rights are the rules that help make people equal. You are entitled to the same rights under the law as everyone else because you are a person and a citizen.

## With rights come responsibilities!

- Responsibilities are duties or obligations. You are accountable for something.



Here is a list of your rights and responsibilities for you and/or your family to think about...

Rights	Responsibilities
To be Safe	To keep others Safe
To Speak Up for yourself and be Heard	To Listen to others
To be Respected	To Respect others
To Privacy	To give others Privacy
To have a Meaningful Day	To Explore dreams and goals
To be a Part of your community	To Contribute to others
To a Relationship	To Respect yourself and others
To have an Education/Keep Learning	To make an effort to do your Best
To be Proud of who you are	To allow others to be Proud of themselves
To say No	To Know what choices you have and their Consequences
To be Included in making decisions	To Learn and Understand what may happen as a result of the decision

# RESOURCES

The *Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services* has a website with information about Developmental Services:

➔ <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/developmental/>

More specifically, the website provides information and appropriate application forms under *Services and Supports*, including:

- Services provided by community agencies
- Residential supports
- Passport
- Special Services at Home

➔ <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/developmental/servicesAndSupport/index.aspx>

## *Ontario Disabilities Support Program*

➔ <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/>

★ Tip: It takes approximately a year to go through the process so it is important to begin applying for funding at 17.5 years.

## *Assistive Devices Program*

➔ [http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/income\\_Support/odsp\\_device.aspx](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/income_Support/odsp_device.aspx)

## NEED HELP WITH PLANNING ?

Find out who can help you in your community! This may be a good friend. This may be a community agency that can help offer ideas and direct you toward opportunities and resources. This may be a private planner who can help you create an individualized planning strategy to help you reach your goals.

- And Remember!**
- ➔ Start planning a head of time!
  - ➔ Be Resourceful!
  - ➔ Have Fun!

# HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ?

For more information, contact us at:

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You can also visit our website at:

➔ <http://www.ensembleunderstands.com/>

This planning guide is also available online at:

➔ <http://www.ensembleunderstands.com/>





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