

## Card #1(A): Bora seeks vocational education and training



**Bora** 17 years old with autism has completed 9th standard and enrolls at the vocational education training (VET) center. As suggested by the social worker, **Bora's** father brought him to the vocational education training centre and he was accepted. **Bora** is keen on learning a skill to support himself and become independent. With the help of his family and teachers at the vocational training centre, he is hopeful of overcoming his challenges and succeed in life.

# Additional Information

Children with autism have Behaviour problems and other challenges depending on the stage of development, such as early childhood (below 7 years), middle (7-14 years) and late childhood (15 years and above).

## Some common age-specific common problems are:

- In early childhood sleep disorder, sensory processing disorders and gastrointestinal problems
- In school going age, anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Epilepsy can occur in any phase of childhood but is more common in adolescent
- Intellectual disability (ID) is the most common problem associated with autism as 6 to 7 out of 10 children have ID.

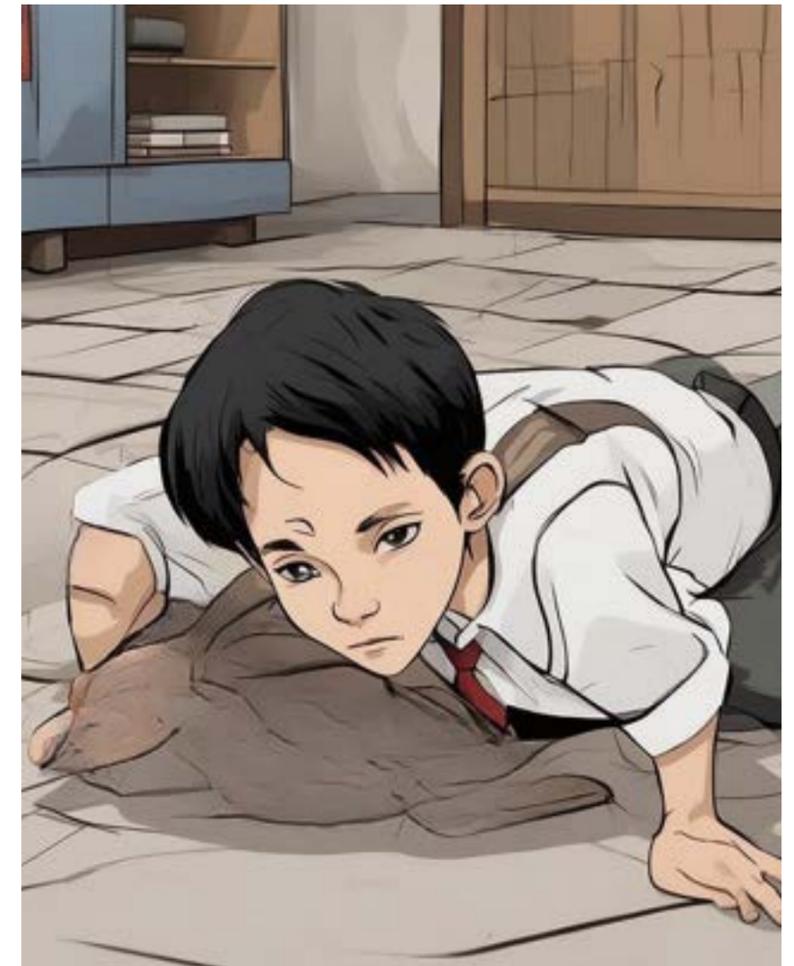
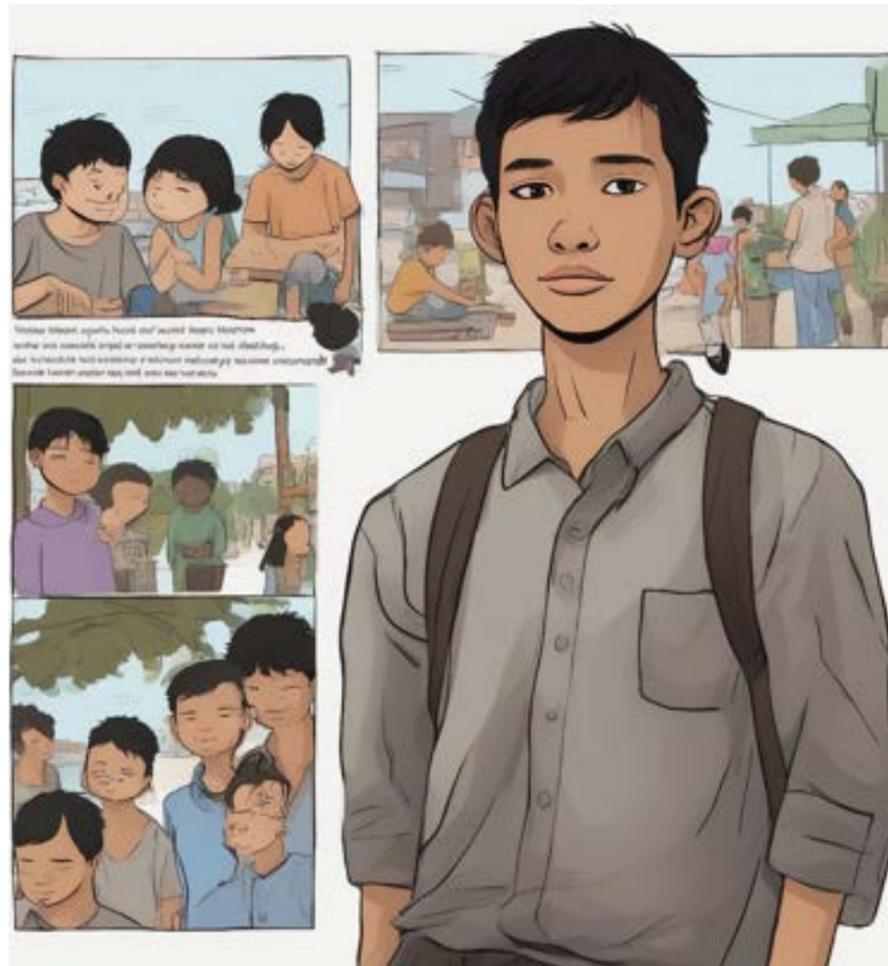
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# Card #1 (B): Bora seeks vocational education and training



**Bora's** story is a reminder that children with autism and comorbidities can learn a skill, earn money and be independent like anybody else. With the right support, they can achieve what they want, when they set their mind on to it.

Comorbidities can affect a child's development, behaviour and interfere with their learning capability. Parents can help their child with autism and comorbidities by seeking early and appropriate help from their doctor as well as the teachers so that the child can complete school and be ready for vocational training, like in the case of **Bora**.

# Additional Information

Here are some specific examples of comorbidities that children with autism may experience:

- Anxiety: Bora experienced anxiety when he started school as it was a new environment. But his mother accompanied him to school and discuss with the teacher about children with autism experiencing anxiety and there is a change. With support from his mother and teacher, Bora was able to continue school.
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): Bora had mild symptoms of ADHD, as he had difficulty paying attention and could not sit still. With home-based intervention, the boy showed improvement.
- Epilepsy: Bora developed epilepsy at the age of 15 years and the family took immediate help at the hospital. After appropriate investigation (EEG) and medication. Bora is fit free for the past 2 years.
- Intellectual disability (ID): Children with autism may have an intellectual disability which can affect their cognitive abilities. Bora has mild cognitive challenges and therefore might have difficulty receiving in university education.

*Despite having comorbidities such as anxiety, a mild version of ADHD and ID, Bora could complete 9th standard.*

*His family has made the right decision by seeking vocational education and training for Bora.*

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# Card #2(A): Learning Style and individualized vocational training

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Bora successfully negotiated the demands at school using a picture exchange communication system (PECS). PECS will also help him learn new skills at the vocational education training centre.

# Additional Information

Here are some useful information about the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) :

The Picture Exchange Communication System is a tool for people with little or no communication abilities such as autism to communicate using pictures. People using PECS can approach another person and give them a picture of a desired item in exchange for that item.

By doing so, the person is able to initiate communication. A child or adult with autism can use PECS to communicate a request, a thought, or anything that can reasonably be displayed or symbolized on a picture card. PECS works well in the home or the classroom.

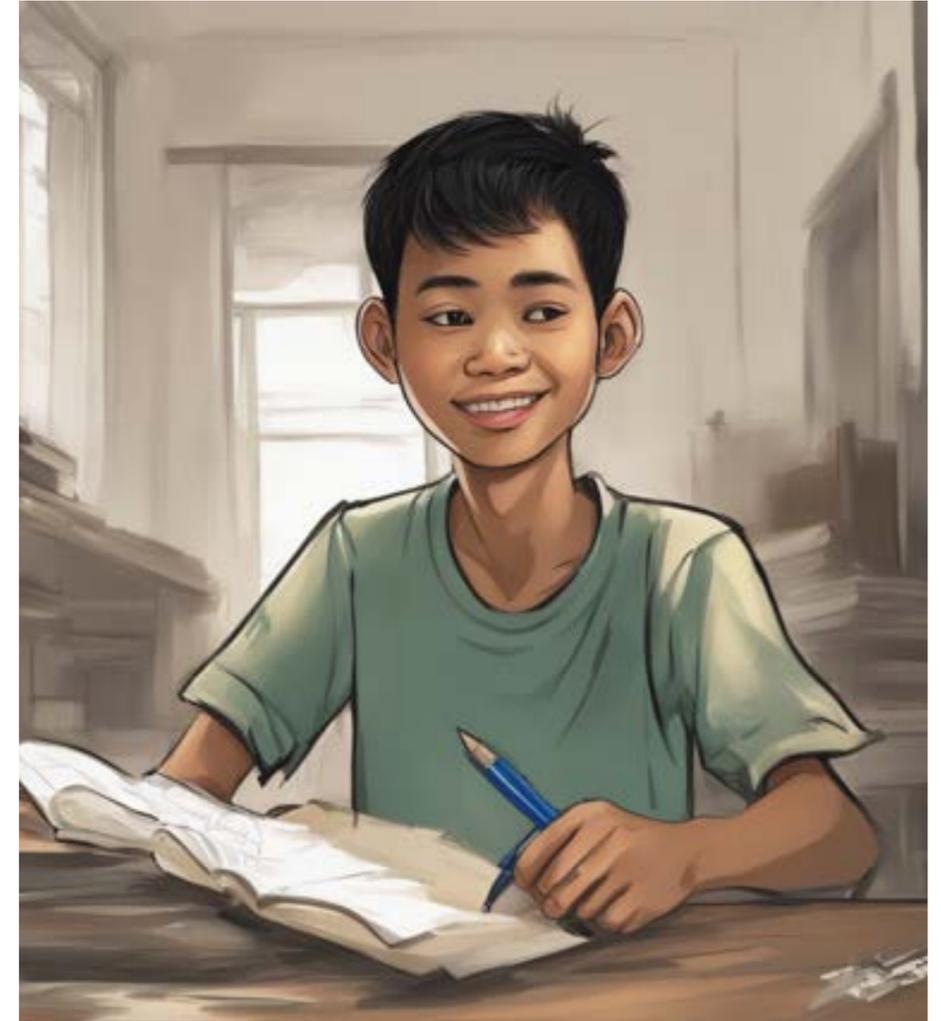
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## Card #2(B): Learning Style and individualized vocational training



**Bora's** parents actively worked with PECS, reviewing and spending time together. They praised Bora whenever he followed and accomplished the tasks and felt proud when he completed the tasks as per the plan. As his parents praised him at the right time immediately after completing the task, he is always eager to do more.

# Additional Information

The following information may help in creating a visual schedule or PECS:

- Use clear and simple language.
- Use pictures or symbols that your child can understand.
- Make the schedule as simple as possible.
- Review the schedule with your child regularly.
- Be patient and consistent.
- Praise the child for following the visual schedule.

*Bora is used to using visual schedules for accomplishing his task as well as communicating with others using PECS. Thanks, to the consistent efforts of his parents, Bora is now ready to attend the vocational education centre. This enables the staff at the VETC to assess and plan the task that is suitable for Bora. This way Bora can learn a new skill and become independent in his life. With a little effort and good planning, parents and trainers of children with autism can create an appropriate visual schedule or PECS that will help their child not only to learn a new skill but also succeed in life.*

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## Card #3(A): Vocational education and training



**Bora is ready to learn vocational education and be trained to make an independent living.**

Bora's parents enrolled him in a pre-vocational education program with the help of an NGO. The program was designed to help children with autism so that they can learn the necessary skills for them to get a job and live independently.

## Additional Information

Pre-vocational education and training is a great way to help children with autism prepare for a job and lead an independent life. Many parents are not hopeful due to the lack of opportunities and the stigma around autism. The parents need to know that young people with autism are capable of learning when the vocational training is modified and suited to their learning style. As a parent, you can help your child to find a job by contacting the local social worker to enable the child to get the necessary skill at the vocational education centre either run by an NGO or the government.

**Here are some additional tips for helping children with autism prepare for a job:**

- **Finding an agency close to the community where the child lives:** The parents can help their child by contacting a local organization either government or non-governmental to develop the skills necessary for the workplace, collaborating with others and following instructions (like the parents of Bora did).
- **Choosing an appropriate vocational skill:** Each child with autism has job preferences based on their level of autism, comorbidities and individualized learning style. It is important that they are given different choices for the period for them to feel comfortable and choose a particular vocation, like in the case of Bora who preferred to learn office skills rather than domestic chores.
- **Adapt training materials to individuals with autism:** People with autism have varied cognitive skills, attention spans and physical abilities. Therefore, the trainers need to modify and adapt the training materials to the individual needs of young persons with autism.

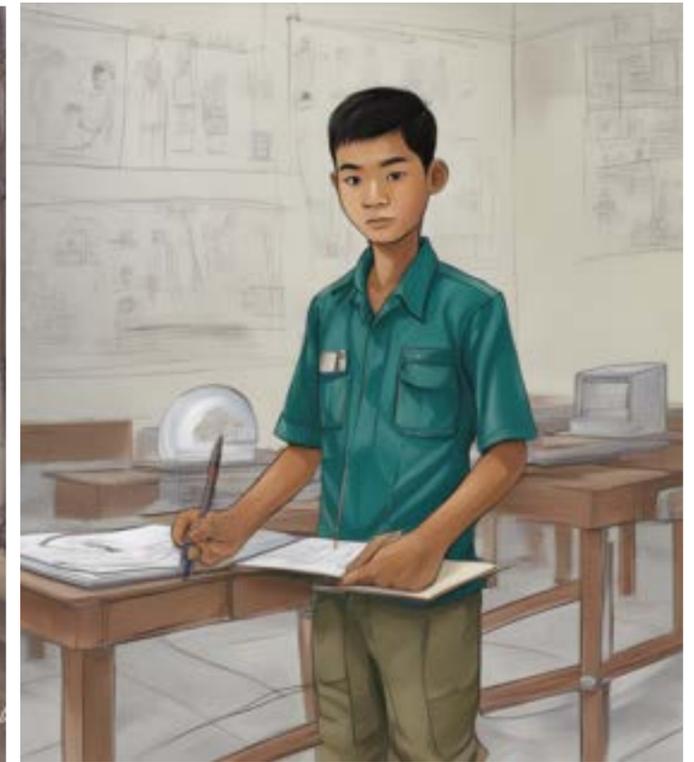
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## Card #3(B): Vocational education and training



**Bora** learned a variety of skills such as phone repair, data entry, photocopying and other office maintenance skills. He received social skills and life skills training. He was given the opportunity to learn how to cook, clean, do laundry etc. But he preferred learning office-related skills rather than domestic chores. He also learnt how to interact with other people at the workplace.

**Bora's** parents, teachers and co-workers were always supportive and helped him to learn the necessary skills.

**Bora's** story is an example of how appropriate pre-vocational training that is of interest to each individual with autism can prepare them for a successful career.

## Additional Information

- **Help the child to develop their social skills:** Social skills are important for success in the workplace. You can help the child to develop their social skills by encouraging them to participate in activities at home (greeting the guests and welcoming them “Chomreap Sour”) in public places (for example saying ‘Thank you’ at the supermarket while buying things or while engaging in sports (swimming)).
- **Importance of developing social and communication skills at the workplace:** Communication skills are also important for success in the workplace. The coach at the workplace should make specific opportunities for the young person with autism to develop their social and communication skills by encouraging them to participate in conversations and all activities at the vocational training centre.

*Good cooperation and collaboration between the families and the vocational training staff to plan and periodically evaluate the progress and modify the training program to suit the individual interest and aspirations of the young person with autism will lead to a successful outcome.*

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## Card #4(A): Behaviour problem at work-station (sexualized behaviour)



Bora explores sexuality in public places, inappropriately.

Bora is able to manage at the workplace with the support of his trainers. Bora's parents came to know that Bora has behaved inappropriately at the training centre by touching and playing with his genitalia. This worried his parents. They met the psychologist who knew Bora earlier.

# Additional Information

## Understanding Behaviour problems among young persons with autism and helping them:

- **Be patient and understanding:** It is important to be patient and understanding of the young person with autism, particularly when they have Behaviour problem that is inconsistent with public expectation.
- **Identify the context and triggers:** What is causing the Behaviour problem? Once you know the trigger, you can modify it or develop a plan to cope with it. In the case of Bora, the problem Behaviour is related to his developmental stage. The hormonal changes in him triggered the inappropriate Behaviour.
- **Set clear expectations:** It is important to let the young person know what is expected of them in different situations. This will help them to understand what is acceptable Behaviour and what is not and change the Behaviour. Bora's parents, as advised by the therapist made it clear to Bora that **'It is ok to explore the genitalia in private but not in public'**.
- **Use of pictures to communicate:** Children with autism often learn best visually, so using visual aids can be a great way to help them understand instructions and tasks. Bora's parents used the picture of his bathroom to indicate that exploring private parts is allowed in a private setting and not in public.

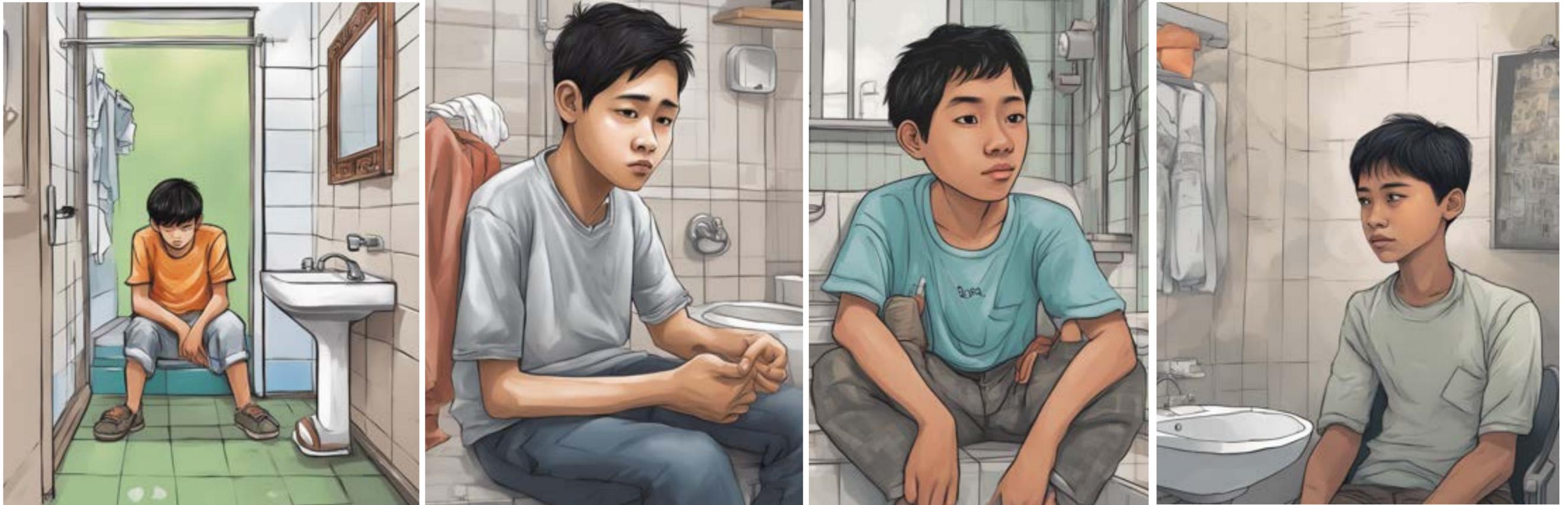
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## Card #4(B): Behaviour problem at work-station (sexualized behaviour)



The psychologist explained that this is a normal development and all children explore their private parts. He explained how to teach him to differentiate between public (workplace, supermarket etc.) and private places (for example bedrooms, bathrooms etc. at home) and to make him understand it is ok to explore genitalia privately and not in public. Bora was able to restrict touching his private parts in his bathroom and his supervisor was happy about the progress. With the right support, an adolescent with autism can overcome their challenges and achieve their goals.

# Additional Information

- Provide positive reinforcement: When an autistic person behaves positively, be sure to praise them. This will help them to learn that good Behaviour is rewarded. Bora quickly understood when his parents praised him for stopping inappropriate Behaviour.
- Be consistent. It is important to be consistent with your expectations both at home (private place and public place (such as a training centre)). This will help the young person to learn what is expected of them and behave appropriately, as in the case of Bora.

*It is important to seek professional help for assisting the young person to overcome challenges,  
that are specific to the developmental stage of each individual.*

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## Card #5 (A): With adequate ADL, Bora feels included and ready for VET



**One of the biggest challenges that Bora faced was learning ADL skills.**

Bora's parents worked with his therapist to develop a plan to teach him ADL skills. The plan started with simple skills, such as brushing his teeth and washing his hands. Bora's parents broke these skills down into smaller steps, and they used visual aids to help him understand what they were asking him to do.

# Additional Information

ADL skills are necessary for persons with autism to be successfully included in society, particularly to join vocational training centre and learn a task to be independent in life. Some common ADL skills are Bathing, Dressing, Eating, Grooming, and Toileting.

It is important to tailor the teaching methods to the individual child's needs and abilities. Most persons with ASD have adequate motor skills (walking, running, writing, etc.). But they have difficulty understanding the sequence (which comes first, the next and the last) and when the activity ends. For example, putting the shirt comes first before buttoning. To make them understand they need visual support more than the others. It is also important to be consistent with visual support and if no progress, good to change the visuals.

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## Card #5 (B): With adequate ADL, Bora feels included and ready for VET



Gradually, over the years, Bora was able to bathe himself, get dressed, and eat independently step by step. He was still struggling with some of the more complex skills, such as buttoning and tying his shoelaces, but he made progress. Bora's parents were proud of him and his peers and teachers liked him for his cleanliness.

# Additional Information

Here are some of the key messages for teaching ADL skills to persons with autism:

- **Involve the young person with ASD in the planning process:** Let him/her choose what skills they want to learn by giving a choice.  
For example, do they want to learn dressing or grooming?
- **Use real-world examples and visuals:** When possible, illustrate the young person with ASD step leading to the skills that they are supposed to learn in their everyday lives.
- **Provide practice opportunities:** The more the young person practices, the better he/she will be confident to carry out the skills.
- **Review the plan and the visuals** if there is no progress in learning the skills
- **Be positive and encouraging.** Praise the child for their accomplishments, no matter how small.

*With time and patience, older children and adolescents with autism can learn ADL skills and be ready to go to the vocational training centre to learn their vocation so that they can live independently.*

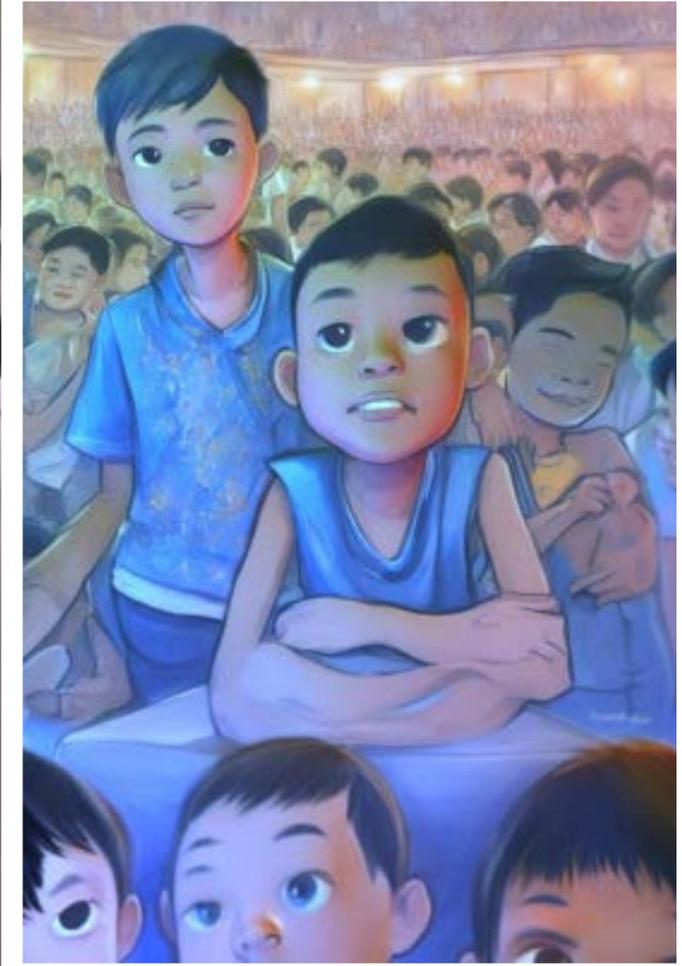
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## Card #6 (A): Bora goes to a concert (Promotion of social communication skills)



**Bora** learned social skills through visuals such as greeting a person (Chomreap sour). He also learned how to express his emotions and understand social cues.

# Additional Information

Social communication is the ability to communicate with others. It includes things like:

- Making eye contact
- Using facial expressions
- Reading body language
- Taking turns in conversation
- Expressing emotions
- Understanding social cues

Most people with autism have difficulty in social communication. This makes it hard for them to make new friends, participate in social activities, and succeed in school or work.

There are some ways to promote social communication:

- Social skills training: This teaches people with autism the skills they need to communicate effectively with others.
- Speech therapy: A speech therapist helps people with autism to sit face to face while communicating to improve their speech and language skills.
- Play therapy: This helps, particularly children with autism to take turns and learn how to interact with others.

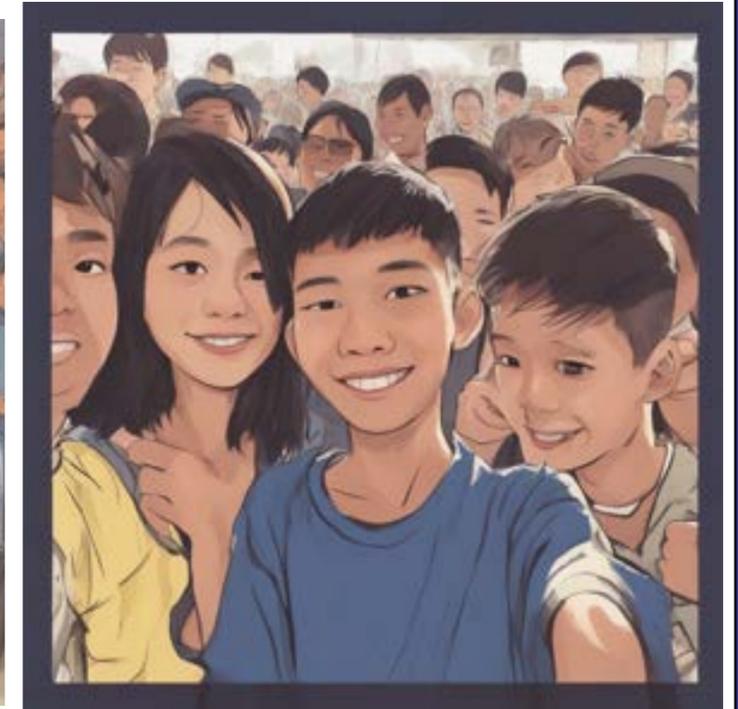
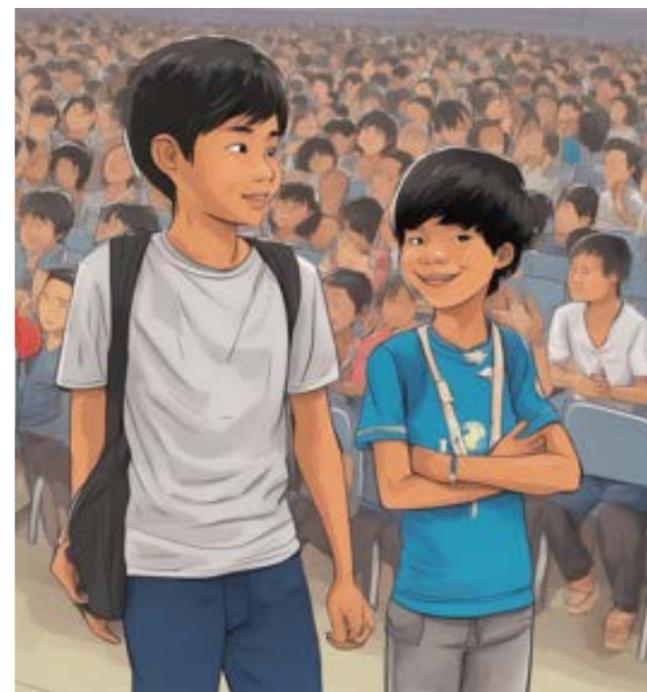
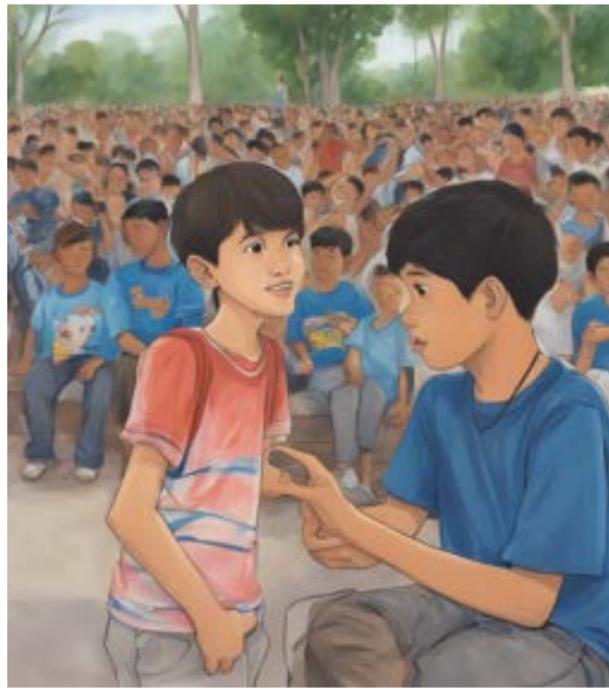
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## Card #6 (B): Bora goes to a concert (Promotion of social communication skills)



Around Khmer New Year, **Bora**'s class went on a field trip to see a concert. Bora was excited, but he was nervous. He took a deep breath and relaxed.

**Bora** had a great time but he had difficulty making new friends. He needs to improve his social skills to make new friends. **Bora**'s story is a reminder that persons with autism need time and effort, to learn social and communication skills.

# Additional Information

Here are some additional tips for promoting social communication in children with autism:

- Start early. The earlier you start working on social communication skills, the better.
- Make it fun. Learning should be enjoyable for children. Find ways to make social communication activities fun and engaging.
- Be patient. Learning new skills takes time. Be patient with your child and don't get discouraged if they don't learn everything right away.
- Praise your child's accomplishments. When your child does something well, be sure to praise them. This will help them to stay motivated and to learn from their mistakes.

*With time and patience, persons with autism can learn the skills they need to communicate effectively with others.*

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## Card #7(A): Importance of parents' participation and consent for VET and employment



As **Bora** got older, his parents started to think about his future. **Bora's** parents met with the social worker who informed them about the various employment opportunities.

# Additional Information

## Parents' Role in vocational education training and job placement:

Parents of children with autism have a vital role to play in their child's future. They have the opportunity to discuss with the therapist and social worker who is the case manager about the various employment options available for Bora. The case manager will choose the vocation that suits the level of competence and temperament. At this stage, the parents give consent for their child's job placement based on the skill he gained at VET centre. The parents should also take into account their child's interests and aspirations while choosing job placement.

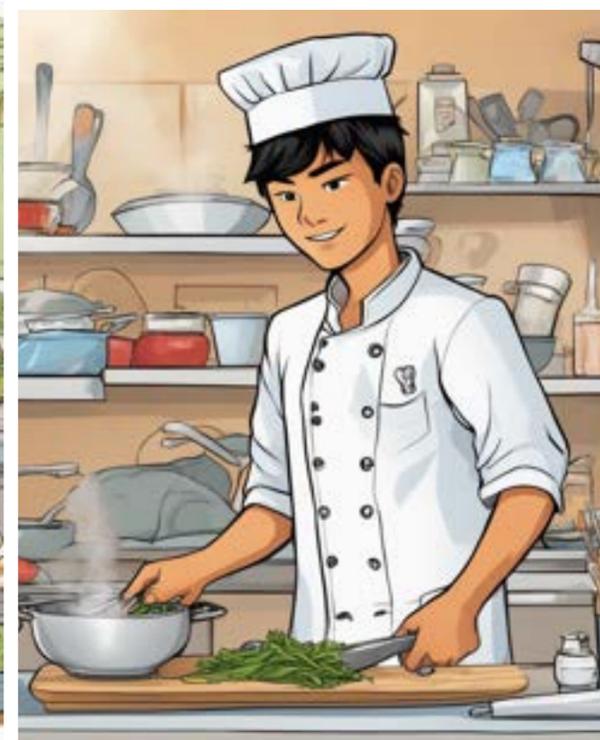
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## Card #7(B): Importance of parents' participation and consent for VET and employment



After their parent's consent, **Bora** enrolled and now he can cook, clean, and do laundry. He also learned how to manage his money and use public transportation. **Bora's** story highlighted the importance of parental involvement.

# Additional Information

Here are some ways that parents can support their child's job placement:

- Get involved in your child's vocational education training.
- Find a vocational education training provider that has experience working with people with autism. This will help ensure that your child gets the support they need to learn a skill.
- Talk to your young person's case manager (social worker) at MoSAVY about their needs and various options before choosing a job.
- Work with your young person's job coach and case manager to develop a health care and employment plan that meets their needs. This will help ensure that your child stays healthy and can participate in the job they enjoy.
- Show them that you believe in their ability and they can succeed in their job and achieve the goal that they set their mind to.

*By working together, parents and professionals can help young persons*

*with autism reach their full potential*

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## Card #8(A): Collaboration between education, health sector and social work



Health Provider



Therapist



Social Worker



Teacher

**Bora's** parents actively worked with his therapist, teachers and social workers to create an individualized plan for his education and health care. **Bora** overcome his sensory problem and his school offered opportunity to participate in group activity, Bora overcame hyperactivity which interfered in his learning. He attended the TEACCH program (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communications Handicapped Children) which helped him to pay attention in the classroom.

# Additional Information

## Collaboration between various service providers for a successful outcome

Young people with autism have various needs and therefore their parents, healthcare service providers, vocational education training providers and case managers (social workers) must come together to make individualized plans.

- The healthcare service provider makes detailed assessments and supports the children with autism to overcome their health challenges. They provide adequate information to parents to function as co-therapist and help their children at home.
- Vocational education training providers look at the competency, strengths and challenges of the young person with autism and discuss with their parents and case manager to choose an appropriate job.
- Parents as co-therapist learn appropriate intervention strategies from the therapist at centres such as Caritas-CCAMH and practice at home. With their love and support and the active participation of case managers, they can help young people with autism access the resources and training they need.

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## Card #8(B): Collaboration between education, health sector and social work



With the help of his parents, teachers and therapists, **Bora** made significant progress, made friends and joined the sports club at the school. **Bora's** story highlights the importance of collaboration between the parents, teachers, therapists and social workers who worked together to create an individualized plan.

# Additional Information

If you are a parent of a child with autism, important to understand the need for active collaboration between the health, education and social work sectors.

## Here are a few tips:

- Be open in your communication, expressing your child's challenges and needs both to your therapists and teachers.
- Work actively with your child's therapists and case manager to develop a comprehensive health care plan which included appropriate referrals when children develop new problems such as hyperactivity, seizure, sleep problem etc.

*While choosing a vocational education training provider, important to discuss in detail with the case manager (social worker) the types of support they need to succeed as well as practical issues such as distance from home to the training centre.*

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## Card #9(A): Job coach as a mediator between the employer, the person with ASD and parents



**Bora's** parents came to know about the technical and vocational education training (TVET) programs provided by the Ministry of Labor Vocational and Education Training, as well as NGOs in Cambodia. The job coach mediates between the employer, parents and young people with autism find jobs that are a good fit for their skills and interests.

# Additional Information

## Collaboration for Success in the Workplace

People with autism can succeed in the workplace provided there is active collaboration and effective planning between employers, job coaches, parents, and young people themselves.

- Employers should be ready to accommodate young people with autism in the workplace. It is important to provide work that matched their skills and competence, as well as appropriate visual instructions.
- Job coaches should periodically review the performance and provide the necessary support. When needed he/she shall review the visual schedule and simplify the steps if the person with autism has challenges in following instructions. The job coach mediates between the employer and the families so that the person with autism can succeed in the workplace and retain their job.

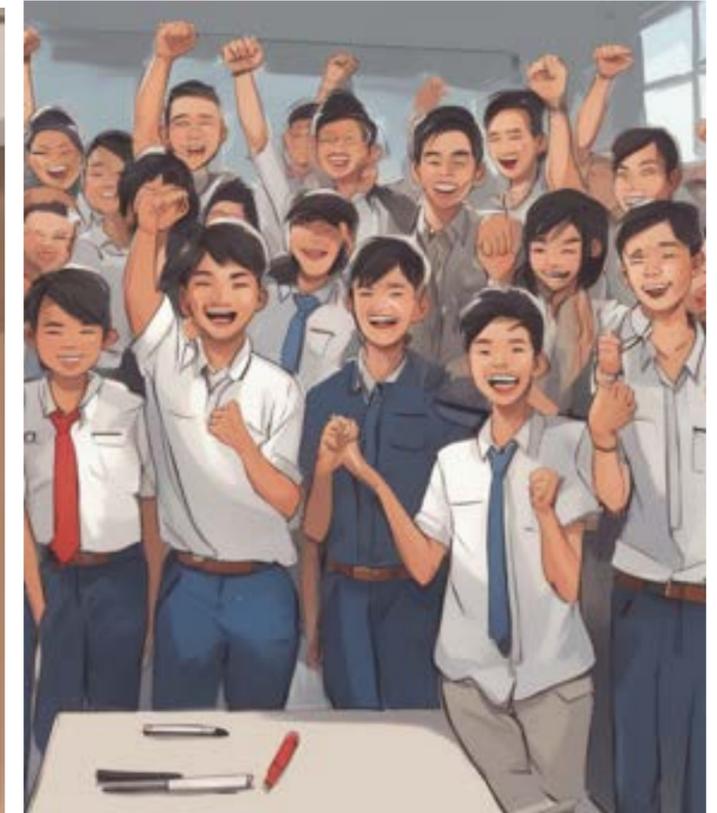
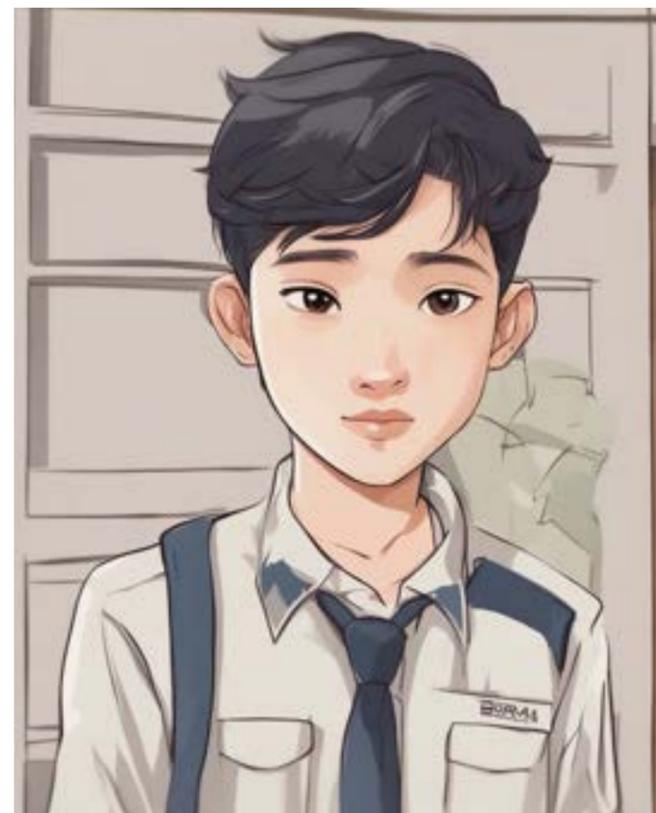
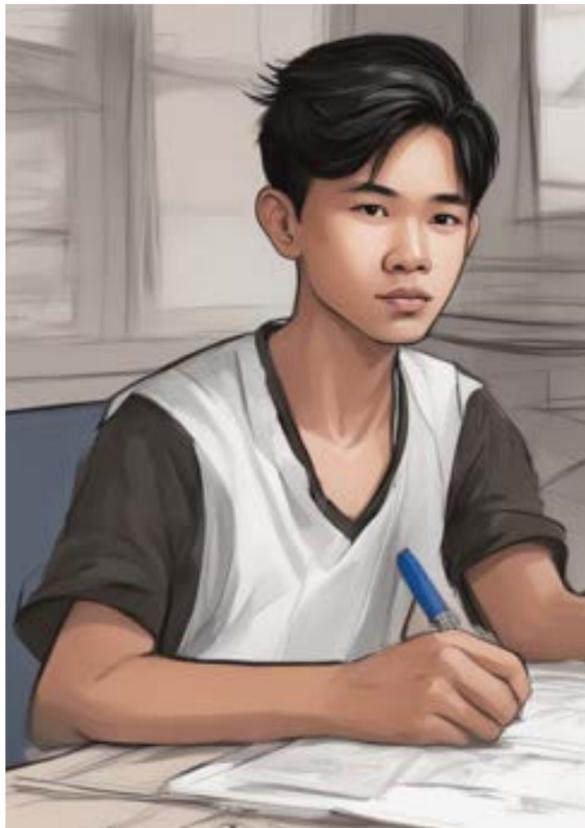
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## Card #9(B): Job coach as a mediator between the employer, the person with ASD and parents



The job provided by an NGO gave economic self-sufficiency to **Bora**. The parents, job coach and employer met regularly to discuss his progress and make sure that he continued his job. **Bora's** story is an inspiration that highlights the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration.

# Additional Information

- Parents should understand their child's limitations and not be over-demanding or expecting. By constantly being in touch with the job coach, they can provide emotional and other support for their young adult to be satisfied and continue his/her job.
- People with autism are straightforward, punctual and work hard. However, they might have challenges in learning a new skill. With adequate support and understanding from their employer and job coach, they will be successful in the workplace.

*By working together, with employers, job coaches and parents, people with autism can perform well  
at the workplace like anybody else.*

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## Card #10(A): Marital issues, cohabiting and independent living



**Bora** met a girl named **Arya** at the workplace. His parents wondered whether **Arya** could live with their son and provide the necessary support. **Bora's** parents met his counsellor who explained the importance of **Arya** and his parents understanding **Bora's** condition. Both **Bora's** and **Arya's** parents were willing to work together to support them lived as married couples.

# Additional Information

Marital issues, partnership cohabiting and independent living People with autism can have partnerships leading to successful marriages, and live independently with the right support.

- **Marriage and Partnership:** People with autism like Bora when they are successfully employed are likely to seek partnership and look forward to having a family like anybody else. However, they may need support from their families and marriage counsellor to bring partners together who love and accept them as they are. They can learn to communicate their needs and wants to their partner with appropriate support from families and therapists.
- **Cohabiting and Independent Living:** People with autism can live independently with the right support. However, they need the support of institutions such as MoSAVY and case managers to find accommodation either for group or independent living. They could learn to manage their income and budget with the help of their case manager.

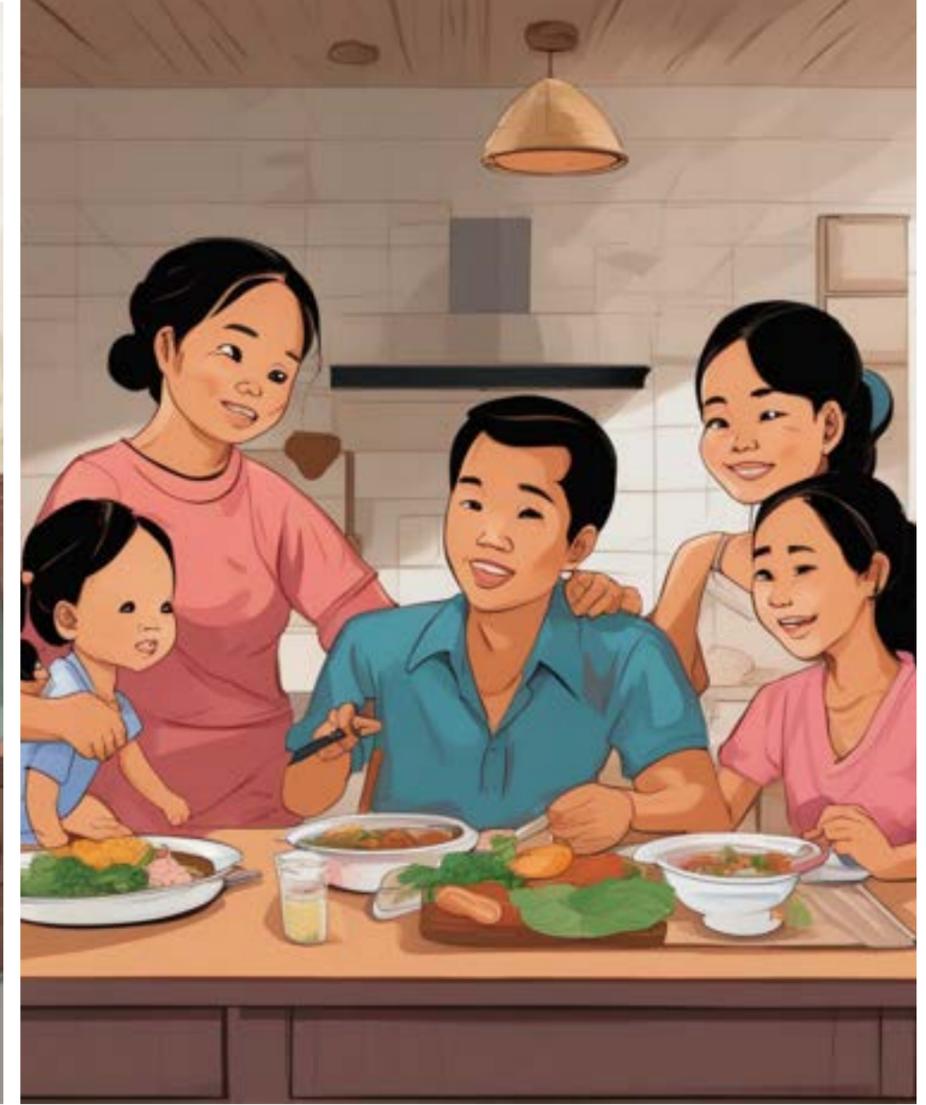
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## Card #10(B): Marital issues, cohabiting and independent living



Arya and her parents found support groups and online forums for Bora and Arya where they can connect with other people to understand the challenges of marital life.

Bora and Arya are grateful to their parents, employer, job coach, counsellor who offered the support system necessary for the couple.

# Additional Information

- **Resources for accommodation and independent living:** In high-income countries, the municipality or local administration may help people with autism to find accommodation and necessary support for independent living. However, the family support system is stronger in countries such as ours (within Asia) and therefore people with autism may live with their parents until they are confident of moving out and living independently. It is possible MoSAVY may plan group homes for people with autism and other disabilities to live together in subsidized homes as Cambodia develops to be a middle-income country.

*With appropriate resources and support from families, NGOs and the government,  
people with autism can live independently.*

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# How to use the cards on Vocational Education and Training (VET) for Young people with Autism (Theme 3)

## 1. What are these cards about (key messages):

These sets of cards explain the challenges and opportunities for young person with 'autism spectrum disorder (ASD)' and the roles of parents, VET trainers, job coaches and social workers in choosing appropriate VET and employment options.

## 2. Who will benefit from these cards (target group):

Parents, social workers, community health care workers, village, commune leaders, Vocational Education and Trainers and potential employers.

## 3. Informing and preparing for the session (community engagement):

- Choose a quiet place
- Inform the participants in advance the location and purpose of meeting
- Good to involve a parent of young person with autism in the discussion (peer-leader)
- Inform the village and/ commune leaders the purpose and get the consent for the meet

## 4. How to use these cards (Process of behavior change communication)

- 10 to 15 the ideal number of participants
- Good to have two sets of cards, in case more people turn-up
- Distribute the cards, one card each
- Allow them time for them to read by themselves before starting the discussion

## 5. Themes in the Leve 3 set of cards (Contents):

- **Card 1:** Bora seeks vocational education and training
- **Card 2:** Learning Style and individualized vocational training
- **Card 3:** Vocational education and training
- **Card 4:** Behavior problem at workstation (sexualized behavior)
- **Card 5:** With adequate ADL, Bora feels included and ready for VET
- **Card 6:** Bora goes to a concert (Promotion of social communication skills)
- **Card 7:** Importance of parents' participation and consent for VET and employment
- **Card 8:** Collaboration between education, health sector and social work
- **Card 9:** Job coach as a mediator and supporter
- **Card 10:** Marital issues, cohabiting and independent living

## 6. How to conduct, summarize and conclude the session (Participatory learning principle):

- Ask whether the participants are ready or need more time with individual cards
- Each participant read the card or share the story on the first page
- The facilitator gives additional information for each card (given on the rear side)
- Give opportunity for discussion and seek clarification before moving to the next card
- One among the participant is asked to summarize the discussion
- The facilitator responds to questions, offer clarifications and highlights the key messages
- Session is closed after deciding the theme, date and time for the next meet
- The facilitator concludes by thanking the participants

For more information, please contact to:

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**Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health**

**(Caritas-CCAMH)**

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