6 Dating Basics for Self-Advocates
(Please share this document with people who support you.)

1. Assess your interest in dating relationships.

A. Discuss your thoughts about dating.
   a. Are you interested in dating?
   b. What do you know about dating and/or dating on the autism spectrum?

2. Prepare for dating relationships.

B. Create dating goals.
   a. What do you hope to experience by dating?
      i. Your goals should be Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART).
      ii. Set short-term and long-term goals and identify steps needed.
   b. What people, information and resources will support you to achieve your dating goals?

C. Learn about dating.
   a. What questions do you have about dating and/or dating on the autism spectrum?
   b. What advice have you received about dating from people you respect or trust?
   c. What is the Healthy vs Unhealthy vs Abusive Relationships spectrum?
      i. Health and wellbeing are the most important parts of dating or any relationship.
   d. Are you familiar with various types of relationships?

D. Establish boundaries and expectations for in-person or virtual communication and contact.
   a. What ways will you practice keeping yourself and others safe while dating?
   b. What is consent?
   c. With a trusted adult or professional:
      i. Practice refusing undesired invitations to date, and unwanted conversations, and undesired relationships, and unwanted touch.
      ii. Practice accepting when someone is not interested in your invitations to date, or having conversations with you, or having a relationship, or being touched by you.
   d. Do you want to disclose your autism diagnosis to someone you are dating?

3. Plan dating activities.

E. List enjoyable, safe opportunities for dating.
F. Connect with others you know who want to date and those who are dating.
4. Share your dating experiences.

G. Discuss what went well and what did not go well.
   a. What have you learned since connecting with others by dating or observing dating?
      i. Share what you learned with others who support you.
   b. What can you do for self-care if dating does not go as planned?

5. Reassess your interest in dating relationships.

H. After you date or communicate with a potential date:
   a. What questions do you have?
   b. What would you do the same?
   c. What would you do differently?

6. Update your dating goals and future plans.

I. Evaluate if your dating goals are met or not met.
   a. Did you make progress in your dating goals?
      i. Share ideas about next steps with those who support you.

Notes:

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