



AASPIRE

Healthcare Toolkit

Staying Healthy: Recreation

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Staying Healthy: Recreation

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1 What is this topic about?

Recreation, leisure and play are important for everyone, including adults on the spectrum. Recreation can increase independence, offer a chance to be around peers, or just help people burn off stress. This section describes suggestions for recreational activities.

2 What is recreation and why is it important?

Recreation is something you do that refreshes you. It is something enjoyable that improves your health. It might help you to burn off stress, or just make you happy. Recreation is important for physical and mental health.

Different people find different things recreational. What is recreational may also depend on your mood. Some examples of healthy recreational activities are:

Arts recreation

- drawing, painting, sculpting, taking photographs, making visual art
- singing, composing, playing a musical instrument

- writing stories, poems, non-fiction, plays
- acting in plays, doing comic routines, making movies
- sewing, knitting, building furniture, crafting
- going to live theatre, live music shows, movies

Science recreation

- making machines out of circuit boards, building robots, building radios
- playing with microscopes, chemistry, examining geology, ecosystems, star-gazing
- doing math problems
- programming computers
- going to a science museum, zoo, lecture, aquarium

Sensory recreation

- touching things that are soft/hard/rough/smooth—whatever you like to touch best
- listening to music, sounds that are entertaining or relaxing
- watching spinning things, shiny things, colored lights, things that are entertaining and relaxing to look at
- rocking, swinging, dancing, going on slides, moving in ways that are entertaining

Quiet recreation

- reading a book
- spending quiet time outside in nature just sitting

- watching a movie
- snuggling quietly with a friend
- doing puzzles

Exciting recreation

- white water rafting, hiking, bungee jumping, skiing, water skiing
- going to a party, a club, or a dance
- traveling, visiting new places
- working with animals
- exploring national parks and public lands (see [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) for some more information)
- playing exciting computer games

Recreation and interests

- Find an online or in-person group that shares your special interest and see about getting involved with it. [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) is a resource for in-person groups; [google groups](https://www.google.com/groups) and [yahoo groups](https://www.yahoo.com/groups) both offer big lists of online communities dedicated to specific interests.
- Allow yourself to spend time studying, building, doing whatever it is that you love most

Recreation and Self-Advocacy Self-advocacy groups may have recreational activities. Some places to contact to get hooked up with local self-advocacy groups: your state's [Council](#) on Developmental Disabilities, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network ([ASAN](#)), Self Advocates Becoming Empowered ([SABE](#)).

Anything that refreshes you can be recreation. It's OK if the things you like to do for recreation are unusual or related to your special interests. It's OK if the things that you like to do for recreation are the same things you liked to do as a child.

3 How do I pick recreational activities that are right for me?

Here are some things to think about when picking a recreational activity:

- Do you enjoy doing it?
- Does it make you feel refreshed and centered?
- Does it make you feel good about yourself?
- Is it safe for you?
- Do you have time in your schedule to do it?
- Is it in your budget? Some recreational activities can get very expensive, while others are free. Some more expensive activities might have low cost options. See the section on "I can't afford the kind of recreation I like, what might I do?" for some ideas.
- Is it available where you live? It might be harder to do nature activities in the middle of the city, or to go to a museum or a live symphony if you live in the wilderness. (Although there are books, films, and the Internet...)

4 I can't afford the kind of recreation I like, what should I do?

Some kinds of recreation can cost money. Some can cost a lot of money. Here are some ideas for how to get access to less expensive or free recreation that often costs.

- Theatre companies will often let people come see their dress rehearsals for a reduced rate or for free. Some theatre companies will have special reduced rate nights.
- Some recreational facilities, like museums, zoos, and aquariums have reduced rates for people with disabilities. Some have reduced rate days or times (although they can be crowded on those days).

- City, state, and national parks will often have recreational activities for free, or on a sliding scale.
- Sometimes rates for recreational activities are lower if a group attends. If you know other people who would also enjoy the activity, maybe you could pool your money and get a group rate.
- Some places have "second run" movie theaters where you can see a movie that's been out for a while for a low price.
- Some expensive recreational activities can be done in less expensive ways. For example, if you like to travel but don't have the money to go very far or to exotic locations, try exploring new places in your own city.
- Ask at your local library. Some libraries offer reduced rate tickets for attractions like museums to library card holders.

5 I need assistance with the kind of recreation I like, what should I do?

If you have a friend or family member who you enjoy spending time with, ask them to help you out. If you get developmental disabilities services, ask your case manager or personal agent if you can get any recreation assistance through your services. If you don't have those things, try contacting the chapter of [Autism Society of America](#) in your state. Sometimes they organize recreation or know of resources that can help.

6 Someone else controls my daily schedule, how can I get recreation included?

If you have a good relationship with the person who makes your schedule and you feel comfortable communicating with him or her, discuss your wish to add

recreation. You can then brainstorm realistic ways that you can fit it into your weekly schedule.

If you don't feel comfortable talking with your caregiver about adding recreation to your schedule, you might ask for help from someone you trust. If you receive disability services, you can bring up your desire to have more recreation at your person-centered care conference. You may want to talk to someone you trust first and invite him or her to the meeting so that he or she can help advocate for you.