

# Autism Initiative: Training Series

## ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Chapter 2.4: Social Networks and Personal Choice

#### Part 1: Review of Concepts

- Research has shown that providing individuals with autism opportunities to make choices leads to improvements in quality of life.
- Four major areas that influence one's quality of life, and therefore where choice is important are:
  1. Family relationships
  2. Religion/faith
  3. Friendships
  4. Dating and relationships

#### Part 2: Guided Discussion: Acceptance and Participation in One's Religious Community

The purpose of this activity is for staff to engage in discussion about identifying a client's personal choices regarding religion/faith and also identifying obstacles. Engaging in this type of process will assist in meeting a client's personal goals and quality of life.

#### Read questions 1 through 5 aloud and, as a group, discuss:

- *How one might go about obtaining the information.*
  - *How they would take the stated preferences into account.*
  - *What are possible barriers or difficulties that may be encountered?*
1. What is the client's preferred religious community?
  2. Is this the same faith/religion as the client's family? If so, will the client be attending religious services with the family?
    - What are the family's expectations regarding the client's participation in religion?
    - Are the client's and family's expectations similar or not?
    - If not, what are some ways to resolve these?
  3. Who will (or has) contact a religious educator/leader about how to support someone with ASD within the religious community?
    - What are some of the things the religious leader should know about the client without compromising a client's right to privacy and confidentiality?
    - Is there a consent to release information to a religious leader to be able to communicate with them about the client in order for the religious leader to have a better understanding of the client?

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4. Sometimes it is important to identify other social supports within a religious community. These could be members of the community that an individual either reports having a preference for developing a supportive friendship or members who would like to build a supportive relationship. Based on your knowledge of the client and his/her preference, would it be helpful to identify social supports? If so, this is another area to speak to the religious leader about.
5. What are the expectations/demands of the religious activities that the client wishes to participate in?
  - Does the client have the skills needed to participate in these activities? If not, these might become important areas to teach or areas that might need additional support from others. It is important to identify these areas and problem-solve different ways to address them.