



Resource Handbook

A Guide for Caregivers, Families, Educators, and Autistic Individuals

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AUTS 250G: Understanding the Autism Spectrum

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<https://bit.ly/resourcehandbook>

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Table of Contents

Section 1: Understanding Autism	3
Terms and Definitions	3
What is Autism?	6
Autism Myths & Misconceptions	8
Co-occurring Conditions	10
Section 2: Receiving a Diagnosis	12
Diagnostic Process	12
Where to Get Evaluated	14
Understanding Autism Levels & Evaluation Criteria	16
Prevalence Reports & Trends	18
Section 3: Evidence-Based Practices	19
ABA & Alternatives	19
Antecedent Interventions.....	21
Behavior Supports	23
Research Portals	24
Section 4: Education & Advocacy	26
IEP, 504, Schools, and School Rights	26
Cultural & Legal Considerations.....	27
College & Transition Programs	30
Events & Organizations That Foster Belonging	33
Section 5: Parent & Caregiver Support	35
Research Literacy	35
Communication & Motivation.....	36
Local Family Services	37
National Family Resources	39
Section 6: Health & Safety Supports.....	40
First Responders & Medical.....	40
Wandering & Safety Planning	43
Communication Aids	44
References	46



Section 1: Understanding Autism

Terms and Definitions

Sometimes, the hardest part is just understanding the words people use. This section breaks down the basics, such as ASD, ABA, BCBA, and all those acronyms that get tossed around. It's a solid starting point for anyone new to the autism space.

ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis): A scientific approach that uses strategies based on learning principles to teach and support behavior. ABA isn't just for Autism—it helps many people with different challenges. Examples include Discrete Trial Training and Incidental Teaching.

ABA Therapist / Behavior Technician: These people work directly with individuals using ABA strategies. Other names might include tutor, tech, or clinician. In this document, we use “ABA Therapist.”

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): A developmental condition that affects communication, social skills, and behavior. Autism is a *spectrum*, so every person is different in their strengths and support needs.

BCBA / BCaBA / BCBA-D: Different levels of certified behavior analysts. BCBA-D has a doctorate, BCBA has a master's, and BCaBA is assistant-level.

RBT (Registered Behavior Technician): Entry-level credential for ABA therapists. They need training and must pass an exam. Not always required, but many jobs and insurance plans prefer it.

Behavior: An action that you can see or measure. Example: Raising a hand is behavior, but “being quiet” is not (a quiet person might be doing nothing at all).

Chronological vs Developmental Age: Chronological age is actual age. Developmental age is based on skills and behavior.

Co-Morbidity: Having more than one diagnosis at the same time (e.g., Autism and Anxiety)

Consequence: What happens right *after* a behavior. It can increase or decrease how often that behavior occurs.



Consultant: Usually, a certified behavior analyst (BCBA) who creates treatment plans, trains staff, and monitors progress.

Contained Classroom: A special education class with only students with disabilities. Smaller group size and extra support.

Inclusive Classroom: A classroom where students with and without disabilities learn together.

Developmentally Delayed (DD): A term when a child isn't meeting milestones like walking, talking, or sitting up. It can also apply to older individuals if diagnosed late.

DSM-5-TR: Manuals used by professionals to diagnose mental health conditions. The DSM-5 (updated in 2022) defines Autism using two main criteria.

High Functioning/Low Functioning: Old labels indicate how much support someone might need. Today, it's better to describe areas *where* a person needs support, like communication or behavior.

Hypersensitivity / Hyposensitivity: Hyper: Overreacts to input (e.g., sounds). Hypo: Underreacts (e.g., may not feel pain).

ICD: An international health coding system doctors use to track conditions and treatments.

IEP (Individualized Education Plan): A legal document that outlines a student's special education services and goals.

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): A law that ensures students with disabilities receive appropriate education and services.

Intervention: A teaching plan or strategy used to change a behavior (e.g., teaching a child to ask for help instead of having a meltdown)

Mainstream: Placing a student with disabilities into a regular education classroom with typical peers.

Mouthing: Putting toys or other objects in the mouth when it's not appropriate.

Normal vs. Typical: To be more respectful and accurate, "Normal" is avoided in favor of "typical."



NT (Neurotypical): A term for people without neurological differences, like Autism.

OCR (Office of Civil Rights): Part of the U.S. government that protects your rights and enforces anti-discrimination laws.

PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder): An older diagnosis for Autism-like symptoms. Now considered part of autism spectrum disorders in the DSM-5.

Perseverative Behavior: Doing or saying something over and over again, like asking the same question repeatedly.

Scripting: Repeating phrases from shows, books, or conversations (sometimes called “self-talk”).

Scrolling: Giving multiple answers when asked a question, often to try and get the right one.

Self-injurious behavior (SIB): Harming oneself intentionally (e.g., biting, head-banging).

Stereotypic/Repetitive behaviors (“Stimming”): Repetitive actions like rocking or hand-flapping that help people self-regulate or express themselves.

Verbal vs Non-Verbal: Refers to whether someone uses spoken words. In professional terms, “non-vocal” is more accurate than “non-verbal.”

[Simplified and adapted from the work of Lillian Adolphson, Ph.D. \(2023\)](#)

The full version of this resource is located in Section 1, ["Terms and Definitions \(PDF\)"](#) of the digital folder. If you're using the printed version, scan the QR code or go to bit.ly/resourcehandbook



What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong, brain-based difference that influences how individuals communicate, connect, and experience the world. I see it as a unique operating system — not broken, just designed differently. Autism isn't something to "fix." It represents a distinctive way of thinking and being, it's not less, just wonderfully different.

Autism Spectrum Disorder – NIMH

A simple but solid breakdown of what autism is, how it shows up in people's lives, and what to look for. Easy to read and great for sharing with folks who are just learning.

Link: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd>

Wired Differently: Module 4 Handout (PDF)

This is my breakdown of autism, how it's diagnosed, and why the spectrum is way more than a one-size-fits-all thing. It's super easy to follow.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection "What is Autism"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Brain of an Autistic Child – YouTube

Ever wonder how the autistic brain works differently? This video makes it visual, real, and relatable—without going over your head.

Link: https://youtu.be/gFIB7ovqL_k

History of Autism – YouTube

This is a look back at how far we've come. It's helpful if you're curious about where we started and how our understanding of autism has shifted.

Link: <https://youtu.be/KRL3RqOmGiU>

Dr. Bernard Rimland Talks About His Journey – YouTube

This is a powerful firsthand account from a parent who changed the game. Rimland helped steer the conversation away from blaming moms and toward real research.

Link: <https://youtu.be/wZPxcsUKfp8>

Don Triplett: Autism's First Child – YouTube

This video tells the story of Don Triplett; the first person officially diagnosed with autism. It's a powerful look at how a supportive community made all the difference. If you're looking for hope and humanity, this is it.

Link: <https://youtu.be/4rNX0Kmu6ak>



Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorder – ASHA

This page from ASHA breaks down what autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is from a communication and behavior standpoint. It is beneficial if you're trying to understand how autism affects how people interact, talk, and process the world around them. It's one of those resources that helps make the clinical stuff more straightforward without overcomplicating it. Great if you're starting and want a legit, professional overview that still feels understandable.

Link: <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/autism>

CDC – Autism Overview

This site is a great place to start if you're trying to understand autism and how the process works. It answers many common questions clearly and helpfully, especially if you're new to all this.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/>

Early Red Flags of Autism: (PDF)

This PDF is a great starting point if you're unsure what to watch for in toddlers. It breaks down early signs of communication, social behavior, and behaviors in a way that makes sense, especially if you're new to all this.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection** [*"What is Autism"*](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Social Communication in Autism – Spectrum News

This article explains why social things, like tone of voice, eye contact, and conversations, can feel different for autistic people. It's helpful if you're trying to understand what social communication means and why it's part of an autism diagnosis. It's easy to follow and worth a read or listen.

Link: <https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/social-communication-autism-explained/>

What Causes Autism in Children – YouTube

This video discusses what we know and what we don't know about what causes autism. It's great if you're sorting through myths or hearing a lot of theories and want something grounded in actual research.

Link: <https://youtu.be/EoCD0asRXvc>



Autism Myths & Misconceptions

There's been a lot of blame and bad science around autism, like the idea that vaccines cause it or that cold parenting is to blame. This section clears up those myths with real research and reminders that autistic people aren't broken—they've just been misunderstood.

MMR & Autism Study Retracted – New Scientist

The study that started the vaccine myth? Fully retracted. This article clears that up with facts, not fear.

Link: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn4743-controversial-mmr-and-autism-study-retracted/>

NPR – Autism & Vaccine Study Was Fraudulent

This one breaks down how the whole myth came from a lie. A good read if you want to know where things went wrong.

Link: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2011/01/06/132703314/study-linking-childhood-vaccine-and-autism-was-fraudulent>

Meta-Study: No Link Between Vaccines & Autism – Annals of Internal Medicine

One of the biggest reviews out there. Lots of studies. Same conclusion: no link.

Link: <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M18-2101>

CDC – Thimerosal in Vaccines

People still talk about thimerosal, but this CDC page clarifies the facts. It hasn't been in kids' vaccines for years—and no, it didn't cause autism.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/about/thimerosal.html>

Meta-Analysis – Vaccines & Autism (ScienceDirect)

A big-picture review of multiple vaccine studies. Great if you're digging deep into the science.

Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X14006367>

AAP – Vaccine Studies Page

This page walks you through the actual science. Super helpful if you need something simple but strong to send to someone.

Link: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Vaccine-Studies-Examine-the-Evidence.aspx>



CDC: Vaccine Studies on Autism (PDF)

This one's for clearing up the big myth—vaccines do not cause autism. This CDC PDF lays out the research studies behind that fact. If you have doubts or questions or need a solid source to send someone, this one's gold.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection "[Vaccine Myths & Facts](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Why “Refrigerator Mothers” Were Blamed for Autism – and Its Harmfulness

This article unpacks one of the most damaging ideas in autism history — the belief that cold, unloving mothers caused autism. It walks through how this myth took hold, what the science says, and why it still matters today. It's important to know where we've come from, so we don't repeat harmful mistakes. This is a solid piece for anyone trying to understand how bias and bad science once shaped the narrative around autism — and why shifting to evidence-based, compassionate approaches matters.

Link: <https://www.discoveryaba.com/aba-therapy/why-refrigerator-mothers-are-blamed-for-autism>

Refrigerator Mother Theory in Fiction: Pauline Holdstock's Here I Am! (PDF)

This article examines the outdated “refrigerator mother” theory, which falsely blamed cold, unloving moms for autism, and highlights the lasting damage of this myth. It not only debunks the theory but also promotes a compassionate narrative in the novel *Here I Am!*, which features a caring and connected mother and her autistic son. This resource is invaluable for parents who feel blamed or misunderstood, emphasizing that autism is not caused by bad parenting, but is simply part of who someone is.

Link: <https://iupress.istanbul.edu.tr/en/journal/litera/article/autism-and-refrigerator-mother-theory-in-fiction-pauline-holdstocks-here-i-am>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection "[Vaccine Myths & Facts](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Refrigerator Mother Theory – What It Was & Why It Matters

This article from Arizona State University's Embryo Project outlines the harmful "Refrigerator Mother" theory, which falsely attributed autism to cold parenting, particularly by mothers. It discusses the roles of early figures like Leo Kanner and Bruno Bettelheim in promoting this idea, resulting in blame and emotional pain for families. The article also emphasizes Bernard Rimland's contribution in changing perceptions towards a biological basis for autism. It serves as a crucial resource for understanding the origins of this stigma and the need to move beyond this damaging theory.

Link: <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/early-infantile-autism-and-refrigerator-mother-theory-1943-1970>



Co-occurring Conditions

Autism often exists alongside other conditions like ADHD, anxiety, or sensory differences. These aren't flaws — they're part of how someone experiences the world. Knowing about co-occurring conditions helps us understand and support the whole person.

Psychiatric Comorbidities in Autism – Comorbidity Handout (PDF)

Autism rarely shows up alone. This handout explains how ADHD, anxiety, and other stuff are part of the mix and how that doesn't make things worse, just more layered.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection ["Co-occurring Conditions"](#)** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Early Brain Development in Infants at High Risk for Autism (PFD)

This study shows how changes in the brain may appear before behavioral signs of autism do. Super helpful if you're exploring early identification or tracking development.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection ["Co-occurring Conditions"](#)** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Conditions That Accompany Autism – The Transmitter

This article clarifies that autism often coexists with conditions like anxiety, ADHD, and others. It outlines the variations in experiences among autistic individuals, making it a great starting point for those curious about multiple diagnoses.

Link: <https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/conditions-accompany-autism-explained/?fspec=1>

Comorbid Psychopathology in Autism Spectrum Disorder (PDF)

This one breaks down how autism often shows up alongside other mental health issues, like anxiety, depression, or ADHD. It's a great reminder that support plans should look at the whole picture, not just one diagnosis. If you've ever thought "there's more going on here," this backs that up with research.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection ["Co-occurring Conditions"](#)** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Sleep Problems in Autism – The Transmitter

Sleep can be a real challenge for many autistic people. This article from The Transmitter explains why, from falling asleep to staying asleep, and how it's connected to sensory needs, anxiety, and brain chemistry. It's easy to read and makes scientific sense if you're tired of being tired or want to help someone struggling. This one's worth a read.

Link: <https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/sleep-problems-autism-explained/>



Section 2: Receiving a Diagnosis

Diagnostic Process

The autism diagnostic process helps bring clarity, not labels. It usually involves interviews, observations, and screening tools. While it's not always quick, it can lead to better understanding, support, and connection.

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria (PDF)

This is the actual diagnostic checklist that professionals use when evaluating someone for autism. It's the real deal—straight from the book—and helps break down core areas like communication and repetitive behaviors. It's super useful if you're trying to understand how decisions are made or reading through a diagnostic report.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection "[Diagnostic Process](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

DSM-5 (ASD Guidelines Overview) (PDF)

Want to get a grip on how doctors check all the boxes? This one simplifies the DSM-5 process. If the full criteria feel overwhelming, this gives you a clear rundown in a way that makes sense.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection "[Diagnostic Process](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

AAP Clinical Guide: Autism Diagnosis & Support (PDF)

This guide from one of the most trusted medical organizations breaks down what pediatricians look for and how they move from screening to support. It's a great big-picture view for families who want to know what happens after a concern is raised.

Link: <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/145/1/e20193447/36917>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection "[Diagnostic Process](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



AAP Executive Summary – Autism Diagnosis & Care

This is the CliffsNotes version of the AAP guide. It's short, clear, and to the point. You'll get the highlights without the overwhelm, making it perfect for busy parents who want quick and reliable information.

Link: <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/145/1/e20193448/37021>

M-CHAT (Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers)

This free screener is for little ones (16–30 months) and helps flag signs of autism. It's not a diagnosis, just a quick check-in to see if a deeper look might be helpful. Super parent-friendly and takes just a few minutes. If you've had that "hmm, something feels different" moment, this is a good place to start.

Link: <https://www.mchatscreen.com>



Where to Get Evaluated

Finding the right place for an autism evaluation can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to figure it out alone. Start with a trusted doctor, psychologist, or your local autism center. What matters most is finding someone who listens, understands, and sees the whole picture, not just a checklist.

Utah Autism Evaluation Resources (PDF)

This guide lists places across Utah where you can obtain an autism evaluation, organized by region. Super helpful if you don't know where to start or want all the local options in one place. Print it, save it, bookmark it — it's a lifesaver when calling around.

Link: https://familyhealth.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/Office_CSHCN/pdf/autism/Autism-Evaluations.pdf

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection** [*"Where to get Evaluated"*](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

CDC Autism Diagnosis Info

This page from the CDC explains what to expect when seeking an autism evaluation. It also helps you understand the screening tools and steps involved, making it a good place to start if you're new to the process.

Link: cdc.gov/autism/hcp/diagnosis

The Autism Clinic of Utah

A local evaluation and therapy center specializes in autism spectrum disorder. This is one of the places in Utah where families can go for testing.

Link: theautismclinicutah.com

University of Utah – HMHI Autism Services

The U of U offers evaluations through the Huntsman Mental Health Institute. They work with children and adults and use a team approach, which can be especially helpful if your case is complex.

Link: healthcare.utah.edu/hmhi/treatments/autism-clinic

Milestone Neurodevelopment Center

Based in Utah, Milestone offers full autism evaluations and support. This is a good local option for families seeking an official diagnosis and support plan.

Link: milestoneneuro.com



ScenicView Clinic (PDF)

As part of ScenicView Academy, this clinic offers evaluations and services for young adults with autism and related needs. A good match if you're past early childhood and looking for adult-focused care.

Link: scenicviewclinic.com

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection** [*"Where to get Evaluated"*](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Understanding Autism Levels & Evaluation Criteria

The DSM outlines autism traits and support levels to guide services, not to judge or define individuals. Every autistic person is unique, and support needs can change over time. The DSM focuses on understanding rather than labeling.

Module 3: Severity Levels (PDF)

Ever wonder what “Level 1” or “Level 3” means? This handout explains the support needs associated with each DSM level and helps clarify clinical language, making it more understandable.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection** [*"Understanding Autism Levels & Evaluation Criteria"*](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

DSM-IV vs DSM-5 Comparison (PDF)

This PDF shows how autism diagnosis used to work and what changed with DSM-5, especially if you're confused about terms like Asperger's or PDD-NOS. It's great for understanding why the “spectrum” looks the way it does now.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection** [*"Understanding Autism Levels & Evaluation Criteria"*](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

How Diagnosis Changed with DSM-5 (PDF)

This article examines what happened when DSM-5 was introduced, such as how fewer people were diagnosed and how that affected services. It's a good deep dive into how diagnosis trends have shifted.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection** [*"Understanding Autism Levels & Evaluation Criteria"*](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Psychiatrist Views on DSM-5:

This article shares opinions from psychiatrists about the DSM-5, the manual used to diagnose autism. It discusses what changed, what people agree or disagree on, and why that matters. If you're curious about the debates behind how autism is diagnosed, this is a good one to check out.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3846446/>



2020 CDC ADDM Data Slides (PDF)

If you're interested in data regarding autism diagnosis trends, this presentation is for you. CDC slides show the number of diagnosed children, their age of identification, and factors like race and co-occurring disabilities that influence it. They clarify diagnosis gaps and areas for improvement.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection** "[*Understanding Autism Levels & Evaluation Criteria*](#)" of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

DSM-5: Classification & Criteria Changes:

This article explains how the DSM-5 changed autism diagnosis, such as why it's all under one label now and what those "levels" actually mean. It's a solid read if you're wondering what the diagnosis process is based on or why it might look different than it used to.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3683251/>

AAP Autism Care Hub

This is the AAP's main autism page. It's got everything from diagnosis basics to family support and medical info. It's a great go-to if you're looking for reliable answers in one place, especially if you're just getting started or helping someone else figure it out.

Link: <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/autism>

Autism in the DSM, 1952–2013 – Archive Entry

This deep dive walks through every major DSM revision—from DSM-I to DSM-5—and shows how the definition of autism has evolved. It's a solid pick if you want to understand the history behind the diagnosis, why specific terms disappeared, and how diagnostic criteria changed. One to bookmark if you like timelines and context.

Link: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/autismhistoryproject/archive/autism-in-the-dsm>



Prevalence Reports & Trends

Autism rates have increased over the years, not because more people are becoming autistic, but because we're getting better at recognizing and understanding it. These numbers help guide support, funding, and awareness, but behind every stat is a real person with a story that matters.

CDC Autism Prevalence Reports (2018–2022)

These reports from the CDC track how many kids are diagnosed with autism — and how that's changed over time. In [2018](#), it was 1 in 54, then 1 in 36 in [2020](#), and most recently, 1 in 31 kids in [2022](#). They also show that more kids are getting diagnosed earlier, and more kids of color are being identified, too. If you want solid stats or see how things are shifting, these reports are the place to go.

Link: 2018 | <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/ss/ss7011a1.htm>

Link: 2020 | <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/ss/ss7202a1.htm>

Link: 2022 | <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/74/ss/ss7402a1.htm>

CDC Community Report on Autism

This report takes all the data from across the U.S. and breaks it down in a way that makes sense. It looks at how early kids are getting diagnosed, how different communities are doing, and what's changed over the years. It's not just numbers—it's about identifying more kids early. It's helpful if you're looking for the bigger picture or want to see how your state stacks up.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/communication-resources/community-reports.html>

Autism & Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network

This is where a lot of the big autism stats come from. The ADDM Network tracks how many kids are diagnosed with autism and developmental delays across different states. It's not just about the numbers—it helps us see patterns, spot gaps, and push for earlier diagnosis and better access to services. If you've ever wondered where the "1 in 36" stat comes from, it's probably here.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/addm-network/index.html>



Section 3: Evidence-Based Practices

ABA & Alternatives

There's a lot of talk (and debate) about ABA — and for good reason. It's one of the most widely used autism interventions, but it's not one-size-fits-all, and it's okay to ask questions. This section pulls together research-backed resources on ABA and other options. The goal isn't to tell you what to choose — it's to help you make informed decisions based on real info, not pressure or promises.

IRIS Center Modules – Vanderbilt

IRIS is a free training hub with easy-to-understand modules for teachers, parents, and anyone supporting autistic learners. It is excellent for building confidence and skills without needing a full course.

Link: <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

National Autism Center Reports

These reports outline which autism therapies are backed by research. This cuts through the noise if you're looking for what works and what doesn't.

Link: nationalautismcenter.org

National Standards Project – Phase 2 (PDF)

This project is the giant decoder ring for determining which autism interventions work. It breaks down hundreds of studies and groups them into Established, Emerging, or Unestablished based on real science (not just hype or testimonials). It's a fantastic tool for anyone trying to make informed choices, whether you're a parent, educator, or autistic person navigating services. It helps cut through the noise and gives you a solid place to start when you want to know what helps.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection "[ABA & Alternatives](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Organization for Autism Research (OAR)

OAR is one of the best spots to find real research that makes sense. They break down studies, offer guides for parents, and focus on issues that impact daily life. This is a solid place to start if you're trying to figure out what supports work or want facts without the confusing jargon.

Link: researchautism.org



The Controversy Around ABA – Child Mind Institute

This article doesn't sugarcoat; it discusses the debate around ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis), one of the most used therapies for autism. It shares both sides: why some families find it helpful and why others (especially some autistic adults) have serious concerns. This is a solid read if you want to understand the whole picture and hear multiple perspectives before jumping in.

Link: <https://childmind.org/article/controversy-around-applied-behavior-analysis/>

Center-Based vs Home-Based Autism Intervention (PDF)

This outlines the pros and cons of home-based (HB) versus center-based (CB) early intervention. Quick takeaway? CB programs with intense parent coaching show better social skills and family confidence results. However, it's not one-size-fits-all; some kids thrive at home, others need center structure, and some families need solutions that fit their schedules. This guide offers helpful information for determining the support that makes sense. It's not just about more hours—it's about what fits you.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection "ABA & Alternatives"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Find an ABA Provider – Utah Medicaid

Trying to track down an ABA provider that takes Medicaid? This tool makes it way easier. Instead of cold-calling random clinics, you can search for providers who are enrolled in the system. It's beneficial if you're in the ASD-FAP program or just got approved for services and don't know where to start. Less guessing means more connecting with people who can help.

Link: <https://medicaid.utah.gov/ltc-2/asd-fap/>

What's ABA & Why Do People Use It? (PDF)

ABA is all about building skills and reducing behaviors that make life harder. This flyer from ABS explains how it works, who is involved (BCBAs, RBTs, etc.), and where support can occur—such as at home or in the community. It's parent-friendly, clear, and shows how data drives progress. If you're new to ABA or just want the basics without the buzzwords, this is a solid place to start.

Link: <https://www.abskids.com/>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection "ABA & Alternatives"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Antecedent Interventions

Sometimes, the best way to support someone is to look at what's happening before a behavior appears. Antecedent interventions involve modifying the setup, such as the environment, routine, or expectations, to make things smoother. It's not about control; it's about understanding what helps someone feel safe, prepared, and successful.

Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI) – AFIRM Module

This free online module explains antecedent-based interventions and how they work. It shows how changing the before can change the after regarding behavior. If you've ever wondered how environment, routines, or expectations affect someone's actions, this explains it all in a way that's practical, visual, and easy to follow. It's ideal for anyone who supports autistic individuals and seeks practical tools that make a meaningful difference.

Link: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/ebp-module/antecedent-based-interventions-abi/>

Step-by-Step Guide for ABI (Antecedent-Based Interventions) (PDF)

This guide from AFIRM walks you through how to do antecedent-based interventions, not just what they are. It's a solid resource if you're trying to reduce behaviors that get in the way and build positive ones instead. It provides clear steps for planning, implementing, and tracking strategies, such as visual schedules, offering choices, and utilizing learner preferences. It's beneficial for educators, behavior teams, or anyone trying to understand how to prevent challenges before they start.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection "[Antecedent Interventions](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Antecedent Intervention List (PDF)

This sheet serves as a cheat code for understanding how to prevent challenging behaviors before they even begin. It breaks down different strategies you can try *before* a behavior occurs, such as using visuals, offering choices, or adjusting sensory input, to make things smoother for the person you're supporting. It's a super practical list that's helpful for families, educators, and anyone building support plans.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection "[Antecedent Interventions](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



A Systematic Review of ABI – ScienceDirect

This article reviews various antecedent interventions—strategies applied before a behavior occurs—to address challenging behaviors in autistic children. It provides evidence-based insights into how modifying environmental factors can influence behavior, making it a valuable resource for practitioners and caregivers seeking proactive approaches.

Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S175094671100064X>



Behavior Supports

Behavior is communication—even when it's loud, messy, or doesn't look like what people expect. This section covers positive and respectful ways to support behavior that focuses on building skills, rather than punishing challenges. It's about understanding the why behind what someone's doing and responding with tools, not just reactions.

Positive vs Negative Reinforcement – YouTube

This video clarifies reinforcement in ABA, explaining both positive and negative reinforcement in simple terms. It's a “wait... that makes sense now” moment—short and helpful for beginners seeking clear explanations without jargon.

Link: <https://youtu.be/x8WWGwWwRlg?si=ustg7FHRWPAyMpUI>

Encouraging Behavior – IRIS Center (PDF)

This guide breaks down easy-to-use, evidence-based tools to help support students in the classroom, especially when behavior gets tricky. It covers strategies such as behavior-specific praise, offering choices, establishing clear rules, and utilizing rewards in effective ways. It's great for educators, paraeducators, and families who want to understand how and why behavior tools are used—and how to apply them in a way that makes sense, especially for learners with disabilities. It's also trauma-informed and culturally responsive, which is something I appreciate.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection “[Behavior Support](#)”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Helpful Strategies to Promote Positive Behavior – Autism Speaks

This offers practical tips for promoting positive behavior, including routines, reinforcement, and clear expectations, to make daily life smoother. It's beginner-friendly and easy to understand. However, Autism Speaks has a complicated history in the autism community, and many autistic individuals, including myself, have concerns about how the organization represents autism and prioritizes certain voices. While the information can be helpful, approach it cautiously and consult other sources.

Link: autismspeaks.org/tool-kit-excerpt/helpful-strategies-promote-positive-behavior



Research Portals

Research can feel overwhelming or too academic, but it doesn't have to be. These sites are helpful if you want to learn more or stay up to date without needing a degree to understand it all. Whether you're looking for what works or just want to dig a little deeper, these are my go-tos for solid, reliable information (not random internet noise).

SPARK for Autism

SPARK is a major autism research study designed for families. Participate from home, share your story, and help researchers understand autism. It focuses on real-world input from autistic individuals and their families rather than just lab studies. If you want to make a difference or follow the research, this is an exciting opportunity.

Link: <http://sparkforautism.org/>

Autism Internet Modules

To gain a deeper understanding of autism, this site is a valuable resource. It offers short, easy modules on communication, sensory issues, and behavior. Whether you're a parent, teacher, sibling, or just curious, it simplifies concepts without overwhelming you. It's self-paced, clear, and free—learn at your own pace.

Link: autisminternetmodules.org

Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules (AFIRM)

This site provides research-backed information on supporting individuals with autism using evidence-based practices (EBPs). It features clear guides, how-to videos, and tools for families, educators, and providers—no jargon, just effective solutions. If you want proven and practical assistance, it's a go-to resource.

Link: autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders

If you're looking for expert research, this journal publishes significant studies and breakthroughs in autism. It's not light reading, but it's valuable for in-depth understanding and evidence-based practices.

Link: <https://link.springer.com/journal/10803/volumes-and-issues>



Autism Research (Wiley)

This journal features current autism research. For deeper insights into science—like brain studies, intervention outcomes, or genetics—this is a great starting point. It's academic but valuable for understanding ongoing studies and their significance.

Link: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/19383703>



Section 4: Education & Advocacy

IEP, 504, Schools, and School Rights

Navigating school can feel like a new language — IEPs, 504s, accommodations, oh my. But you have rights, and so does your kid. Understanding these rights makes a huge difference. This section clearly explains them, so you can walk into meetings feeling informed (not steamrolled).

Utah Special Education Services

This is the state's special ed page — full of resources on IEPs, laws, and programs. If your kiddo is in school and you're trying to figure out how to get support, this is a must-visit.

Link: schools.utah.gov/specialeducation

Autism Speaks – School & Your Child's Rights

This page provides an overview of educational rights for students with autism, covering IEPs, 504 plans, and legal obligations. It's a good starting point for navigating special education. However, Autism Speaks has a complicated history in the autism community. Many autistic individuals, including myself, have concerns about how the organization represents autism and prioritizes certain voices. While the information can be useful, approach it cautiously and consult other sources.

Link: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-school-your-childs-rights>

Spectrum Academy

Spectrum Academy is a Utah charter school for students with autism. They emphasize small class sizes, personalized supports, and social skills alongside academics, making it ideal for families seeking an autism-friendly environment with built-in support.

Link: <https://spectrumcharter.org>

Least Restrictive Behavior Interventions (LRBI) Manual (PDF)

A go-to guide for school teams working with autistic students. Helps you understand positive behavior plans and what schools should (and shouldn't) be doing. Helpful for parents at IEP meetings, too.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection ["IEP, 504, Schools, and School Rights"](#)** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Cultural & Legal Considerations

2017 IACC Report to Congress on Autism Activities

This is a comprehensive government report that provides an overview of national efforts related to autism, including research updates, policy initiatives, federal programs, and objectives from various agencies. It's not exactly light reading, but it's packed with helpful context about where funding goes, what the government is focusing on, and how things are (or aren't) improving. It can help you better understand how autism services and supports are shaped at a national level.

Link: https://iacc.hhs.gov/publications/report-to-congress/2017/report_to_congress_2017.pdf

Wrightslaw – Special Education & Advocacy Help

Okay, real talk — the website layout might feel like it's stuck in the early 2000s, but the info? Gold. Wrightslaw breaks down special education laws like IDEA, 504s, and IEPs in a way that makes sense without needing a law degree. If you're trying to advocate for yourself or someone you care about in the school system, this is one of those go-to tools that can help you feel more confident walking into any meeting. Clunky site, powerful resource.

<https://www.wrightslaw.com/> <https://www.wrightslaw.com/>

Autism CARES Act of 2019 – IACC (Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee)

The Autism CARES Act is the primary federal law that supports autism research, services, and support nationwide. This page explains the law's purpose and its impact on improving diagnosis, treatment, and community resources. It's a solid starting point if you're looking into national autism policy or simply want to understand who's behind many of the programs we benefit from today. Worth checking out if you're into advocacy or systems-level support.

Link: <https://iacc.hhs.gov/about-iacc/legislation/autism/cares-act-2019/>

Special Education Rules for IDEA (PDF)

This document breaks down Utah's version of the IDEA — the major law that ensures students with disabilities receive the support they need. If you're trying to figure out what schools are supposed to do, how IEPs work, or what your rights are, this clarifies the process without making your head spin.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "Cultural & Legal Considerations"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



National Autism Law Center – Webinar Library

This site offers free webinars on special education rights, legal protections, and navigating systems for individuals with autism and their families. It provides actionable information from legal experts without requiring the decoding of a law book. Whether new to advocacy or looking to refresh your knowledge, it's a valuable tool.

Link: <https://www.nationalautismlawcenter.org/webinar-library>

Autism in the Legal System: What Advocates & Judges Should Know (PDF)

This guide outlines how autism is perceived in courtrooms, including potential communication misunderstandings, sensory issues, and the behavior of legal professionals. It's useful for attorneys, judges, and advocates to support autistic individuals during interviews, hearings, and trials. If you or someone you know is navigating the legal world, this resource helps ensure fairness, safety, and clarity.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "[Cultural & Legal Considerations](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Multicultural Issues in Autism – Journal Article (PFD)

This article examines autism across cultures and its significance. It notes that most research excludes diverse backgrounds, leading to additional barriers or misdiagnoses for families of color. While not claiming all the answers, it initiates thought on how race, culture, and access intertwine. For individuals from underrepresented communities, this resource underscores the significance of their experiences and the necessity for more support and research.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "[Cultural & Legal Considerations](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Culturally Sensitive Collaboration Within Person-Centered Planning (PDF)

This article examines how person-centered planning (PCP) ensures the support plan aligns with the individual's culture, language, and background. It emphasizes that support should not be one-size-fits-all. It provides examples of building trust and collaborating rather than assuming needs. For those navigating IEPs or advocating effectively, this resource helps ensure a truly person-centered plan.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection** *"Cultural & Legal Considerations"* of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



College & Transition Programs

Planning for life after high school can feel like a lot, especially if you're simultaneously navigating support needs, independence, and all the unknowns. This section highlights programs that truly understand its importance. Whether you're looking for college options with built-in supports or paths to employment and life skills, these places meet you where you're at and help you build what's next.

PASSAGES Program (PDF)

PASSAGES is a UVU program that helps autistic adults develop life skills, social confidence, and community connections. Whether you're working on independence and relationships or want a space to connect with others who get it, this program meets you where you're at.

Link: uvu.edu/autism/passages

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "College & Transition Programs"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Wolverines Elevated (PDF)

Wolverines Elevated is a 3-year college experience for young adults with intellectual disabilities. It blends life skills, academics, and career training, with full campus involvement. If you're looking for college opportunities, this is a game-changer.

Link: <https://www.uvu.edu/wolverines-elevated/index.html>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "College & Transition Programs"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

ScenicView Academy

ScenicView Academy is a nonprofit school in Utah that helps young adults with autism and learning disabilities develop independent living skills, receive job training, and pursue education in a supportive, strength-based environment. If you're looking for a place that blends real-world prep with support and understanding, this is for you.

Link: <https://www.svacademy.org>



Aggies Elevated – USU

Aggies Elevated is a college program at Utah State for young adults with intellectual disabilities, focusing on achieving absolute independence, not just busywork. You get to live on campus, take classes, build life skills, and work toward a future that's yours. Programs like this matter because they open doors that too many people assume are closed. Spoiler: they're not.

Link: <https://cehs.usu.edu/aggieselevated/>

Utah Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) (PDF)

VR is a statewide program that helps people with disabilities, including autistic folks, prepare for, get, and keep jobs. Whether you're seeking help with job training, education, workplace accommodations, or figuring out your goals, VR walks you through that journey. It's a great support if you're ready to start working, thinking about the future, or want to know what's out there beyond school.

Links: <https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/vr/index.html>

Vocational Rehab (VR) Flowchart — Step-by-Step Help for Teens & Adults (PDF)

This guide outlines the entire VR process in plain English—from applying for services as early as age 14 to receiving help with school, training, jobs, and even obtaining bus passes. It's extremely helpful for parents or young adults who are wondering, “*What now?*” after a diagnosis or when contemplating the future. It demonstrates how the VR counselor, student, and family can collaborate to create a personalized plan tailored to their strengths, interests, and goals. Bonus: it includes who to call when things get confusing (because let's be honest—sometimes they do).

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection “[College & Transition Programs](#)”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Youth Transition Services – Utah VR (PDF)

This flyer outlines the services provided by Utah's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to support students with disabilities in transitioning from high school to adult life, employment, and independence. They offer job training, career counseling, and attend your IEP/504 meetings as well. It's a solid local resource if you're looking for real-world support during that tough transition from high school to life.

Link: <https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/students>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection “[College & Transition Programs](#)”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Navigational Handbook for College and Career – IDEA

This guide is packed with information to help students with disabilities (including autism) and their families plan for life after high school, college, jobs, and everything in between. It breaks down rights under the IDEA, ADA, and other laws, helping to make sense of the supports available during significant life transitions. It's super helpful if you're thinking ahead or just trying to figure out what options are out there.

Link: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-guidance-transition-guide-postsecondary-education-employment-students-youth-disabilities-august-2020/>

Life Journey Through Autism: A Guide for Transition to Adulthood (PDF)

This guide is honestly one of the best step-by-step walkthroughs for navigating life after high school. It breaks down what transition really means—from figuring out jobs and independent living to understanding your rights and building self-advocacy skills. Whether you're autistic, a parent, or an educator, this one's got your back with actual tools and realistic advice. It doesn't sugarcoat things but makes the process way more manageable.

Link: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508625.pdf>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "[College & Transition Programs](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Life Journey Through Autism: A Guide to Safety (PDF)

This guide covers it all — from wandering to internet safety to how to communicate with first responders. It's made for families, educators, and autistic folks themselves who want to do something to prevent problems, not just stress about them. It breaks everything down in a way that makes sense and gives real, doable steps. If you've ever thought, "Okay, but what do we actually *do* about safety stuff?" — this is the one.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "[College & Transition Programs](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Events & Organizations That Foster Belonging

Community matters. *Whether you're autistic, a family member, or someone who wants to be part of something meaningful, these are the spaces where you can show up as your full self. These groups don't just check boxes or talk about accessibility—they create real connections, host events that feel safe and welcoming, and offer a place where people are valued without needing to mask or explain who they are.*

Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism – UVU

This is the hub for autism support at the University of Utah Valley (UVU). From community events and advocacy to resources for families and professionals, this page connects you to everything the Center has to offer. A great place to start if you're looking for trusted, local support.

Link: uvu.edu/autism

Autism Incorporated (PDF)

A peer-led student group at UVU is open to *anyone*, whether autistic or simply interested in learning and supporting others. It's a space for connection, creativity, and community. Whether it's art showcases, chill hangouts, or projects that make a difference, this group is all about showing up as you are and building something meaningful together.

Link: <https://linktr.ee/autismincorporateduvu>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection** "[Events & Organizations That Foster Belonging](#)" of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Columbus NEXTWORK Academy

This program helps autistic and neurodivergent young adults prepare for employment and independent living. It focuses on real-world skills, paid work experience, and transition support, with coaching along the way. If you're looking for something that combines career readiness with support, this is one to consider.

Link: <https://www.columbusseves.org/>



Autism Council of Utah

This statewide group brings together families, professionals, and self-advocates to improve autism resources across Utah. It's all about collaboration—connecting people with events, news, services, and real ways to get involved. It's great if you want to stay updated, meet others in the community, or see what's happening across the state.

Link: <https://autismcouncilofutah.org>

Encircle – LGBTQ+ Family & Youth Support

Encircle is dedicated to creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth and their families. They offer free therapy, friendship circles, creative classes, and drop-in centers across Utah. If you or someone you love needs connection, identity-affirming support, or just a place to be fully seen, this is a powerful resource.

Link: encircletogether.org

Encircle LGBTQ+ Resource Guide

This digital guide from Encircle is packed with affirming resources—think mental health tips, family support, coming out help, school rights, and more. It's made for LGBTQ+ youth, families, and allies navigating tough stuff with real support. It's clear, uplifting, and full of tools that make a difference.

Link: <https://issuu.com/encircletogether/docs/lgbtq-resource-digital-final>

Encircle Resource Library – LGBTQ+ Guides & Stories

This digital library is packed with affirming resources—think guides on starting a GSA, understanding gender, and heartfelt stories from LGBTQ+ youth and families. It's a go-to spot for anyone seeking clarity, support, or just a good read.

Link: encircletogether.org/library

Coming Out Handbook – The Trevor Project (PDF)

This is one of those must-haves. It breaks down identity, attraction, safety, and how to come out (or not) in a way that feels right for *you*. It has reflection tools, identity maps, mental health check-ins, and plenty of validation. Whether you're out, questioning, or somewhere in between, this guide meets you where you are—no pressure, just support.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection** [*"Events & Organizations That Foster Belonging"*](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Section 5: Parent & Caregiver Support

Research Literacy

Let's be honest — research can feel like a whole different language. However, learning to discern what's solid from what's just fluff is essential. You don't need a PhD to understand good information; you need the right tools. This section helps you break it down so you're not just Googling and guessing — you know what to trust.

A Parent's Guide to Research (PDF)

Navigating the world of autism research can feel like being handed a complicated puzzle without the picture on the box. This guide from the Organization for Autism Research breaks down the information in a valuable and relatable way. It helps parents and caregivers get more comfortable with terms, spot solid evidence, and avoid falling for “miracle cure” claims. It's a powerful confidence booster for anyone starting out or even if you're further along but want to be more informed when making decisions about therapies, interventions, or next steps. It's like your research survival kit—with tools to help you feel more in control and less overwhelmed.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 5, Subsection "Research Literacy"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Social Validity Questionnaire (DOC)

This short questionnaire helps measure whether an intervention makes sense to those who use it, such as parents and caregivers. It's all about seeing if a support plan feels realistic, ethical, and practical from a real-world perspective. Tools like this matter because even the most “evidence-based” intervention doesn't work if the family can't or won't use it. It helps bridge that gap between research and lived experience.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 5, Subsection "Research Literacy"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Communication & Motivation

Sometimes the most challenging part isn't knowing what to say — it's figuring out how to connect. This section is about building trust, making things work, and supporting motivation in ways that are effective for the individual. Whether someone uses speech, AAC, or vibes alone, there's no one-size-fits-all — just strategies that respect who they are and how they communicate.

9 Characteristics of Effective Feedback – ABA Learning Lab

Giving feedback can be tricky, especially when trying to help someone grow without discouraging them. This article breaks down nine key things that make feedback helpful, like being timely, specific, and respectful. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or therapist, this is an excellent reminder that how you say something matters just as much as what you say. Super helpful if you're trying to support progress and maintain a positive outlook.

Link: <https://www.abalearninglab.com/9-characteristics-of-effective-feedback/>

101 Ways to Say Good Job – CCETompkins

Sometimes, it's hard to find the right words when encouraging someone, especially when you don't want to just keep saying "Good job" over and over. This list gives 101 creative and positive ways to acknowledge effort and celebrate progress. It's super helpful for parents, caregivers, teachers, or anyone who wants to build up confidence and motivation while keeping praise meaningful and fresh.

Link: <https://ccetompkins.org/resources/101-ways-to-say-good-job>

Understanding Motivational Interviewing (PDF)

This short guide breaks down Motivational Interviewing (MI)—a respectful, person-centered approach to helping someone explore and commit to change. It's not about pushing someone, but about asking the right questions, building trust, and helping them discover their motivation. Whether you're a parent, educator, or support provider, this resource provides a comprehensive overview of how MI can facilitate meaningful conversations and compassionately guide behavior change. Super helpful if you want tools that work *with* the person, not *on* them.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 5, Subsection "[Communication & Motivation](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Local Family Services

Sometimes, the best support isn't some giant program—it's something right down the street. This section highlights local services available to families. Whether you're looking for early intervention, caregiver support, or someone who gets it, these resources are here to help without the runaround.

MNCA Resource Library (PDF)

This little flyer directs you to the Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism's on-site resource library — it's stocked with books, sensory tools, visuals, games, and more. It's perfect if you're looking for real, hands-on stuff that can make life a little easier or more manageable. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or just figuring things out, this is a solid spot to check out free tools that help.

Link: <https://www.uvu.edu/autism/resources.html>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 5, Subsection "[Local Family Services](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Help Me Grow Utah

A support network for Utah families, especially if you've got a young child and are unsure where to start. They help connect you to screenings, services, and early intervention options.

Link: helpmegrowutah.org

Ability 1st Utah (PDF)

This nonprofit helps people with disabilities, including those with autism, live independently. They provide peer support, skills training, advocacy, and transition assistance (like moving from high school to adulthood). It's open to anyone who qualifies, offering support for those seeking greater independence from experienced individuals.

Link: <https://ability1stutah.org>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 5, Subsection "[Local Family Services](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Creating an Individualized Support Plan (ISP) – Utah DHS (PDF)

This guide explains ISPs, which help people with disabilities receive personalized support. Whether you're determining services, creating a care plan, or assisting someone in transitioning to adult support, this guide outlines the process and its importance.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 5, Subsection "[Local Family Services](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Utah Parent Center – Resource Hub

This site offers a wide range of tools for families, from IEP assistance to support groups and everything in between. It's one of those places where this can point you in the right direction if you don't know where to start. It's extremely helpful if you're trying to figure things out or just want to know what's available for your child or family.

Link: <https://utahparentcenter.org/resources/>

Utah DSPD – Support Coordination

This is a significant consideration if you're trying to determine which services your family might qualify for. Support Coordinators through Utah's Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD) help create personalized plans and connect you with resources, like housing, day programs, and other supports. Think of them as your guide through the maze of services. They help make the system feel a little more human if you're feeling overwhelmed.

Link: <https://dspd.utah.gov/services/support-coordination/>

Utah DSPD – Division of Services for People with Disabilities

This site is a must-bookmark if you or someone you love needs long-term support services in Utah. DSPD helps connect people with programs for housing, day services, job coaching, respite care, and more. It can feel overwhelming trying to figure out where even to start, but this is where you apply for state supports and learn what's available for individuals with developmental disabilities, including autism. It's one of the best spots to learn about funding, waiting lists, and how to build a support plan that works.

Links: <https://dspd.utah.gov/>



National Family Resources

Not everything has to be local to be helpful. These national organizations offer toolkits, helplines, guides, and support you can access from anywhere. Whether you're just starting out or trying to figure out your next steps, these are solid go-to spots for real information and real support—no matter where you live.

Autism Society

This national nonprofit has been around for over 50 years, and it's one of the best places to find up-to-date information, advocacy tools, and local chapters that offer real-life support. If you're looking to get involved, find services, or just understand more about autism from a community-led lens, this is a solid place to start.

Link: autismsociety.org

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

Run by and for autistic people, ASAN focuses on disability rights, self-advocacy, and public policy. They offer toolkits, plain-language guides, and resources that center autistic voices. If you're looking for neurodiversity-affirming and community-driven support, this is a great place to start.

Link: autisticadvocacy.org

National Autism Center at May Institute

This organization provides evidence-based resources for families, including the Parents' Guide to Evidence-Based Practice and Autism and the Pathways for Parents webinar series. It's ideal for families seeking trustworthy, research-backed information to navigate treatment options.

Link: nationalautismcenter.org

The Arc

The Arc advocates for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism. They offer support in areas like education, employment, and independent living, with a network of chapters nationwide.

Link: thearc.org



Section 6: Health & Safety Supports

First Responders & Medical

When something goes wrong, we want the people who show up to understand what's happening, not make things worse. This section has tools to help first responders, doctors, and ER staff work with autistic people, not around them. Whether it's a communication card or a safety form, these resources ensure folks are seen, heard, and supported during the chaos.

Big Red Safety Box – NAA

This free safety kit helps families prepare for wandering risks. It includes door alarms, ID cards, and other life-saving tools. It is highly recommended if your child is a wanderer.

Link: nationalautismassociation.org/big-red-safety-box

Orem Police Department Autism Info

Orem PD has resources and training focused on autism safety. If you live in or near Orem, it's worth checking how to register your loved one or prepare for emergencies.

Link: orem.org/police

First Responder Training – UVU Autism Center

This page outlines how UVU is helping first responders better understand and support individuals with autism in emergency situations. Whether police, EMTs, or firefighters, this kind of training can make a huge difference. It's also a great resource to share with your local agencies if they're open to learning.

Link: uvu.edu/autism/first-responders.html

Paramedics and Emergency Room Staff (PDF)

This guide helps paramedics and ER staff better support individuals with autism in high-stress emergencies. It covers sensory sensitivities (sirens and bright lights can be overwhelming!), communication tips, and how autism can manifest differently during trauma. This is essential if you work in medical or crisis response or are curious about the process. It bridges the gap to ensure autistic people receive safer, informed care when it matters most.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection "[First Responders & Medical](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Health Support for Autism (PDF)

This handout is designed for nurses or medical staff working with autistic individuals. It covers basic dos and don'ts in a clear, direct way that helps create safer, more supportive environments in clinics, schools, or hospitals. It's a solid, quick-reference guide for anyone in healthcare seeking to improve care for their neurodivergent patients.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection "[First Responders & Medical](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Law Enforcement and Other First Responders (PDF)

This guide helps first responders better understand autism—what to expect, what to avoid, and how to provide effective support. It's a great resource for police, EMTs, or anyone else who may interact with autistic individuals in stressful situations. The goal here is safety and understanding on both sides.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection "[First Responders & Medical](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Community Days (PDF)

This flyer highlights events for autistic individuals and their families to connect, feel seen, and have fun. Community Days are about showing up, being yourself, and creating space where everyone belongs. It's a good reminder that advocacy can look like joy and connection. **Link:**

bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection "[First Responders & Medical](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Dentably – Dentist

Finding sensory-aware dental care can be tricky. This site helps you locate U.S. dentists experienced in caring for patients with disabilities or special needs, including those with autism. Whether you seek a more understanding environment, extra accommodations, or someone who understands, this is a great place to start your search.

Link: <https://www.emergencydentistsusa.com/special-needs-dentist-near-me/>



Planned Parenthood Utah – Reproductive & Health Services (PDF)

Planned Parenthood isn't just birth control and STI tests. They offer gender-affirming care, sex ed, cancer screenings, mental health support, and more—services that many autistic folks and families might need but don't always hear about. It's local and focused on care without judgment.

Link: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-utah>

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection** *"First Responders & Medical"* of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Wandering & Safety Planning

Wandering isn't about being disobedient — it's often about sensory overload, curiosity, or trying to get somewhere safe. This section is all about proactive tools and plans that help prevent scary situations without shame or blame because keeping someone safe shouldn't come at the cost of their dignity or independence.

Wandering Prevention Checklist – September 26

Simple, clear steps to help prevent wandering. Great for families or teachers who need a checklist to keep kids safe.

Link: september26.org/wandering-prevention

Fire Safety (PDF)

This one's all about fire safety—but with autistic folks in mind. It discusses how things like alarms, lights, and instructions might go differently and gives simple ways to prep ahead of time. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or want to feel more secure, this is a valuable resource to have on hand.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection** ["Wandering & Safety Planning"](#) of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Fire Safety Checklist – September 26

This printable fire safety plan was created with individuals with autism in mind. It's good for home use or if you're working with first responders to build a strategy.

Link: september26.org/fire-safety

National Autism Association – Safety Facts

A great go-to for understanding autism safety concerns, like wandering and emergencies. Super clear and parent-focused.

Link: nationalautismassociation.org/resources/autism-safety-facts



Communication Aids

Not everyone communicates with words, and that's okay. This section highlights tools that provide people with alternative ways to express themselves, ranging from AAC apps to visual boards and scripts. Everyone deserves a voice, no matter how they speak. Communication isn't just about talking—it's about being heard.

Google Live Transcribe & Sound Notifications

Free and available on Android — turns speech and sounds into real-time captions. It's a great accessibility tool for autistic people who are hard of hearing, in loud environments, or just process language better visually.

Link: <https://www.android.com/accessibility/>

Pure Progression Music Therapy

Music can be a powerful way to connect, especially for individuals on the autism spectrum. Pure Progression offers music therapy services that support communication, regulation, and emotional expression — all through the power of rhythm and sound. It's a cool option if traditional therapy settings feel too stiff.

Link: <https://www.pureprogressionmt.com>

Speech & Language Development Chart (PDF)

This chart outlines the typical stages of speech and language development by age. It helps you know what to expect and identify potential delays. Although it's not a diagnostic tool, it can alert you to early signs to discuss with a doctor or speech therapist. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or looking to enhance your understanding of communication, this resource provides a simple guide to identifying red flags and supporting someone's language journey.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection "[Communication Aids](#)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Tobii Dynavox – AAC Devices & Eye-Tracking Tools

Tobii Dynavox is a leader in AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication), providing devices that enable communication through touchscreens, symbols, and eye-tracking technology. For those who can't speak or have limited verbal speech, these tools facilitate connection and expression. Whether starting or seeking advanced setups, this site offers information, funding assistance, and free training resources, focusing on finding the right support for effective communication.



Link: <https://us.tobiidynavox.com/>

CoughDrop – AAC That Moves With You

CoughDrop is a cloud-based AAC app that works across devices, so your voice can follow you wherever you go, whether you're using a tablet, phone, or Chromebook. It's customizable and lets communication supporters (like parents or teachers) jump in to help without taking over. You can track progress, tweak boards, and make the tech work. It's a solid option if you want something flexible, collaborative, and built to grow with the communicator.

Link: <https://www.mycoughdrop.com/>



References

All the resources in this handbook originate from credible sources—peer-reviewed research, trusted organizations, or lived-experience content created by the autism community. Not every source is academic, but each one was chosen for its clarity, accuracy, and value to real people. I believe in citing sources and giving credit where it's due, but printing out 15+ pages of references? That's not exactly eco-friendly (or necessary).

So instead of adding extra paper weight, you can find everything—**every article, PDF, toolkit, video, and resource**—listed in one easy-to-access file.

View the full reference list here:

[*Resource Handbook – Doc Clegg – Version 1.3 References*](#)
bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Just open the digital folder and look for that exact title.)

This way, you still get all the transparency and citations, minus the paper waste.



Resource Handbook

Version 1.3

Thanks for taking the time to flip through this handbook. Whether you're a parent, teacher, provider, or autistic person yourself, I hope you found something in here that made things feel a little clearer, a little easier, or just more doable.

Every resource was carefully chosen to be practical, respectful, and useful in real life. You don't have to know everything or do it all at once—just start where you are and use what helps.

(Find this in the digital folder or access it by going to bit.ly/resourcehandbook or scanning the QR code.)



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