Assistive Technology for Behavioral and Mental Health

Autistics can be successful the way we are. We just have a different style brain and learning style. Video games are a great way for autistic people to learn how play with others. I learned turn-taking by playing video games with my sister. I have had hard time being social when I can't be myself. When I was able to be myself, I became more social and started liking being around people. —Ivanova Smith, Advocate

Thanks to assistive technology (AT), opportunities for improving communication and relationships are expanding for children with social/emotional challenges.

There are thousands of devices and programs (apps) designed to aid communication, teach life skills, improve academic and social learning, and reduce frustrations that can lead to destructive behaviors. Games, in particular, are a great way to engage children with others and the world around them.

We've listed a few popular apps below, as well as links to more listings and AT funding resources. No one app or device fits all, so be sure to research and ask around.

[POPULAR APPS]

Camp Discovery (FREE)
Developed by the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD), Camp Discovery is a suite of games that create fun learning opportunities for children with autism.
www.campdiscoveryforautism.com

First Then Visual Schedule ($9.99-$14.99)
Helps children use and follow schedules. Choose possible rewards for completed activities. www.commonsensemedia.org

Learn with Rufus: Feelings and Emotions ($4.99)
Helps children learn the facial expressions that correspond to feelings and emotions.
www.rufusrobot.com/emotions.php

Meet Heckerty (FREE)
Heckerty finds the world confusing and makes mistakes (as we all do). Teaches reading and vocabulary, inclusiveness, caring and loyalty. www.heckerty.com

Proloquo2Go ($249.99)
Symbol-supported communication app to promote language development and grow communication skills.
www.assistiveware.com/product/proloquo2go

FIND MORE APPS

Bridging Apps: www.insignio.bridgingapps.org/lists
Closing the Gap: www.closingthegap.com
Washington Assistive Technology Act Program: www.watap.org

[FUNDING RESOURCES]

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)
The Children's In-Home Intensive Behavior Support and Individual & Family Services Program include assistive technology as a covered service. www.dshs.wa.gov/dda

Community First Choice (CFC)
A new program for individuals eligible for personal care through DDA or Home & Community Services (HCS). Talk to your DDA case manager about AT funding through CFC.

School District
Assistive technology & training can be included in a student's IEP. If you feel your child could benefit from assistive technology to improve his/her learning, ask for an assessment.

Washington Access Fund
Low interest loans and matched savings accounts for low-income households.
www.washingtonaccessfund.org

Washington Assistive Technology Act Program
Information, referrals, training and device loans. www.watap.org