

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Technology as a Lifeline: Communication, Scheduling, and Safety Tools

AAC, visual schedules, medication reminders, GPS wearables, smart-home prompts. Five categories of practical technology that scaffold adult autistic life, plus the privacy-versus-safety conversation that every family eventually has.

BY JIM PALASTY · OASIS FOR AUTISM · 10 MIN READ

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CATEGORIES

Communication. Scheduling. Medication. Location and safety. Home prompts. Most autistic adults benefit from three or four. Pick what the chart calls for.

How it works

THREE STEPS

Map the gap

What does the adult struggle with that technology could scaffold?
Communication, time-management, medication, location, daily prompts.



One tool at a time

Three weeks per tool. Configure, train, measure. Adopt or drop based on real use, not advertised features.



Build the maintenance routine

Software updates, battery care, replacement budgets. Tech that is not maintained becomes tech that fails.

Tech categories and what they do

AAC	Communication scaffolding, speech-generating to text-to-speech
Visual schedules	Phone, tablet, or paper; daily and weekly views
Medication	Alarms, dispensers, monitored pillboxes, watch reminders
GPS / safety	Location wearables, watches, fobs, phones with location
Smart home	Voice assistants, doorbell cameras, automated routines
Communication	Messaging apps with photo or AAC support
Emergency	Emergency contacts, fall detection, panic buttons

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE



We added the smart watch two years after the AAC tablet. The watch reminds him to take his afternoon medication at three. The tablet has been his voice since he was nineteen. The watch and the tablet do not replace people. They give him a way to participate in his own days without me hovering. The privacy conversation we had as a family lasted six weeks. He decided what he was comfortable with. He told us where he draws the line. The line is documented. We do not cross it.

HOWARD, ANN ARBOR

What matters, at a glance

The wearable drained at three a.m.

Tech failure mid-routine is worse than no tech. Maintenance is not optional. Plan for batteries, software updates, and replacement cycles before the first failure teaches you.

AAC for adults

Augmentative and Alternative Communication is not just for children. Adults benefit at every fluency level. Insurance and Medicaid often cover devices and software.

Visual schedules

Phone, tablet, or paper. The schedule is the supports. The schedule is the routine. The schedule is a reduction in daily anxiety that costs almost nothing to set up.

AAC funding

Medicaid and insurance often fund AAC devices, but the approval process can take weeks. Start the funding application before the device is needed, not after.

Medication reminders

Pill organizers, phone alarms, smart watches, dedicated dispensers. The right reminder system is the one the adult actually uses. Pilot the candidates.

Privacy vs safety

GPS wearables, location sharing, smart-home cameras. Every tool that protects also surveils. The family conversation about consent is what makes it ethical.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Gap map drafted (one sentence) | ☐ Two or three candidate tools researched |
| ☐ Three-week pilot scheduled | ☐ Configuration tuned to the adult, not the default |
| ☐ Privacy conversation held and documented | ☐ Maintenance routine on calendar |
| ☐ Replacement budget set | |

YOUR MOVE

Adopting a new tech tool

- 1 Map the gap. Write the specific daily problem in one sentence.
- 2 Research two or three candidate tools. Read reviews from autistic adults, not only parent reviews.
- 3 Pilot one tool for three weeks. Configure for the adult's actual needs, not factory defaults.
- 4 Hold a family conversation about privacy tradeoffs. Document the adult's choices in writing.
- 5 If the tool sticks, add the maintenance routine to the calendar. If not, drop it without regret.

Technology is scaffolding, not staffing. The right tools reduce the need for some support hours. The wrong tools add new failure modes. Pilot before commit.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

oasisforautism.com · <https://oasisforautism.com>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Jim Palasty is the founder of OASIS for Autism and a single father of an adult autistic daughter in Michigan.