

# *Entering Into Adulthood with Autism:*

What We Know and What We Still Need to Learn

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# “A Letter To My Younger Self”





# Overview

- ❖ Autism in Adulthood 101
- ❖ Back to the Future
- ❖ Interdependence (And Now For Something Completely Different)
- ❖ The Meaning of Life: Growth and Learning
- ❖ Questions

What Do You Want Your  
Child/Client to Be  
When They Grow Up?



❖ Doctor

❖ Lawyer

❖ Teacher

❖ Happy

# What Does Being an Autistic Adult Look Like?

- ❖ Dominant image of autism as childhood condition

1 in 59  
children  
in the U.S.  
has autism



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

# What Does Being an Autistic Adult Look Like?

- ❖ The few images we do have of adults on the spectrum...





# What Does Being an Autistic Adult Look Like?

- ❖ 35% of autistic adults go to college
- ❖ 15% of these adults are employed
- ❖ *85% unemployment rate for autistic adults*



# What Does Being an Autistic Adult Look Like?

- ❖ Services and supports related to autism are still overwhelmingly geared toward children or parents of children on the autism spectrum
- ❖ Autism-centric spaces are sometimes not accessible to autistic adults
- ❖ Research is still focused on children with autism

Autistic Adult  
≠  
Autistic Child

# Future Planning

- ❖ How can individuals on the autism spectrum think about the future if no one believes they can have one?
- ❖ IEP meetings
  - ❖ The world outside
- ❖ What the “experts” said

# Future Planning

- ❖ “Amy is a very rigid, unimaginative youngster, who is unable to understand the intricacies of interpersonal relationships.”
- ❖ "Most of Amy's statements were quite factual and she displayed no understanding of humor."
- ❖ “Amy displayed no understanding of empathy.”



# Future Planning

- ❖ Part of thinking about the future is thinking about who you are
- ❖ Individuals on the autism spectrum don't always have the opportunity to discover who we are

# Future Planning

- ❖ Individuals with autism can have our lives planned from beginning to end
- ❖ ...But is it really our life or the one you chose for us?
- ❖ Let go and let grow



# Future Planning

## ❖ Amy's Thoughts on the Future (Age 10)



## ❖ Autistic resilience

# What is Something You Need Help With?

# What is Something You Need Help With?





# Interdependence

Knowing who you are



Knowing what to ask for help with



Knowing whom to ask for help

# Interdependence vs. Codependency

- ❖ Interdependence and Codependency are **not** the same thing
- ❖ “*Codependency is characterized by a [...] dysfunctional, one-sided relationship where one person relies on the other for meeting nearly all of their emotional and self-esteem needs.*”
- ❖ Interdependence = Mutual dependence

# Interdependence

❖ Amy's Thoughts on  
Independence (Age 10)

❖ My own harshest critic



What is something you  
couldn't do when you  
were younger, but now  
can do?

# Growth & Learning

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# Growth & Learning

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❖ Autistic people can grow and change!



# Growth & Learning

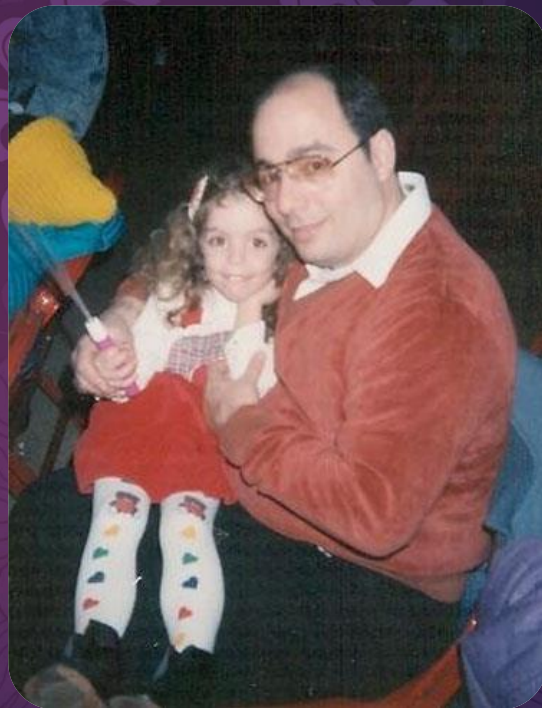
- ❖ Challenges and problems don't go away when we get older. They change, too.
- ❖ Address these challenges by treating us like the adults we are, not the children we were
- ❖ Experts aren't always right

# Growth & Learning

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- ❖ Second Adulthood

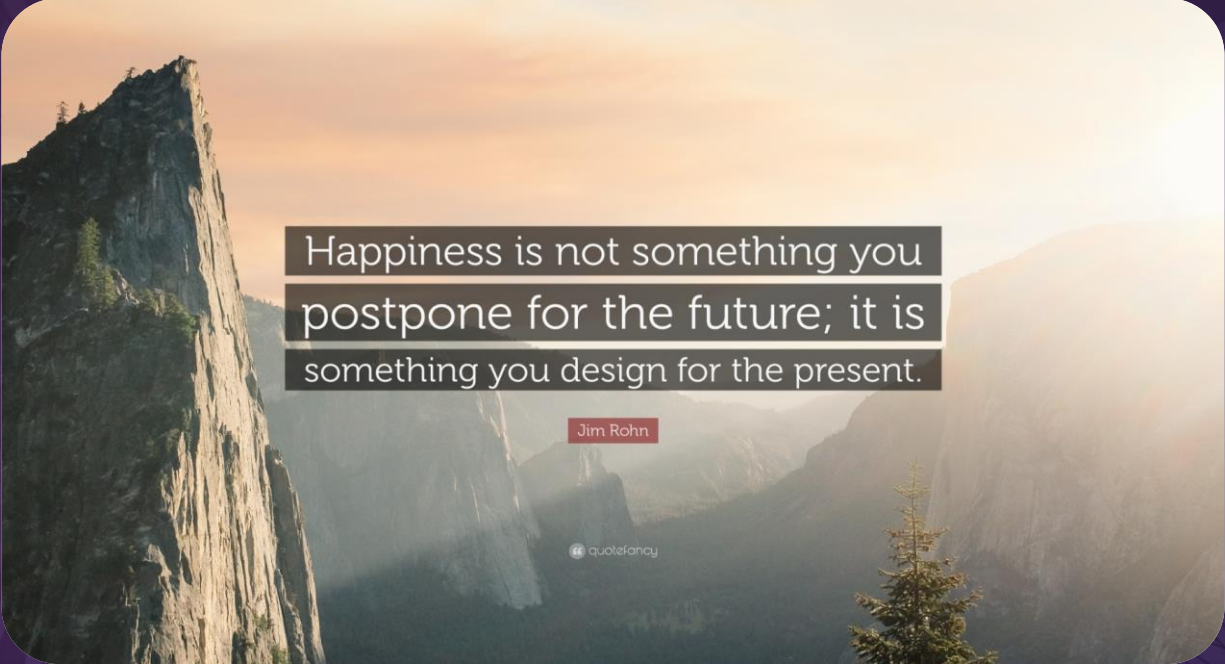
- ❖ Autistic parents of autistic children need support, too



# Remember...

- ❖ Include autistic people in discussions about the future
- ❖ Interdependence instead of independence
- ❖ Yesterday doesn't define tomorrow

# Remember...

A scenic view of a mountain peak, likely El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, with a quote overlay. The image shows a steep, rocky cliff face on the left, with a forested valley and distant mountains in the background. The sky is a soft, hazy orange, suggesting sunrise or sunset. The quote is centered in a dark, semi-transparent box.

Happiness is not something you  
postpone for the future; it is  
something you design for the present.

Jim Rohn

quotefancy



# Contact Information



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## *Social Media*



[@AmyGravino](https://twitter.com/AmyGravino)



[Facebook.com/AmyGravinoFanPage](https://www.facebook.com/AmyGravinoFanPage)



[@Amy.Gravino](https://www.instagram.com/Amy.Gravino)



[Linkedin.com/in/amygravino](https://www.linkedin.com/in/amygravino)

# Questions



ANY  
QUESTIONS  
?