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We can produce this document in Braille, large print, on audio tape and in other languages. If you would like a copy in one of these formats, please call 01452 426955.

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Early Years - helping my child to make sense of their world

Advice and information for parents & carers



Advisory Teaching Service

Communication and Interaction Team

 **Gloucestershire**
COUNTY COUNCIL

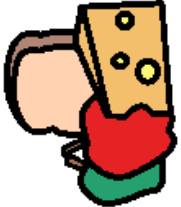


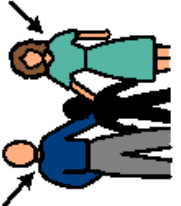


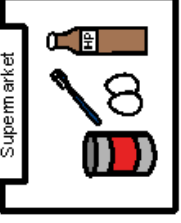

Why it could make a difference

Because of their difficulties with social understanding, social communication and imagination, the world can be a confusing place for a child on the autism spectrum. Making things predictable and clear are important in making your child feel secure.

You can define the day for your child through a series of predictable milestones that always occur at the same time, in the same place or in the same way.

- ◆ Keeping things consistent can help a child predict what they need to do in a situation and encourage them to be independent
- ◆ Children on the autism spectrum often have particular problems with sequences and the organisation of time. Doing things in the same order helps them predict the next step
- ◆ Children on the autism spectrum often unsure of what is going to happen next, and this can make them anxious. Keeping to routines and warning of changes allays some of their anxiety
- ◆ Children on the autism spectrum have a poor understanding of 'finish' and need to know that something they don't like will finish and something they like will have to finish sometime.
- ◆ When children do not know what will happen next they sometimes make up their own idea and are upset when it does not happen.
- ◆ Using the same language in a situation can help a child understand what is expected of them

Ideas and Strategies

<p>We go to the supermarket to buy food. My mum or dad will know what food we need.</p> 	<p>I will try to wait quietly while mum and dad pack the food.</p> <p>wait</p>  <p>quiet</p> 
<p>My mum or dad may go with me.</p> 	<p>The checkout is important, this is where we give the cashier the money and pack the food.</p> <p>pay</p>  <p>food</p> 
<p>Sometimes we go to the Supermarket.</p> 	<p>Before we leave the supermarket we will go to the checkout.</p> <p>checkout</p> 

Ideas and Strategies

Children often need a lot of preparation for new experiences . They may not remember what happens at places they do not visit regularly such as the doctors or hairdressers. Collect pictures, photos and leaflets to show them. Children's books such as 'Going to the Doctor ' are widely available – keep an eye on the charity shops!

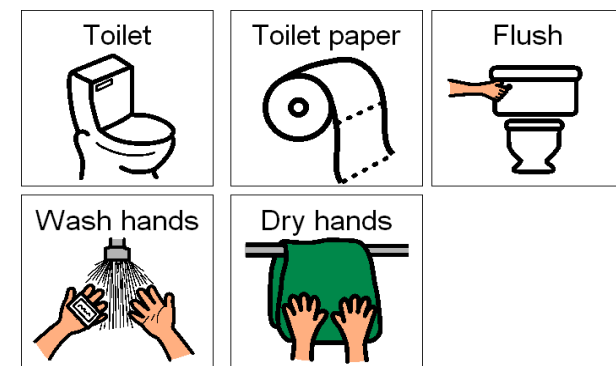
Social Stories were devised by Carol Gray several years ago. Please refer to Early Years 'Where to go next for Practical Ideas & Strategies' leaflet. They are written in a structured way and explain what usually happens in a situation. They can help to allay children's anxiety in new or difficult situations. They have several descriptive sentences but also one that suggests what the child should try to do. At this stage the pictures are very important but the words ensure that all adults give the same message. The example of the page opposite uses Boardmaker (Widgit Software).

Ideas & Strategies

Visual schedules are a strip of symbols or photographs to sequence events. You may even need to start with a series of objects e.g. a spoon to indicate breakfast. These suggestions are made using Boardmaker (Widgit Software) but you can just draw your own. Sources of symbols are listed in the Early Years - Where to go next for Practical Ideas & Strategies leaflet. The length of a schedule for your child will vary according to your child's ability to project forwards in time. Below is a morning sequence: these simple instructions will remind your child what to do.



This basic routine, displayed near the toilet, will help your child understand the sequence and encourage independence

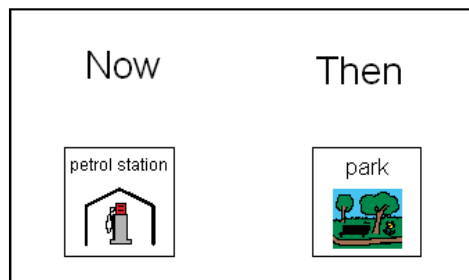


Ideas and Strategies

Using a routine and schedule will help your child to recognise the bath time sequence and could avoid upsets when they know they will have their favourite book afterwards. These could be shown with objects in a series of small baskets with the book to take away from the last one.



Many children with autism instigate their own routines e.g. they will insist on a certain route being followed and may become distressed if they are taken in a direction which deviates from the one they are familiar with. The visual below clearly explains to your child that you will be going to the park but you have to get petrol first. This will help to prevent any upset if you stop to get petrol on the way to the park.



Ideas and Strategies

We usually include the word with a picture so that all adults say the same thing.

Try putting simple drawings on the family calendar to show when something will happen

Keeping things the same will help your child predict what is happening next. Putting your child's clothes out in the same way each day and dressing in the same order will help them to understand their getting dressed routine.

Have a set place for where things happen e.g. a mat where we share a book, a table where we eat, a chair where we wait for Mummy. Things can be structured within this e.g. using a placemat with their favourite character or baskets of toys that are available

Too much choice can often be very confusing for your child. Try putting out a few toys or books at a time to see if it helps them find something to do

Anything that shows the passing of time can be useful for letting your child know when they have to move on or stop. This could be a sand timer, kitchen timer, or a toy that plays a tune then stops. When a big event is coming up put something like bricks by the child's bed to indicate how many 'sleeps'

If changes to routines are unavoidable then it is essential that your child has prior warning of this, by way of visual explanations, showing a change in routine, e.g. a yellow star displayed will indicate a change. This can help your child to understand the change and adapt to it without becoming to upset.

