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Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

5 Tips To Avoid Your Child From Becoming Prompt Dependent

Picture this: It's time to wash your child's hands. You bring them into the bathroom and you tell them to turn on the water, pump the soap, rub their hands together, etc. and your child follows all of the steps until their hands are nice and clean. Later that day, when with their Grandma, Grandma says, "Go wash your hands." Your child walks into the bathroom and then just stands in front of the sink. After a minute of silence, Grandma notices that your child has not begun to wash their hands and instead, is just standing in front of the sink. Grandma then does hand-over-hand prompting, by doing all of the steps for your child by holding onto their hands while washing.

This example could be occurring due to the child becoming prompt dependent. Prompt dependency is where the child relies on being told what to do or for the task to be done for them. It is when the child



knows what to do, but depends on the prompt to be given to them. Essentially, the child is dependent on being told or shown what to do in order for them to respond. Our goal for every child is for them to become independent with every skill that has been taught. A child who becomes prompt dependent has less opportunities to become independent.

Here are 5 tips to follow in order to avoid prompt dependency:

Continued on page 2.

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5 TIPS TO AVOID.. CONTINUED....

1. Be mindful of when prompts have been given.

A prompt is a cue which elicits a response. A prompt can be a physical prompt, verbal prompt, or gestural prompt, to name a few. Typically when prompt dependence occurs, it is done unintentionally. So the first step is to recognize that a prompt has been given.



2. Fade prompts as quickly as possible.

Once it has been established that a prompt has been used, work on fading the prompt as quickly as possible. If using a physical prompt, start using a faded physical prompt. This will look like holding the child by their forearms, elbows or shoulders. If using a verbal prompt start to use a faded verbal prompt. This will look like telling the child part of what they need to say instead of giving them the full sentence to repeat, such as expecting the child to say "I want __," you might just say "I" for the child to then say the full sentence.

3. Use a less intrusive prompt whenever possible.

Let's go back to that hand washing example, instead of using a verbal prompt (telling the child what to do) or a physical prompt (hand-over-hand prompting), try using a visual schedule instead. This visual schedule will show the steps of what is needed to be done for the child to follow. This will allow the child to become less dependent on needing directions from the parent and will increase their independence.

4. Only give verbal prompts when you are looking for a verbal response.

Over prompting often leads to prompt dependency. If you are not looking for the child to say anything, then a verbal prompt should not be given. For instance, when washing hands, we are not looking for the child to say "turn on the water." Instead, we are looking for the child to turn on the water. Giving the verbal prompt "turn on the water" can lead to prompt dependency. Use visuals, gestures, and faded physical prompts instead.

5. Contrive the environment as much as possible to give as many opportunities for practice.

As parents, we tend to be able to read our children and are quick to do things for them. Take a step back before prompting. Offer some prompts along the way, but give your child an opportunity before jumping in and doing it for them. Sometimes as parents, we feel like it's easier for us to complete a task for our children and to just do it for them because it saves time or possibly a big mess to clean up. We are all guilty of this! However, recognizing that those prompts are given and then fading them will create more opportunities for independence.

Remember, independence is our end goal for every child and for every skill! Be mindful of over prompting so that your child has more opportunities to reach independence!

Article was by: Allie Edwab, NJ Autism Program Supervisor

<https://www.sunnydayssunshinecenter.com/blog/5-tips-to-avoid-your-child-from-becoming-prompt-dependent>

HOW DO I TEACH A PERSON WITH ASD TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT?

How do I teach a person with ASD to be more independent?

By: Maureen Bennie

Teaching independence is a baby steps process that starts at an early age. When working with children with autism on any skill, you have to think it forward. How will this look and function at age 5, 10 or 18? Imagining where you want this person to be as an adult is a good motivator to teach independence skills. It gives a framework to set goals.

There are small, gradual ways to build independence. One of the tools to help increase independence is visual supports. I have written about the effective use of visual supports in a past [blog](#). Visual supports can be used to break down the steps of any task. When the steps are put on a strip, the person with autism now has those for a handy reference. I've used this idea for routines like getting dressed, toileting, hand washing and brushing teeth. There are some great ideas for breaking down routines on the [Do2Learn](#) website. Thinking this forward, these tasks strips could be used for doing laundry, dishes and other household chores.

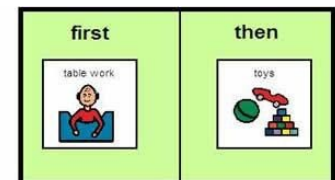


Visuals can also be used for scheduling. Schedules can be done for the day or

within an activity. If a child feels anxious seeing the whole day's plan, break it down into smaller sections like morning, afternoon and evening. When scheduling, think about teaching flexibility and how to cope with something unpredictable. Put the word "surprise" in one time block. Teaching flexibility and unpredictability are important life skills because we all know the day doesn't always go as planned and things can change at a moment's notice in the workplace.

Build in a sense of choice at an early age. One of the first things that I see happen to people who are diagnosed with autism is their ability to choose for themselves or say no gets taken away. Making choices and refusing things is an important life skill. Start small with two choices on a board. "Would you like an apple or banana for snack?" You can also start with a non-preferred activity followed by the choice of a preferred one. For example, first we do math, then you can (let the child choose between 2 or 3 things they like to do). This teaches the child they can do something they don't like and survive and delays gratification, all part of life.

My children Marc and Julia are working on the concept of working to earn things they want through volunteering at a local Farmer's Market. If Julia wants a Playmobil set which is more expensive than the DVD her brother wants, Julia knows she has to work 4 shifts to earn the Playmobil set while Marc only has to work a shift to get his first DVD. Both children understand this concept and realize you have to work more hours to get something that costs more – a valuable skill.



Continued on page 4.

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HOW DO I TEACH A PERSON WITH ASD TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT? CONTINUED..

Think about ways to build in independence when in the community. Both Marc and Julia practice checking out groceries at the self-serve checkout. Both can sign out their library items at self-serve check-out. I increase their job responsibility each week at the Farmer's Market. For example, Marc had to work with the manager putting out the pylons for the market stalls. Sometimes he has to work with a different manager during different shifts who has a different. He has to learn how to follow directions from a different person, but using his visual supports can help the information to remain constant and predictable even when he is working with a different person. Julia has to bring the beverage orders to the vendors and take their money which helps her practice her memory and interpersonal skills.

Teaching the concept of time fosters independence. Whether using a [Time Timer](#), sand timer, of the traditional clock, letting children see there is a beginning, end and time limit for activities is a good way to teach patience and transitioning. Marc and Julia are now at a stage of independence where I can tell them we will leave a place at a certain time and they come and get me when it's time to go. Marc has many activities built into times of the day such as meal times and snack times.

Start small and build on success. If you want your child to be able to get a drink of water on his own, start with him giving you the symbol for drink. The next step is for him to get his own cup. The last step is for him to fill it from the tap or pitcher. The tap can be trickier because the temperature and flow of the water have to be adjusted, but those skills can be taught in steps as well.

There will be little setbacks when teaching new skills, but independence is a step-by-step process. Build the foundation when the child is young and continue to build on those skills as they grow. My children are surprising me every week with new demonstrations of independence.

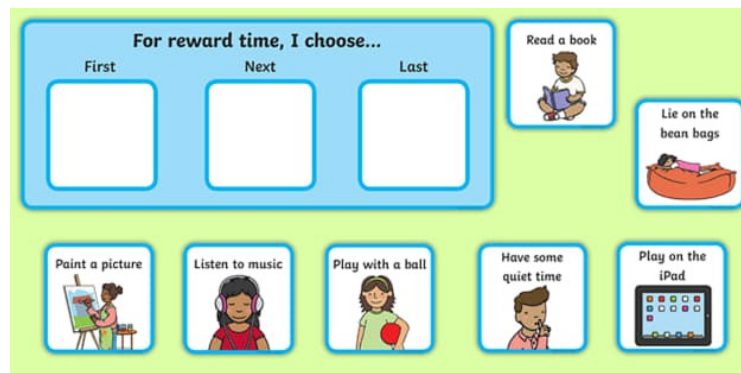
<https://autismawarenesscentre.com/teach-person-asd-independent/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE

<https://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/professionals/supporting-independence>

<https://www.tpathways.org/faqs/can-a-person-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-live-an-independent-adult-life/>

<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/articles/increasing-independence-in-adults-with-autism-spectrum-disorders-using-a-to-do-list.html>



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TEN WAYS TO BUILD INDEPENDENCE

Ten Ways to Build Independence

Transition Tool Kit

September 2, 2018

This list from Autism Speaks Autism Response Team member Emily Mulligan provides information on how you can help your child increase his or her independence at home, at school and in the community. By introducing these skills early and building block by block, you can help your loved one with autism gain the tools that will allow him or her to be more independent throughout his or her life.

1. Strengthen Communication

If your child struggles with spoken language, a critical step for increasing independence is strengthening his or her ability to communicate by building skills and providing tools to help express preferences, desires and feelings. Consider introducing Alternative/Augmentative Communication (AAC) and visual supports. Common types of AAC include picture exchange communication systems (PECS), speech output devices (such as DynaVox, iPad, etc.) and sign language.

2. Introduce a Visual Schedule

Using a visual schedule with your child can help the transition from activity to activity with less prompting. Review each item on the schedule with your child and then remind him or her to check the schedule before every transition. Over time, he or she will be able to complete this task with increasing independence, practice decision making and pursue the activities that interest him or her. You can learn more about using visual supports by downloading the ATN/AIR-P Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorder Tool Kit.

3. Work on Self-Care Skills

This is a good age to introduce self-care activities into your child's routine. Brushing teeth, combing hair and other activities of daily living (ADLs) are important life skills, and introducing them as early as possible can allow your child to master them down the line. Make sure to include these things on your child's schedule so he or she gets used to having them as part of the daily routine.

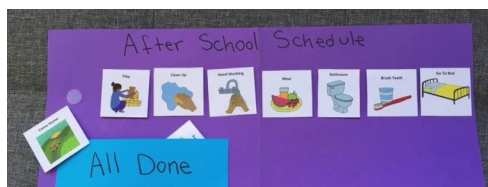
4. Teach Your Child to Ask for a Break

Make sure your child has a way to request a break – add a "Break" button on his or her communication device, a picture in his or her PECS book, etc. Identify an area that is quiet where your child can go when feeling overwhelmed. Alternatively, consider offering headphones or other tools to help regulate sensory input. Although it may seem like a simple thing, knowing how to ask for a break can allow your child to regain control over him or herself and his or her environment.

5. Work on Household Chores

Having children complete household chores can teach them responsibility, get them involved in family routines and impart useful skills to take with them as they get older. If you think your child may have trouble understanding how to complete a whole chore, you can consider using a task analysis. This is a method that involves breaking down large tasks into smaller steps. Be sure to model the steps yourself or provide prompts if your child has trouble at first! Also, try using My Job Chart: a great tool to help

Continued on page 6.



TEN WAYS TO BUILD INDEPENDENCE CONTINUED...

6. Practice Money Skills

Learning how to use money is a very important skill that can help your child become independent when out and about in the community. No matter what abilities your child currently has, there are ways that he or she can begin to learn money skills. At school, consider adding money skills to your child's IEP and when you are with your child in a store or supermarket, allow him and her to hand over the money to the cashier. Step by step, you can teach each part of this process. Your child can then begin using these skills in different settings in the community.

7. Teach Community Safety Skills

Safety is a big concern for many families, especially as children become more independent. Teach and practice travel training including pedestrian safety, identifying signs and other important safety markers; and becoming familiar with public transportation. The GET Going pocket guide has many useful tips to help individuals with autism navigate public transportation. Consider having your child carry an ID card which can be very helpful to provide his or her name, a brief explanation of his or her diagnosis, and a contact person. You can find examples of ID cards and other great safety materials.

8. Build Leisure Skills

Being able to engage in independent leisure and recreation is something that will serve your child well throughout his or her life. Many people with autism have special interests in one or two subjects; it can help to translate those interests into age appropriate recreational activities. The Autism Speaks Resource Guide contains activities that your child can get involved with in your community; including team sports, swim lessons, martial arts, music groups and more. For more information about participation in youth and community organizations, see the Autism Speaks Leading the Way: Autism-Friendly Youth Organizations guide.

9. Teach Self-Care during Adolescence

Entering adolescence and beginning puberty can bring many changes for a teen with autism, so this is an important time to introduce many hygiene and self-care skills. Getting your teens into the habit of self-care will set them up for success and allow them to become much more independent as they approach adulthood. Visual aids can be really useful to help your teen complete his or her personal hygiene routine each day. Consider making a checklist of activities to help your child keep track of what to do and post it in the bathroom. This can include items such as showering, washing face, putting on deodorant and brushing hair. To stay organized, you can put together a hygiene "kit" to keep everything your child needs in one place.

10. Work on Vocational Skills

Starting at age 14, your child should have some vocational skills included on his or her IEP. Make a list of his or her strengths, skills and interests and use them to guide the type of vocational activities that are included as objectives. This is also a time to start planning for the future. Consider all of the ways up to this point that you have been fostering your child's independence: communication abilities, self-care, interests and activities and goals for the future. The Community-based Skills Assessment (CSA) can help you evaluate your child's current skills and abilities to create an individualized transition plan.

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit-excerpt/ten-ways-build-independence>

"I CAN DO IT MYSELF"

"I Can Do It Myself!" Using Work Systems to Build Independence in Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

By: Kara Hume

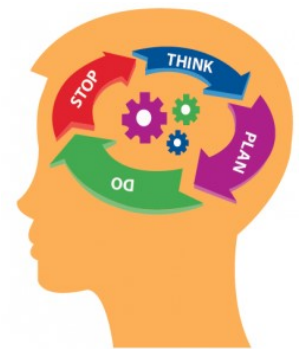
WHY IS INDEPENDENCE IMPORTANT?

The desire for, and movement towards independence, is a typical developmental milestone for children. The feeling of accomplishment and competence is meaningful and motivating to children as they begin to complete tasks with minimal adult prompting or guidance. This desire for independence is certainly present in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Reaching the maximum level of independence, however, has proved more difficult. The goal of independence is a priority for all children, yet when working with children with ASD, independence is the key to successful community inclusion and future employment.

A variety of sources in the autism community are raising concerns about issues related to independence. The National Research Council recently recommended eight areas of focus for educational development in their book, *Educating Children with Autism* (2001). Independent organizational skills, which included completing tasks independently and following instructions in a group setting without adult assistance, were highlighted as essential educational objectives. In an article describing an ideal curriculum for students with ASD, Gregory Olley, a psychologist at the University of North Carolina, wrote "The goals of all curricula and methods are to assist students to work independently, to manage their own behavior, and to be motivated by learning and the natural consequences of learning, rather than by artificial reinforcers (1999)." John Kregel, a contributing author to *The Forgotten Generation*, cites an unemployment rate for individuals with mild cognitive disabilities at a rate of 70-80%, and notes difficulty in demonstrating independent job skills as a contributing factor (2001).

Why is Independence Challenging for Students with ASD?

Establishing independence as a curricular goal is vital, as is gaining an understanding of the possible barriers to independence that students with ASD face. Gary Mesibov, Director of Division TEACCH® (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children), explains that students with autism may face several unique challenges when learning. The following difficulties may be an obstacle to the development of independent skills:



Organization is often difficult for students, and the challenge of understanding demands and developing a plan of action may overwhelm or immobilize a student with ASD. Collecting all of the needed materials to complete an assignment may be a complicated organizational demand for a student with ASD.

- **Distractibility** caused by internal or external factors may also hamper a student's ability to complete work on his/her own. Students with ASD may have difficulty prioritizing the visual and auditory information in their environment, which may interfere with their independence.
- **Sequencing** can hinder a student's ability to become independent, as the relationships between tasks or steps may not be meaningful and may be disregarded by a student with autism. Remembering the exact order of tasks, or steps within a task, may be challenging for students.

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“I CAN DO IT MYSELF” CONTINUED...

- **Generalization** difficulties are also discussed by Mesibov as a potential impediment to independence. Students with ASD may perform a task independently in one situation or setting, yet may not apply what they have learned in a novel situation. Students may miss the central principles of an activity, instead focusing on the specific details.
- **Independent** initiation is also difficult for students with ASD, especially during lengthy sequences of activities. A student may have learned to complete the routine in the cafeteria, yet still require prompts to initiate each part of the routine (i.e. get the tray, select the drink, pick up utensils). Individuals with ASD often learn to wait for others to prompt their every move, which results in a lack of independence.

Monitoring the balance between 1:1 instruction and assistance with the awareness that the development of over-reliance may occur is essential when instructing students with ASD. Several studies have shown that students with ASD are not able to continue productive and appropriate responding with the removal of close adult supervision (Dunlap & Johnson, 1985; Dunlap, Koegel, & Johnson, 1987; Stahmer & Shreibman, 1992). Further research indicates that without the reinforcers or contingencies provided by adults, students with ASD have difficulty maintaining independent on-task behavior (Dunlap & Johnson, 1985; Dunlap, Koegel, & Johnson, 1987).

Work Systems to Increase Independence

A work system is a strategy that addresses independence as an essential outcome for students with ASD. A work system, an element of structured teaching, is defined by Division TEACCH® as a systematic and organized presentation of tasks and materials that visually communicates at least four pieces of information to the student (Schopler, Mesibov, & Hearsey, 1995):

1. **The tasks/steps the student is supposed to do.** What is the nature of the task? Does it involve sorting by shape, writing an address, making popcorn, or recycling cans?
2. **How many tasks/steps there are to be completed.** Visually represent how much work is to be done. If a student is to cut 10 coupons, give only 10 coupons so he/she can visualize completion. Steps may be represented by more abstract cues such as numbers, shapes, poker chips, or pictures of high interest items, such as Thomas the Train cars.
3. **How the student knows he/she is finished.** The student should independently recognize the end of the activity through the structure within the task, use of a finished box, timer, or other visual cue such as a stop sign.
4. **What to do when he/she is finished.** Indicate next scheduled activity. May need to use a highly desired item/activity to increase motivation, though often being “finished” is motivating enough.

While a picture schedule directs a student **WHERE TO GO**, a work system instructs a student on **WHAT TO DO** once they arrive in the scheduled area. In our own lives, a daily planner may direct us to the grocery store (our schedule), while our grocery list informs us what to do/buy while at the store (our work system). A work system provides all of the required information without adult prompting and teaches the student to attend to visual cues (rather than verbal directives) when completing a task. A work system assists in organizing a student with ASD by providing a systematic work routine—working from left-to-right or top-to-bottom. Students do not have to plan where to begin or how to proceed. Work systems can be used with any type of task or activity (e.g., academic, self-help, leisure), across settings (e.g., independent work area, cafeteria, place of employment), and for individuals at all functioning levels (e.g., systems can range from concrete to abstract).

Continued on page 9.

“I CAN DO IT MYSELF” CONTINUED...

For example:

Activity: Practice mastered academic tasks (e.g., filing by letter, sorting by color, answering math problems)

Setting: Independent Work Area

Functioning Level: Concrete (using objects)



CD box is
behind the
final task.

Photo 1-Left to Right Work System

For a student that has several academic activities to practice independently, the teacher will arrange them in baskets/folders on a shelf to the student's left. At the end of the row of baskets is a computer CD box, indicating that the computer is the next scheduled activity. The student will complete the first activity and put it in a box/shelf for finished work on the right, then move to the second activity. When all that is left on the shelf is the CD box, the student will transition with the CD box to the computer. (See photo 1)



"What's Next"
Activity

Photo 2- Matching Picture Work System

This system may be adapted for a student with higher level work skills by indicating that the work tasks should be completed in a sequential order. For example, the student has a strip of shapes velcroed to his work space. He has multiple work tasks located on a shelf to his left. To complete tasks in his matching work system, he takes off the square and matches it to the square located on one of the work jobs. This is the task he must complete first. He continues matching shapes to tasks in order to complete the activities in a specified sequential order. When the shapes are matched and the tasks are completed, he takes the photo cue directing him to the next activity (snack). (See photo 2)

Activity: Hand washing

Setting: Bathroom

Functioning Level: More abstract (using icons)

For a student that requires prompting and assistance with the hand washing sequence, a work system can be created for use in the bathroom. Each step of the routine is indicated visually, and as the student completes each step, the icon is placed in the "Finished Pocket." When the steps are completed and all of the icons are in the pocket, the student knows that hand washing is finished, and is directed to the next activity (e.g., go to the table). (See photo 3)

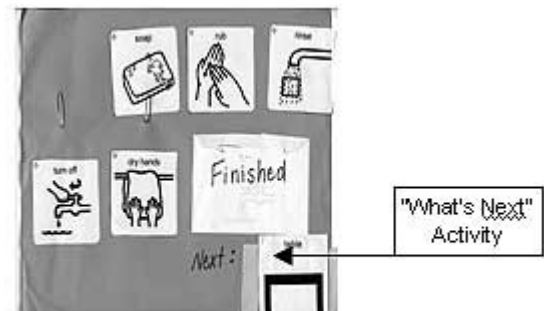


Photo 3- Hand washing icon work system

Continued on page 10.

“I CAN DO IT MYSELF” CONTINUED...

Activity: Art

Setting: Group Area

Functioning Level: Abstract (following written directions)

For a student that has difficulty following group directions, and sequencing steps to a complex project, a written work system can be used. A written list of the steps required in sequential order, as well as an explicit notion of finished and the next activity, increases independence and task completion. (See photo 4)

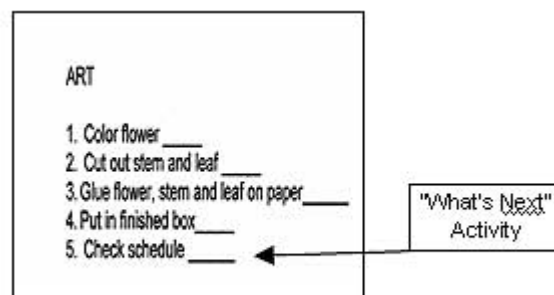


Photo 4: Written work system

Experience with the use of work systems has shown that a student's overall productivity increases when he/she understands how much work there is to do, as well as when it is finished, and what activity is upcoming. Use of work systems help students with ASD become more organized, more attentive, and more capable in carrying their skills across settings independently. Work systems reduce the number of adult prompts and the use of contingencies and reinforcers, as the structure of the system provides motivation and meaning to the students.

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING WORK SYSTEMS

- Provide only the materials the student will need for the specific task/activity to decrease confusion.
- Use work systems in a variety of settings (e.g., circle time, social groups, playground, home, doctor visits) to increase generalization across location and adults.
- Teach the work system with minimally invasive prompts so the adult/prompts do not become part of the work routine (e.g., prompt nonverbally, direct students to visual cues, prompt from behind so adult is not part of the student's visual field, fade prompts as quickly as possible to maximize independence).
- Create smaller, more portable work systems (e.g. in a notebook, file box) for students who travel to different settings throughout the school day.
- Incorporate student's interests in the visual cues used in the works system (e.g., students can match pictures of SpongeBob on their work system).

<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/articles/i-can-do-it-myself-21-using-work-systems-to-build-independence-in-students-with-autism-spectrum-disorders.html>



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BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Chantal Sicile-Kira
Jeremy Sicile-Kira

Foreword by Temple Grandin

A Full Life with Autism

From Learning to Forming Relationships
to Achieving Independence



A Full Life with Autism: From Learning to Forming Relationships to Achieving Independence

by Chantal Sicile-Kira and Jeremy Sicile-Kira

This truly impressive book by Chantal Sicile-Kira and her son Jeremy, who is in his early 20s and autistic, will serve as an invaluable resource not only for families who have a child or young adult with autism but also for the professionals who work with these families. ***A Full Life with Autism*** vividly brings to life not only the challenges and stresses faced by young adolescents and adults on the autism spectrum, but also steps that can be taken to assist these individuals to become more independent, successful, and resilient. Even if your child has not reached adolescence, families will learn strategies for the road ahead. The authors offer real solutions to a host of difficult questions, including how young adults of different abilities and their parents can:

- Navigate the economy where adult service resources are scarce
- Cope with the difficulties of living apart from the nuclear family
- Find and keep a job that provides meaning, stability and an income
- Create and sustain fulfilling relationships

an instant help book for teens

the asd independence workbook

transition skills for teens &
young adults with autism



* improve
social skills

* succeed at
school & work

* live
independently

FRANCIS TABONE, PhD
Foreword by JUDITH NEWMAN

The ASD Independence Workbook

by Francis Tabone, PhD

The ASD Independence Workbook offers powerful skills to help teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder successfully navigate the skills required for daily living and integration into their communities. This easy-to-follow and engaging workbook is designed to help young adults, ages fourteen and up, develop invaluable communication skills and practice with interactions they would encounter in everyday life. Teens will also find information on topics that are imperative for a successful transition into adulthood—including health and safety, self-care, and more. This unique book not only focuses on what adaptive skills are needed in the real world, but also gives teens with ASD the ability to practice these skills, either independently or with a teacher/caregiver.

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Linn Benton Lincoln ESD
Cascade Regional Inclusive Services
Autism Program

905 4th Ave SE
Albany, Or. 97321
Tel: 541-812-2600
Fax: 541-926-6047
E-mail: webmaster@lblesd.k12.or.us

Autism Consultants:

Skye McCloud-
skye.mccloud@lblesd.k12.or.us
541-336-2012

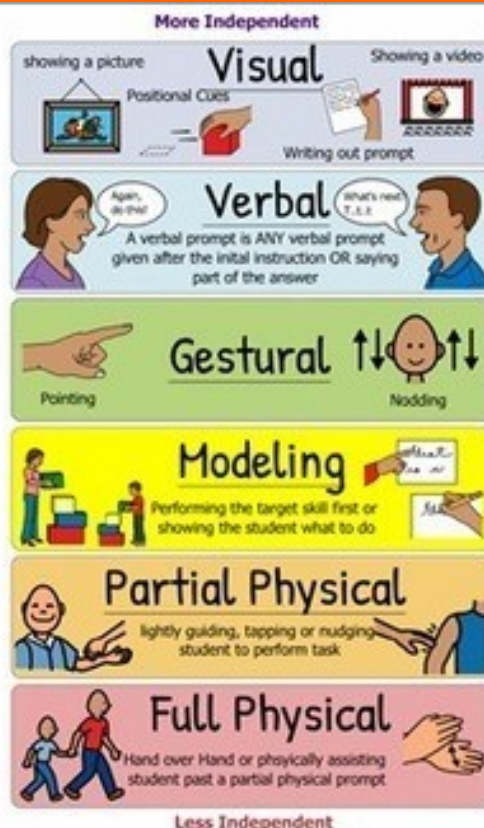
Ryan Stanley-
ryan.stanley@lblesd.k12.or.us
541-812-2773

Amanda Stenberg-
amanda.stenberg@lblesd.k12.or.us
541-812-2676

Scott Bradley-
scott.bradley@lblesd.k12.or.us

Michelle Neilson-
michelle.neilson@lblesd.k12.or.us
541-812-2678

VISUALS



30 Day Life Skills Challenge

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Learn how to load and unload the washing machine. Day 1	Make your bed. Day 2	Learn to wrap a gift. Day 3	Cook a new meal from whatever you have in the fridge. Day 4	Make your own breakfast. Day 5
Learn to tie your shoelaces. Day 6	Learn to stitch a button. Day 7	Learn to tell the time in both digital and analogue clock. Day 8	Set a dinner table for your family. Day 9	Sort the recyclable bins. Day 10
Make a cucumber or cheese sandwich. Day 11	Wash a dish or pot. Day 12	Learn to use a knife and fork. Day 13	Read a book and act out a scene from it. Day 14	Girls: Learn to plait hair. Boys: Do a cool hairstyle. Day 15
Clean your bedroom. Day 16	Know your full name, phone number and complete home address. Day 17	Learn how to use a vacuum cleaner. Day 18	Plant a herb and take care until it grows. Day 19	Hang the clothes out to dry. Day 20
Dress yourself. Day 21	Hang clothes on a hanger. Day 22	Learn to fold clothes. Day 23	Mop one room in your house. Day 24	Clean your kitchen shelves. Day 25
Peel vegetables safely. Day 26	Know who to call in an emergency. Day 27	Iron a pillowcase and put it on the pillow. Day 28	Know when to call 911 for emergency services. Day 29	Tidy your toys. Day 30

The LBL ESD Autism Agenda Newsletter is a compilation of national and regional resources designed to support families and school teams. Every effort is made to provide accurate and complete information in the LBL ESD Autism Agenda Newsletter; however, LBL ESD cannot guarantee that there will be no errors. For example, some of the content within curated resources from across the nation may not apply to Oregon. LBL ESD does not assume any legal liability for any direct, indirect or any other loss or damage of any kind for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, product, or process disclosed herein, and do not represent that use of such information, product, or process would not infringe on privately owned rights.