

PATIENT INFORMATION

Supporting our Young People with Independence Skills

Visuals (or pictures), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECs), symbols etc. are a great tool to use to support your child with their communication as being able to visualise along with the use of speech can support your child's understanding.

Visual communication aids can also be good for giving your child more time to be able to process what is being requested of them. Spoken word or hand gestures can come and go but with using pictures they remain in focus giving visual feedback. Visuals can also be put into a sequence or routines, they can be broken down to enable a person to learn a skill, or into a story to support and develop understanding around a specific area. Visuals remain the same and allow for identical rehearsal and consistent memory pathways to be created. This can be particularly helpful for parents as it enables you to communicate what you are explaining clearly and consistently. With this rehearsal and memory of sequenced activities comes learning and understanding and ultimately increased confidence and self-esteem. Visuals should be used alongside other forms of communication such as speech, signing and tactile experiences. We can use visuals aids in numerous ways to support communication, some of these include:

Object of reference: - An 'object of reference' is, as the name implies, an object which has a particular meaning associated with it. For example, a fork may be the object of reference for dinner. The object is closely associated with and comes to represent another object, an activity, a person or an event. These objects give the child information about what is going to happen if they are used consistently. They are often used in schools now to represent curriculum activities, or personal care routines, but they can be used at home in the same way. The important thing is that the same objects and methods are used. The objects should have relevance for that pupil, for example, an orange arm band to represent swimming is not suitable if s/he uses a completely different flotation aid.

Objects should be chosen sensitively, particularly with reference to personal care, a nappy would not be the best choice to indicate changing time, so perhaps a sponge bag could be used instead.



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Now and Next board: - A now and next board is used to help the child visually see what the present task is and what is to follow. The now and next board is also used as a reward chart, for example: if the present task is completed the next option can be a treat.



Social Stories: - Social stories and comic strip conversations are ways to help people with autism develop greater social understanding. Social stories were created by Carol Gray in 1991 to help teach social skills to people with autism. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.



Task Analysis and chaining: - Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), additional needs/learning disabilities may not learn some skills in the same way as their peers. It is sometimes necessary to break down a complex skill into smaller steps in order to meet the learning needs of the child. A task analysis does not need to be used for every skill but can be useful when attempting to teach a complex skill or to see with which step a child may be having difficulty (e.g. getting dressed and tooth brushing). The number of steps involved in a task analysis will depend on the child's ability. Some children may require many steps while others only a few (Alberto & Troutman, 2003). Forward and Backward Chaining - The skill to be learned is broken down into the smallest units for easy learning. For example, a child learning to brush teeth independently may start with learning to unscrew the toothpaste cap. Once the child has learned this, the next step may be squeezing the tube, and so on.

 Washing hands	
	Water on
	Hands wet
	Rub hands with soap
	Rinse
	Water off
	Dry



Timeline/visual schedules:- Many individuals with additional needs/learning disabilities benefit from visual schedules in written and / or picture form because they have trouble processing verbally delivered information, initiating activities, staying focused, completing every step within a task, and shifting focus between one activity and the next. Visual schedules can increase independence and also reduce anxiety for many individuals with a learning disability. Visual schedules are often vital to the individual's performance in school, vocational, self-care, and leisure activities.



Visuals can be supportive with children who have numerous difficulties including, listening and attending, understanding and responding, processing sequenced information, following instructions and routines, Anxiety and resistance to change, Social isolation and shyness, and behaviour which challenges. Visuals are not seen as a replacement to spoken or written language, but instead, to be used in conjunction with and to aid communication.



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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.