



Neuropsychology & Education Services
for Children & Adolescents

TRANSITION

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TRANSITIONS ARE ANXIETY INDUCING

The Cliff

*94 percent of high school students with disabilities get some kind of help, but just 17 percent of disabled college students do.

College?

Only 34 percent complete a four-year degree within eight years

Work?

Only 17% of adults with disabilities are employed.



Savage Chickens

by Doug Savage



www.savagechickens.com

CHANGING THOSE NUMBERS

Getting more young adults with ASD to college, employed or at least productively engaged in life

The most important factor?

Not math skills or MCAS scores.

Self Determination!





Determination

© 2005 Larry E. Hayes

SELF DETERMINATION

- Goal-directed: knowing why we are doing something and working to achieve an end result
- Self-regulated: being in control of our actions
- Autonomous behavior: making informed, independent choices



SELF DETERMINATION

Individuals who score higher on measures of SD have more positive adult outcomes (e.g., better employment, better living situations)

Research is emerging regarding the relationship between SD and positive school experiences (e.g., higher grades, attendance, fewer behavior problems).

Wehmeyer & Schwartz (1997)




A TALE OF TWO TEENS


Two High School Juniors with Autism

- Average range intelligence overall
- Good academic skills
- Passing MCAS
- Specific deficits in executive function skills, Big Picture processing, attentional regulation, slow processing speed
- Both on IEPs in supported high school program
- **BOTH WILL GRADUATE NEXT YEAR**

ANTHONY

- Anthony has had volunteer jobs with job coaches through Aspire
 - Has an identified career goal: computer programming
 - Helps teachers with technology problems.
 - Does household chores independently: cooks simple meals, does laundry.
 - Likes walking and hiking
 - Anxious, rule bound, compliant
 - BUT Afraid to stay away from home for a night
- 

EVAN

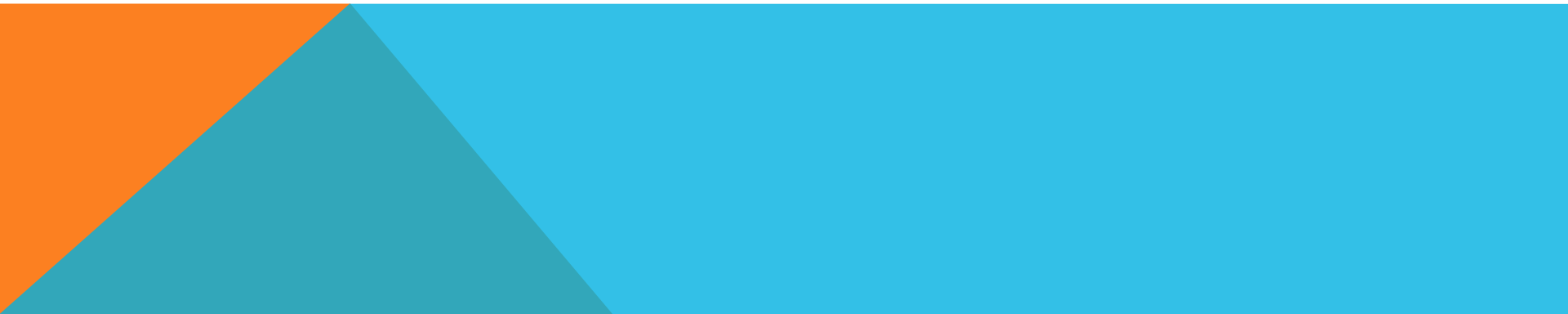
- Has no interests outside computer games
 - Doesn't complete chores at home independently
 - Doesn't get school work done unless adults nag and support
 - Very oppositional when doesn't get his way
 - Has never had a job
 - Career interests – video game designer – Realistic?
 - Doesn't engage socially with others
- 

TWO TEENS (CONT)

Which one is more likely to be successful at college or a job?

Vital to start building life skills early!

Each child is a Pre-Adult; the goal is to allow them to eventually be as independent as possible.



HOW TO GENERATE SELF DETERMINATION

Look to what ASD individuals already have:
Incredible focus on Special interests!



Gerald Franklin, who was diagnosed with autism as a child, is now lead developer for a website that matches workers with prospective employers.
--All Things Considered

RESTRICTED INTERESTS

DSM-V diagnosis of autism includes this criterion:

“Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus (e.g., strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or perseverative interest)



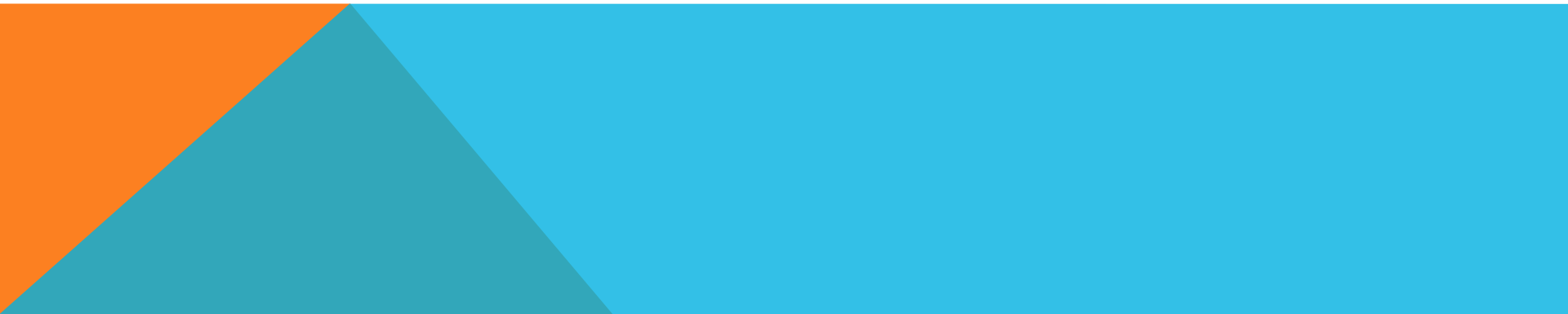
TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- Special interests are seen as symptoms of the disorder
- Parents should limit time child spends “obsessing” about special interest
- Try to get them “out of their world” and into the “real world”
- Special interest is seen as distraction
- May be used as a reward in behavioral program

NEW PERSPECTIVE: A GIFT

Individuals with autism have an extraordinary capacity for singular focus on areas of interests

These passions fuel learning, creativity, productivity, advancements/paradigm shifts, connection and joy



CHANGE OUR LANGUAGE FIRST

Former:

Restricted interests, perseverative interests,
obsessions

Better labeled as:

Special interests, passions, talents, gifts, affinities



AFFINITIES => ACHIEVEMENT

Able autistic individuals can rise to eminent positions and perform with such outstanding success... Their unswerving determination and penetrating intellectual powers, part of their spontaneous and original mental activity, their narrowness and single-mindedness, as manifested in their special interests, can be immensely valuable and can lead to outstanding achievements in their chosen areas.

–Hans Asperger



CAPABILITY, NOT DISABILITY

Specialisterne, started in Denmark, now worldwide.

New York and CA

Employment agency that places people with autism

- “Autism creates capabilities, not disabilities.”
- Meticulous, detail-oriented, incredible concentration on a task.
- People with autism are especially gifted for software-tests, testing mobile phone applications, general programming, or auditing. Tasks that require attention to detail and have little range for mistakes.

JUST ASK THEM!

Results of a survey of adults with autism found that participants have a positive view of preferred interests, They view their preferred interests as a way to mitigate anxiety, and engage in vocational and avocational pursuits around their preferred interests.

The majority of participants articulating that their areas of interest were positive, beneficial, and should be encouraged.

Findings support a strength-based view of preferred interests

Characterization and Utilization of Preferred Interests: A Survey of Adults on the Autism Spectrum, by Kristie Patten Koenig & Lauren Hough Williams, 2017.

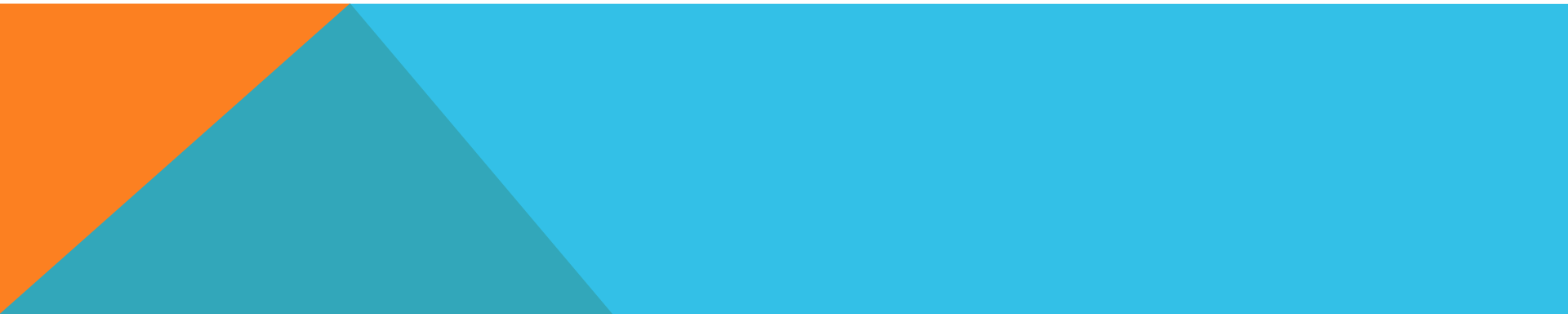


GOOD NEWS

He still hasn't learned algebra? Still hates gym class?

Forget about it!

Time to focus on what s/he loves!



ONE DAY'S NEWS IN ASD LAND

Nonverbal Twins with autism run marathons

Alex and Jamie Schneider, New York



They are both severely autistic. Neither can communicate verbally. They cannot cross the street alone, or be alone at any time. They have very challenging, and at times, self injurious behaviors. They need 24/7 supervision.

THEY ARE RUNNERS. And have run in 25 marathons and over 350 races collectively.”

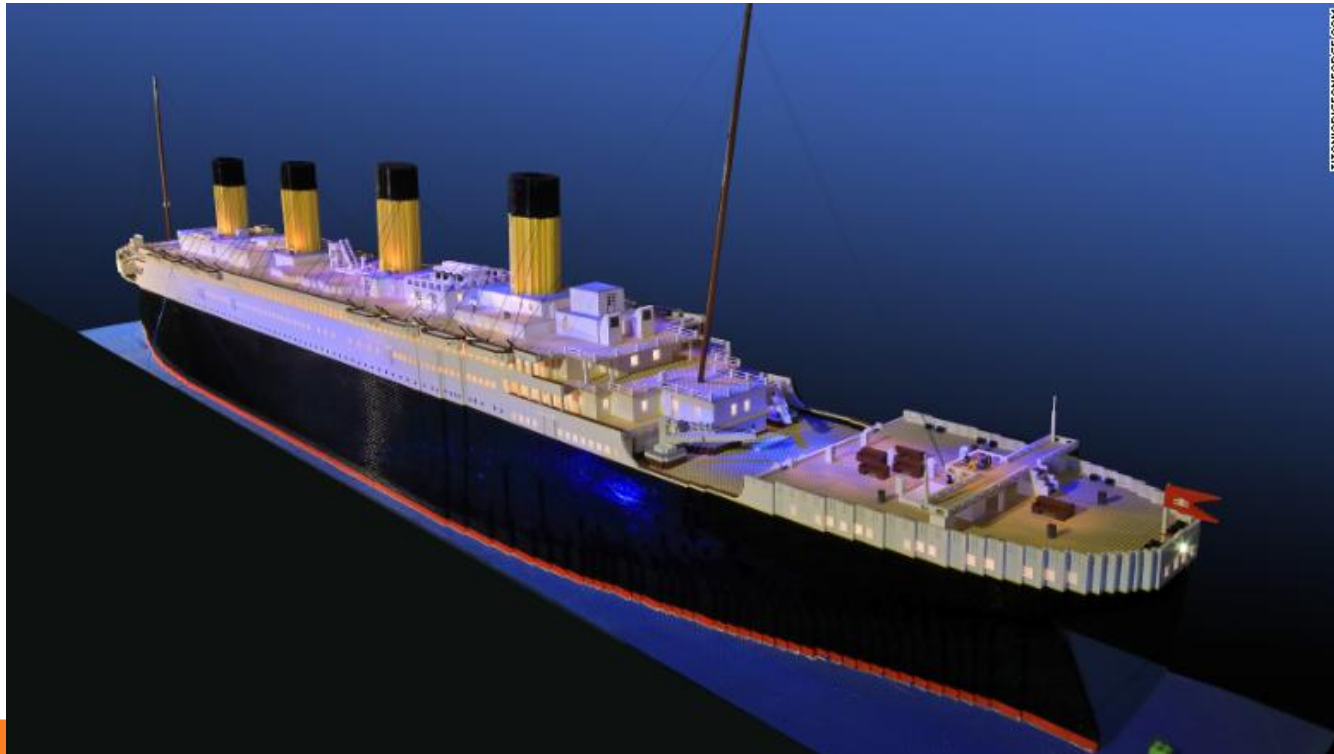
Alex in particular, he really enters a state of Zen,” said his mother. “He’s completely focused, just has a euphoric look on his face. We love seeing that because we don’t see it very often. We see it when he’s running....He’s normally high-strung, hyper, his typical state is high anxiety. But on the way to a race, he’s different.”

What this family has built around running represents the best of what we can be for our kids.

-Tara Sullivan, Boston Globe, April 16, 2018



Boy With Autism Builds World's Largest Lego Titanic Replica



Brynjar Karl Bigisson, now 15, built the replica with 56,000 Lego bricks. It's 26 feet long and 5 feet tall. It took 700 hours.
– CNN April 16, 2018





Brynjar and his grandfather Ludvik Ogmundsson, at the Titanic Museum, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

CHANGED BRYNJAR'S LIFE

Building his Titanic changed his life, says his mother, helping him move out of an "autistic fog." When he began, he was extremely shy and spoke little. But his mother encouraged her son to plan and speak about his idea. She helped him write letters, create a YouTube video and talk to strangers.

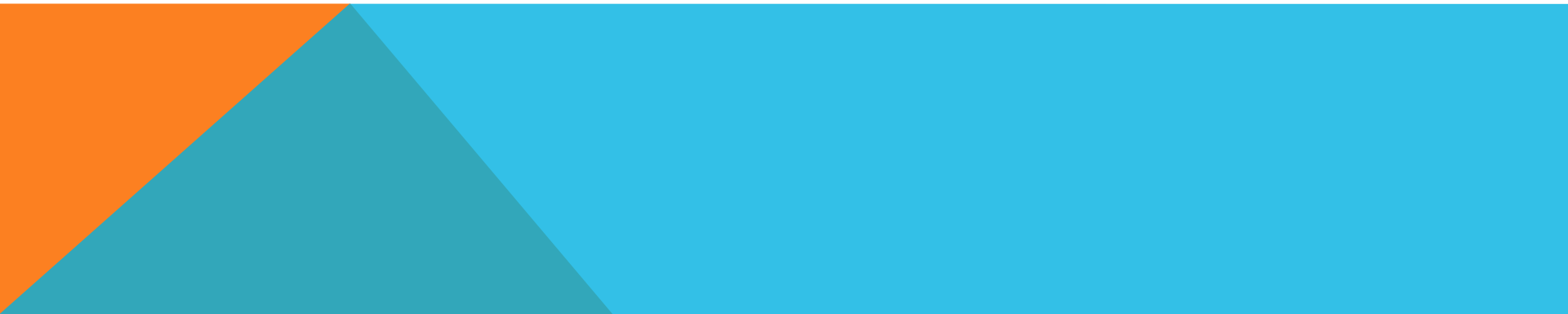
As he says, "When I started the building process, I had a person helping me in school in every step that I took, but today, I'm studying without any support. My grades have risen, and my classmates consider me as their peer. I have had the opportunity to travel and explore and meet wonderful people."

The Pigeon Forge visit is Brynjar's third trip to America since he became "the Lego boy." In 2013 he spoke at the nonprofit TED's TEDx kids meeting in San Diego. A year later, he talked to 1,200 teachers in San Diego about the project. On Saturday, April 21, he'll meet and talk with Titanic museum visitors.



Brynjar's mother said that when she started raising her son, she felt totally blind as to what his future would look like because of his autism, and she worried about the obstacles that many children on the autism spectrum have to overcome. She is now proud to share with other parents of children on the autism spectrum that it is possible to achieve their goals.

"When your child comes to you with an interesting big crazy dream, mission or goal, he or she would like to reach and needs your help. Listen carefully and make an attempt to find ways to support the child to reach that goal. It might be the best investment you ever make for your kid," Ludviksdottir said.



Serena Dejesus, Age 23, Won Her Debut Event In Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) League Competition –April 15, 2018



“[MMA] allows me to pour out all my frustrations and other emotions from me being over-stimulated that have piled up in the course of the day,” says DeJesus. “Whenever I haven’t trained for a few days, I get a lot more aggressive and edgy with people. No, I don’t hit them, but I don’t feel good, nor do I feel like myself. The training makes me feel like I belong, and that I am normal enough to be with a team.”

FOLLOW A CHILD'S PASSIONS

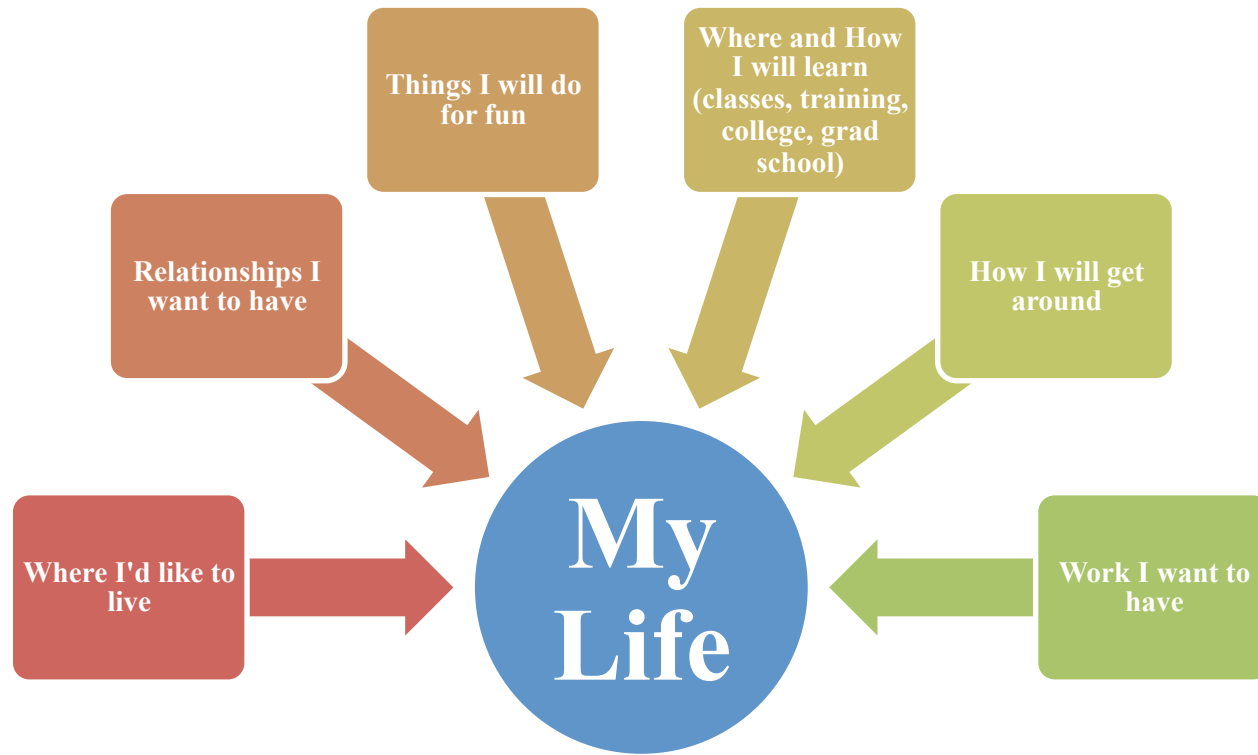
The parents of each of these youngsters was probably, at one time, told to reduce the child's obsessive interests....

But they encouraged these affinities and built
Self-Determination!

- Greater self confidence
- Enhanced self regulation
- Expansion of their world




PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING



Best transition planning puts teen at the center
Encourages teen to articulate a vision for him/
herself

PERSON CENTERED PLANNING

Purpose

- *To look at an individual in a different way.*
 - *To assist the focus person in gaining control over their own life.*
 - *To increase opportunities for participation in the community.*
 - *To recognize individual desires, interests, and dreams.*
 - *Through team effort, develop a plan to turn dreams into reality.*
- 

TRANSITION PLAN IS LEGALLY REQUIRED

IDEA 2004 requires that...

no later than age 16 (14 in Mass) a student's IEP “*must include appropriate measurable post-secondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills*”

34 CFR 300.43 (a) [20 U.S.C. 1401(34)]

AREAS FOR ASSESSMENT

- Intelligence
- Achievement
- School Performance
- Self-determination
- Self-advocacy
- Emotional/Behavioral
- Social skills

- Functional/Life Skills
- Community Participation/Access
- Personal relationships/safety
- Leisure/Recreation
- Vocational/Career interest and awareness
- Work readiness
- Post-secondary Education/Training

IMPORTANT TO HAVE A GOOD ASSESSMENT

TRANSITION PLANNING FORM

Transition planning form is the formal documentation of team's discussion about student's goals in areas of **Education, Independent Living and Vocational, AND** programming necessary to meet these goals.

Don't let team skip over any of these. Make sure necessary content is transferred to IEP

Using the TPF

--<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/cspd/transition-planning.pdf>

REAL LIFE SKILLS

Direct observation across settings can be crucial here

Teen can do things in one environment, not another

For example: How does a high school senior navigate a college campus when instructed to get information from the student services department about how to apply for accommodations?

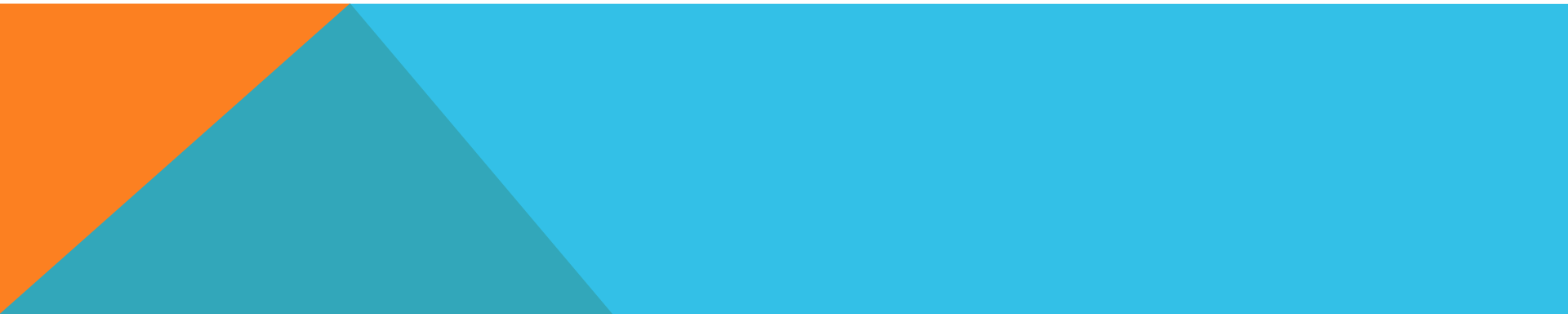
Provides tremendous information about his/her self-advocacy, executive function, and transportation skills/needs

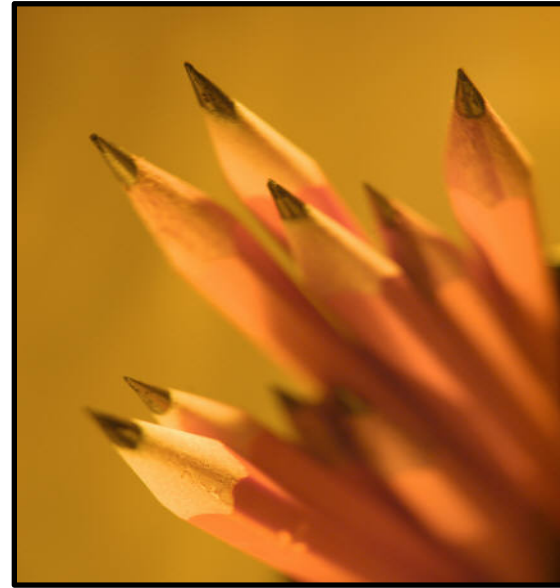
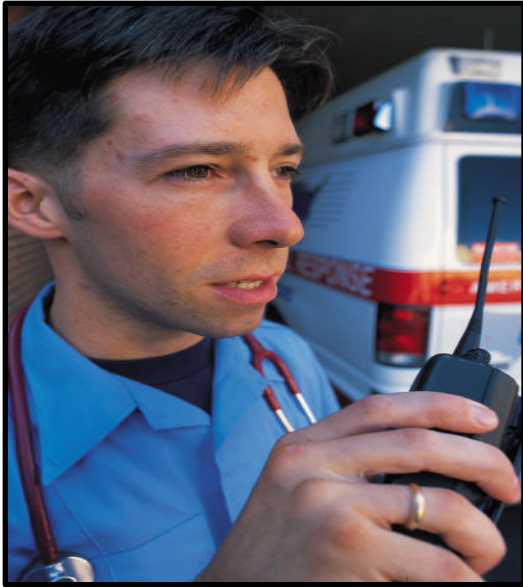
PROVIDE EXPERIENCES

Even individuals with affinities often have trouble translating that into real life.

Need to experiment with a variety of volunteer jobs, internships, etc.

Often need job coaching – in the moment.





COLLEGE FOR ALL

Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) Partnership Programs for Students with Disabilities (2006)

–MA DESE

Provided Massachusetts students with severe disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22 the opportunity to take part academically and socially in the life of the college.

Partnerships with 5 local community colleges

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2012/06icep.pdf>

GET HELP

Mass Rehab Commission

Offers many services for transition age youth (16-22)

- Workplace readiness: assessments, exploration, counseling, training
- Internships
- Leadership forums
- Independent living supports

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/mrc-services-for-students-and-youth>

GET HELP (CONT)

NESCA: Transition specialists who offer

- Comprehensive transition assessments
- Case management
- Support for advocating with schools
- Help accessing community resources
- Community and job coaching



CLIFF BECOMES A SPRINGBOARD



QUESTIONS??

