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Autism Agenda

**Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program**

Visuals for Autism: Who needs to change?

Blog by Linda Hodgdon

Visuals for autism is my passion. I'm obsessed.

Communication is a critically important element for relationships and life success. But for as long as I've been preaching this message of visuals for autism, I still don't think enough people "get it." Or they get a part of the problem but not the whole situation.

The part they are missing is the most important part.

You can't assume

Not enough educators and parents (communication partners) understand the real "root problem" with communication for students with autism. As communication partners, they just assume what they say is clear. And they assume any communication breakdowns are the "fault" of the student.

If educators and parents use visual supports, their goal is to "fix" the student. This seems like a reasonable goal. But the situation is more complex than that.

Continued on page 2.

VISUALS FOR AUTISM: WHO NEEDS TO CHANGE CONTINUED....

Important facts you can't ignore

As we “unpack” the complexity of communication, we need to understand the challenges our students experience and how visual tools impact them.

It's an attention thing

It's common for these students to have issues with establishing attention, shifting attention and/or maintaining attention. It's not every student and it's not all the time. But issues related to attention affect their ability to effectively participate in communication interactions. (And it's not just autism. Think of ADHD as another example.)

BUT....

Visual tools change the situation. Speech is transient. That means it moves. Speech disappears immediately after it is spoken. In fact, the spoken words can actually be completely gone before the student's brain even registers that you said something. When we use visuals for autism, those visual tools remain present as long as necessary for the student to focus his attention and then take in the information. The visuals help the student focus attention more quickly.

It's an understanding thing

Verbal communication is complex. It's not just the words that are spoken. Comprehension is dependent on understanding vocabulary, body language, inferences, vocal inflection and many more elements that work together to create meaning. Our students with ASD typically experience difficulty interpreting all this information. Again, not every student and not all the time, but this is a common problem.

BUT.....

Pictures and other visual tools enhance understanding. They provide a unique function by simplifying the communication message. They communicate a simple but consistent message every time they are used.

It's a consistency thing

A student has multiple communication partners in his or her life. Each has their own communication style, vocabulary and personality. Sorting through the differences can be a challenge for everyone, not just our students with special communication needs. But all those variations in the social world add another “layer” of difficulty for our students on the autism spectrum.

BUT.....

When multiple people use the same visual tools to support their communication, it creates a form of consistency among them. The best visual tools have the words that are said written on them. When communication partners all use the same terminology, it simplifies the communication environment.

Another explanation of visuals for autism

Lydia, a Speech Pathologist who is a long-time supporter of visual strategies, explained in a different way how visual strategies affect the communication environment.

I have found when working with teachers, paraprofessionals and others that using visual strategies helps our own language we use with students who experience communication challenges.

Continued on page 3.



VISUALS FOR AUTISM: WHO NEEDS TO CHANGE CONTINUED....

Pictures are usually paired with a written, succinct, concrete phrase. These words and phrases become part of a lexicon that becomes established among ALL adults working with the student. It eliminates "wordy" and indirect language. So instead of adults using varied phrases, this gives a team common language.

For example, classroom staff might use various phrases but once there is an icon with the words "check your schedule" now the whole staff consistently uses that phrase.

It is very difficult for adults to adjust their communication for students who have language processing issues. The use of visual strategies serves as a guide and a strong visual reminder to the adults to consistently use specific language.

What is the goal?

Visuals are not the goal. Better communication is. Visual tools help us reach that goal.

Who needs to change?

This is where it can become confusing. Of course, we want our students to improve their communication skills. But visuals for autism is not just about changing students. If communication partners (teachers, lunch ladies, bus drivers, parents and all of those who interact with these students) make some changes, that can result in major benefit for students. Then everyone wins.

<https://usevisualstrategies.com/visuals-for-autism-who-needs-to-change/>

Don't be afraid of autism gestures

(a clip of another blog By Linda Hodgdon)

Here's what research tells us about gestures*

1. Gestures are a significant part of communication development, creating a bridge between pre-verbal communication and speech.
2. Gestures enhance the child's communication ability. They create communication before the child can speak.
3. There is a positive correlation between parent gesture and child gesture. Parents who use more gestures tend to have children who use more gestures.
4. When children use more gestures they tend to get more verbal feedback from their parents (which stimulates their verbal development).
5. Early child gesture predicts later child vocabulary. Those who use more gestures at about 14 months demonstrate larger vocabularies at 54 months.
6. Children spontaneously produce gestures along with their speech, just like adults do.
7. Parents are often reluctant to encourage gesturing in their children with communication delays because they fear the child will not put forth the effort to verbalize.
8. Encouraging the use of gestures will not hinder the development of verbalization. Rather, using gestures can facilitate and encourage speech development.
9. There is quite a bit of research describing the relationship between gestures and language development of typically developing children. Less is known about development of the gesture-language system of children who experience language delay or communication disorders.
10. The use of gestures to support communication continues even after children develop verbal language. Gestures are an important part of the communication system even for adults.



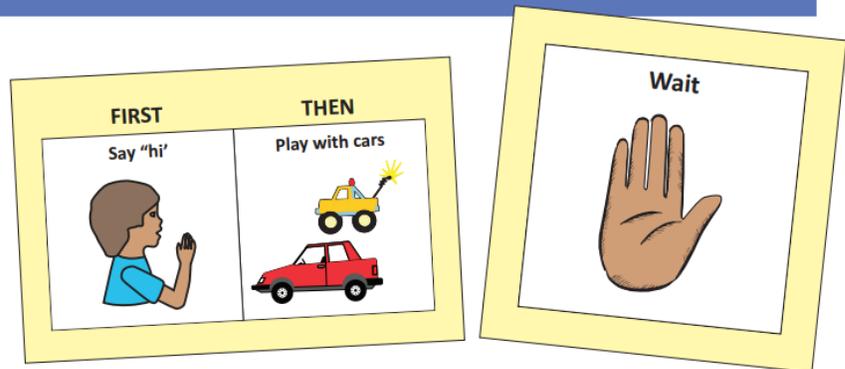
Please go to the following link for the entire Blog Article: <https://usevisualstrategies.com/dont-be-afraid-of-autism-gestures/>

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.

Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorders

Introduction

What are visual supports? A visual support refers to using a picture or other visual item to communicate with a child who has difficulty understanding or using language. Visual supports can be photographs, drawings, objects, written words, or lists. Research has shown that visual supports work well as a way to communicate.



Visual supports are used with children who have autism spectrum disorders (ASD) for two main purposes. They help parents communicate better with their child, and they help their child communicate better with others.

This brochure introduces parents, caregivers, and professionals to visual supports and provides instruction on how to use them effectively. Visual supports can be used with persons of any age, although this brochure refers to children. Also, visual supports can be used by caregivers other than parents.

Why are visual supports important? The main features of ASD are challenges in interacting socially, using language, and having limited interests or repetitive behaviors. Visual supports help in all three areas.

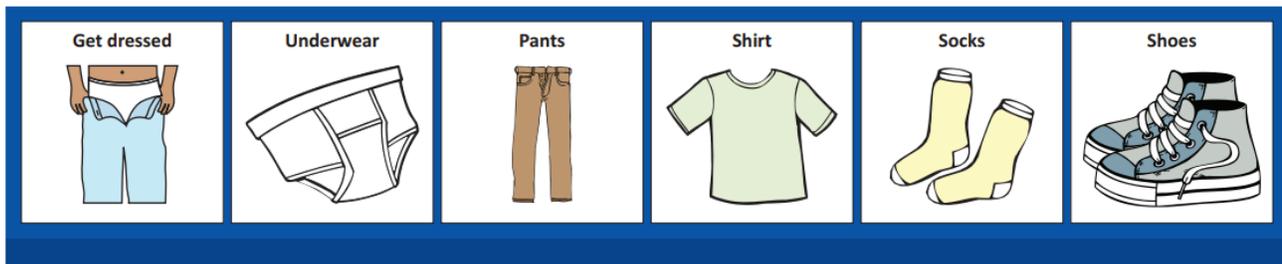
First, children with ASD may not understand social cues as they interact with others in daily activities. They may not grasp social

expectations, like how to start a conversation, how to respond when others make social approaches, or how to change behavior based on unspoken social rules. Visual supports can help teach social skills and help children with ASD use them on their own in social situations.

Second, children with ASD often find it difficult to understand and follow spoken instructions. They may not be able to express well what they want or need. Visuals can help parents communicate what they expect. This decreases frustration and may help decrease problem behaviors that result from difficulty communicating. Visuals can promote appropriate, positive ways to communicate.

Finally, some children with ASD are anxious or act out when their routines change or they are in unfamiliar situations. Visuals can help them understand what to expect and will happen next and also reduce anxiety. Visuals can help them pay attention to important details and help them cope with change.

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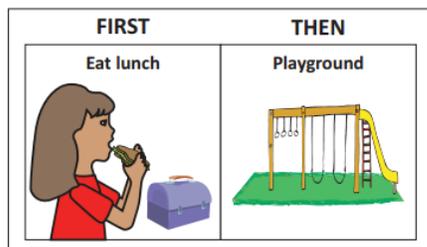


VISUAL SUPPORTS AND AUTISM DISORDERS CONTINUED...

First – Then Board

❑ What is it?

A First-Then Board is a visual display of something your child prefers that will happen after completing a task that is less preferred.



❑ When is it helpful?

A First-Then Board is helpful in teaching children with ASD to follow directions and learn new skills. A First-Then Board motivates them to do activities that they do not like and clarifies when they can do what they like. A First-Then Board lays the language foundation needed to complete multi-step directions and activities and to use more complex visual systems.

❑ How do I teach it and use it?

Decide what task you want your child to complete first (what goes in the “first” box) and the preferred item or activity (what goes in the “then” box) that your child can have immediately after the “first” task is done. This preferred item/activity should be motivating enough to increase the likelihood that your child will follow your direction.

Put the visuals on the board (e.g., photos, drawings, written words) that represent the activity you identified. Present the board to the child with a brief, verbal instruction. Try to use the least amount of words possible. For example, before beginning the “first” task, say, “First, put on shoes, then swing.” If needed, refer to the board while your child is doing the task. For example, say “One more shoe, then swing” when your child is almost done.

When the “first” task is completed, refer back to the board. For example, say “All done putting on shoes, now swing!” and immediately provide the preferred, reinforcing item or activity.

In order to teach children with ASD the value of the First-Then Board, you must give them the reinforcing activity or item after they complete the “first” task. Otherwise, your child may not trust the board the next time you use it.

❑ What if challenging behaviors occur?

If challenging behaviors occur, continue by physically prompting your child to complete the “first” task. Keep your focus on the task rather than on the challenging behavior. Then it is important to still provide the reinforcing item or activity, since the focus of the board

is on completing the “first” task, and not on addressing challenging behaviors.

If you think challenging behaviors may happen, begin by introducing the First-Then Board for a task that your child usually completes willingly and successfully. If challenging behaviors become more difficult to control, it may be appropriate to consider behavioral consultation with a professional to address these behaviors directly.

Visual Schedule

❑ What is it?

A visual schedule is a visual representation of what is going to happen throughout the day or within a task or activity.

❑ When is it helpful?

A visual schedule is helpful for breaking down a task that has multiple steps to ensure the teaching and compliance of those steps. It is also helpful in decreasing anxiety and rigidity surrounding transitions by communicating when certain activities will occur throughout the day or part of the day.

❑ How do I teach it and use it?

After your child understands the concept of sequencing activities through the use of a First-Then Board, you can develop a more complex schedule for a series of activities during the day.

Decide the activities that you will picture in the schedule. Choose activities that really will happen in that particular order. Try to mix in preferred activities with non-preferred ones.

Put on the schedule the visuals (e.g., photos, drawings, written words) that show the activities that you have identified. The schedule can be portable, for example, on a binder or clipboard, or it can be fixed to a permanent place, like a refrigerator or wall. Your child should be able to see the schedule before beginning the first activity on the schedule. It should continue to be visible to your child during the rest of the activities.

When it is time for an activity on the schedule to occur, cue your child with a brief, verbal instruction. For example, say “Check the schedule.” This helps your child pay attention as the next activity begins. At first, you may need to physically guide your child to check the schedule (e.g., gently guide by shoulders and prompt your child to point to the next activity on the schedule). You can gradually decrease physical prompts as your child begins to use the schedule more independently.

When a task is completed, cue your child to check the schedule again, using the procedure described above, and transition to the next activity.

VISUAL SUPPORTS AND AUTISM DISORDERS CONTINUED...



Provide praise and/or other positive reinforcement to your child for following the schedule and for transitioning to and completing activities on the schedule. It may be helpful to use a timer that your child can hear to make transition times clear to your child.

Mix variability into the schedule by introducing a symbol that represents an unknown activity (e.g., "oops" or "surprise activity"). Begin to teach this concept by pairing this with a positive activity or surprise. Gradually use this for unexpected changes in the schedule.

❑ What if challenging behaviors occur?

If challenging behaviors occur, continue by physically prompting your child to complete the task that is occurring. Keep your focus on the task rather than on the challenging behavior. Then transition to the next activity as communicated by the schedule and still provide the reinforcing item or activities indicated on the schedule, since the focus of the schedule is on completing the tasks, and not on addressing challenging behaviors.

If you think challenging behaviors may happen, begin by introducing the visual schedule during tasks that your child usually completes willingly and successfully. If challenging behaviors become more difficult to control, it may be appropriate to consider behavioral consultation with a professional to address these behaviors directly.

Visually Setting Parameters

❑ What is it?

Setting parameters involves using visuals to set clear boundaries around items or activities and to communicate basic expected behaviors, like waiting.

❑ When is it helpful?

Visually setting parameters is helpful in communicating limits that are part of an activity and that may seem unclear to your child. Some examples of situations where this might be useful follow. Communicate physical boundaries of an area or activity, for example, use a "stop" sign to mark where to stop in the backyard. Or show how much of an item or activity is available before it is gone. For example, place a "not available" picture on the computer when it is not time to play on the computer. Or place pictures of 3 juice boxes on the refrigerator and remove or cover one each time

juice is given. Show the need to wait for something that is delayed but will be available soon, for example, by providing a "wait" card paired with a timer.



❑ How do I teach it and use it?

Begin to teach the use of these visuals in situations that have clear, defined, brief parameters. As your child understands these visuals better, gradually increase their use in more long-term activities and with more abstract parameters.

❑ Examples:

Physical boundaries: Place the visual on physical boundaries that already are defined (e.g., a door) and refer to it when the rule is followed. For example, when your child stops at the door, point to the stop sign and say, "Stop." Give praise or reinforcement for complying with this parameter. After you have taught the concept, use the same visual during other activities or in other settings where the same boundary is needed but is not as clear, such as a "Stop" sign on the playground.

Limited availability: Decide the number of times or length of time that the item or activity is available. Indicate that through the visual, for example, 3 pictures of a juice box on the refrigerator to indicate that 3 juice boxes are allowed that day. After the item or activity has been used or done, show the change by using the visual, for example, cross out or remove one of the juice box pictures. When the item is no longer available, use the visual to show this. For example, show your child that there are no more pictures of juice on the refrigerator after they have used them all.

Wait: Begin by presenting the symbol for "wait" for a very brief amount of time before your child can have a preferred item or activity. It may help to pair the use of the "wait" symbol with a timer. Have your child trade the "wait" card for the item or activity. For example, when your child asks for a snack, hand your child the "wait" card, set the timer for 10 seconds, and then praise your child's waiting and trade the snack for the "wait" card.

VISUAL SUPPORTS AND AUTISM DISORDERS CONTINUED...

As your child learns to use visuals for setting parameters, gradually increase the length of time or the number of situations in which your child is expected to wait for items or activities.

What if challenging behaviors occur?

If you think that challenging behaviors may occur, introduce these parameters during less difficult situations or begin with simple expectations.

If problem behaviors occur, be consistent with the parameters you have set. Focus on praising any aspects of the parameters that are being followed, rather than shifting your focus to the challenging behaviors.

Using visual supports can help you and your child with ASD communicate and manage everyday activities in positive ways.

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Resources for Using Visual Supports:

- www.do2learn.com
- card.ufl.edu/content/visual.html
- www.kidaccess.com/index.html
- Eckenrode, L., Fennell, P., & Hearsey, K. (2004). *Tasks Galore for the Real World*. Raleigh, NC: Tasks Galore.

Resources on Autism Spectrum Disorders:

- Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (TRIAD)**, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, is dedicated to improving assessment and treatment services for children with autism spectrum disorders and their families, while advancing knowledge and training. For information on TRIAD and Vanderbilt autism services and resources:

Vanderbilt Autism Resource Line

Local (615) 322-7565

Toll free (1-877) ASD-VUMC [273-8862]

Email: autismresources@vanderbilt.edu

TRIAD Outreach and Training

(615) 936-1705

Web: triad.vanderbilt.edu

- Tennessee Disability Pathfinder**, a free information and referral service for all types of disabilities, all ages, provides information on autism resources external to Vanderbilt. Local (615) 322-8529, (1-800) 640-4636. Web: www.familypathfinder.org
- Local chapters of the **Autism Society of America (ASA)** (www.autism-society.org) provide information, support, and advocacy for individuals with ASD and their families.

Autism Society of Middle Tennessee

Phone: (615) 385-2077, (866) 508-4987

Email: asmt@tnautism.org

Web: www.tnautism.org

Autism Society of the Mid South

Phone: (901) 542-2767

Email: autismsocietymidsouth@yahoo.com

Web: www.autismsocietymidsouth.org

Autism Society of East Tennessee

Phone: (865) 247-5082

Email: asaetc@gmail.com

- Autism Speaks** (www.autismspeaks.org/) provides resources and support for individuals with ASD and their families.

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.

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR MAKING VISUALS

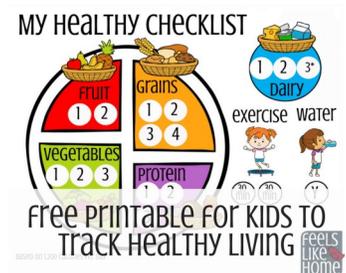
Module 3b

Handout 3b.2: Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals

Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals to Support Young Children with Challenging Behavior

Why Use Visual Strategies

1. Visual strategies can be used to prevent challenging behavior.
2. Visual strategies are helpful in supporting and increasing both receptive and expressive communication.
3. Just as adults use calendars, grocery lists, and “to do” lists to enhance memory, children also benefit from visual reminders.
4. Visuals are static, meaning that they remain present after words are spoken. Children can refer to them once the spoken words are no longer present. Visuals serve as a reminder of the verbal direction.
5. Visuals assist children in knowing exactly what is expected of them (e.g., washing hands independently, cleaning up toys).
6. Regular routines, when represented visually, can be taught to children at a very young age. Once taught, the adult can fade out of the routine and allow the child to self-monitor the routine to completion.
7. For many children, visual supports are most beneficial when used in conjunction with spoken language and/or sign language.
8. Visuals can act as a cue to teach appropriate behavior or new skills for children who are having challenging behavior.



TIPS AND IDEAS FOR MAKING VISUALS CONTINUED...

Picture Tips

1. Remember that children communicate and understand at **different levels**.
2. Determine your child's "**visual stage**" (or combination of):
 - **Object Stage:** use of actual objects and items for communication needs.
 - **Photo Stage:** use of real photographs (photo, digital, scanned, magazines, catalogs, coupon ads, Izone Camera, which prints out mini "Polaroid" pictures with adhesive on the back side of the picture) for communication needs.
 - **Picture Symbolic Stage:** use of colored line drawings (hand drawn or commercially produced) for communication needs.
 - **Line Drawing Stage:** use of black and white line drawings (hand drawn or commercially produced) for communication needs.
 - **Text Stage:** use of written words and/or numbers for communication needs.
3. Use **written text** along with photographs, pictures, and line drawings to promote reading. Written text also assures that everyone interacting with the child uses the same language for a particular item.
4. Present visuals from **left to right** if your child can scan horizontally. Horizontal orientation will also prepare the child for reading. *Note: Some children are vertical scanners. In this case, present visuals from top to bottom.*
5. **Photographing tips:**
Place item or object on a **solid/high contrasting background** when taking photo.
*Note: If you are trying to communicate "go potty" and you take a photo of the toilet, try to avoid including the bathtub in the picture. The child may focus on the tub instead of the intended picture of the toilet. Try to take the photograph from the **child's perspective**.*
6. **Preparing the picture visuals:**
 - Remember to make the "picture" sturdy, **easy to handle**, and durable.
 - Either print on cardstock, or glue to a file folder, then cover with contact paper or laminate.
7. **Pictures** can be obtained from a variety of places:
Photographs, camera, digital images, computer scanning, magazines, catalogs, coupons, advertisements, Izone Camera, Internet sites, commercial computer programs, etc.

Picture Symbols & Line Drawings: computer scanning, magazines, catalogs, coupon ads, Internet sites, commercial computer programs, coloring books and dittos, hand drawn pictures, etc.

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR MAKING VISUALS CONTINUED...

Module 3b

Handout 3b.2: Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals



Boardmaker® activity picture choices on file folder.

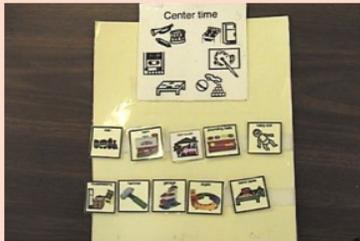
Banjo



Shaker



Digital Camera



Combination of downloaded Boardmaker® and Internet pictures on a center choice poster board



Snack choices with pictures from food containers and coupon advertisements.

Choice Charts

1. Allowing for choice making gives children **opportunities for socially appropriate power and control**.
2. **Give choices** at every opportunity possible. ("Do you want the blue cup or the red cup?")
3. If you don't have a visual that represents a particular choice, **use the actual item** or a representation of the choices (e.g., food choice, art materials, toy pieces, video choices).
4. When first introducing choices, **start with 2 or 3 choices**; then, gradually over time and communication progress, increase the amount of choices offered at one time.
5. Examples of **Choice Boards** commonly used (Start with one category at a time):
 - Foods & Drinks
 - Toy Choices
 - Activity Choices (tickle game, chase, computer, swim)
 - Places (restaurants, library, stores, park, beach)
 - Material Choices (such as for art: colors, utensils, media)
 - Clothing & Shoes
 - Actions (stop, do, sit, eat, drink, sleep, do it again, my turn, take a break)
 - People
 - Songs
6. Choice Boards or Charts need to be placed in a location that is **accessible to the child** (at eye level and within reach) for quick and easy use.
7. **Incorporate a child's preference**, when possible, in choice charts and choice making. For instance, if the child likes "Blue's Clues," place "Blue's Clues" stickers along the border to increase attention (unless it is distracting).

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR MAKING VISUALS CONTINUED...

Module 3b

Handout 3b.2: Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals



Binder with schedule pictures from catalog and glued on index cards



Class photo schedule



Boardmaker® schedule pictures with removable miniatures to carry while transitioning from one location to another



Mini photo album for carrying visuals

How to Make a Visual Schedule

1. **Gather Materials:** Scissors, glue stick, poster board, clear contact paper, Velcro, pictures (photographs, pictures from magazines, computer programs, cereal boxes, household supplies, restaurant napkins, placemats, wrappers, etc.) *TIP: Every picture should have a label so the child can associate the written text with the picture.*
2. **Choose pictures** for the schedule you wish to create. Keep in mind that a visual schedule is used to assist children with transitions and anticipating activities throughout the day. It can be as specific or as general as the children may need, and can be for various amounts of time. For example, a visual schedule may outline parts of a day, half-day, or an entire day.
3. **Cut** your pictures and poster board squares the same size. Keep in mind your child's developmental level (see "Picture Tips" to determine your child's visual picture stage).
4. **Glue** the pictures on poster board squares for durability.
5. **Laminate or cover** the pictures with clear contact paper.
6. **Velcro** a small piece of Velcro on the back center of each picture. *TIP: Always use the same type of Velcro for pictures and the opposite kind for the schedule board.*
7. **Create a strip** to hold the schedule. Cut out poster board long enough to hold all the pictures for the block of time you are creating a schedule.

You may create a pocket at the bottom/end that represents "finished" or "all done." *TIP: If your child visually tracks up and down, you will want the schedule to be vertical. If your child visually tracks from side to side, you will want to make a horizontal schedule (horizontal schedules promote reading skills). Laminate the strip, and place a long piece of Velcro down the center.*

8. **Velcro** the pictures to the schedule in the order they will occur. Teach the child how to use the schedule by explaining and modeling how to use the pictures. Remember to always include changes in the schedule and to review them with the child. When setting up the schedule, you can either turn the pictures over as you move through the schedule to indicate that the activity is finished, or you can remove the picture entirely from the schedule, and place it in a pocket with the word "finished" on it. If you are going to turn over the picture as you complete each schedule item, make sure to put Velcro on the front without covering the picture/text. This will enable the picture to adhere to the Velcro strip, and then once the day is complete, you can easily set up the schedule for the next day by turning all the cards back over to show the pictures.
9. **Use the schedule!** Keep the schedule located in a convenient place at the child's eye level, to promote consistent use. Use the schedule as part of your routine.
10. **Celebrate!** Be sure to celebrate your success and the child's success. Acknowledge the child for following the schedule appropriately! Good luck!

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR MAKING VISUALS CONTINUED...

Module 3b

Handout 3b.2: Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals



Microsoft Clipart® pictures on a simple 2 step transition "First/Then" board.



Activities pictured on the left side represent 2 activities within circle time, then the bold line represents the transition to the next place.



Activities pictured on the left side represent a mini schedule of activities prior to the transition to the activity pictured on the right.



Schedule pictured on the left side represent activities within circle time, then the bold line represents the transition to the next place.

How to Make a First/Then Board

A First/Then board can be used to communicate a sequence of events or to reinforce completion of a non-preferred activity. A First/Then board can be used in a variety of ways:

- Assist with transition from one activity to another.
- Assist in completing non-preferred tasks by reinforcing with a preferred activity.
- Breaking a large schedule or sequence of events into smaller steps.
- First/Then boards can be broken down into two-step activities. For example, "FIRST clean up, THEN go outside."
- First/Then boards can be broken down into a sequence of steps followed by a reinforcer or the next transition. For example, "FIRST color-cut-glue, THEN computer."

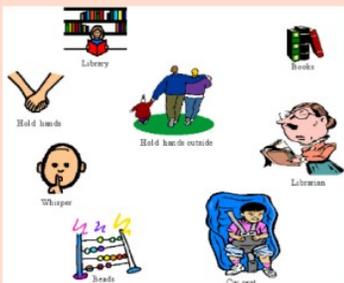
Making the First/Then Board

1. **Gather the materials:** Scissors, glue stick, poster board or file folder, clear contact paper, Velcro, pictures (photographs, pictures from magazines, computer programs, cereal boxes, household supplies, restaurant menus or placemats, wrappers, etc.). *TIP: Every picture should have a label so your child can associate the written text with the picture.*
2. **Collect pictures** to represent activities (refer to section on Picture Tips, (H3b.2, 2/7), to determine your child's visual stage).
3. **Cut the pictures** out and paste on poster board for durability or print on cardstock.
4. **Laminate or cover** in contact paper.
5. **Use a file folder or cut the poster board** large enough to hold several of the pictures. Divide the sections by making a vertical line to separate the first/then sides. Laminate or cover in contact paper.
6. **Velcro** small pieces of Velcro on the back of the pictures. *TIP: Make sure you use the same side of Velcro on all pictures. Next, place a strip of opposite Velcro on both sides of the First/Then board.*
7. As you **use the "First/Then"** board with your child, try to place a reinforcing activity or item on the "then" side of the board. This will increase the likelihood that the child will complete the activities on the "first" side of the board. (See samples.) As each activity is completed, turn the picture over to indicate that the activity is "finished."
8. Once your child successfully follows the First/Then board activities, **change the pictures** according to the activity. When using a First/Then schedule, remember to model the behavior. It shouldn't take long before your child understands the First/Then concept! If your child is not following the First/Then board, consider the visual stage you have selected by referring to the "Picture Tips" section. It is also possible that the activity on the "then" side is not reinforcing for your child.
9. **Celebrate your success!**

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR MAKING VISUALS CONTINUED...

Module 3b

Handout 3b.2: Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals



Other Creative Ideas for Use of Visual Strategies

Routine Activity Sequences

This is an example of the tooth brushing routine in child's home. The pictures are of his brother to increase the likelihood that the child would attend to the visual and also to give his brother a sense of involvement.

Cue Cards

Cue cards are placed on a ring with "stop" on one side and the cue (shown in sample picture) on the other side. The ring of cues could easily be attached to a key ring, necklace, or belt loop for easy access for cuing.

Activity Analysis Using Clip Art

This is an example of the steps to follow when washing hands.

These pictures were placed on small cue cards on a ring to cue a child in the library.

These cues were hand drawn and placed on a ring to use to cue a child at swim lessons.

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR MAKING VISUALS CONTINUED...

Module 3b

Handout 3b.2: Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals



Turn-Taking Charts

Children place their names with pictures on the turn chart to indicate order at the computer. As turn is completed at the sound of a timer, the child places his or her name/picture in the "all done" pocket, and the next child takes a turn.



Reminder Chart

Using the child's preference of traffic signals teachers created, a reminder chart to cue him to "stop computer," "go pee-pee," then "go back to the computer."



Stop Signs

Stop signs can be used on items, cabinets, and doors to help cue children when items or activities are "not a choice." A stop sign is placed on the door to remind children to "Stop and stay inside."



Feeling Charts

Feeling pictures in an easy-to-carry portable book act as a visual reminder when children are trying to express feelings. The child can either point to the appropriate "feeling picture" or say what is being felt.

Other Possible Ideas

Job Charts, Toy/Activity Self Labels, People Locators

[handout2.pdf \(vanderbilt.edu\)](#)

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WHAT ARE VISUAL SUPPORTS?

Why use visual supports?

'Visuals stay, words
 fly away...'

Visuals are
 permanent

Visuals help us with
 changes and
 transitions

Visuals can move
 between people and
 environments

Visuals help to build
 independence

Visuals allow
 children to share
 information

Visuals help children
 to make choices and
 express their wants
 and needs

Visuals provide
 structure for
 children who need it

Visuals help ALL
 children

WHAT ARE VISUAL SUPPORTS CONTINUED...

Ideas for how you can Use Visuals to Support Communication

Starting/Finishing Activities

For some pupils, it is important to know when activities are starting and even more importantly, when they are finishing. This will reduce confusion and support their understanding.



There are lots of different visual supports you can use, depending on a pupil's current understanding, you could have an object signifier, or a sign, or a picture. For example to indicate when something is starting if a pupil is currently using objects you could use a stopwatch, or at picture level a 'Go' sign.



Use the visual with the pupil, and ensure that when the activity is finished, the object or symbol is no longer be visible, as the pupil should associate it with finishing only.

Sequencing

Use a visual timetable to support the pupil to structure their day.

Some pupils might find it easier to only follow two or three parts of a routine e.g. you



could make a 'now and next' board, and have a visual to indicate what is 'now' and what is 'next'. It is often useful to have the 'next' activity as something motivating for the pupil, this encourages them to do

an activity of your choosing first.

Alternatives to this include 'First - Next' boards, which can be expanded to 'First - Next - Then' boards.



Information informed by NHS Forth Valley 'Visual Supports'

WHAT ARE VISUAL SUPPORTS CONTINUED...

Choices

Some pupils need support to make choices and visual supports can help them to choose food, activities etc. Choices promote independence and involve pupils in the decision making process.



Opinions

Pupils can be supported to use visuals to express their opinions. You could make 'like' and 'don't like' symbols/objects/photos and ask the pupil to place them beside the object/activity that you are seeking their opinion on. You can also use gesture e.g. thumbs up, thumbs down.

Emotions

Visual supports can help pupils to express their emotions and tell people how they are feeling. You could draw happy/sad/scared faces, or use photographs, and support the pupil to identify how they are feeling.



Supporting transitions or changes

There are lots of changes happening at the moment and pupils are out of their normal routine. The use of visuals can prepare pupils for changes and help them to understand that there is a change. The use of 'Social Stories' can also support pupil's understanding of transitions, it may be useful to prepare a story for pupils transitioning back to school, using photographs of the school or classroom to support the pupil's understanding. For further information on how to write a social story see: <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx>

Information informed by NHS Forth Valley 'Visual Supports'

WHAT ARE VISUAL SUPPORTS CONTINUED...

Developing Independence in Routines

Help the pupil to develop independence in familiar self-care routines through the use of pictures or objects to signify each step e.g. handwashing routine, toileting routine, putting coat/shoes on. Using visuals to break up the routine helps pupils to learn the sequence of the routine and sustain attention. For some pupils, having visuals to show them what will happen next reduces stress and anxiety as it adds predictability to the task.

Use the visual schedule to help pupils follow the steps necessary to successfully complete a self-care task. You may wish to include photos of the actual materials pupils use, in order to better help him/her understand each step.



Example of washing hands schedule (place at eye level for pupil at sink)

Example of putting on coat schedule (place next mirror/in area where pupil put on coat):



Visuals for self-care activities are available to print off online at:

<http://life-skills.middletownautism.com/strategies/self-care-activities/personal-hygiene/>

Information informed by NHS Forth Valley 'Visual Supports'

[Using-Visuals-to-Support-Communication.pdf \(ncse.ie\)](#) We have included only a portion of this article.

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25 REASONS TO USE VISUAL STRATEGIES

25 Reasons to Use Visual Strategies with Students with Autism

Published August 21, 2009

Autism Digest

Parents and teachers working “in the trenches” with individuals on the autism spectrum know that the expressive and receptive communication challenges these kids typically have can impair learning. Whether it’s social conversation, understanding a written assignment, or being able to decipher more figurative language we all tend to use, if effective communication is our goal, we need to use more than our voices with this population. We need to use visual strategies too!

What are visual strategies? They are anything you can SEE that can help a child better understand the world. Photographs, drawings, a tangible object, a sign or label, a gesture, written notes, or a clock are all visual tools.

Why use them? We use visual tools to accomplish a purpose, and we can use different tools for different purposes. Perhaps we use something visual to help a student understand a situation. Maybe we provide a visual prompt so a student can accomplish a task more independently. Or be more organized. Defining the need guides the decision about what kind of visual tool to use. Identifying the purpose helps us know how to use it.

Is your school or home environment a visual-friendly place? Here are 25 functional areas in which visual tools can help the student with autism or Asperger’s Syndrome.

1- Establish Attention

Looking helps students establish attention better than just listening. Once they have focused their attention, the rest of the communication message can get in.

2- Give Information

How do students get information to answer the who, what, why, where, when questions?

3- Explain Social Situations

The social world can be confusing. People are moving, changing, and often unpredictable. Sharing social information through written as well as verbal avenues helps students process and understand.

4- Give Choices

How do students know the available options? What choices they have? How about options that are not available?

5- Give Structure to the Day

Telling what is happening or what is not happening. Sharing the big picture tends to reduce anxiety.



Continued on page 20.

25 REASONS TO USE VISUAL STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

6- Teach Routines

Following multiple steps in a routine will be easier when the student can see the steps. They will learn a routine faster when they don't make a lot of mistakes guessing or trying to recall what comes next.



7- Organize Materials in the Environment

Where are the things we need? Is it clear where to put supplies away when it is clean-up time?

8- Organize the Space in the Environment

Can the student identify his or her own space to work, play or sit? Which parts of the environment can he use and which parts are "off limits"?

9- Teach New Skills

Learning to operate a new toy or piece of equipment. Learning a new task or academic skill.

10- Support Transitions

Stopping one activity to start another. Moving from one environment to another. Anything that involves a shift or change.

11- Stay on Task

Remembering what the current activity is and staying involved with it until it is completed. Seeing what constitutes 'finished.'

12- Ignore Distractions

Help students consciously focus their attention on desired activities or interactions.

13- Manage Time

How long is five minutes or one hour? How much time is there before a transition in the schedule? Time is invisible. Timers and clocks turn time into something students can see, something concrete and visual.

14- Communicate Rules

People presume students know the rules. That is often not true. Perhaps they don't remember. Or they don't understand. Or they get too impulsive or excited.

15- Assist Students in Handling Change

Prepare for something that is going to change. Preparing students for situations where something will be different from what they normally expect can prevent many problems from occurring.

Continued on page 21.

25 REASONS TO USE VISUAL STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

16- Guide Self-Management

Students need to learn how to manage themselves when they get anxious or encounter a problem.

17- Aid Memory

Remembering what to do or when to do it. Remembering the name of an object or a person. (Think about how many ways you provide cues for yourself for this one!)

18- Speed Up Slow Thinking

Some students have lots of information in their brains, but it takes them a very long time to access it. Visual cues can speed that process.

19- Support Language Retrieval

Did you ever have an experience where you know someone's name but you just can't remember it? Or you know what something is but can't recall the word? Then once you hear it or see it you instantly remember. (The older we are, the worse it becomes!) Students can experience the same challenges in remembering and word retrieval.

20- Provide Structure

Structure means organized and predictable. Many students function better in environments where changes are minimal. Strive for an environment that provides visual organization and information.



21- Learn Vocabulary

Create a personal dictionary with pictures and words of items important in the child's life: people's names, favorite toys or videos, activities or places. Students learn information better when they can access it over and over.

22- Communicate Emotions

Students demonstrate a variety of emotions with their actions. Translating those responses into pictures or written language gives an opportunity to explain, clarify or validate their experience.

23- Clarify Verbal Information

What I understood might not be what you meant. Making it visual helps clarify our conversation. It eliminates confusion.

24- Organize Life Information

Think of phone numbers, calendars, cooking instructions, shopping lists, social security numbers, appointments, etc.

25- Review & Remember

One of the greatest benefits of making something visual is that you can keep it. Verbal language flies away. It disappears. Keeping visual information to review over and over helps students remember and understand.

Giving information to students with autism/AS in a concrete visual form helps them handle the many happenings during a day that can cause confusion or frustration. It gives them the structure necessary to better handle situations that are difficult for them, and helps them participate more independently in their life activities.

Best of all, visual strategies are not just helpful for individuals on the autism spectrum – they're beneficial for all kids and adults. Visual tools reinforce verbal instruction and provide a second channel for learning and retention. Now, that's how I spell S-U-C-C-E-S-S!

[25 Reasons to Use Visual Strategies for Autism - Linda Hodgdon](#)

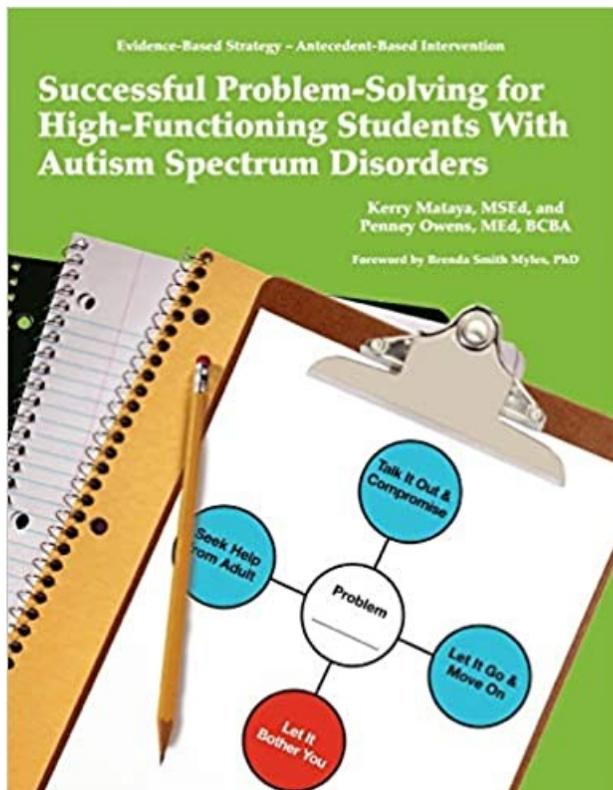
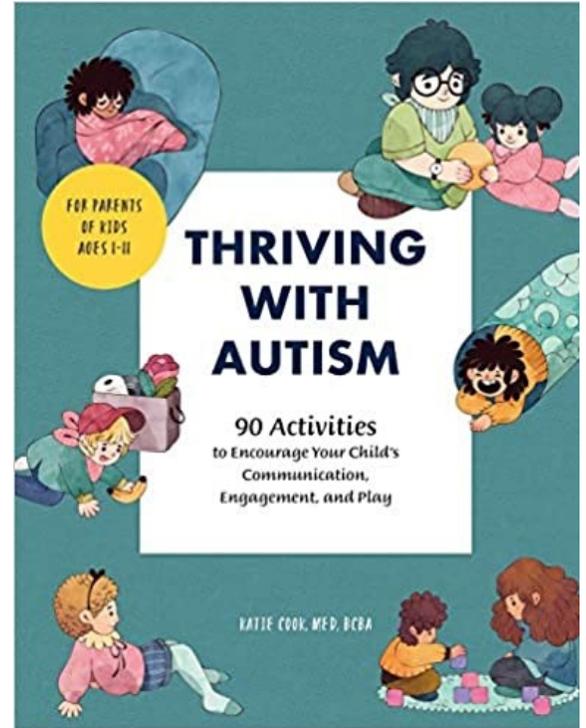
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BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Thriving with Autism: 90 Activities to Encourage Your Child's Communication, Engagement, and Play

by Katie Cook

This resource provides an easy, effective toolbox of evidence-based strategies to supplement and support the developmental work parents and caregivers are doing with their children. These solutions are designed for kids with autism from ages 1 to 11. Featuring exercises like Acts of Friendliness, The Human Burrito, and Emotional Charades, this comprehensive guide encourages children with autism to boost their communication, engagement, social and self-regulation skills.



Successful Problem-Solving for High-Functioning Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

by Kerry Mataya

Many individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have difficulty coming up with effective ways to solve problems. *Successful Problem-Solving for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders* teaches youth how to solve problems in the classroom, home, and community by using a simple rubric. The book's strategy teaches problem-solving and related social skills by building on strength in visual processing.

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VISUALS

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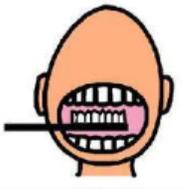
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Brushing Teeth

1	<p>Squeeze toothpaste onto your toothbrush.</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<p>Hold toothbrush under the tap.</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<p>Brush your teeth.</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<p>Spit the toothpaste into the sink.</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<p>Rinse your mouth and smile.</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>yes</p> 	<p>no</p> 	<p>stop</p> 	<p>Help!</p> 
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