

# SUPPORTING NEW HABITS

COMPETENCIES: PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICES;  
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

## INTRODUCTION

Habits are the things we do routinely day after day. When we get up, how we dress, and whether we exercise are all examples of daily habits. In a sense, we are the product of our habits, and sometimes it's necessary to change habits if they do not serve our health or well-being. For people with autism, the predictability that is found in habits and routine, is both calming and critical. Cultivating new habits, while challenging, often lead to personal growth and improved quality of life. The flow process chart below will assist you in supporting a person with autism in developing and maintaining new habits.



### SET A GOAL

- Involve the individual in the goal-setting process
- Ensure the goal is achievable
- Focus on one new habit at a time



### SELECT A MICRO-BEHAVIOR RELATED TO THE GOAL

- Getting out of bed 5 minutes earlier each day
- Walking for 5 minutes every morning
- Eating one vegetable each day



### LINK THE BEHAVIOR TO AN ESTABLISHED ROUTINE

- Link the new behavior to an existing habit (e.g., after lunch go for a walk)
- Provide visual support to show how the new habit fits into the existing routine (e.g., picture activity schedule, check-list, calendar)



### REINFORCE THE HABIT

- Always provide encouragement and praise
- Reinforce the effort made, not the accuracy of the behavior
- Encourage sharing of success with others



### BUILD ON SUCCESS

Adjust the micro-behavior in small steps until the desired goal is met and the habit is established

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW!

- 1** Review the individual's current goals to identify whether there are areas that new habits should be encouraged.
- 2** Ask her which goal she would like to focus on and describe the new habit(s) that are necessary to work toward the goal. Choose one new habit together and begin the process of fostering the new behavior using the strategies provided here.