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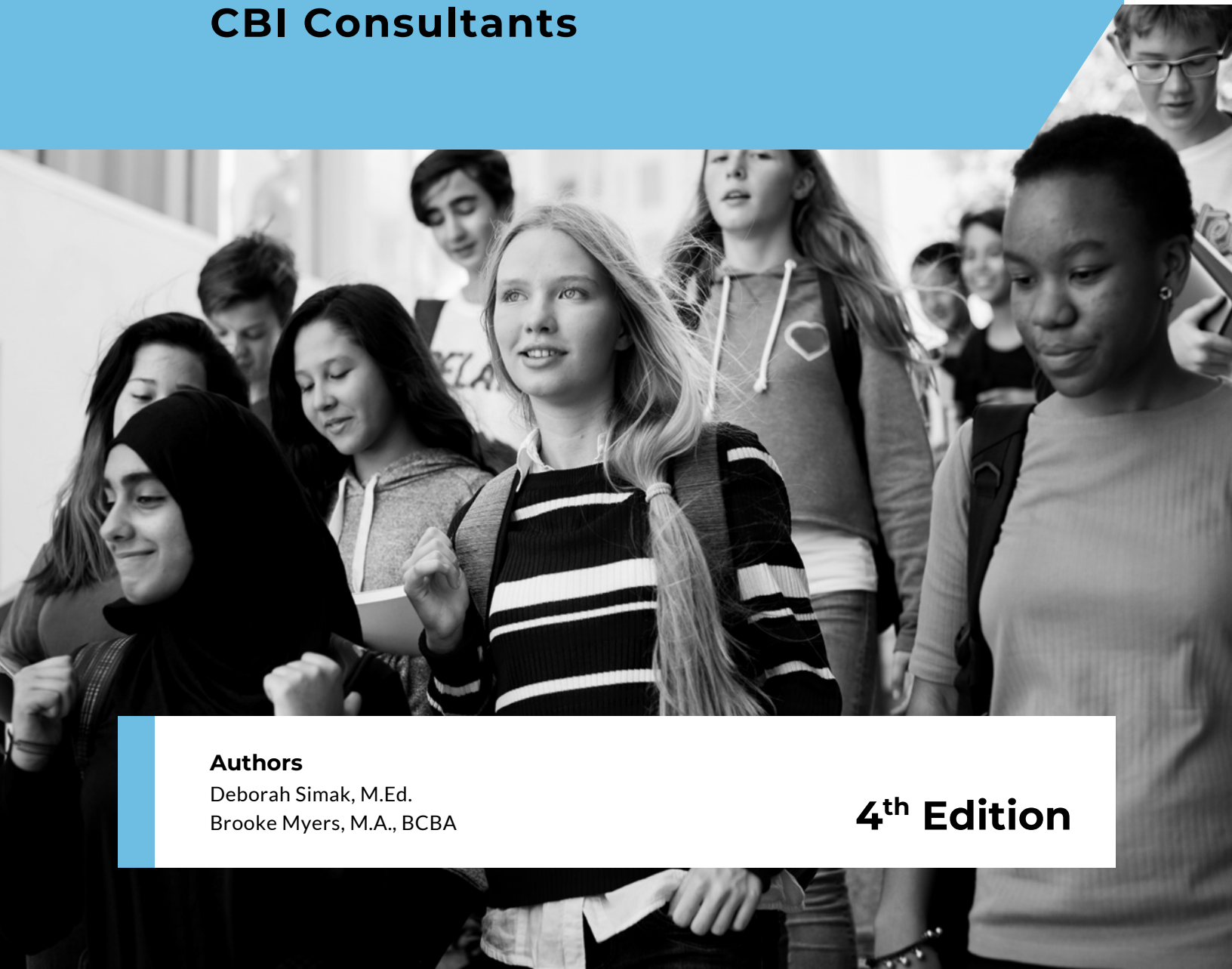
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# Self-Determination Course

## CBI Consultants

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**4<sup>th</sup> Edition**

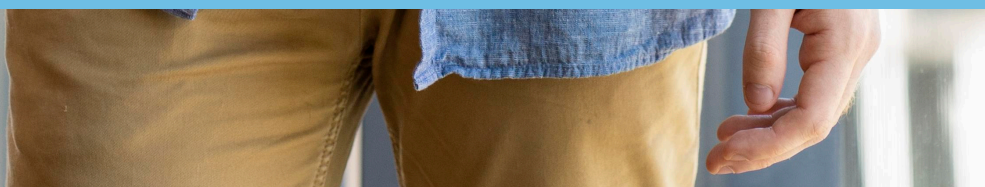


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***Teaching self-determination to individuals with disabilities is essential for promoting their independence, self-confidence, and ability to make informed decisions about their lives.***

**Michael L. Wehmeyer, Ph.D.**

**Ross and Marianna Beach Distinguished Professor in Special Education, University of Kansas**



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# Introduction

Everyone wants to have control of their life, to make their own choices, decisions, and set goals that are meaningful and important to them and students who are neurodiverse are no exception. Self-Determination research indicates a host of positive quality of life outcomes for people who are neurodiverse including better employment and independent living outcomes. Recently, in inclusive education, there has been growing recognition that self-determination and self-advocacy is a critical factor for a successful transition from school to adulthood specifically for autistic students or students who have a developmental disability. Whether your students want to attend college or obtain employment after high school they will need to acquire the skills necessary to pursue career-life directions that are personally meaningful and are of their own volition.

Wehmeyer defined self-determination as “acting as the primary causal agent in one’s life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life free from undue external influence or interference.”

Becoming self-determined enables students to make choices, problem solve, set goals, evaluate goal progress and advocate for their rights as a citizen and employee, in other words they will engage in autonomous behaviour. Too often we see students who are neurodiverse, particularly those who have developmental disabilities, not given opportunities to take an active role in the decisions that will affect their future, where they will live, the type of work they want to do, friends they want to have, where they want to travel and the type of community resources they want to use. As educators, we have the responsibility to ensure that “what” we teach our students will contribute to them taking charge of their life, to advocate for their needs and provide them with opportunities to practice these core competencies so they can actively pursue their career-life opportunities.

# What are the benefits of acquiring Self-Determination skills?



Research on self-determination indicates that self-determination in secondary school is related to positive transition outcomes, including a higher likelihood of being employed and earning more per hour than peers who were not self-determined (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997, p. 245). Students who also scored high in self-determination on the ARC's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995) were more likely to have expressed a preference to live outside the family home, have a bank account and have a paying job.

Other studies to note also indicate other benefits of acquiring self-determination skills.

- Enhances **quality of life** (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001)
- Enhances **confidence/self-esteem** (Eisenman et al., 2005)
- Increases **goal-oriented behaviour** (Wehmeyer et al., 2000)
- Is essential for **positive transitions** and outcomes - especially after kids leave the school system (Test et al., 2005)
- Increases the likelihood of being **successful in post-secondary settings** (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007)
- **Significant increases in access to the general curriculum** (Shogren et al., 2012)
- **Improved employment outcomes and community participation and inclusion post high school** (Shogren et al. 2015)

Self-determination also correlates with the quality-of-life indicators; life satisfaction and sense of meaning and purpose. These two indicators are positioned at the centre of *Canada's Quality of Life Framework*. What matters most in people's lives is how they feel about who they are and whether their life has purpose. Having opportunities to make life choices and planning for a meaningful future contributes significantly to an individual's life satisfaction and overall happiness.

By fostering your neurodiverse student's development of self-determination skills, you're giving them the tools they need to build self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-advocacy skills. This not only improves their academic

performance but also promotes personal growth and social development, helping them lead fulfilling lives. Ultimately, teaching self-determination is about creating opportunities for neurodiverse individuals to thrive and reach their full potential. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to incorporate self-determination skills into their course to ensure that students with intellectual disabilities have the necessary tools to succeed and lead fulfilling lives.

## CBI's Self-Determination Course

The Self-Determination Course offered by CBI is an ideal tool for teachers to help students develop the essential competencies for self-determined behaviour. The course consists of five modules that provide instructional content specifically designed to enhance students' understanding and mastery of the skills and concepts needed to be self-determined and advocate for themselves. Through this course, teachers can empower their students to take control of their lives and make informed decisions. The course's comprehensive instructional content covers all the necessary aspects of self-determination, making it a valuable resource for educators seeking to foster self-determination skills in their students.

### Component Elements of Self-Determined Behaviour



# Overview of Modules

The Self-Determination Course is structured around 5 modules that progressively build upon one another to help students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for achieving positive adult outcomes.

- In Module 1 students will be introduced to the learning outcomes of the course and will become familiar with the key elements of self-determination and self-advocacy and their importance in achieving positive adult outcomes.
- In Module 2 students focus on becoming more self-aware by examining and understanding their uniqueness as an individual and gain an understanding of others. Emphasis is placed on students knowing their strengths, abilities, challenges and how this self-awareness is necessary when exploring career-life possibilities.
- In Module 3 students continue to build on their self-awareness by developing emotional literacy or emotional awareness. Understanding what emotions feel like and how the brain controls our thoughts, emotions and behaviour and learning how to self-regulate is critical to establishing and maintaining relationships and to achieve personal goals.
- In Module 4 students focus on why self-advocacy is important, knowing personal rights as a citizen and a student, knowing how to advocate for their wants and needs. Module 4 concludes with students creating a self-advocacy plan.
- In Module 5 students are taught how to create a Self-Directed Life Plan (SDLP) that incorporates all life domains. Using the knowledge and understanding that students gained in the previous modules, students identify goals, develop an action plan to achieve the goals and identify a self-monitoring process to evaluate their progress toward the goal they identified.



To effectively teach skills related to self-determination, it is important to create a plan and schedule that meets the needs of your students. The self-determination course lessons were designed based on a 60 – 70-minute block of instructional time. The frequency and duration of instruction will depend on various factors such as the students' support needs and the class's curricular content. It is recommended to schedule instruction on self-determination skills at least twice a week, but the exact time per session should be individualized based on the students' needs and the material being covered. A detailed plan and schedule can help ensure that the necessary skills are taught effectively and efficiently.



In a secondary school setting, students have ample opportunities to practice the self-determination and self-advocacy skills that are being taught and evaluated. These skills, which include problem-solving, decision-making, and choice-making, can be demonstrated through regular course activities in general education classrooms. In addition, students can advocate for personal accommodations necessary for specific academic subjects or take on leadership roles in Individual Education Plan or transition planning meetings by identifying goals and strategies. By applying these skills, students become more independent and confident in making decisions that affect their academic success and overall well-being.

## Lesson Structure

### Learning Outcomes

At the beginning of every Self-Determination Course lesson, the learning outcomes are clearly defined and specific, but they can also be tailored to cater to the diverse learning needs of all students. As the lessons progress, it's crucial to encourage students to recognize how the concepts they're learning can apply to their unique interests and strengths and contribute to their self-awareness. The course aims to equip students with the necessary knowledge, personal and social competencies, and skills to take charge of their career and life paths. Therefore, it's vital to ensure that students are equipped with the tools they need to effectively manage their future endeavors. By breaking down the outcomes into smaller components and adapting them, all students can engage with the course and develop their self-determination skills in a way that suits their individual learning styles.

### Lesson Activities

The Self-Determination Course offers a variety of lesson activities that incorporate various teaching strategies to promote students' critical thinking, communication, and personal and social competencies. Through think-pair-share, small and large group discussions, students can develop their ideas, express their individuality, and consider other students' perspectives while challenging their own thoughts and ideas. Lessons make use of videos to promote student engagement, increase motivation and deeper learning. Most lessons contain two or more videos that reinforce the concept being presented. We suggest that you preview these videos to determine which ones will resonate with your students. All the video links will be available in the student presentation mode, so you will



be able to select the appropriate video link. From time to time, YouTube videos may be taken down so you may have to find alternative ones.

Each learner is unique, and while some lessons may be considered basic for certain students, they may be more relevant and necessary for others. As the expert in understanding your students' specific needs and strengths, you are well-equipped to determine which instructional strategies and student accommodations will best support their learning. Planning your instructional interventions, including preparing materials and resources in advance, will contribute to the success of your lessons. We encourage you to modify or expand lesson plans as needed, such as adjusting the number of learning outcomes in a lesson, adapting the language, or using scenarios that are more relevant to your learners to meet individual student requirements.

Experiential learning is emphasized throughout each lesson, incorporating instructional games, cooperative learning activities, and debates. These approaches promote active engagement and hands-on experiences, allowing students to learn through direct participation and interaction. By incorporating experiential learning, you provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge, collaborate with their peers, and engage in critical thinking and problem-solving.

### **Lesson Summary/Key Concepts**

At the end of each session, a review of the Key Concepts is conducted, which summarizes the knowledge, concepts, and skills outlined in the learning outcomes. This review is an effective way to assess students' understanding of the stated learning outcomes and identify areas that may require additional focus. By using a variety of teaching strategies and regularly reviewing the Key Concepts, teachers can help students develop a comprehensive understanding of the material and acquire the skills they need to become self-determined individuals.

### **Student Workbooks: Assessment and Student Reflection**

Each lesson in the Self-Determination Course comes with accompanying workbooks that not only allow teachers to assess student understanding of the concepts but also provide opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. Through these workbooks, students can identify and revise goals and action plans, helping them to apply what they have learned to their own lives. By actively engaging in this reflection and goal-setting process, students can take ownership of their learning and better understand how to apply the concepts to their unique situations. As teachers, the workbooks also provide us with valuable insight into how well students are grasping the material and where additional support may be needed. Together, these tools can help ensure that students are well-equipped to take charge of their own future success.

# Other Benefits of Using CBI's Self-Determination Course (for schools)



Aligns with the B.C. Ministry of Education Core Competencies, specifically Personal & Social Awareness & Responsibility, and Positive Personal & Cultural Identity



Provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate on student learning experiences and resources and to identify standards of expected Ministry competencies



Provides consistent educational experience for students when used across all secondary schools & district



Student workbooks and portfolio entries can be used to assess student's understanding and competency development



Comprehensive lesson plans in 5 modules that are available online 24/7 – student slideshow with embedded resources



Course Overview provides students explicit information on what skills they should be able to demonstrate and the course content that they will encounter



Student learning data can be captured in school or district achievement data



Self-Directed Life Plan (Module 5) can be used as a student led transition planning document

# Conclusion

In conclusion, CBI's Self-Determination Course offers an invaluable framework for teaching students the skills and competencies necessary to take charge of their own lives and achieve success. By tailoring the course to individual needs and providing clear learning outcomes and accompanying workbooks, teachers can create a supportive and engaging learning environment that fosters self-awareness, confidence, and advocacy skills. Ultimately, by empowering students to take control of their career and life journeys, we can help them to overcome barriers and achieve their goals. As educators, it's our responsibility to equip students with the tools they need to thrive, and the Self-Determination Course is an excellent resource to help us achieve this important goal. So, let's get started!



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