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Autism Agenda



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Teaching Important Life Skills

By Autism Speaks

Start as Early as Possible!

"No matter what our child's level of ability, he will do best in the future if you help him develop practical skills now." -

More than a Mom, by Amy Baskin and Heather Fawcett

Where To Start

Teaching your child independent skills - home living, personal care, etc. - can be easier said than done, especially if they are accustomed to having things done for them. You may be rushed, your child may be fighting you every step of the way, you may be too exhausted, but teaching life skills early on is an important part of raising a child with autism. A great start is to break up your child's daily routines in a typical day. For example, create checklists for different parts of the day, and help get your child accustomed to the daily routine by checking off items on the list as the day goes on.

Sample Morning Checklist

- ☐ Wake up at _____
- ☐ Eat breakfast in the kitchen
- ☐ Put dishes in sink
- ☐ Take Shower
- ☐ Get dressed
- ☐ Brush teeth
- ☐ Get backpack ready for school



<http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/community-connections/teaching-important-life-skills>

DAILY LIFE ON THE SPECTRUM

Daily life on the Spectrum is a website full of information for parents with Autistic children. It is a resource full of information given from four families and what they have done to help their autistic children be successful. Below is a screen shot of one of their web pages.

You can find more information contained in the website at:

<http://www.dailylifeonthespectrum.com>



about **DAILY LIFE** get in **CONTACT**

DAILY LIFE

on the spectrum

what is autism

self-care tips

resources

glossary



About Daily Life On The Spectrum

Each parent interviewed for this website commented on the difficulty of teaching their child certain self-care skills. However, despite their child's uniqueness, their overall advice was similar:

- > First, have fun with your child and try to keep the mood light when teaching self-care skills. It helps to turn learning into a game.
- > Focus on what motivates your child, and incorporate that into teaching them new skills.
- > Praise your child for their successes, no matter how small those steps may be.
- > Communicate with all caregivers about the child's self-care goals and routines. This will ensure that everyone works on reinforcing the same skills in the same way.
- > Have patience with yourself and your child when teaching them new skills. Every parent gets frustrated sometimes. Feel free to stop teaching for a while and come back to it when the environment is less tense.

> Allow your child to be as independent as possible while still ensuring their safety. Giving them choices about tasks increases their ownership over task performance. Make sure that you allow them to be independent, rather than doing things for them because it is more convenient for you.

> Your child will learn the skill eventually. Don't stress perfection too much while they are learning.

> Talk to other parents of children with ASD. One study found that 93% of parents of children with disabilities looked to other parents of children with similar challenges for advice.²⁷ Other parents are a wealth of information and motivation, and are more likely to understand your individual struggles and frustrations.

> Communication with other caregivers, parents and teachers is critical to being consistent with reward or punishment systems.

SELF CARE AND INDEPENDENCE

Self Care and Independence

By NWRES Regional Office

Introduction to Teaching Self-Care and Independence

Children with autism have varying degrees of independence. Some children need help with basic tasks such as dressing and toileting, while others have difficulty only with higher level skills like completing homework, or cleaning the bedroom.

When designing intervention strategies, it is helpful to understand why people with autism have difficulty completing tasks independently, and to determine which factors are relevant to each particular child.

One significant factor can be described as “learned helplessness”. Caregivers feel protective or have the perception that someone with a disability cannot be expected to be independent. Time constraints or impatience drives caregivers to do more for a child than necessary, instead of waiting for him to do it himself. As a result, the child becomes used to others helping, and would naturally rather avoid the frustration of a challenging task.

Even for a child for whom there have been high expectations of independence, learning characteristics specific to autism may impede independence. Routines are remembered quickly and precisely.

If assistance is provided a few times, from the child’s perspective it becomes an integral step in the routine, and this ‘habit’ can be hard to change. The purpose and meaningful sequence of steps in routines can be utterly mysterious.

I have to wait for Mom to say “get soap” before I do it, because that is what always happens.

Why do I have to get dressed?

What am I supposed to look like when I’m done?

What do I have to put on, and in what order?



Without an understanding of social context, and with impaired organizational abilities, the whole task seems pointless and overwhelming. At the same time, the child needs to be able to filter out distracting stimuli, and to focus on the important elements of the task.

These obstacles can make it challenging for a person with autism to organize, start, and complete tasks independently. (Janzen, 2003).

On the other hand, learning characteristics common to autism can also be advantageous to learning independent routines. People with autism often enjoy completing familiar routines, and can remember precise sequences of events.

Since visual learning abilities are strong, visual supports can be used effectively in teaching routines. If routines and instructional supports are carefully designed to build on these strengths, independence can be greatly improved. (Janzen, 1996).

The most important step in teaching independent self-care skills is believe that your child can learn to be independent given the proper supports. When some people hear “autism” or “disability” they think this implies “can’t” or “won’t” or “will never.”

Some parents accept the prognosis, and do their best to care for and protect their children, without high expectations of independence. Other parents fight the implication of disability by pushing their children to be more independent, but may not be successful if they do not use the appropriate strategies. Either way, parents need to understand how to teach routines in a way that matches the needs of their child.

Typically developing children can be told what to do, and learn from verbal instruction and modeling. They eventually assert their independence. Teaching a child with autism requires a departure from this kind of teaching. Visual cues and physical prompting more effectively match the learning style of children with autism.

Insisting on independence is necessary for the child with a disability who does not go through the “I want to be a big boy” stage. This is an adjustment for parents, and for teachers, but it can be just as effective and rewarding in the end.

This article continues to give additional resources and information. Please go to <http://www.nwresd.k12.or.us/autism/Self-CareandIndependence.html>.

'PARENTHOOD' AND AUTISM

What 'Parenthood' Did for Autism Awareness

By Kerry Magro

This guest post is by Autism Speaks Staffer Kerry Magro. Kerry, an adult with autism, is a national speaker and autism advocate. You can follow Kerry on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). This blog originally appeared on [Kerrymagro.com](#).



In the history of television, I don't believe our community has ever had as strong a connection to a show as we have had with NBC's *Parenthood*. Last week, we saw the series finale after six magnificent and heartfelt seasons on the air. This show tells the story of the Bravermans, a family that consists of grandparents, their four adult children and their growing families. One of the more intriguing characters on the show was Max Braverman, a boy diagnosed early on with Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism.

No other show on national television has ever depicted as realistic a portrayal of a child character with autism before. This show offered us the opportunity to show a national audience each week a new look into the world of autism. The American public saw what families that have a loved one with autism see everyday. Topics such as acceptance, bullying, unique interests, sensory integration, speech, communication and much more were discussed through Max's character. Later, we'd even be introduced to a character named Hank (played by Ray Romano) that would self-diagnose himself with asperger syndrome.

Jason Katims, the creator of *Parenthood*, who has a son on the autism spectrum, said it best in an exclusive with [The Huffington Post](#)...

You know, I've heard so many anecdotal stories about what a positive effect that has had for families and for the autistic community. It actually goes beyond the autistic community to just people who are dealing with various challenges and disabilities. So, of course, that's incredibly rewarding to all of us that the show seems to have had an impact in some way. It's not what we set out to do. We set out to tell stories that were true and personal to us, but the fact that it has seemed to help in some small way is incredibly gratifying.

It became clear very early on that this show wasn't only a true look into life with autism, but also into many other family issues that happen today, like adoption, single motherhood, a separation and more. Now this show can live on on Netflix, Hulu and all the other streaming websites as one of the best family dramas we've seen.

The show ended on a sweet note last week with its series finale highlighting Max's first job as a photographer at his aunt's wedding, as well as his graduation from Chambers Academy. For a majority of the first few seasons, *Parenthood* showcased many of Max's struggles with autism, but the finale highlighted him coming into his own and overcoming many of the obstacles he's faced. It made for a very sweet (if not tearful) ending to a show many of us have come to love over the last six years.



IPAD APP CORNER

Stories2Learn

Company: MDR

Category: Social Skills

Price: \$13.99

Description: Stories2Learn offers parents and educators the ability to create personalized stories using photos, text, and audio messages. These stories can be used to promote an individual's literacy, leisure, as well as social skills. With Stories2Learn an educator can quickly create a story that shows various social cues. For example, if an individual is learning a new concept such as turn taking, making improved eye contact, sharing, or other social messages, these concepts can be quickly depicted in a story created by parent or educator within minutes! The creator is able to add their own audio and write dialogue that corresponds to the photos.



Social Skills

Company: MDR

Category: Social Skills

Price: \$6.99

Description: Social Skills offers parents and educators the ability to interact with six social narratives designed to help individuals improve their social ability. With Social Skills, the stories contain targeted instruction in the following core areas: Joint Attention; Non-Verbal Communication; Greetings; Structured game play; Turn Taking; Classroom rules; and Imitation. In addition to using the specific content, users can modify the stories by adding different photos, text, as well as audio. The end results allows for the individual to look at a social photo, touch the picture for audio, and continue onto the next page!

QuickCues

Company: Fraser

Category: Social Skills

Price: \$4.99

Description: QuickCues is a social script app that helps teens and young adults on the autism spectrum to handle new situations and learn new skills. Social scripts have been used successfully for years, but QuickCues makes these tools mobile and easy to use in everyday situations. With Quick Cues you can add four additional modules each priced at \$4.99. The Communication module comes pre-installed and provides help with conversations at school or work, listening, and talking on the telephone. It also gives tips on reading body language and finding shared interests with others. Available for additional purchase via the In-App purchase are Life Skills Module, Socialization Module and the Coping Module.



Hidden Curriculum For Kids

Company: AAPC

Category: Social Skills

Price: \$1.99

Description: Some people seem to learn the hidden curriculum almost automatically. Others learn it only by direct instruction. This includes children with autism spectrum disorders. These real-life based entries spur conversations about the countless "unwritten social rules" that we encounter every day and that can cause confusion and anxiety.

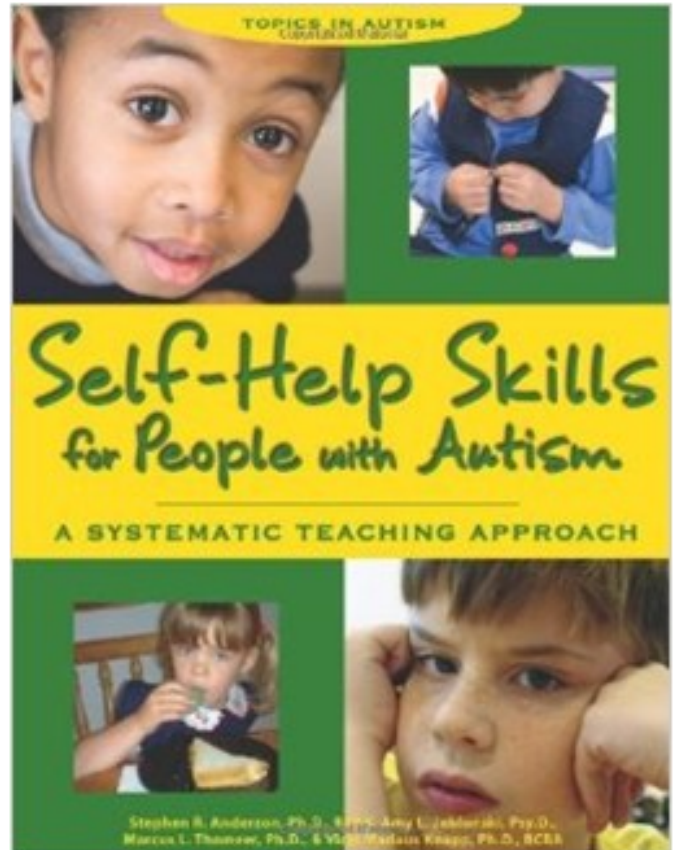


All apps are suggested and not required.

Self-Help Skills for People with Autism: A Systematic Teaching Approach

by Stephen Anderson, Amy Jablonski, Vicki Madaus Knapp and Marcus Thomeer

This book outlines a systematic approach that parents and educators can use to teach basic self-care to children, ages 24 months to early teens, and even older individuals. The authors emphasize that it's worthwhile to devote the extra time and effort now to teach skills rather than have your child be forever dependent on others. The many case studies depict individuals with deficits in specific self-care tasks, and demonstrate how a coordinated and systematic approach is effective in teaching more complex skills. Instructional methods include task analysis (breaking task down into smaller steps), verbal prompting, reinforcers/rewards, chaining, graduated guidance, shaping, modeling, and visual supports. A chapter is devoted to each of the four skill areas (eating, dressing, toileting, personal hygiene), offering detailed insight and specific instruction strategies. Appendices contain forms to complete for task analyses, instructional plans, and data collection.





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SELF CARE VISUALS

toothbrush & toothpaste 	brush teeth 	bathe 	shower
towel 	soap 	shampoo 	put on clean clothes
brush hair 	brush hair 	comb 	wash up
put dirty clothes in the laundry 	dry hands 	wash hands 	go to bathroom