

Bridging to Adulthood Tips: But First, Who Am I? My Life Roles

“Roles not activities”...

These are words of wisdom from the P4P Planning Network¹ about planning for life after high school.

Often, there is a lot of pressure put on youth with disabilities and/or their families to create a definite, fulsome plan of activities to engage in once finished high school. Sometimes this relates to practical reasons e.g. government program guidelines, finances, childcare needs. However, this may also be influenced by societal pressures, [ableism](#), or other factors outside of the individual or family.

Unfortunately, in some cases, this may contribute to youth with disabilities feeling unnecessary pressure to figure out ‘exactly what they want to do’ after high school. Or, for some youth with disabilities to get slotted into a full schedule of “disability-related activities”, for the sake of having a full schedule of activities. Unfortunately, the underlying values, attributes, preferences, talents and broader life roles of the person may take a back seat.

Also, adult life is a journey. Ask most adults and they will agree, who they were and what they did 20 years ago may be quite different from who they are or what they do now. The same holds true for youth with disabilities. There is no “right or wrong” activities to engage in after high school. A person might start with one or two types of activities. As the person grows and their situation evolves, they might stick with, expand on, or change the activities they are involved in in their adult life.

Steps to Planning Your Activities Around Your Life Roles

When starting to plan activities for after high school, we encourage you to:

1. Start by thinking about the **life roles** the person has **now and/or** wants to hold in the **future**
2. Think about the types of **activities the person does now** that are in line with **current life roles**
3. Think about the types of **activities you could add in** to further grow these **current life roles**
4. Think about any **new life roles** the person wants to have in the **future**, and **new activities** that could support these new roles

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5. Think about any activities that are not in line with your life roles, interests or values that you might want to **remove**
6. Have self-compassion for the fact that some daily activities will be influenced by external factors (e.g. government program mandates, finances, childcare needs). This is ok too. Also, sometimes adults must engage in daily activities that are important to complete and are necessary for overall wellbeing yet not necessarily fun e.g. brushing teeth, doing dishes, commuting.
7. Stay flexible – your life roles and activities will likely evolve in the future. If you feel unsure of what you want to do, we encourage you to jump in and ‘start somewhere’ to learn about yourself and what you might like or not like. You can use these first experiences for personal growth over time.

Where Can I Find Practical Information About Specific Activities?

We already have information consolidated as starting points for learning about different categories of activities e.g. continuing education, day programs, social activities, work/volunteering, civic engagement activities.

- Refer to the **My Activities** section of your **Personalized Transition Plan**
- Refer to **Tip Sheets** in applicable drop down categories (e.g. **My Activities, Civic Engagement, Social & Relationships**)

Examples Youth’s Life Roles and Activities

A. Aura – Household Member, Helper, Dancer and Friend

Aura is an 18 year old who loves spending time with her grandfather. Her current roles are household member, granddaughter, and dancer and friend. Aura and her grandfather do many activities after school together including playing cards, watching movies, and getting treats at the local Gelato shop. Aura also loves to help out around her grandfather’s home and she enjoys working as a team they plan meals, cook, do dishes and then garden together. Grandfather is also Aura’s biggest fan at her yearly dance recital. On weekends, Aura takes dance classes with her friends and twice a year they hold a large recital for the community. Aura plans to stay in high school and take life skills courses until age 21, when she will graduate with a Certificate of Completion. Aura and her grandfather are exploring different activities that Aura could participate in during the day. Aura will have access to some government funding, which will be enough to pay for approximately 2 days of programming per week. Aura is looking into the Centre for Creative Alternatives day program, since it incorporates dance into its arts programming. On the other 3 days per week, Aura will continue to help her grandfather around the house. Aura wants to continue her active role as a household member, and both she and her grandfather enjoy spending quality time helping each other. In line with her value and role of helping

others, grandfather and Aura are also exploring some joint volunteering that they might be able to do at the retirement home down the street. With Aura's permission, grandfather has booked a meeting for both of them with the retirement home's director. They want to offer 1 hour of weekly programming for the residents where grandfather would play the piano and Aura and her friends from dance class would hold a mini recital. This would contribute to the residents' quality of life and also forge new social relationships for Aura. Aura hopes that, one day that her new acquaintances from the retirement residence might want to also come to her large yearly dance recitals in the community. As you can see, Aura engaging in several activities that are in line with her current life roles as a household member, helper dancer and friend. In planning for life after high school, Aura and her grandfather are working to create opportunities to enhance her participation her current roles. They are also creating opportunities to use Aura's talents to expand her social ties, participation in the community and develop a new role in volunteering jointly with her grandfather.

Aura's Life Roles	Activities I do Now (While I'm Still in High School)	Activities I Want to Add In (For After High School)
Household Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing cards, watching TV, getting Gelato with grandfather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with these activities
Helper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping grandfather with planning meals, cooking, dishes and gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue helping grandfather with planning meals, cooking, dishes and gardening
Dancer and Friend <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current dance class on the weekends with friends Yearly dance recital for the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with currently dance classes on weekends with friends Continue with yearly dance recital for the community Participate in the Centre for Creative Alternatives day program 2 days/week to meet new friends and participate in the program's dance activities
Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint volunteer role with grandfather and friends at local Retirement Home, hosting mini-dance recitals for the residents Invite local Retirement Home residents to the yearly community dance recital

B. Ibrahim – Student, Mentor and Cousin

For example, Ibrahim is a 17-year-old who loves working with kids. His current roles include being a student, mentor and cousin. He is also a household member and lives with his parents. Ibrahim dreams of working in a childcare centre in the future. Being someone with lived experience, he applies his knowledge of having cerebral palsy when he meets with other youth through his involvement with Holland Bloorview’s Youth Mentorship Program. He also enjoys hanging out with his younger cousin, Hafiz, on the weekends and teaching him the ins and outs of Fortnite. Ibrahim plans to graduate next year. When thinking about activities for after high school, Ibrahim draws on his current life roles and what he envisions for the future. For example, he plans to apply to an Early Childcare Educator program at several colleges in Ontario. He not only wants to continue with Holland Bloorview’s Youth Mentorship Program, but is also keen to explore starting his own youth mentorship at his local community centre. Of course, he will continue to play Fortnite with his cousin Hafiz and, given his future aspirations of working in child care, he has volunteered to babysit Hafiz and take him to the park more often this summer to gain more informal experience.

As you can see, Ibrahim is already participating in a range of activities (e.g. going to high school, going to Youth Mentorship meetings, playing Fortnite) that align with his current life roles of a student, mentor and cousin. As well, as he transitions towards adulthood, Ibrahim is planning to add additional activities (e.g. starting his own mentorship program, babysitting, going to college) to further grow within these roles and hopefully to add an additional role a childcare worker in the future.

Ibrahim’s Life Roles	Activities I do Now (While I’m Still in High School)	Activities I Want to Add In (For After High School)
Household Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidy my room Help my parents with lawn maintenance on weekends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do more household activities when I’m in college to take more responsibility – cooking, cleaning, laundry Eventually have my own apartment
Student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking High school classes Taking school bus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College classes in Early Childhood Education Taking public transit to college
Mentor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Holland Bloorview’s Youth Mentorship Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start my own youth mentorship program at my local community centre
Cousin <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play fortnight with my cousin Hafiz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baby sit Hafiz in the summer Take Hafiz to the park
Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work at a childcare centre after graduating from college

C. Darron - Creator, Spiritual Voice and Drummer

Darron is a 17 year old who loves music. His current roles include being a creator, spiritual voice and drummer. He dreams of leading ceremony and drumming at Pow Wows in the future. Being someone with lived experience, he applies his knowledge of living with an intellectual disability when he is drumming with youth groups at the local Friendship Centre. He is passionate about leading drumming and dancing in the way that he learned and always wants to lead songs at gatherings. He also enjoys working with others to get more people involved in the community and ceremony. Darron plans to stay in high school until he is 21, where he will graduate with a Certificate of Accomplishment. When he thinks of activities for after secondary school, Darron thinks about drumming and supporting his community. For example, he thinks about traveling to different communities to perform and participate in ceremony with them. Darron also wants to continue to engage at his Friendship Centre and is looking to get more involved with their day time programming. He has asked about leading drumming workshops in the future and the staff have been receptive to having him support them. Darron has also spoken with elders from the centre and they have agreed to have him join them to learn more about different ceremonies. As you can see, Darron is engaging in activities in his community that are in line with his roles as a creator, spiritual voice and drummer. He is also taking on more opportunities within these roles to support him toward his adulthood goals of leading ceremony and drumming at Pow Wows.

Template: Exploring My Life Roles and Planning My Activities

My Life Roles	Activities I do Now (While I'm Still in High School)	Activities I Want to Add In (For After High School)
<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Future		
<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Future		
<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Future		
<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Future		
<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Future		
<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Future		
<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Future		
My notes: 		

Reference: P4P Planning Network. (n.d.). Using Passport Funding to Your Long Term Advantage¹.

This handout is brought to you by Holland Bloorview's Transitions Team
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