

A Curriculum for



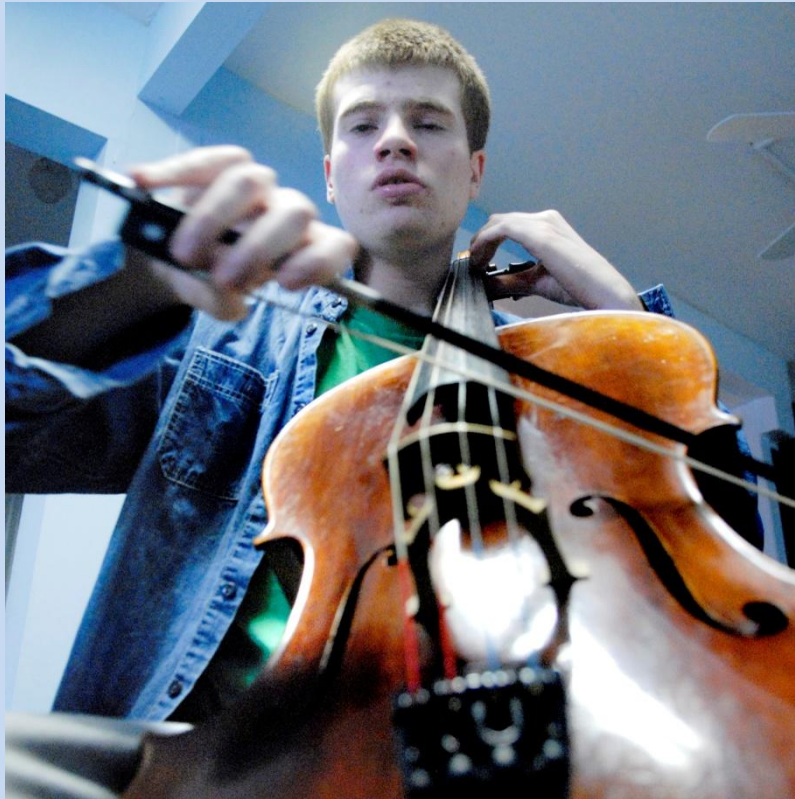
Helping Young Adults with Autism Develop
Lifeskills, **I**ndependence, **F**riendships, and **E**mployment Skills

Abilis Autism Program
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Abilis provides people with disabilities and their families in lower Fairfield County with supports and advocacy for building able lives and strong communities. Our vision has been to set the standard of excellence for person-centered services through innovation, teamwork and respect for the people we serve. Together, we will shape communities in which people of all abilities participate and contribute as equal citizens. It is in this spirit that our L.I.F.E. program evolved and took shape. It is founded on inspiration and respect for the many people we have served in over 60 years of service to the community.

It is our hope and expectation that the L.I.F.E. Curriculum will remain perpetually in transition, being implemented, evaluated, altered and, when appropriate, expanded. Basing our decision on both our experience as educators and the relevant literature, we chose domains of value that we felt were most applicable to our students. We hope this serves as a training tool and provides opportunities for students in the delivery of this curriculum.

Special thanks to Hilary Williams and her students.

Background

The Abilis Autism Program (AAP) began 14 years ago, when the organization then known as ARC Greenwich began creating support services that were specifically designed for children with autism and their families. AAP (then known as the Greenwich Autism Program) began providing office- and home-based supports to families who had a child on the autism spectrum. Services included direct instruction, help with challenging behavior, consultation to schools, and social skills instruction. The development of an autism-specific Birth-to-Three program, and a diagnostic clinic grew out of the initial program as well.

About four years ago, parents who had children supported by the Abilis Autism Program began asking us about services for their soon-to-be “young adults”. While transition programs were in place in the public schools (often called ‘super seniors’ programs), parents had concerns about how well these programs met the specific needs of young people with autism. At the same time, while Abilis had high quality programs for adults with developmental disabilities, we had not yet developed programming that was specific to adults on the autism spectrum.

Staff members, parents, and board members spent months visiting programs, talking to other professionals, and reviewing curricula. Out of this work, the L.I.F.E. program evolved. Our initial vision was a program that targeted the specific skill gaps and behavioral excesses that made it difficult for adults with autism to be successful in programs designed for adults with other developmental disabilities, and that kept them from achieving their highest level of success and independence. The same “issues” that had been the focus of their education when they were younger – social relatedness, language development, and emotion/behavior control – would be the focus of this new program.

In the early stages of planning the L.I.F.E. program, we looked for existing curricula to assist us. What we found was that most curricula did not focus on the needs of teens and adults with autism – assuming a level of social awareness and relatedness that our participants did not have. Autism-specific curricula that we did find were narrow (focusing just on social skills and not on the other learning aspects of autism) or were too ‘high functioning’ (more for adults with Asperger’s than classic autism).

We spent a year planning, and then two years developing, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum that is specifically for young adults with autism who needed a planned transition to adult services. The attached curriculum is what came out of that effort.

Who is the L.I.F.E. Curriculum for?

We designed this curriculum to help parents, schools, and human service agencies implement the transition between school-age and adult services for young people with autism. It is designed so that you can implement large pieces of it “as is”, or pull out the pieces that meet the specific needs of your students or program. You may already have a classroom for students

of this age, and are looking for a supplemental curriculum that is specific to the needs of students with autism.

Which students are the “best fit” for the L.I.F.E. Curriculum?

As we were developing the L.I.F.E. program, we visited several programs designed for young adults on the Autism Spectrum. We found some very high quality programs where the goal was “independent living.” We wanted to design a program for young adults who would likely need some sort planned support as adults; people who could live “more independently” but not totally apart from regular support. We also knew that since our program is based on small group instruction and has many components in the community, that we would not be a good fit for someone who needed more intense support, had significantly limited language, or who exhibited significant behavior problems. The best fit for our curriculum is someone who:

- Is 18-25 years old
- Has an autism diagnosis
- Is able to work in small groups for 15 minutes
- Has behavioral challenges that are well managed with a positive behavior plan
- Is able to communicate (verbally or with an AAC system) immediate needs, likes and dislikes, and interests; can carry on basic conversations with familiar peers and adults; and can respond to basic verbal instruction.

Philosophy and Guiding Principles

Mission – The mission of Abilis L.I.F.E. is to provide young adults with autism the skills they need for a successful work, community, and home life. The program provides instruction in a wide variety of settings and teaches key skills related to independence, social relatedness, and emotion regulation.

L.I.F.E. is literally a transition program. It’s a 2-3 year design to teach both specific skills (e.g. functional academics, job skills, social skills) and more general success skills (less prompt dependence, social fluency, and self-regulation) that predict overall success.

Guiding Principles – The Abilis L.I.F.E. program is based on the following guiding principles:

- ❖ **Abilis L.I.F.E. is a transition program** – Transition is a time to begin planning a student’s post-high school life. The students in our program are ready to leave the High School environment, but they, their parents, or their school team have identified some specific skills that they want to address before a full transition to Adult Services. A transition program specifically focuses on skill gaps that interfere with a full adult life. The addressed skills and planned teaching activities move students toward functional and meaningful adult lives.
- ❖ **Abilis L.I.F.E. promotes independence** – The students in the L.I.F.E. program are learning to take more responsibility for their own activities, advocate for themselves, and move through their day with greater independence. Instruction is gradually moving

from 1:1 support to small group and independent activities. Students are learning to respond to decreased frequency and intensity of prompting, and to identify when they need additional help.

- ❖ **Participants in Abilis L.I.F.E. are adults** – The students in the L.I.F.E. program, like their typical age-peers, are young adults. No longer children, but still young, they face both the opportunities and challenges of this age-range. As adults, they should make some decisions for themselves, have work and recreation options that are appropriate and of their choosing, and learn how to succeed given the distinct characteristics of autism. Staff members of Abilis L.I.F.E. talk to participants as adults, as partners rather than teachers and students, and in a tone and manner that conveys that respect.
- ❖ **Participants in Abilis L.I.F.E. have autism** – Autism Spectrum Disorders impact each person differently. However, there are key characteristics that affect how people with autism interact with the world. The activities and strategies of Abilis L.I.F.E. are specifically designed to either teach around or adapt to autism. Students' difficulties in receptive and expressive communication, social interaction, sensory processing, and emotion regulation are both the focus of instructional time and the content of programmatic adaptations. The core of Abilis L.I.F.E. is to identify the autism- and person-specific characteristics that might limit opportunities for a person and to either teach those skills specifically or find adaptations that can be functional and meaningful.
- ❖ **Abilis L.I.F.E. uses positive, proactive behavior management** – Successful behavior change is based on a functional understanding of the problem behavior. Behavior is seen as serving a specific function for the individual (or sometimes more than one function). The most common functions are: gaining attention, gaining access to preferred items, avoiding or escaping a non-preferred activity, giving pleasure, and alleviating pain or discomfort. Most importantly, behavior change is accomplished through positive strategies that are based on 1) preventing the “bad” behavior from accomplishing the function, 2) teaching new skills for achieving the same function, and 3) creating situations in which the problem behavior is not needed. Punishment (a negative consequence to inappropriate behavior) is used rarely, and is seen as a short-term response to a crisis. Any incident that results in a negative consequence is immediately analyzed to identify proactive strategies that can be used in the future.

L.I.F.E. Goals: the primary curriculum components¹: Every activity in the Abilis L.I.F.E. weekly schedule is designed to target one of our primary curriculum components. These curriculum pieces help our students to meet the goals of increased independence in

¹Goals are adapted from Baker, J (2005) Preparing for Life: The complete guide for transitioning to adulthood for those with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, Inc. And Ford, A., Schnorr, R., Meyer, L., Davern, L., Black, J., and Dempsey, P. (Eds) (1989) The Syracuse Community-referenced Curriculum for Students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

adult life. Adults with Autism and ASD are more likely to achieve independence in their lives when they are able to develop these skills. The major curriculum components are:

- Independence
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Advocacy
- Social Interaction
- Communication

- ❖ **Increasing independence** – Students in Abilis L.I.F.E. are learning to succeed in a context of decreasing frequency and intensity of prompts. Using least-to-most prompting strategies, L.I.F.E. staff members help students complete daily activities with the least amount of support possible. When prompts can't be totally faded, L.I.F.E. staff members identify prompting strategies that are minimally intrusive. Independence also means trying things that are new, and accepting reasonable risks associated with those activities.

Goals:

- Follow familiar routines with decreasing prompts
- Use appropriate communication skills in community settings
- Plan and prepare nutritious snacks and meals for self and others
- Identify and follow safety rules in the community
- Take care of personal belongings
- Plan and gather items for activities
- Manage a daily and weekly schedule
- Manage money in a variety of daily and weekly activities

- ❖ **Self-awareness** – Students in Abilis L.I.F.E. are learning to be more aware of themselves and their surroundings. Paying attention to their own belongings, relying on their own judgment of where they are in space, noticing hygiene and personal appearance, and understanding their own strengths and needs are all part of gaining self-awareness.

Goals:

- Use appropriate attending skills to respond to natural cues in the environment
- Identify triggers for extreme emotional reactions
- Recognize internal states (hunger, anger, agitation) and report to familiar people
- Use appropriate “personal space” rules when interacting with peers, familiar adults, and community members
- Identify who can provide help in school, work, and community settings

- ❖ **Self-management** (emotional control and self-advocacy) – As students improve their awareness of themselves and the world around them, they are learning to recognize their specific challenges, manage their own behavior, and ask for help when they need it. Emotional control means recognizing triggers and staying under control. Self-advocacy means knowing what you need in specific situations, finding the person who can help you, and asking specifically for what you need. This includes making informed choices about work, leisure, and activities of daily life. Self-management means knowing what you need and communicating this in positive, constructive ways that are understood by the people around you.

Goals:

- Generate appropriate solutions to problems in the classroom, at work, or in the community (e.g., “I want to buy a soda, but they are sold out. Instead, I can _____”)
- Ask for help in school, work, and community settings
- Ask for needed materials in school, work, and community settings
- Use relaxation, deep breathing, and other self-management strategies to manage emotional reactions
- Decrease odd motor movements in public settings
- Avoid or change triggers for negative emotions

- ❖ **Communication** – Being able to communicate across a range of functions is a key component of Abilis L.I.F.E. Students learn to make requests, ask questions, and make comments. Communication occurs in the context of daily activities, in conversations with peers, teachers, and community members. Each student learns to respond to naturally occurring cues that signal a time to communicate. Students learn to use and understand eye gaze, words, gestures, and facial expression across a variety of settings and functions.

Goals:

- Use basic communication skills with familiar and unfamiliar people (hello and goodbye, introduce self, and introduce people to each other)
- Use appropriate “speaker” and “listener” skills, including eye gaze, facial expression, and body language
- Start, maintain, and end a conversation appropriately
- Use conversation repair strategies
- Be responsive to listener cues (e.g., attention or boredom cues)
- Recognize appropriate times and use appropriate strategies for interrupting
- Use communication skills in a variety of settings in the community
- Communicate a range of language functions (requests, refusals, asking and answering questions, commenting, and sharing information)

- ❖ **Social relatedness** – Being able to get along with other people is an essential skill in adult life. Adults will have more success with house-mates, co-workers, customers, and other community members when they use appropriate social skills. L.I.F.E. focuses on functional communication, conversation skills, and body language. In addition, social problem-solving, in which a person has to figure out a solution in a socially challenging situation, is a key aspect of L.I.F.E. Having healthy long-term relationships with other people is also part of the L.I.F.E. curriculum.

Goals:

- Identify characteristics of a “friend”, “acquaintance”, and “stranger”
- Use appropriate skills for approaching friends, acquaintance, and strangers
- Use appropriate listening and sharing skills to build friendships
- Use appropriate conflict resolution skills
- Express a range of social and emotional cues (welcoming and unwelcoming cues, interest, boredom, and sincerity)
- Respond to a range of social and emotional cues

Teaching Strategies

In designing and refining the L.I.F.E. program and curriculum, we drew on a long history of educational strategies for children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Many of these strategies are described in great detail in other sources. They are described here to provide an understanding of the basic approaches of the L.I.F.E. program and curriculum.

Least-to-most prompting

Least-to-most (LTM) prompting is a strategy that is designed to build independence. We see a lot of students on the Autism Spectrum who have learned to wait for prompting, and who have become “prompt dependent.” Rather than accept that the problem is the student’s, we looked at what we could do to “break” that prompt dependency and to build independence.

Here's an incident that will illustrate where our commitment to LTM prompting came from, and to understand why we are so passionate about it. One of our students had an area of extreme talent. Before his enrollment in our program, we'd seen him perform in multiple settings to great success. But when we asked his parents to show us how they got him set up (in anticipation of a performance that we would facilitate), we realized that he needed nearly 100% verbal prompting to get through the sequence. As long as his mother (or sister or typically developing playing partner) told him what to do, he was able to complete a performance. BUT, if we didn't tell him each step, he'd freeze and be unable to move on. Rather than resign ourselves to the "fact" that he was prompt dependent, we introduced visual cues and general verbal prompts before the specific verbal direction he was used to. Gradually, we saw him initiating steps BEFORE the prompt.

In our classroom, LTM prompting generally takes the form of first waiting for an independent response, then giving a gestural or other nonverbal prompt, then a generalized verbal prompt, and finally a full verbal direction. For example, a student sits at a desk, but does not have a pencil. The teacher COULD hand him a pencil, but instead, we wait for either a correct request, or for at least a partial initiation. If the student doesn't give the correct response (for example, saying "Can I have a pencil please?"), the teacher might use a gesture (e.g., expectant eye contact, shrugging shoulders, hands out to side with palms up). If more prompting is needed, the teacher might then say "what do you need to finish your work?"

"Wait!"

Waiting, referred to in behavioral literature as "time delay", is often a component of LTM prompting, when waiting for a correct response is the first step. We use this strategy very deliberately for several reasons. First, our students come to us with a history of being told what to do. In order to help them be more independent, we have to stop prompting, or at least prompt more slowly. Secondly, many of our students have a long "latency to respond" (in non-behavioral circles, this is often referred to as needing extra "processing time"). In either case, our students need extra time to follow a direction, to shift attention from one activity to another, to scan the environment to find the right items, or to start a new action. When instructors wait, they provide the time needed for the student to respond independently. Eventually, we work to decrease the latency to respond (get students to respond faster). But at first, we need to wait out the delay, in order to get students to ask, answer, or move more independently. And, to be totally transparent, telling teachers to "wait" is much harder than it sounds. Our staff members are so interested in seeing our students be successful, that it is hard to stand there and do nothing. When we start to see more independent initiations, staff members and parents are convinced.

Repetition, with change

Like many other students on the Autism Spectrum, repetition is both an asset and a hindrance for our students. Students with ASD are calmer and do their best work when they have predictable schedules and routines. Teachers working with students with ASD have developed many strategies over the years for providing stability and predictability. In Abilis L.I.F.E., we've done the same thing – using similar visual cues, verbal prompts, and daily routines.

However, we also know that students with ASD can sometimes get “stuck”, only able to do a certain activity if the right words are used or if the same materials are present. In order to promote flexible skills that can be used in a variety of settings, Abilis L.I.F.E. staff members balance the comfort of repetition with the challenge and growth of change.

For example, in our use of daily and weekly written schedules, we are able to help students participate in a wide range of activities with predictable start and end times, and to plan for a week's worth of activities. This use of written schedules helps our students anticipate a planned activity (“we go to the gym on Wednesday”) and decreases the need for them to repetitively ask about upcoming activities (sometimes labeled by teachers as perseverative speech). Questions or concerns about the plan for the day or week are answered with a reference to the written schedule, and gradually students learn to look at the schedule themselves. But also, as students learn to rely on their written plan, teachers make changes in the plan (and sometimes changes just happen). Students learn to be flexible within their predictable routine, and learn to use their (sometimes changeable) written schedule as a support. Once the overall schedule is learned and used fluently, we systematically vary the time or day of activities, change the order of activities, or change the length of time we use an activity. We introduce language such as “sometimes things are different” or “Usually we ____, but today we ____” to help students make these changes.

Challenge, within familiarity

Similarly, we use familiar and comfortable routines as an opportunity to present challenge to our students. As routines become “easy”, we raise the bar, continually and systematically. The familiar activity provides a structure and comfort for our students within which we can push them to new skills. Very often this involves introducing a language or social component to a familiar (and nearly mastered) task. When students were fluent in an academic activity, they were then taught to increase the complexity of language with which they ask for help or indicate they're finished with their work. When our students were fairly independent in several routines at the local gym, we began to expect them to greet and have a short conversation with people who worked there.

These two strategies (repetition with change and challenge within familiarity) have become integral to our approach. It pushes us to recognize some of the challenges of ASD, such as preference for familiarity and routine and to systematically and gently push back by introducing change and challenge. It also challenges us to be looking constantly ahead, to future jobs, classrooms, and community settings. An adult who can only work in a quiet room, or who needs every detail of the day mapped out, or who won't ride in a car unless his favorite

radio station is playing, will be very limited in where he can live and work. Part of the L.I.F.E. curriculum is to keep as many future doors open as possible.

Small group (3:1 or 4:1)

Many students with ASD spend the majority of their educational time in a 1:1 format. Teachers and parents have found this to be the way to get fast acquisition of new skills, and a reliable way to promote safety. However, in designing Abilis L.I.F.E., we knew that many programs that serve adults with ASD often do not have the staffing to provide 1:1 support. A young adult who has not yet learned to work in a small group may have difficulty accessing the full range of adult opportunities. So, we deliberately designed a program that uses a 3:1 or 4:1 ratio. At first, this was difficult for our students. They had become accustomed to having close support. They did not have reliable independent work skills and often became off-task when someone walked away. They also did not have consistent prosocial ways to bring a teacher back to them, such as asking for help. But very quickly, we saw the advantages of teaching this way. Working in small groups:

- **Promotes independent work** – Put simply, working in a small group, rather than 1:1 “forces” students to work on their own. At first, the teacher checks back with a student frequently to provide support or instruction, but gradually students learn to work for longer periods of time without direct prompting. Also, the teacher uses written or picture cues to remind students of their work, and students learn to rely on these first, before asking a teacher for help.
- **Promotes peer modeling** - Students in small groups are taught to follow the example of other students. Our teachers use cues like “look at what ____ is doing” or “where did ____ put his backpack?” to teach students to watch and imitate their peers. For some students, this is a difficult skill. But for others, it becomes a reliable way of figuring out what the next step should be.
- **Allows development of leadership skills** – For students who enter the program with more independence skills, working in small groups helps them develop leadership skills. This might include being the one who walks in front on a community walk, being a leader in a group activity, or going with a peer (and no staff member) into a community setting. Over the course of the program, we’ve seen our students become teachers, and advocates for their peers.
- **Teaches monitoring of others** – Being in a group means that you need to know where other group members are and what they are doing. Students learn to watch what others are doing, a skill that transfers to other work and leisure activities.

We make the most of the benefits of small group instruction in our Relaxation Skills group. Initially taught by staff member, Relaxation Skills is a way to learn both physical and emotional control. During the early phases, students are learning to follow the model of the instructor, and are being guided to watch their friends for other examples. As the Relaxation Skills are mastered, some students then learn to lead the group. Leading the group means monitoring the behavior of others, as well as yourself. The leader needs to know if others are following him, provide correction if they are not, and adjust the activity to match the group.

Use of daily and weekly schedules

Many people, with or without disability, use visual supports to plan their days and to increase predictability in their activities. For our students, it's no different. A written schedule can help a person with ASD mediate weaknesses in language, memory, sequential skills, attention, motivation, and social skills.

Like most programs that support students with ASD, L.I.F.E. uses routines (doing things in a similar way each day) and schedules. These tools teach and reinforce time concepts and help our students anticipate upcoming activities as well as plan how they will respond. They also serve an “anchoring” function, one that allows us to add variation and challenge around familiar routines. So, for example, the morning routine (arrival, check in, review daily schedule) happens every day. As students master the basic of that routine, we can make changes that require gradually increased independence or language.

“Daily Schedule” and “Weekly Schedule” are activities that provide a time to talk about upcoming events. We have a time each day to review or plan. Students participate in the writing of the schedule, and talk about upcoming changes. Is today a day that we go shopping? Is a visitor going to be in the classroom? Is there a change from what we did last week?

This regular work on sequencing, planning, and review creates stability and reduces the need for students to ask about upcoming events (reducing anxiety). In addition, students learn to plan ahead. For example, a weekly schedule that shows “go to the Y” on Tuesday is reminder to wear sneakers and comfortable clothes on that day.

Finally, weekly and daily schedules give us a framework in which to introduce change in routine. Changes are discussed at the beginning of the day, and placed in the appropriate spot on the schedule. Students learn that “it’s OK” when things change, and learn to rely on the familiarity of the schedule format itself.

A sample weekly schedule is attached here. This will give an overview of how each activity can fit in across a program week. Your schedule may vary with your students’ needs and with other program characteristics.

L.I.F.E. Sample Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30-8:45	Arrival				
8:45-9:00	Get settled in classroom, write out schedule, review rules				
9:00-9:15	Morning Check -in				
9:15-9:30	Let's Get Organized	Let's get organized			
9:30-9:45		Relaxation Skills			
9:45-10:00		Relaxation skills	Functional Academics		
10:00-10:30	Functional Academics (Restaurant Review, Ledger Management)				
10:30-11:00	Walk/Snack				
11:00-11:30	Healthy Relationships	Social skills	Healthy Relationships	Social Skills	Social skills
11:30-12:00	Being my Best – How do I look?		Food Prep (lunch)	Being my Best – How do I look?	
12:00-1:00	Lunch at deli	Lunch at deli	Lunch at Abilis	Lunch at deli	Lunch in Restaurant
1:00-2:45	Volunteer at Library Fitness Center	Shopping Food bank	Office skills (work) Food Prep	YMCA: Health and Hygiene Fitness	Alternate weeks: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Community RecreationTravel Training
2:45-3:15	Return to Classroom - Review of the day, emails home, independent leisure skills			Return to Classroom - Review of the day, emails home, independent leisure skills	

“Linked” Activities

One of the key curriculum components is the linking of activities across the week. Many of our daily and weekly activities are designed to relate to each other. Our reading program (News2You) is published as a week’s worth of activities, each one building on the next. The planning we do on Monday (“Weekly Schedule”) is referred to consistently throughout the week. Each afternoon we have students write reminders of what they need to bring for the next day. And, many afternoon activities are structured to be opportunities for functional practice of skills that have been taught and mastered in the more structured classroom setting. Here are some specific sets of activities that work best when they are linked together in a week:

- **Math** – Functional math skills are taught in the classroom. In addition, students save receipts from their daily lunch purchases and from weekly grocery shopping, to be used in “Ledger Management” as a way to teach them to keep track of the money in their wallets. Similarly, the receipt from the weekly food shopping provides another chance to keep track of money spent and money left over. Finally, Restaurant Math both precedes and follows a trip to a restaurant, helping students plan their purchases and then use their receipt to manage their wallets.
- **Homework/Morning Check-in/Daily emails** – this set of three activities connects each day to the next and connects the school program to home. Homework is a chance for students to record the activities they do after they leave the program. These records are then used in Morning Check-in as supports for the conversation. Daily emails home help students share the highlights of their school day with their parents, so that similar conversations can happen at home.
- **Cooking** – The process of making healthy meals and snacks ties across three days – planning, cooking, and reviewing. This kind of linkage helps make each activity more meaningful (“we’re not just shopping for fun; we’re shopping so we can cook tomorrow”). In addition, linking activities in this manner builds skills for short term and long term memory.
- **Eating in a Restaurant** – Similarly, eating out is linked across three days – planning, eating, and reviewing. Students learn to anticipate a desired activity (eating out) and to pay attention to details while they’re in a restaurant. On review day, students draw on memory skills and language skills to talk about their restaurant trip. In our schedule, eating out was on Friday, and the review was on Monday, increasing the memory and language challenge.

Carry over outside of the program

The **L.I.F.E.** Curriculum is designed to teach meaningful, functional skills that will help students outside of the classroom, and long after they graduate. We have several components that promote generalized use of skills and carry over at home or in other settings

The connection between “Homework” and “Morning Check-in” is a key example of this. Students bring home a worksheet which asks them to write about what they did after they left us. During morning check-in, this is a visual reminder that can structure the “what did you do last night?” conversation. In addition, as we work on specific skills (using increased language, increasing independence, etc.), information is shared with parents and other caregivers, so that

those skills can be encouraged and supported at home. While there have been some “self-help” skills taught in L.I.F.E., they are taught with the intention of shifting them back to home as quickly as possible.

Use of Reinforcers

In a general way, we have avoided using explicit “rewards” in L.I.F.E.. In planning the program, we wanted a reinforcer plan that was more “normal” and more age-appropriate. So we thought about what is reinforcing for other adults (without autism) and what kinds of things would be generally available after students leave L.I.F.E.? We looked for reinforcers that were (or could easily be) a natural part of a student’s day, that did not make them stand out when we were in the community, and which were likely to have generalized benefit to students when they left our program.

First, we built a variety of activities into our daily and weekly schedules, so that there were some that were naturally enjoyable and rewarding (for example, a break to watch a video after morning work is done). Students enjoyed opportunities to eat in a restaurant, to go on community trips, to listen to music, etc.

Then, we used a wide range of social reinforcers throughout the day. For some students with autism, praise and social attention have become strong reinforcers over the time they’ve been in school. For others, social attention from preferred adults becomes reinforcing over time, as relationships are built. Opportunities for increased independence are reinforcers for other students.

In a few situations, where a skill was particularly hard for a student to master, we did add in more obvious reward systems. For one student, staying calm (using nice words and having gentle hands) was very challenging. The strategies in place in the classroom (daily schedule, reminders of classroom rules, and general positive attention) were not strong enough. For him, we added in a “checkmark” system, in which appropriate behavior was rewarded with a check and a certain number of checks earned access to high preference activities.

L.I.F.E. classes and major activities: In the following section, each of the classes and major activities of L.I.F.E. are described. Where it makes sense, activities are grouped thematically (e.g., all the activities related to preparing a meal – finding a recipe, shopping, managing money at the store, and following a recipe). To assist you in implementing these activities, we’re including a sample weekly schedule. Your own week will vary from this as your staffing, building use, and transportation needs dictate.

Activity: Arrival

- **Description:** Students arrive from their home, are met by their teacher at their arrival location, and transition together to their classroom.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Follow familiar routines with decreasing prompts

- Self-awareness: Use appropriate attending skills to respond to natural cues in the environment
- Communication: Use basic communication skills with familiar people
- Self-management: Ask for help or for needed materials in school settings
- **Specific Objectives**
 - Student will follow a familiar 5-step sequence with decreasing prompting
 - Student will use appropriate language to communicate a need for materials or help, or to indicate completion of the routine.
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least to Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Arrival Routine chart posted (for example, backpack and coat on chair, binder on desk, take out your schedule, get a pencil, and write the day and date on your schedule)
 - Space arranged to accommodate placement of student's belongings
 - Desks or tables clear and arranged to facilitate work
 - Work materials (e.g., pencil box and work folders) in sight
 - Words "Day" and "Date" are on board
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Teacher greets students as they are dropped off
 - Teacher models greeting and general social statement (e.g., "It's great to see you" or "you look nice today"), and invites students to greet each other
 - When students enter the classroom, teacher tells them to "start your arrival routine" and uses "least to most" prompting to build independence in the routine

Activity: Check-in

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to talk to their peers and build basic conversation skills. It is also a chance for the teacher and students to "check-in" and get a feel for how students are doing (e.g., mood, health, social availability).
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Communication: Basic communication skills with familiar people
 - Communication: Use appropriate speaker and listener skills
 - Communication: Start, maintain, and end a conversation appropriately
 - Communication: Use conversation repair skills
 - Social Relatedness: Use appropriate listening and sharing skills to build friendships
 - Social relatedness: Express and respond to a range of social and emotional cues
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will report recent past events
 - Students will engage in 3-5 turn conversations with peers and adults

- Students will ask questions of peers that are relevant to shared information (listen and ask for additional information)
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Chairs arranged so students are looking at each other
 - Written cues for conversation – these can vary from general statements or suggestions to more scripted cues, depending on the needs of your students.
 - Visual on board: “I’m done, come see my work” and “I need help please”.
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Cue students to move chairs or sit so they are looking at each other
 - Distribute written cues, as needed, to students. See the sample attached here.
 - Tell students “Let’s talk about what we did last night”
 - Ask one student to go first, and to pick another student to ask questions of
 - Have each student ask 3-5 questions of a peer
 - Cue appropriate talker and listener behavior

Check-in

Name: _____ Date: _____

I will check in with _____ today.

(Name)

Directions: I can ask these questions. I can check yes if they say yes . I can check no if they say no .		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Directions: Choose a number with a yes check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The number I will choose is . Now I will ask more questions.
1. Did you watch TV last night?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was it a DVD or a TV show? What was it called? What did you like?
				<div style="text-align: right;">Circle</div>
2. Did you listen to music last night?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you listen to music on the radio, computer or I-pod? What was the name of a song you liked? Who sang the song?
				<div style="text-align: right;">Circle</div>
3. Did you exercise last night?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of exercise did you do? Where did you do your exercise? Who did you exercise with?
4. Did you use the computer last night?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you do on the computer? What did you like the most?
5. Did you eat breakfast this morning?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you like eating the most? Who cooked your food? Where did you eat breakfast? Who did you eat with?

Activity: Schedule for the Week (completed on Mondays)

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to learn basic temporal planning skills, and to develop an opportunity to anticipate and tolerate change.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Manage a daily and weekly schedule
 - Independence: Plan for and gather materials for planned activities
 - Self-Awareness: Use appropriate attending skills
 - Self-Management: Ask for needed materials
 - Self-Management: Use self-management strategies to manage emotional reactions
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will understand, sequence, predict and prepare for regularly-scheduled and novel events
 - Students will use emotion regulation strategies to manage changes in planned activities
 - Students will identify materials needed for planned activities
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - “Schedule of the Day” on the board
 - Visual reminders of “I’m done” and “I need help”
 - See section on “Daily schedules” for strategies for increasing awareness of daily routines
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Have students put out their “Schedule for the Week” worksheet
 - Student fills in the Schedule for the Week sheet noting the dates for the week, morning activity, afternoon activities, and individual, as well as program, reminders (e.g., need money for restaurant, going to the gym on Wednesday, need to shave).
 - Student requests that the teacher come see completed work and makes corrections as needed
 - Students put completed schedule in their binders

Note: One version of our daily schedules is here. The Daily and Weekly routines changed over time – reflecting changes in our students’ needs and the activities we did. Your schedule may look different. Ours is here to give a sample framework

L.I.F.E. Program Daily Schedule

Today is: _____ The Date is _____

Our schedule for Monday is:

#	Activity	Start Time	End Time	√ When done
1	Arrive and check-in			
2	Schedule for the Week			
3	Schedule for the Day			
4	Rules of L.I.F.E. and Message			
5	Relaxation Skills			
6	Reading (Restaurant Review)			
7	Math			
8	Ledger fill in & Planning for Snack and Lunch			
9	Snack and Walk			
10	Independent Leisure Activity			
11	Social Skills			
12	How Do I Look			
13	Lunch @ UCONN Café			
14	Food Bank			
15	Stamford Library			
16	Type e-mails and Home			

Reminders:

L.I.F.E. Program Daily Schedule

Today is: _____ The Date is: _____

Our schedule for Tuesday is:

#	Activity	Start Time	End Time	√ When done
1	Arrive and check-in			
2	Schedule for the Day			
3	Reading and Recipe Shopping List			
4	Rules of L.I.F.E. and Message			
5	Relaxation Skills			
6	Math – Shopping Math			
7	Ledger fill in & Planning for Snack and Lunch			
8	Snack and Walk			
9	Social Skills			
10	How do I look			
11	Lunch @ UCONN Café			
12	Grocery Shopping (Copy of Receipt)			
13	Breakthru Fitness			
14	e-mail			
15	Home			

Reminders:

L.I.F.E. Program Daily Schedule

Today is: _____ The Date is: _____

Our schedule for Wednesday is:

#	Activity	Start Time	End Time	√ When done
1	Arrive and check-in			
2	Schedule for the Day			
3	Rules of L.I.F.E. and Message			
4	Relaxation Skills			
5	Reading and Recipe Review			
6	Ledger fill in & Planning for Snack and Lunch			
7	Math (Grocery Shopping Receipt Math)			
8	Snack and Walk			
9	Social Skills			
10	Food Prep and Lunch at Abilis (Recipe)			
11	Office skills			
12	Dessert Prep			
13	Write e-mails			
14	Jenna Maries			
15	Home			

Reminders:

L.I.F.E. Program Daily Schedule

Today is: _____ The Date is: _____

Our schedule for Thursday is:

#	Activity	Start Time	End Time	√ When done
1	Arrive and check-in			
2	Schedule for the Day			
3	Reading and Recipe Review			
4	Rules of L.I.F.E. and Message			
5	Relaxation Skills			
6	Math			
7	Ledger fill in & Planning for Snack and Lunch			
8	Snack and Walk			
9	Social Skills			
10	How do I look			
11	Lunch @ UCONN Café			
12	YMCA			
13	Yoga with Carole @ YMCA			
14	e-mail			
15	Home			

Reminders:

L.I.F.E. Program Daily Schedule

Today is: _____ The Date is: _____

Our schedule for Friday is:

#	Activity	Start Time	End Time	√ When done
1	Arrive and check-in			
2	Schedule for the Day			
3	Ledger fill in & Planning for Snack and Lunch			
4	Restaurant Math			
5	Reading			
6	Rules of L.I.F.E. and Message			
7	Relaxation Skills			
8	Snack and Walk			
9	Social Skills			
10	How do I look			
11	Lunch at a restaurant			
12	Travel Training (Bus)			
13	e-mail			
14	Home			

Reminders:

Activity: Rules of L.I.F.E. and Message

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to learn the program's guidelines, develop awareness that they have rules and choices, and for the teacher to set out a positive message for the day.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Self-awareness: Identify triggers for emotional reactions
 - Independence: Identify and follow safety rules in the community
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will identify 3-5 prosocial behaviors and will model (show) both positive and negative instances of the behaviors
 - Students will identify reasons for program rules that are related to health and safety
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Schedule for the day
 - Write (or ask student to write) start time for activity
 - Visual on board: "I'm done, come see my work" and "I need help please"
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Generate 3-5 group rules for your students. Rules should be individualized for your students and worded in a way that is age-appropriate. Some examples of program rules are:
 - "Use nice voice and gentle words"
 - "Stay close to friends in public"
 - "Use gentle hands"
 - "Say nice things to friends"
 - Write "Rules of L.I.F.E." on the board, list the rules, and review them with students
 - Early in a program year, you will need to explain and role-play the rules to make sure students understand.
 - You may want to discuss the reasons behind the rules with your students, so they gain a more meaningful understanding of classroom expectations. Consider talking about:
 - How many rules do we have?
 - What are the rules?
 - Why do we have these rules?
 - Which rule keeps us safe? Why?
 - Which rules keep us relaxed and happy? Why?

- Write “Message of the Day” on the board. Write a positive reflection or message for students each day. This might include
 - “We’re going to have a great day!”
 - “Let’s be flexible!”
 - “Today is going to be fun”
- Discuss with students the importance of staying relaxed and happy, and how to get relaxed when we feel frustrated
- Rehearse classroom rules with students
- For example, ask “What can you do when you get tense?” Help students respond in a complete sentence...“When I get tense, I can take a deep breath.”
- Ask a student to show how he/she takes a deep breath. Ask a student, “What can you do when you get frustrated?” Have students practice calming strategies.

Three Rules of **L.I.F.E.**



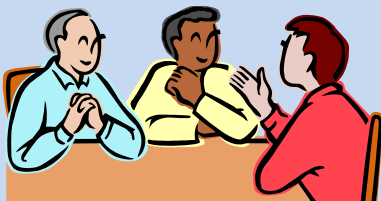
1. Stay with the group



2. Have a quiet body and use gentle hands



3. Use a quiet voice and gentle words



Name: _____

Date: _____

Being My Best**1.** I practiced ***“Relaxation Skills”***. I can tighten and relax...

- My hands
- My arms
- My legs
- My shoulders
- My face

I can take slow deep breaths to totally relax my body. It feels so good to have my body calm and relaxed.

- The relaxation skills **LEADER** was: _____

2. How Do I Look?

a. Today I checked in the mirror to see if...

- | | | | | |
|---|------------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| ○ My hair is neat and clean..... | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ○ My teeth are clean | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ○ My face is clean..... | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ○ My face is shaved..... | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ○ My clothes are clean and neat. They fit me well.... | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

• ***Can I shave by myself?***

- **Yes**, I shaved my face and under my chin all by myself.
- **Yes**, but I need help with my _____
 - The person who helped me shave is _____
- **No**, I did not shave at all

3. In ***Social Skills*** I practiced

I can show Mom and Dad what I worked on.

Activity: Relaxation

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to develop awareness of tension held in different parts of their body. They also learn the difference between feeling “tense” and feeling “relaxed”, and about their ability to relax when they feel tense or frustrated.
 - Start with teacher led sessions. As students master the strategies, shifting to peer-led relaxation develops an awareness of others, and an opportunity to offer support to a tense or frustrated classmate.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Self-awareness: Identify triggers for negative emotions
 - Self-management: Use relaxation, deep breathing, and other self-management strategies to manage emotional reactions
 - Communication: Use appropriate speaker and listener skills
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will follow verbal cues to tense and relax 5 muscle groups (arms, legs, hands, shoulders, and face) in isolation
 - Students will use visual cues only to complete a relaxation protocol which includes muscle tensing and relaxing and deep breathing
 - Students will independently lead a Relaxation Group – giving verbal directions to, modeling for, and providing feedback to their peers
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Schedule for the day
 - Teacher writes the schedule and activity number on the board to signal the start of the activity and asks students for start time
 - Visual on board: “I’m done, come see my work” and “I need help please”
 - Chairs arranged so that students are facing each other in a circle
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Teacher-led Relaxation
 - Have students sit in a circle facing each other and you
 - You may want to turn off some of the classroom lights, or otherwise create a quiet space
 - Cue students to sit with feet flat on the floor, hands relaxed in their laps
 - Cue students to relax and tighten body parts one at a time. Isolating body parts is important in increasing awareness of how your body feels.
 - Legs (one at a time)
 - Arms (one at a time)
 - Hands
 - Shoulders

- Face
- Cue students to take several slow, deep breaths
- Note: The initial stages of this activity required that all steps be explicitly taught. The teaching requires modeling and a most-to-least prompting strategy to support the student's ability to discern between a tense and relaxed physical state, as well as their ability to control each of their body parts tension/relaxation state.
- It may take several weeks for all students to master this. Isolating body parts to tense and relax can be difficult.
- **Student-led Relaxation**
 - Set up as above
 - Ask for a student to volunteer to be leader
 - Give student leader a visual aid, as needed, with relaxation steps
 - Cue student leader to show peers the steps (above) and to watch to make sure peers are following the model
 - Look for opportunities to teach awareness of others. For example, ask student if another student is doing the step correctly, or to praise peers when they follow the relaxation steps
 - Ask students how they can tell they are relaxed, and how they can tell that a peer is relaxed. This builds awareness of your own and others' body states, and might include
 - I can tell I'm relaxed when my arms feel loose
 - I can tell my friend is relaxed because he is sitting with his feet flat and his arms loose by his side
- Have students take out "Being my Best" sheet and complete the Relaxation portion
- When an activity is completed the teacher asks a student for the activity's end time. Teacher writes the end time on the board and students write on their daily schedule.

Student-led Relaxation Script

Name: _____

Date: _____

Say	Show	Relax
1. Tighten your face like this.		Now relax.
2. Tighten your shoulders like this.		Now relax.
3. Tighten your arms like this.		Now relax.
4. Tighten your hands like this.		Now relax.
5. Tighten your legs like this.		Now relax.
6. Take a deep breath like this.		Now relax.
7. Take another deep breath like this.		Now relax.

Activity: Reading

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to develop an awareness of current events, an appreciation of other students' interests, and to talk about what they've read.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Follow familiar routines with decreasing prompts
 - Self-awareness: Identify who can provide help in school
 - Self-management: Ask for help in school
 - Communication: Recognize appropriate times and use appropriate strategies for interrupting
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will read modified reading materials independently
 - Students will answer comprehension question related to reading
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Schedule for the day
 - Write (or ask student to write) start time for activity
 - Visual on board: "I'm done, come see my work" and "I need help please"
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Teacher or student hands out the reading activity for today
 - Reading activities depict present current events and/or specific student areas of interest (animals, ice hockey, and music)
 - All reading is modified to accommodate specific skill sets
 - All reading is followed by an independent assignment to support reading skills, such as WH-comprehension, exposure to new word meanings, functions, and talking about what you've read
 - We used "News2You" because of its multi-level availability and tie to current events
 - Students take turns reading a section of the assignment out loud
 - Check for comprehension at the end of each page
 - Hand out the end of reading activity
 - As students complete their work, cue them (using LTM prompting) to ask that the teacher come see work completed, and that they make corrections, if needed
 - On Tuesday through Friday, begin reading with these questions: Do you remember what we read about yesterday?

Activity: Restaurant Review

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to practice and reinforce short/long term memory and problem-solving solution skills, as well as, identify and share their likes and dislikes. In our weekly schedule, this activity takes place on Monday mornings (because eating in a restaurant was a Friday afternoon activity). You can schedule it whenever it makes sense for your program, preferably the program day immediately after a restaurant trip.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Follow a familiar routine with decreasing prompts
 - Communication: Use basic communication skills with familiar people
 - Communication: Communicate a range of language functions (requests, refusals, asking and answering questions, commenting, and sharing information)
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 1. Students will recall and retell recent past events
 2. Students will express opinions (likes and dislikes) about recent past events (did you like it? What did you like?)
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - **Least-to-Most Prompting**
 - **Peer Modeling**
 - **Environmental/Physical cues**
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Schedule for the day
 - Write (or ask student to write) start time for activity
 - Visual on board: “I’m done, come see my work” and “I need help please”
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - This activity is done on the Monday directly following the students Friday outing to the restaurant
 - Ask students if they went to a restaurant on Friday. After receiving a “yes” response, ask students for the name of the restaurant, how they got there, who they went with, and other questions that build both short term memory and communication skills
 - Distribute the “Restaurant Review” sheet
 - Responses to questions about the restaurant can be prompted with cues to look back on Friday’s schedule, to find the information about the restaurant or to find the Restaurant Math sheet. Review using their Restaurant Math sheet as a visual memory anchor and solution. The student completes their Restaurant Review sheet using their Restaurant Math sheet.

Restaurant Review



Date: _____

Name of restaurant: _____

What did you eat?

Main dish

Side dish

Drink

Dessert

How did you like the restaurant?

Great



Good



Bad









Activity: Recipe (planning and making)

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to follow a familiar routine and develop basic kitchen/cooking skills. The complexity of recipes will vary depending on your access to kitchen appliances and your students' abilities and interests. In addition, students learn to identify their food likes/dislikes, to individualize a recipe, and to master preparing and eating a main dish. Upon mastery students prepare the same recipe according to their peer's likes/dislikes.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Follow a familiar routine with decreasing prompts
 - Independence: Plan and prepare nutritious snacks and meals for self and others
 - Self-Management: Generate appropriate solutions to problems in the classroom or in the community (e.g., if items are not available in the kitchen)
 - Social Interaction: Use appropriate conflict resolution skills
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will indicate food likes and dislikes on the ingredient list for a recipe
 - Students will follow a 3-5 step recipe
 - Students will use kitchen tools appropriately (bowl, spoon, measuring cup and spoons)
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Schedule for the day, and "I'm done, come see my work" and "I need help please" on the board.
 - Recipe planning is followed by shopping for ingredients, and usually happens the day before food preparation
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - **Planning**
 - Hand out the recipe sheet. Students take turns reading the recipe steps and discussing their food likes and dislikes.
 - Students can cross off their dislikes on their recipe sheet and reread how they will now make their food as they would like it
 - Once a recipe is mastered, have the students exchange recipes with a peer. They will make food for someone else, and make it according to the other person's preferences.
 - Student places their recipe in their appropriate binder folder to be accessed the following day for making
 - **Making**
 - Students take recipe sheet out from their binders
 - If they are making someone else's recipe, they exchange recipes

- Students get needed ingredients from the cupboard or refrigerator and lay them out on the counter or table
- Students follow the recipe, completing each step before moving on to the next step
- Students put completed food on a plate

Turkey Sandwich Recipe

I need		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check if I will use this
1. Bread		
2. Sliced turkey		
3. Cheese slices		
4. Lettuce		
5. Mayo		
6. Salad Dressing		

I like my Turkey Sandwich to be made like this:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check when done
1. Put one slice of bread on a plate	
2. Spread mayo or salad dressing on my bread	
3. Put on two slices of cheese	
4. Put on two slices of turkey	
5. Put on one or two slices of lettuce	
6. Put another slice of bread on top	
7. Cut in half	

Activity: Eating Lunch

- **Description:** Lunch is a time to practice good eating habits (neatness, eating slowly, not talking with food in your mouth) and a time to socialize. Most of the students we support are fairly independent. They have come to us with experience in sitting in small groups and eating. If students need more assistance, provide instruction to build independence, using least-to-most prompting.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Self-Awareness: Recognize hunger and satiation cues
 - Independence: Manage money in daily and weekly activities
 - Social relatedness: Use appropriate skills for interactions in the community
 - Self-Management: Decrease odd movements in public places
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will eat a meal independently, using good eating habits (eating neatly, keeping mouth closed, using a napkin, eating slowly, etc.)
 - Students will use appropriate money skills to purchase all or part of a meal
 - Students will engage in appropriate conversation with peers during a meal
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - A small table (or multiple tables if you have a large group) with room for 3 or 4 students
 - Visual cues, if needed for eating rules (e.g., “Take a small bite, put food down, chew and swallow, wipe your face with the napkin, take a sip of water”)
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Eating in classroom or cafeteria
 - Tell students to find a place to sit (let them scan the room for a place that is open)
 - Use verbal reminders of good eating habits
 - Have students set out their food
 - Tell students, “today we’re going to talk about ____”
 - Teacher/staff member eats with students to provide model
 - Buying all or part of lunch
 - Have students identify ahead of time what items to buy (usually a drink or snack)
 - Make sure student has wallet and enough money (use “planning for lunch” as support for this)
 - Use LTM prompting to guide students through the social part of ordering food
 - Choosing something to purchase
 - Waiting to pay
 - Paying
 - Waiting for change
 - Thanking cashier

Planning for Snack and Lunch

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Complete 1-4 and

Circle

choice

1. Wallet:

- ◆ This is how much money I have in my wallet _____.
- ☐ I filled out my **ledger**

2. Snack:

- ◆ I brought snack today.
- ◆ I **did not** bring snack today. I am going to buy a snack on our walk.
- ☐ This is what I will buy: _____

3. Lunch:

- ◆ I brought lunch today.
- ◆ I **did not** bring lunch today. I will buy lunch today.
 - ☐ This is how much money I have in my wallet _____.
 - ☐ I filled out my **ledger**
- ◆ We are making our lunch at ABILIS today. I do not need to buy lunch.
- ◆ We are going to a **restaurant** today.
 - ☐ This is how much money I have in my wallet _____.
 - ☐ I filled out my Restaurant Math sheet...
 1. Yes
 2. No

4. Ledger:

- ◆ When I spend money (\$) I remember to:
 - ☐ Fill in my LEDGER...

Put my RECEIPT in my wallet

Activity: Recipe Shopping List

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to complete a shopping list and make purchases at the store in order to prepare their recipe. Students also learn to review what is already available, which things they need to by.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: plan and gather materials for activities
 - Independence: managing money in a weekly activity
 - Self-Management: Using self-management strategies to manage emotional reactions
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will write a shopping list of items needed (in recipe but not on hand in the kitchen) for a familiar recipe
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Completed recipe sheets
 - Blank shopping list sheets
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Student hands out the Shopping List sheet
 - Students take turns reading the sheet prior to performing this activity and after completing the Recipe activity
 - Students go to the kitchen (or where food is stored) to check the cabinet and refrigerator
 - Use LTM prompting to have students check for each item on their recipe list
 - Have students write the names of missing items on their shopping list sheets

Shopping List

Today is: _____ the date is: _____

- I checked the cabinet.
- I checked the refrigerator.

This is what we need so that **EVERYONE** can make their Turkey Sandwich, with something extra.

#	This is what we need to buy to make our <u>sandwich</u> .	Who will get this?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I bought it
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
#	We also need these <u>extra</u> items to eat with our sandwich.	Who will get this?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I bought it
1.			
2.			
3.			

Activity: Recipe Review

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to practice and reinforce short/long term memory and problem solving- solution skills, as well as, identify and share their likes and dislikes.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Follow a familiar routine with decreasing prompts
 - Communication: Communicate likes and dislikes
 - Communication: Use communication for a range of functions
 - Social Relatedness Show appropriate listener and speaker skills
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will recall immediate past events
 - Students will answer questions related to a recent meal (did you like it? What should you do differently? Was it a healthy recipe?)
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Schedule for the day
 - Write (or ask student to write) start time for activity
 - Visual on board: “I’m done, come see my work” and “I need help please”
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - This activity is done one day following the students cooking activity, and is usually part of the “Functional Academics” block
 - Hand out the Recipe Review sheet
 - Students take turns reading and talking about the recipe
 - Take time to talk about what students liked or didn’t like, things they might do differently, and whether this was a healthy food
 - Students complete the recipe review sheet and put it in the appropriate folder

Date: _____



1. What did you eat? _____
2. Who made your food? _____
3. Whose food did you make? _____
4. What was in your sandwich? _____

5. How did it taste? ☐ Great! ☐ Good ☐ I didn't like it
6. Was it easy to make or hard to make? ☐ Easy ☐ Hard
7. Was it healthy or unhealthy? ☐ Healthy ☐ Unhealthy

Activity: Functional Math

- **Description:** There are multiple opportunities for students to learn, practice and reinforce the fundamental math skills necessary to maximize their participation in activities of daily living. Some work is done to teach or reinforce skills. Other Math work is done to tie directly to weekly activities.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Manage a daily schedule
 - Independence: Manage money in daily activities
 - Self-Awareness: Identify who can provide help in school setting
 - Self-management: Ask for help in school settings
 - Self-management: Use self-management strategies to manage emotional reactions
 - Communication: Communicate a range of language functions (requests, refusals, asking and answering questions, commenting, and sharing information)
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will complete individualized math work independently
 - Student will request feedback or asks for help using appropriate language
 - Students will correct work as needed, with no additional prompting
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - “Schedule of the Day” on the board
 - Visual reminders of “I’m done” and “I need help”
 - Students seated at individual work areas
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - **Teaching Math Skills**
 - Distribute individualized math packets to the students covering mastered, newly acquired and in progress skills. These skills address adding, subtracting, money handling (counting money template attached), time, receipt management and maintaining a ledger. Daily activities that feed the function of these skills include: recipe (grocery) shopping, ordering food from a restaurant, buying a snack and/or lunch (ledger math), bus travel and community outings.
 - Student requests that the teacher come see work completed-student makes and verbalizes necessary corrections (individualized instruction occurs during the correction process as well as when the student requests help)
 - Student puts completed work in the appropriate folder in their binder
 - **Shopping Math:**

- This activity is done the day after the students have selected and purchased their items
- Students work from a copy of their store receipt
- Distribute the Shopping Math sheet (see attached). Students refer to their shopping receipt and complete the Shopping Math sheet. Calculators are used if needed. If incorrect and/or student requests help, problem/solution skill development open-ended questioning ensues (e.g.: What do you think you can look at to find out what you bought at the store yesterday? Who else could help you? Ans.: My shopping list, my receipt, my “peer”).
- **Restaurant Math:**
 - Choosing a restaurant (teaching the concept of more/less)
 - Make a list of possible restaurants (2-3 is best)
 - Students vote for their favorite place
 - Restaurant with the most votes “wins” (teaching more/less as a concept)
 - Appropriate social and emotional skills are taught and modeled to address potential problems (e.g., rigidity, not getting what you want, limited food preferences)
 - After the restaurant is chosen distribute the Restaurant Math Sheet (see attached) and the chosen restaurant’s menu
 - Have students read menu and make choices (doing this ahead of time minimizes problems in the restaurant, both in terms of having enough money and in terms of having the right food choices)
 - Students complete the Restaurant Math sheet noting their food choices and prices and arrive at their total expense using a calculator if needed
 - Students compare their total cost to the amount of money they have in their wallet
 - If student does not have enough money in his/her wallet for his/her choices, it is another opportunity to teach/model appropriate social skills and problem solving

Restaurant Math

1. Today is:_____ The date is:_____

2. I am going to a restaurant today.

3. The name of the restaurant is:

4. This is what I will order today:

Name	Size	Cost
		+
		+
		+
		+
Total:		= \$

5. This is how much money I have in my wallet _____

-

6. This is the **total** amount of money I will use _____

7. This is how much money I will have after I

buy my food

=

Activity: Ledger Fill-in (receipt management)

- **Description:** Related to Functional Math, this activity teaches a specific skill related to managing your own money. It starts out focused on what is in a student's wallet, but can be expanded to managing a savings or checking account. This is an opportunity for students to practice and reinforce short/long term memory and problem solving-solution skills, as well as, the basic skills needed to manage money over time.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Manage money in daily and weekly activities
 - Communication: Communicate a range of language functions (requests, refusals, asking and answering questions, commenting, and sharing information)
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will count money in their wallets and enter the appropriate amount at the start of a ledger
 - Students will use receipts to tally the amount of money spent in a day or week
 - Students will use a ledger to track expenses and monitor the balance of money in their wallets or bank accounts
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - "Schedule of the Day" on the board
 - Visual reminders of "I'm done" and "I need help"
 - See section on "Daily schedules" for strategies for increasing awareness of daily routines
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Each day have students make entries to their ledger (see attached), which they keep in their Math folder in their binder
 - Ledger entries include the day, date, amount of money in wallet before any purchases, amount of money spent (receipt attached), amount of money remaining
 - Have students count the money in their wallet in the morning (before any purchases are made)
 - During the day, when students make purchases, have them ask for receipts (also a social skills opportunity)
 - Ledger completion can either be at the end of the day (what's left in my wallet), or the next morning
 - Filling out their ledger requires that they recall events from early in the day or the previous and/or ask for help

Ledger

[illegible]

Activity: Community Walk

- **Description:** This is an opportunity for students to practice collaborative decision-making, basic conversation skills and street safety and awareness when walking.
- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Follow safety rules in the community
 - Communication: Use basic communication skills with familiar and unfamiliar people
 - Self-Management: Decrease odd movements in public
 - Self-Management: Use relaxation, deep breathing, and other self-management strategies to manage emotional
 - Social Relatedness: Use appropriate listening and sharing skills to build friendships
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Students will walk in a community setting using safety skills as needed
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Peer Modeling
 - Environmental/Physical Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Schedule for the day on the board
 - Students' jackets are available for them if needed
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Ask students where they want to walk. This is an opportunity to build consensus, expand solution repertoire, and teach compliance relative to a highly preferred activity (e.g.: We walked by the river yesterday. I would like to walk to the park. I like J's idea, do you?)
 - As they walk, teach a range of safety skills, including
 - Stay with your friends (walk at an appropriate pace)
 - Stop at driveways
 - Cross only at crosswalks
 - Using traffic lights and crossing signals
 - Model and teach about having a conversation with a peer about what is seen or an activity from the morning
 - Walking may also be a time to be quiet, to have a break from social interaction, and to enjoy the surroundings

Activity: Job Exploration (Office Skills, Food Bank, Library)

Description: There are multiple opportunities across the week for students to learn job skills. This serves several purposes – students can see what kinds of jobs or workplaces they enjoy, work-related social skills can be taught and practiced and “employment skills” that are applicable to many kinds of work can be taught.

In addition, most work environments can be used to teach almost any of the L.I.F.E. goals. Work sites can be wonderful places to work on generalized use of communication and social skills, and can provide wonderful opportunities to teach self-awareness and self-management skills in a functional way.

- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Use appropriate communication skills in a work setting
 - Independence: Manage a weekly schedule
 - Self-Awareness: Use appropriate attending skills to respond to natural cues in the environment
 - Self-Awareness: Use appropriate “personal space” rules when interacting with community members
 - Self-Awareness: Identify who can provide help in a work setting
 - Self-Advocacy: Generate appropriate solutions to problems at work
 - Self-Advocacy: Ask for help or needed materials at work
 - Communication: Use basic communication skills with familiar and unfamiliar people
 - Communication: Use communication skills in a variety of settings
 - Communication: Communicate a range of language functions
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Independently complete familiar work routines in three paid or volunteer settings
 - Use appropriate work-supporting communication in work settings (greeting, asking for work, asking for help as needed, asking for more work as needed)
 - Use appropriate job maintaining skills in work settings (e.g., working steadily for a pre-determined amount of time, doing work accurately, finding and correcting errors)
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Modeling
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Visual Cues
- **Environmental Cues: These will vary with each work site. Depending on the job and students, you might consider:**
 - A quiet, distraction-free work space
 - Written or pictorial cues of the work sequence
 - Written or pictorial cues of work rules
- **Steps/Procedure:**

- Talk to community members and local stores about volunteer opportunities. These may include: assisting a local food bank, shelving books in the library, helping to clean at the local gym, doing office work, working as part of a maintenance or grounds crew, working in a local greenhouse.
- Identify jobs or parts of jobs that your students can do
- Identify all the steps involved in the job, beginning with entry into the building (greeting supervisor, finding work space, beginning work)
- Teach each step of the job using shaping or chaining strategies (teaching parts of the job, gradually expecting student to do more and more of the job independently)
- Use modeling (showing) to help students with job components that are mostly motor actions (where verbal instruction will not be helpful)

If your students have mastered the goals here, or if you are looking for more information about work-related expectations for young adults with autism, you can look at these websites:

- Careerinfonet.org
- <http://ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1749>
- <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/BuildingABridge.pdf>

Activity: Community Leisure (Gym, YMCA, Community Exploration)

Description: This is a time to work on age-appropriate leisure skills in the community. Students use communication and social skills in new environments, and find things they enjoy doing outside of school or home.

- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Follow familiar routines in the community
 - Independence: Use appropriate communication skills in the community
 - Independence: Identify and follow safety rules
 - Independence: Plan and gather items for activities
 - Independence: Manage a weekly schedule
 - Independence: Manage money in weekly activities
 - Self-awareness: Use appropriate attending skills in the community
 - Self-awareness: Identify who can provide help in the community
 - Self-management: Decrease odd motor movements in public settings
 - Self-management: Recognize and avoid triggers for negative emotions
 - Self-management: Use self-management strategies
 - Communication: Use basic communication skills with familiar and unfamiliar people
 - Communication: Use communication skills in a variety of settings in the community
 - Communication: Communicate a range of language functions

- Social relatedness: Use appropriate skills for approaching friends, acquaintances and strangers
- Social relatedness: Express and respond to a range of social and emotional cues
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Participate in 4-5 different leisure activities in the community (e.g., gym or Y, local nature center, museum, music performance)
 - Use appropriate self-management strategies
 - Complete a leisure routine independently (e.g., a planned workout at the gym)
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Least-to-most prompting
 - Visual Cues
 - Small Group (peer modeling)
- **Environmental Cues:** **As much as possible, the goal is to have students rely on the naturally occurring cues in the community. Adding in the following will help you teach, but they should be faded quickly, to teach students to respond to natural cues.**
 - Written or picture cues showing the leisure routine
 - Posted pictures or signs to cue 'next steps' in a leisure routine
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Talk with members of the community to identify leisure activities that are typical for students in this age range
 - Approach settings to gain access to these settings, especially during typically low-use times (we were able to use the local Y, at no cost, during their mid-day lull)
 - Give students multiple opportunities to become comfortable in the various settings
 - Use modeling (showing) to teach specific skills and routines

Activity: Healthy Relationships

Description: This is a class to work on the full range of age-appropriate relationships students will encounter. The specific curricular topics will vary with the individual students in class. If appropriate, use a packaged "sexuality and relationships" curriculum to teach specifics of dating and sexuality.

- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Use appropriate communication skills in community settings
 - Self-awareness: Identify triggers for emotional reactions
 - Self-awareness: Use appropriate personal space rules for peers, familiar adults, and community members
 - Communication: Use basic communication skills with familiar and unfamiliar people
 - Communication: Communicate a range of language functions

- Social Relatedness: Identify the characteristics of a friend, acquaintance, and stranger
- Social Relatedness: Use appropriate skills for approaching friends, acquaintances, and strangers
- Social Relatedness: Respond to a range of social and emotional cues
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Understand the differences between friends, acquaintances and strangers
 - Use different social skills for different relationships
 - Identify and report inappropriate touch or other social actions
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Verbal instruction
 - Modeling
 - Peer modeling
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Video or Pictorial Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Written reminders of appropriate or targeted behaviors
 - Quiet space for teaching and talking about sensitive topics
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - Have students sit comfortably, so they can see the instructor and each other
 - Say “we’re going to talk about _____” today and check for understanding of the topic (for example, “we’re going to talk about who we can hug and who we can’t hug”)
 - Have students generate some of the rules
 - Give students guidelines for behavior (no more than 5 ‘rules’)
 - If you have video, that can enhance students’ understanding of the topic
 - Use modeling and role play to assist students in understanding the topic
 - Repeat mastered topics over several days of instruction. We found many of these topics to be abstract and challenging for our students, and required repetition.

Activity: Emails Home

Description: During this activity, students follow a template to report on their daily activities to their parents. This provides an important link between the program and home, gives parents a structure in which to talk about the day with the students, and builds communication skills. As students become fluent, they may be able to write the email without the template or compose responses to emails that their parents have sent to them.

- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**

- Independence: follow a familiar routine with decreasing prompts
- Self-Awareness: Use appropriate attending skills
- Self-Awareness: Identify who can provide help at school
- Self-management: Ask for needed materials in school setting
- Communication: Communicate a range of language functions
- Social Relatedness: Use appropriate skills for family, friends, acquaintances
- **Activity-specific Goals:**
 - Write an email message containing greeting, 3-5 sentence body, and sign-off
 - Recall and retell three details from the day's activities
 - Respond to questions or comments in an email received from a friend or family member
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Visual cues (see attached Email Template)
- **Environmental Cues:**
- **Steps/Procedure:**

Sample E-mail

Hi _____:

I feel _____ today.

In Reading today, I read about _____

_____.

In Math, I practiced _____.

In Relaxation Skills, I practiced staying calm and relaxed. The relaxation leader was _____. When I get *tense* I can _____

_____.

When I get *frustrated*, I can _____.

In Social Skills, I practiced _____.

After lunch, I will be going _____

_____.

One thing I really liked about today was _____

_____.

Tomorrow, I want to remember _____

_____.

I hope you have a great day.

Regards,

Activity: Social Skills

Description: This is a chance to teach specific social skills in a structured session. The content of the lessons will be drawn from both packaged curricula and from the students' daily experiences. For example, when we realized our students were not consistently looking at and smiling at visitors in the classroom, we designed lessons around that skill. At another time, when we began riding the city buses, we used the Social Skills period to talk about the expectations of bus riding. We relied heavily on Dr. Jed Baker's "Preparing for Life" curriculum, due to its sensitivity to the specific challenges of young adults with autism.

- **L.I.F.E. Goals:**
 - Independence: Use appropriate communication in community settings
 - Self-Awareness: Use appropriate "personal space" rules
 - Self-Awareness: Identify who can provide help in the community
 - Self-Management: Generate appropriate social solutions in school, at work, or in the community
 - Self-Management: Use relaxation, deep-breathing, and other strategies to manage strong emotions
- **Activity-specific Goals:** Specific goals will depend on the individual needs and strengths of your students. Some goals we addressed in our program include
 - Following four rules of talking to someone (look at them, smile at them, say something nice, have a relaxed body)
 - Having a 3-4 turn conversation and staying on topic
 - Greeting a new person and introducing yourself
 - Introducing a new person to one of your teachers or friends
 - Using "polite" language – please, thank you, excuse me, you're welcome
- **Teaching Strategies Used:**
 - Modeling, Peer Modeling
 - Least-to-Most Prompting
 - Visual Cues
- **Environmental Cues:**
 - Specific skill and steps of it are on the board
 - Students are sitting so they can see teacher and see each other
- **Steps/Procedure:**
 - For each skill, start by explaining what the new skill is. ("Today we're going to talk about introducing yourself")
 - Ask students why or when they need to use this skill
 - Write the steps on the board and review them
 - Model some positive examples of the skill, and have students role play
 - Model some negative examples, and have students "catch" you and explain the right way

NOTES



Since 1951 Abilis has provided people with developmental disabilities and their families in lower Fairfield County, CT and parts of Westchester County, NY with supports and advocacy for building able lives and strong communities.

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