

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Building natural supports and community inclusion

Seventy percent of autistic adults report loneliness. The intervention is not another program. It is two named community members who know his story and expect him each week. Here is how to build that in your town, one small yes at a time.

BY JIM PALASTY · 12 MIN READ · COMMUNITY INCLUSION

70%

REPORT LONELINESS

Autistic adults reporting loneliness (Mazurek 2014). The remedy is not another program. It is two named people who know his story.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Ask for the small yes



STEP 2

Give the accommodation script



STEP 3

Show up repeatedly

Community settings and what to ask for

Faith community	Weekly attendance. Named greeter. Simple role.
Volunteer site	Weekly shift. Buddy. Task with clear structure.
Recreation program	Adaptive class. Small group. Consistent instructor.
Adult day program	Community outings. Not just facility hours.
Family gathering	Named cousin or aunt who talks with him.
Neighborhood	A neighbor who knows him. Front porch presence.
Fitness or gym	Off-peak hour. One trainer who knows him.
Cultural or civic	Library programs. Museum days. Community concerts.

A STORY WE KNOW

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Isabella is 41. For seven years she went to programs designed for autistic adults and nowhere else. Her mother started asking around at the small Lutheran church three blocks away. The pastor invited Isabella to be a greeter one Sunday, then every Sunday. Now Isabella knows the ushers by name, has three regulars who save her a seat, and gets a birthday card from the church office. Nobody at the church calls it inclusion. They call it Isabella. That is inclusion.

BELONGING IS NOT A PROGRAM. IT IS A SUNDAY

What matters, at a glance

The small yes

Not lifelong friendship. Weekly greeting. Monthly coffee. Predictable. Low-load. Honored consistently.

Accommodation script

Two sentences a stranger can read. He does not shake hands. He needs time to answer. Keep it brief.

Loneliness is medical

Isolation shortens life. Mazurek and other researchers document elevated depression and mortality risk. Community is not optional.

Faith communities

Often the fastest path to weekly community for adult autism families. Not every congregation is ready. The ones that are, are worth the drive.

Belonging window

Real belonging takes about three months of showing up. Do not conclude a site failed after two visits. It is not you.

Volunteer sites

Food bank, animal shelter, garden, library. Purpose plus predictable others plus low social demand.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

- | | |
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| ☐ Two-sentence description of him | ☐ What he can do at the site |
| ☐ What accommodation you are requesting | ☐ What consistency you are asking for |
| ☐ Your contact number for questions | ☐ An offer of your own help |
| ☐ A follow-up date in six weeks | ☐ A thank-you note when it works |

YOUR MOVE

When you are starting to build his community from scratch, here is how you do it

- 1 List everyone he already knows by name. Family, staff, neighbors, familiar faces.
- 2 Pick one site (faith, volunteer, recreation) with a friendly first contact.
- 3 Write the two-sentence accommodation script. Rehearse it with him.
- 4 Attend the site four consecutive times, same day and time. Introduce him deliberately.
- 5 Ask one specific small yes: greet him, save him a seat, teach him one task.
- 6 Review at three months. Keep. Adjust. Add.

The two named connections you build this year are the reason he sleeps well at 60.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

lifecoursetools.com · <https://www.lifecoursetools.com/>

bestbuddies.org · <https://www.bestbuddies.org/>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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