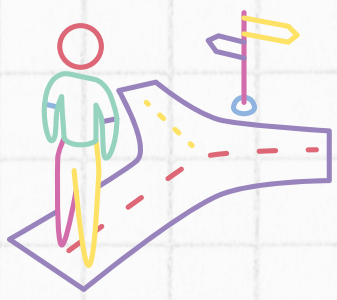
Exploring Self-Determination for Autistic Adults

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What is Self-Determination?

Self-determination refers to the extent to which individuals are able to **act autonomously** (i.e., as the primary decision-maker in their life) and make their own choices, **free from the influence, involvement, and control of others** [1].



The United Nations considers self-determination a **fundamental human right** [2].

Thus, supporting people to become more self-determined is a **moral and ethical imperative**.



The Present Study

Thompson-Hodgetts and colleagues (2023) interviewed **nineteen Autistic adults**, exploring their perspectives on the barriers they encounter in **making independent choices** and acting as causal agents in their own lives. Participants also discussed strategies to support Autistic people's abilty to make their own choices

Making choices and having control over their lives is **just as important for Autistic people's well-being** as it is for non-Autistic people.

However, Autistic adults are given **fewer opportunities** to make their own decisions.



Autistic adults described how their own difficulties and barriers around them can make it harder to make choices and have control over their lives:



Internal barriers
Because difficulties with planning and thinking things through can make it harder to make decisions.



External Barriers
Because of negative attitudes and unfair treatment toward people with disabilities.

Executive Functioning Differences

Participants described difficulties managing emotions, staying organized, switching their attention between tasks, and adapting their thinking when things change.

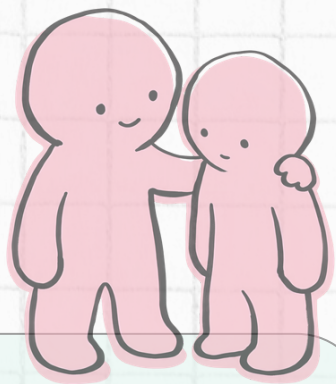
Ableist Views and Discrimination

- Assuming Autistic people **cannot make** their own decisions.
- Treating Autistic people's needs and preferences as **unacceptable** or **made up**.

Participants also shared how they would like to be supported to live more autonomously:

Support Executive Functioning Differences

- Present **all choices** clearly and directly
- Provide sufficient **time to think** and process decisions
- Make it clear that **"no" is a viable** and **safe option**
- Offer help and emotional support



Challenge Ableist Views, Stigma, and Discrimination

- Ensure Autistic people are given the **chance** to make their own decisions
- **Respect** and **honour** the **decisions** of Autistic people
- Support Autistic people when they choose to **unmask** and be their **authentic selves**

[1] Thompson-Hodgetts S, Ryan J, Coombs E, Brown HM, Xavier A, Devlin C, Lee A, Kedmy A & Borden A (2023) Toward understanding and enhancing self-determination: A qualitative exploration with autistic adults without co-occurring intellectual disability.
[2] United Nations. (2006). Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. United Nations Treaty Series, 2515, 3.

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