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## Going Solo

*Emmanuel is a 17 year old young man, with an intellectual disability, living in a child-welfare supported foster home. A background of family conflict precipitated his coming into care. His mother is unable to support him. He has two older sisters, one of whom (A.) he sees often. He was approached by his social worker, Shawn, to talk about what he would do when he transitions out of child welfare care, and what he thinks about when he considers 'independence'.*

I don't think of being independent. I was thinking maybe living around here (small town in Ontario) or Toronto, one of those two. I talked to A. (his 20 year old sister), and she said I could move in, that's fine with her. She lives not very far from here. I could live with A. until I get enough money, and then, vamoose! Then it's solo! Did you write that I said vamoose? (laughter) I lived with A. before. Sometimes she'd baby-sit me when I was a kid. We would talk about horror movies and I don't think we would have any fights cause we have everything in common and like horror movies.

I don't know if I want to go for more education. I don't know if there's a college that does animation near here. I'm really fond of animation. All that stuff. I heard of this weird college, like, it's technical, one of those. I have no idea how much it is.

I'll probably find a job I could manage to do. Like working in the theatres, so I wouldn't have to bug my mother to take me. I'd do, you know, one of those jobs to organize stuff, clean up, stock shelves. But not money and tickets and that kind of stuff. Because that's not a strong point. It just isn't, not really. I tried money and I didn't really enjoy it. I got frustrated. Like if something's cost ten bucks, and you give me thirty, and I have to give you the right amount of change, plus tax as well. That's hard, I guess. There's so many stores near here. I could work at Zellers.

A. would help me out with stuff. I can't cook Kraft dinner all the time. Make turkey? Forget it. I can make

shepherd's pie, scrambled eggs, some chili. I feel a little not confident in case it burns. It's easy to burn, I don't pay attention. It depends if someone is talking to me. I get distracted. I'm not the strong type with money exchange and all that. It worries me a little bit. I might not have enough money. Not the right change. I can grocery shop. It's easy to pick out what you want. I used to grocery shop in grade eight for a lunch program. I'm fine with riding buses. I used to ride in Toronto when I was a kid.

Will I need help from my family? Probably. I'm concerns if anything happened to one of my family. If I'm living independently and my first day something happens, I'm on my own. My first house, then I have stress on my shoulders. I still have stress on my shoulders, stress gets bigger and bigger and I have trouble being independent. I hear news about burglars and gun fighters and stuff in Toronto.

Maybe I might be living with A., or a supported independent living. You get a little help don't you? At first it might be weird, but once you get the hang of it .... You have your first home, and you're on your own, instead of your mother or father doing dishes, you're doing them. You have a responsible job. You have a responsibility to do that job. You don't want to live in a pigsty. I pretty much do it here (at foster home). I clean my room, wash dishes, clean the basement. Once I get the hang of doing it here, I might be ready for independence. What about mortgage and all that stuff? When you have your own house you need mortgage and house insurance, you have to do all this stuff. You have bills, phone, food, all that stuff. Furniture, that's one of the big things. Probably hard, because it would be your first time. I could probably get a little support with my mother and sisters. They have experience. I think I'd want to visit my mother but not live with her cause my dad's living with her as well. I might be in

the middle of fights. It might get serious, say they fight, they go more into fighting, if you know what I mean. I don't know if they still do it or what. I think I'd have a better chance living here than with my mother. It happened quite a few times (the fights); I don't want to talk about it.

Could I live independently with supports? In an apartment you have supports, cause there's an apartment manager and he'd probably be there. Oh, you mean an independence support worker for when you are on your own. A support worker—that would be awkward living with a social worker! And them writing down everything I did, like I ate beans today. "Today we watched movies, he used the bathroom two times today". (The social worker asked E. if he felt he would have any control over how he worked with a support worker and what he thought a support worker would do.) Yes, I'd feel like I have control, supports, but I'd have to get to know her first. I'm comfortable talking to you. But I couldn't let a stranger in my house. First, the worker has to come in your house and check it out and see if you're living healthy. I felt like it was invading privacy. I mostly want to talk away from my house. I don't feel comfortable talking to strangers about my health etc... (The social worker then explained how support workers help with getting jobs, money, and setting goals.) We could probably try the worker thing. At an early age, so I get a head start. So I know why you're hiring a worker. So I get to know what I'm doing before I'm independent.