


GUIDE

**HOW DO I
PREPARE MY
STUDENT WITH
AUTISM FOR LIFE
BEYOND HIGH
SCHOOL?**

A photograph of an astronaut in a white spacesuit floating in space against a starry background. The astronaut is wearing a helmet with a dark visor and has a large backpack. The suit has an American flag patch on the right arm. The astronaut's right hand is raised towards the camera.

Taking the giant leap into adulthood can be daunting for even the most prepared young person. If you have a teenager with autism or other exceptionalities, they may need that extra boost of support to guide them into the next stage of their lives. This stage in life can cause many parents a lot of stress and anxiety but the great news is that there is a lot of support and information out there, and in this guide, we will take you through each step of the way.

CREATING STABILITY

CHANGES TO ROUTINE

Young people thrive when given stability and a daily routine during their formative years.

They learn to develop a sense of themselves and the world in a secure, healthy way by having certain expectations of what will happen any given day and what support their caregivers can provide them.

This forms the foundation on which they build their values, interests, and later their own adult life.

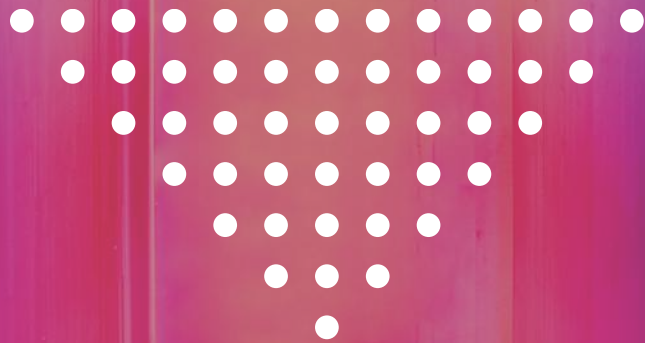
Big disruptions to their routine can prove to be highly destabilizing and cause emotional turmoil, negative behaviors, and a disrupted sense of identity, especially true for children with autism.

Potential consequences of significant change in routine could be:

- Refusal to comply with requests
- Behaving in socially inappropriate ways
- Aggression towards peers and caregivers
- Depression and withdrawal
- Self-harming behaviors

How can you prevent this from happening? It all starts with planning ahead. Keep reading to learn about planning for the future.

MAKING A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE



HOW TO PLAN AHEAD

GETTING AHEAD OF THE GAME

The best way to prevent this is to get ahead of the game and create a thought-out plan to prepare them for when they finish school. People with autism may need additional help to strengthen their real-world life skills, learn about careers that mesh well with their capabilities, and develop social connections with peers. The ideal solution is to find a post-school transition program that sets them up for success.

WHAT IS A TRANSITION PROGRAM?

Transition programs are designed to teach independent living skills, including vocational skills, to students with autism or other exceptionalities, starting as early as 18 years old and up to 22 years old. As students make progress, they fine-tune their work abilities, determine job preferences, and learn to work with growing independence.



CHOOSING A TRANSITION PROGRAM



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

INDICATORS OF A GOOD PROGRAM

When deciding on a transition program, doing the homework is vital. It is best to research options available before making a final decision. Your child's future is worth the time this will take. Typical indicators of a good transition program are:

- Small class sizes allowing teachers to spend more one on one time with students
- Specialized programs built to help teens understand their options, sharpen their skills and find their passions
- Modern facilities, specially designed for transition activities
- Varied group activities to practice socializing
- Emphasis on both soft and hard skills in the workplace
- Strong focus on career development and creating an action plan for the future
- Community outings focused on life skills and career exploration

A good transition program can be life-changing for any teenager, setting them up for a happy and productive future.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

FINDING A PROGRAM

After finding a program that could be suitable for your student, what's next? We always recommend booking a tour to meet the team and see the facilities for yourself. When speaking to the team that coordinates the transition program, a few questions that we recommend asking are:

- **How are student's abilities tested?** The key idea is to find a program that does not focus so much on traditional pen and paper tests, where students may struggle. The ideal scenario favors testing the practical application of skills in simulated real-life scenarios, allowing parents and students to understand where student strengths and interests lie.
- **How is success measured?** Transition programs should assess their students individually, catering to their unique situation and specific ability level. There should not be any peer-to-peer comparison but instead emphasizing the student reaching individually set milestones.
- **What activities does the program offer, and how "hands-on" will it be?** The right program will have a highly varied range of practical activities, including community outings and classes focused on life skills. They should also include minimal intervention by the staff, encouraging leadership, self-advocacy, and independent decision-making.

LYFE LAUNCH

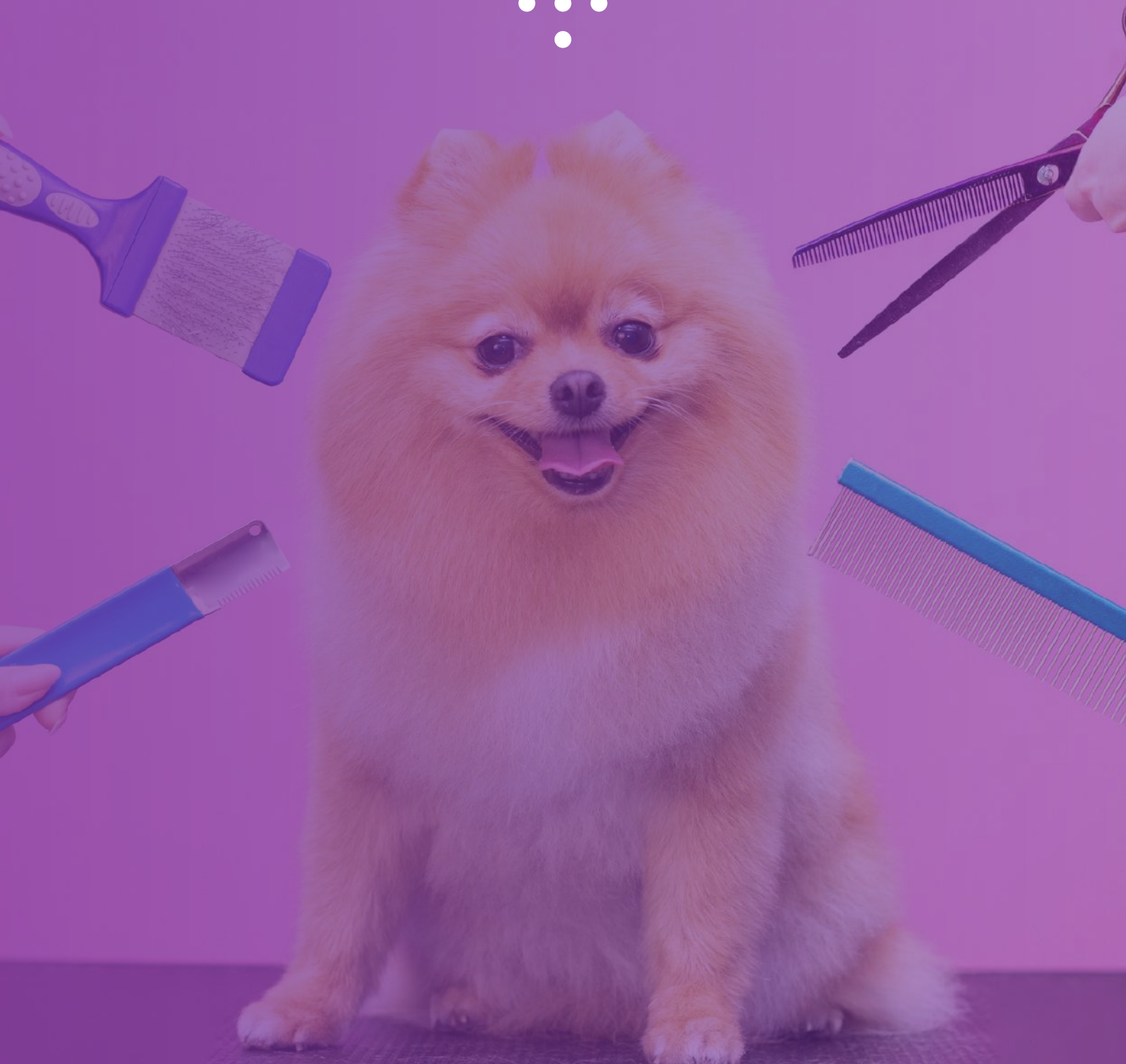
PS ACADEMY'S TRANSITION PROGRAM

PS Academy has an amazing transition program called Lyfe Launch. Lyfe Launch is a comprehensive transition program that is made up of three main components:

1. Newly installed PAES Lab allows students to become “employees” and teachers to become “employers” as we use this lab to assess a student's competitive work potential and interest level, while simultaneously exploring various jobs, using real tools, and developing proper work behaviors in the following five areas: Construction/ Industrial, Consumer/ Service, Computer Technology, Processing/ Production, and Business/ Marketing.
2. Weekly community outings allow students to explore a variety of businesses in person with the goal of internship or future employment. These outings also allow students to hone many daily living skills including accessing public transportation, retail shopping at a big box or grocery store, and finding entertainment spots.
3. Students participate in classes such as “Lyfe 101” and Personal Finance to further increase knowledge and independence, as well as work collaboratively with peers to practice skills.



CAREER POSSIBILITIES



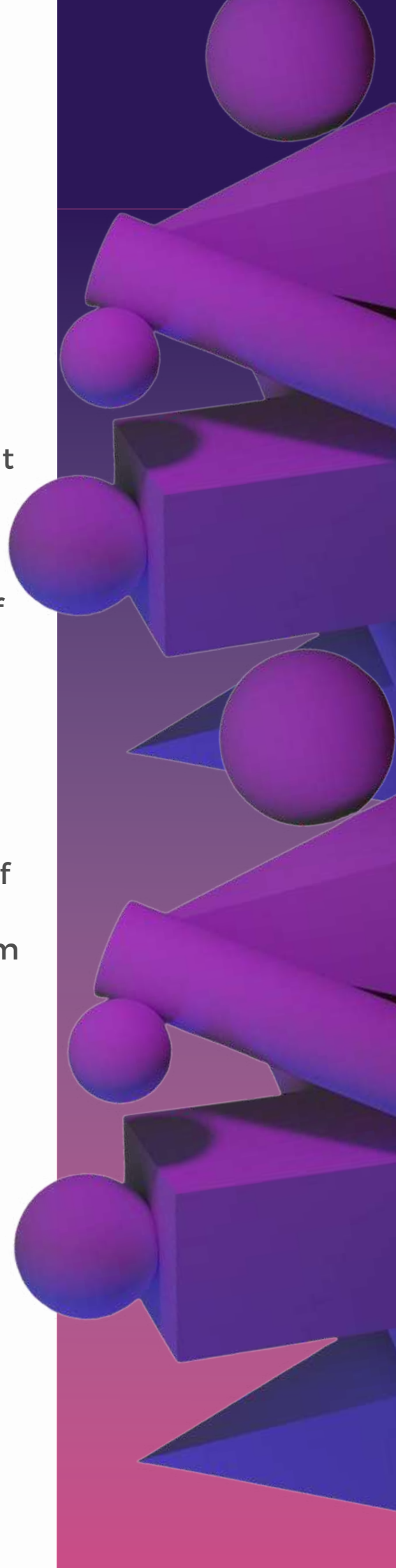
WHAT CAREERS ARE A GOOD FIT?

It can be concerning for parents, pondering whether their teenager will have the ability to pursue an independent career for themselves. The great news is that the quirks of people with exceptionalities can lend themselves to extraordinary success in the job market if they find a field that plays to their strengths.

They tend to be highly visual thinkers, extremely good with facts, have impressive technical aptitude, and relish in highly intricate, detailed work. Some of the most fantastic ideas, discoveries, and inventions known to man have come from exceptional people. Generally speaking, some career paths that pair well are:

- Information Technology
- Retail
- Manufacturing
- Art
- Design
- Animal Care

Giving your teenager the opportunity to apply themselves in a hands-on environment will be key to helping them discover what's next.



WHAT'S NEXT?



FINAL NOTES

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Remember that the end goal is success for your child - academically, socially, and professionally. To meet this goal, you need to have confidence in the team that surrounds them. Opting for a program that can cater specifically to their needs as a young adult with autism is key.

FUNDING OPTIONS

Worried about costs? Free tuition (ESA) and scholarships (STOs) are available. Just get in touch with one of our enrollment experts to learn more.

Remember, the future is positive, and there are answers. We can help you and your student find them. Please don't hesitate to reach out to learn more about how we have changed lives at PS Academy by giving students the tools they need to succeed and thrive.

To learn more about our transition program, Lyfe Launch, or any of our specialized K-12 programs, get in touch.

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