

# 3 Signs Your Child's Program Isn't Preparing Them for Adulthood

(And what to do about each one.)

## 1 Every goal traces back to the diagnosis — none of them trace to adulthood.

Read the plan straight through, whether it's an IEP or a treatment plan. Each goal answers the question *what is this child's deficit?* Not one answers *what will this person need to do at 25?* Matching pictures to categories is aimed at a test score. Increasing eye contact during preferred activities is aimed at a diagnostic criterion. Ordering his own coffee is aimed at a life.

### WHAT TO DO → SAY THIS

"Can you show me how this goal connects to what my child will need to do as an adult? If it doesn't, I'd like to talk about what goes in its place."

## 2 Nothing is being taught where your child will actually use it.

Skills learned at a table stay at the table — the classroom table or the clinic table, it makes no difference. If your child is counting plastic coins into a paper cup, he is learning to count plastic coins. The register at the store gives him a total, takes a card, and hands back change and a receipt — none of which the worksheet ever asked him to do. Ask where each goal is practiced, with what materials, and how often.

### WHAT TO DO → SAY THIS

"Where is this practiced outside this room, and with real materials or pretend ones?"

## 3 Nobody has asked the one question that decides whether a goal belongs there at all.

There's a fifty-year-old standard for this, called the Criterion of Ultimate Functioning, and it comes down to one sentence: **if your child can't do this, will someone else have to do it for them?** If nobody would — if the skill disappearing would change nothing about the life your child actually leads — it doesn't belong on the plan, no matter how measurable it is or how good the progress data looks.

### WHAT TO DO → SAY THIS

"If my child never learns this, will someone else have to do it for them? If the answer is no, I'd like to talk about replacing it."

THE FULL METHOD IS IN THE BOOK.

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