



Autism Society
of North Carolina

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.

- a. Who else in your life is dating or has dated?
 - i. Make plans to observe friends and family on their dates.
 - ii. When appropriate, role play aspects of dating for practice.
- b. Decide to go forward with dating opportunities you choose and determine if you are prepared and comfortable. You may want to consider in person or virtual group, double dating, or a chaperone.

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:

If you would like to learn more, contact:
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