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Autism Center of Learning™



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Transitions and Visual Supports



Why are we doing this training?

- To help provide proactive strategies for transitions
- To increase appropriate behavior during transitions
- To increase child participation during school and community outings and in the home setting
- To reduce the amount of transition time



Training Objectives

- Learn different strategies to establish consistent transition routines
- Become familiar with various visual supports and how to use them
- Select a strategy that you will implement with your child



Why are transitions important?

- Transitions occur frequently in day to day life
- Transitions require individuals to stop one activity, move from one location to another, and begin something new
- Individuals with ASD may have a greater difficulty in shifting attention from one task to another
- This may be due to
 - a greater need for predictability
 - challenges in understanding what activity may be coming next
 - difficulty when a pattern of behavior is disrupted



What are transition strategies?

- Techniques used to support individuals with ASD during changes in or disruptions to activities, settings, or routines
- Techniques can be used before a transition occurs, during a transition, and/or after a transition
- Can be presented verbally, auditorily, or visually
- Attempt to increase predictability for individuals with ASD and create positive routines around transitions



Why do we use transition strategies?

- Transitions are a large part of any school or work day
- Studies have indicated that up to 25% of a school day may be spent engaging in transition activities
- Similar transitions are found in home and employment settings
- Individuals with ASD may struggle with changes in routines or changes in environments, and may have a need for predictability and sameness. These challenges can ultimately impact independence and limit a person's ability to succeed in community settings



Why do we use transition strategies cont.

- One issue may be related to understanding verbal directions or explanations that a teacher, parent, or employer are providing – individuals may not understand all of the verbal information provided related to that transition
- Difficulty sequencing information and recognizing relationships between steps of an activity can also impact one's ability to transition
- Environmental cues that are more subtle may not be recognized (e.g. students cleaning up their materials, co-workers getting their lunches out of the refrigerator etc.)
- Individuals with ASD may also have restrictive patterns of behavior that may be difficult to disrupt, therefore creating difficulty at times of transition



What can we do to help?

- Preparation Strategies
- Cueing individuals with ASD before a transition is going to take place

Examples:

- “Time for a bath” “It’s almost time for dinner”
- This strategy may not be as effective as verbal information may not be quickly processed or understood
- In addition, providing the cue just before the transition is about to occur may not be enough time for an individual to shift attention from one activity to the next



Visual Timers

- Some learners with ASD benefit from being able to “see” how much time remains in an activity before they are expected to transition
- Concepts related to time can be very abstract (e.g. “Just a second” or “we need to go in a few minutes”) and may be confusing to individuals with ASD, especially if time-telling is not a mastered skill



Visual Timers



Visual Countdown

- Visual countdown helps an individual to “see” how much time is remaining in an activity.
- Visual countdowns are different than a timer as no specific time increment is used
- They are helpful if the timing of the transition needs to be flexible
- Visual countdowns use a countdown tool that can be numbered or color-coded



Visual Countdown



Visual Countdown



Visual Schedules

- A visual schedule is a line of pictures, objects or words that represent each major transition during the day
- Schedules increase flexibility – when implementing a visual schedule individuals get less dependent on having the same daily routine because the schedule itself provides the stability and routine he/she needs
- Schedules help learners better handle changes in routine because they can always determine what will happen next and get information needed by checking their schedule



How to make a visual schedule

- Break the learner's day into several steps represented by pictures or words
- Be conscious of details (some learners may need minor steps included)
- Include each activity so the learner knows what is expected (e.g. periods like free time and break)
- Determine the best visual format for the individual based on skills, (motor skills, reading etc.) developmental level, interests, distractibility, and functionality
- Determine how the schedule will be used to indicate when activities are completed and which remain to be done, as well as how an individual will transition to and from the schedule (e.g. transition strips, pockets, finished pockets, mobile schedules)



How to use a visual schedule

- Give a standard phrase (e.g. “Time to check the schedule”)
- Prompt the individual (from behind) to go to the schedule
- Prompt the individual to look at or point to the first activity
- Prompt the individual to go to the location of the first activity
- When the activity is over, give the standard phrase again and prompt the individual back to the schedule



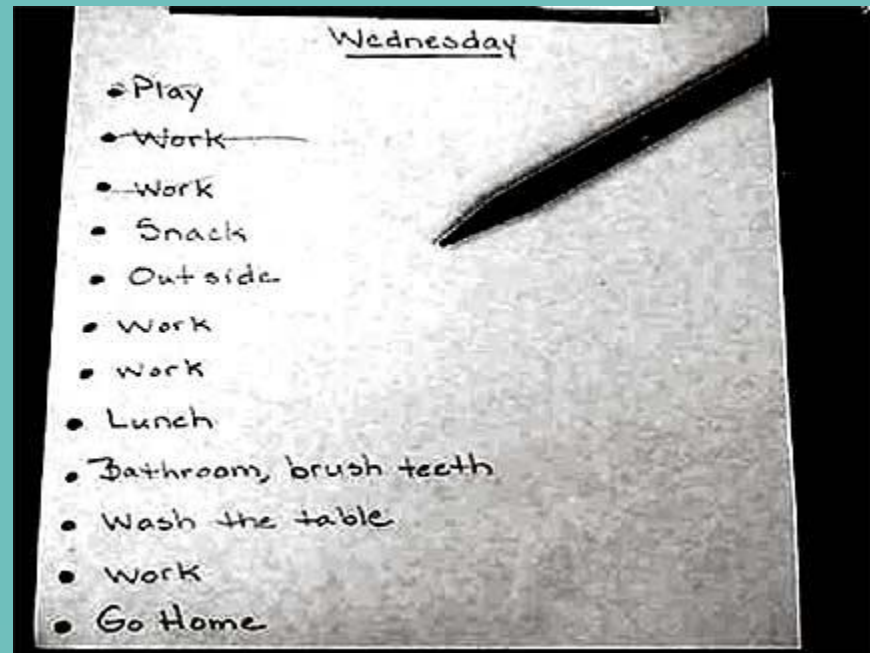
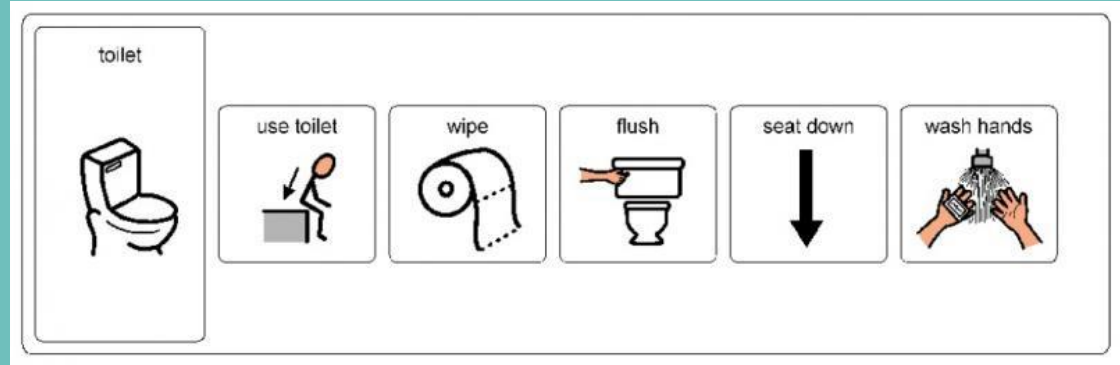
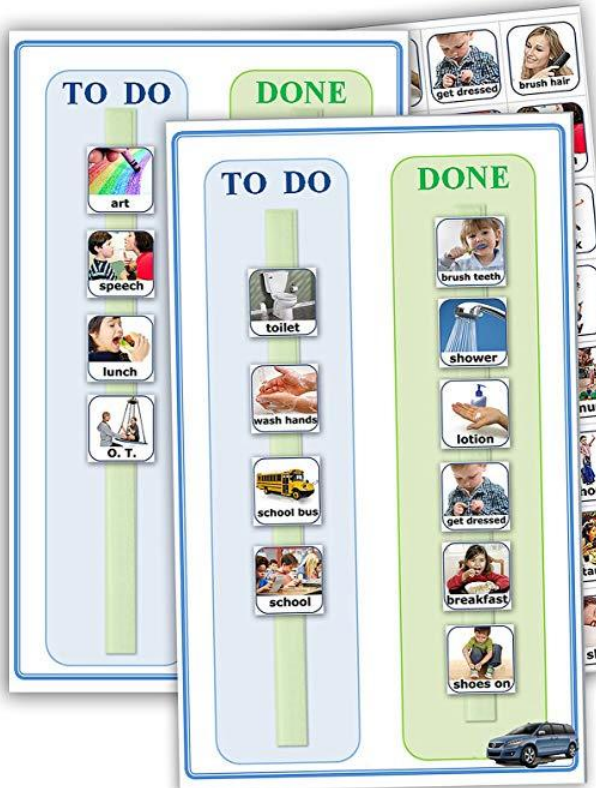
Visual Schedule

Daily Schedule	
1	arrive at school
2	check in
3	reading
4	writing
5	math
6	recess
7	Journal
8	P.E.
9	lunch
10	art
11	shared reading
12	bus

Arrival at school		
1		Take off coat <small>(coat, remove, bare and hot)</small>
2		Open Backpack
3		Take out work
4		Take out lunch
5		Hang up coat
6		Hang up backpack



Visual schedule



Important!

- The schedule will require teaching; it will not automatically have meaning. Use enough prompting to make sure that the child can successfully get to the schedule, but fade out slowly so that he/she is able to go to the schedule with increasing independence



Use of photos, icons, objects, or words

- Research has indicated that using a visual cue during a transition can decrease challenging behavior and increase following transition demands
- You might present the learner with a photo of the location where they will be going, which helps clarify expectations and increases predictability

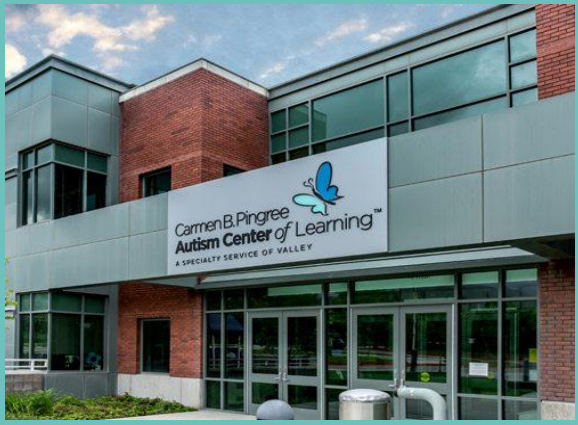


Use of photos, icons, objects, or words

- You could also use objects, simple drawings or written words to provide this information to the learner
- When using a transition object, it is helpful to have the individual carry the information with him/her to the assigned location. This allows the learner to continually reference the information about where he/she is headed as the transition occurs. Once the learner has arrived at the destination, consider having a designated "spot" for them to place the information, such as an envelope or small box. This helps them understand that they have arrived at the correct location.



Photos, icons, objects, or words



First-Then Cards

- Some individuals with ASD may benefit from seeing a sequence of two activities so they can better predict what will take place during the day
- A first-then sequence of information may be useful in situations where a child is expected to transition to a less preferred location if he/she is able to see that a preferred activity will be coming next

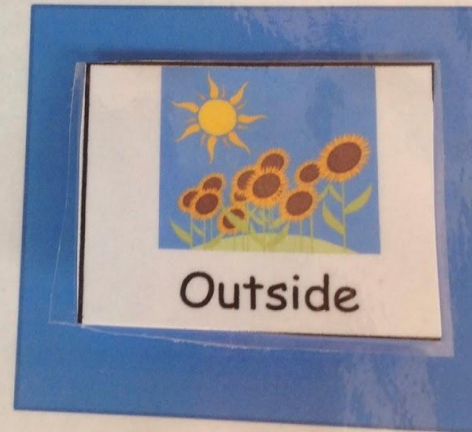


First-Then Cards

FIRST



THEN



Transition Cards

- For some individuals longer sequences of visual information may be more effective
- These individuals may benefit from use of a schedule that is located in a central transition area in the home, classroom, or employment setting
- Instead of the information about the schedule coming to the individual, individuals have to travel to the schedule to get the object, photo, icon, or words that describe the next activity or location



Transition Cards

- Using a consistent visual cue to help indicate when it is time to transition is beneficial as concrete cues reduce confusion and help in developing productive transition routines
- The visual cue may be more meaningful and effective than repeated verbal cues



Transition Cards



Finished Box

- This is a designated location where individuals place items they are finished with when it is time to transition
- When transition times occur, it is often helpful for individuals to have an assigned location to put materials before moving on to the next activity
- You could have a box located in the child's work area, as well as in any center or area of a home that is labeled with the word or visual cue to indicate its purpose



Finished Box



Other Considerations

- In addition to developing predictable and consistent transition routines there may be other adjustments that may need to be made if transition difficulties continue
- Length of an activity
- Difficulty of an activity
- Interest level
- Environments may be overstimulating
- Sequence of activities



Other Considerations

- May be beneficial to review all required activities for an individual and categorizing them as preferred, non-preferred, and/or neutral
- Staff members or parents may be able to strategically sequence activities so that individuals are moving from non-preferred to preferred activities and from preferred activities to neutral activities
- Staff members or parents may also consider adding in additional reinforcement for successful transitions or “creating” a preferred activity after a highly preferred activity (e.g. leaving playground then access to swing in the classroom)



Questions?



**Task: Everyone think about
a transition strategy that
you can implement with
your child.**



References

- Hume. (2008). Transition Time: Helping Individuals on the Autism Spectrum Move Successfully from One Activity to Another.
- Dettmer, S., Simpson, R.L., Myles, B.S., & Ganz, J.B. (2000). The Use of Visual Supports to Facilitate Transitions of Students with Autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 15, 163-169.

