Nine 15-minute activities for new direct support professionals

One activity for each tenet of the revised NADSP Code of Ethics (June 2026), for a new DSP's first weeks supporting an autistic adult. Free to use with your staff.

How to run one (15 minutes): Read the tenet aloud from your copy of the Code (NADSP offers a printable copy on its site). Read the scenario. Pairs talk through the questions for about 8 minutes, then share one answer with the group. Close by naming one thing each person will do on their next shift. All names are fictional.

1. Advocacy

At a clinic visit, the receptionist asks the DSP, not Sam, about Sam's symptoms. Sam uses a text-to-speech app. *What do you do in the moment? How do you hand the conversation back to Sam? How would you find out what Sam wants next time?*

Notes:

2. Confidentiality and Privacy

A coworker posts in the staff group chat: "Heads up, Jordan had a rough night," followed by details. *What did the next shift actually need to know, and through which channel? NADSP notes a DSP can act unethically without breaking HIPAA. Where is that line here?*

Notes:

3. Justice, Fairness, Equity, and Inclusion

A day program cancels a concert outing for "the whole autism group" because concerts are loud. *Who decided, and who was asked? What might each person choose, such as ear defenders, a quiet seat or a plan for leaving early? Is this JEFI?*

Notes:

4. Person-Centered Supports

Alex prefers dim lights and a knock and a pause before anyone comes into the room. The previous staff member "always just went in." *Where do you find Alex's preferences? What do you do when habit and preference differ? How do you check with Alex?*

Notes:

5. Physical and Emotional Well-Being

Morgan's usual staff member is out and the shower routine has moved. Morgan is pacing and covering their ears. *What does Morgan's plan say? What could you offer? What goes in the shift note?*

Notes:

6. Professionalism, Accountability and Growth

A DSP realizes she handed Chris the wrong schedule card, and Chris missed his art class. No one else noticed. *What do you do now? Who do you tell, and how do you tell Chris? What makes it less likely next time?*

Notes:

7. Relationships and Social Roles

Dana wants to invite a coworker to her birthday but isn't sure how. *How do you support her without taking over? Later, if Dana wants to step back from a friendship, how would you support that choice?*

Notes:

8. Respect

Two staff members talk about Riley in the kitchen while Riley sits at the table, calling his hand-flapping "his thing." *What did Riley hear? How would you repair it? Who could help you understand what flapping means for Riley, starting with Riley?*

Notes:

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9. Self-Determination and Choice

Taylor wants to take the bus to the grocery store alone for the first time. *Whose decision is it? What information would help Taylor decide? How does the team support Taylor's choice?*

Notes:
