Visual Supports Tool Kit

MILESTONES AUTISM RESOURCES

Visual supports are a great tool for people of all ages with autism. This tool kit will define a variety of supports and how they can be used to help increase communication, along with other benefits.

Visual supports can be pictures, illustrations, objects, picture symbols, daily schedules or choice boards. To learn more about picture symbols, read this article: www.do2learn.com/picturecards/overview.htm. To view a choice board, visit this site: appliedbehavioralstrategies.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/choice-board.jpg. They can be used to help increase communication, promote independence, and provide a vehicle for monitoring and decreasing challenging behaviors, and are often used in a schedule (multi-step) format, or as individual pictures. View an example here: www.do2learn.com/picturecards/images/morningschedule.jpg.

Milestones provides consultation services to all family members, professionals, and self-advocates. Services include connecting participants to resources and providing general information and assistance. We also offer a free Autism Help Desk. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at (216) 464-7600.

Visual Schedules

Creating a schedule for after school or unscheduled free time is crucial for you and your child. Individuals with autism don't know what to expect next in their day, or may have anxiety about their routine and they may not have the ability to ask. A visual schedule will remind them what will happen next. Schedules can have drawings or pictures, or can be written on a chart

Schedules can also be useful if your child has difficulty with change. Once your child is familiar with a visual schedule, you will be able to slowly introduce new activities or a different sequence in their day, and this will help them learn to be more flexible.

You can have many different schedules for different parts of the day. A general daily schedule can show an overview of what is happening during the entire day, such as school, chores, homework, leisure time, meals, and waking and sleeping time. You may find a need for additional schedules for individual activities like getting ready for bed, or for brushing teeth. Hanging these schedules near where they will be used (like the sink for brushing teeth) will help remind your child what to do.

Depending on the needs of your child, you can create a visual schedule as general or as detailed in steps as needed. These websites offer suggestions on how to create your own visual schedules:

Visual Aids for Learning – Teeth Brushing:
https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/assets/files/resources/healthy-smiles-for-autism.pdf

Indiana Resource for Autism – Using Visual Schedules: www.iidc.indiana.edu/?pageId=394

As your child becomes familiar with following a particular schedule, you can begin to fade your directions and prompts until your child is able to follow the schedule on his or her own, without any prompting from you.

Visual Reminders

After you have taught your child an appropriate behavior or verbal response, instead of continuing to verbally prompt, you may want to try a visual reminder.

For example:

- Put a sign that says "Lock the door" on the back door to remind your child.
- Put a sign on the table during meals that says "Small bites. Lips together. Look up."
- Hang a sign on the refrigerator that says, "Close door when finished".
- Put a sign on the table during meals that offers prompts for conversation:
  "How was your day?
  Today I _____.
  Please pass the _____.""

Visual Behavior Checklist

Children may respond well to a visual checklist about their behavior. You can handwrite the list or use a dry-erase board to make the list – it does not have to be formal!

Once a child performs the behavior or task correctly, they should refer to his/her visual checklist and cross it off. An example of this kind of list would be:

Using the bathroom:

Did you...

- Use toilet?
- Use toilet paper?
- Flush?
- Wash hands?

The visual checklist would have these questions written out or as pictures, if your child cannot read. By using one- or two- word directions, you will eventually be able to fade out the pictures and leave the simple directions.

After completing a task successfully on his/her own, you can add to the task, or start with a new checklist.

What is Priming?

The term priming refers to previewing an activity or task with a child prior to it happening. It is commonly used in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), and is a research-based intervention proven to be successful in preparing someone for an upcoming event. One example of priming would be reading a book to a child before he hears it in school that week. There are more examples on the website Positively Autism. (http://positively-autism.blogspot.com/2012/08/antecedent-strategy-priming.html)

Here is a video from OCALI that illustrates the concept of priming:
(https://us1.campaign-archive.com/?u=bd3743bdcb66be2dc0a49a703&id=02cba3e5c8&e=86b69d3856)

Additional Resources

There are many websites, smartphone apps and software programs that cater to pictograms and pictures for making visual charts. Some suggestions for sites to try are:

Autism Speaks' Visual Supports Tool Kit:
https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/atnair-p-visual-supports-and-autism

Autism Speaks has created Personalized Stories that families can customize for their needs:
https://www.autismspeaks.org/templates-personalized-teaching-stories

Monarch Center for Autism has a great web page that offers visual supports for teaching personal hygiene routines and holidays at www.monarchcenterforautism.org/about-us/visual-supports-dp1.

The Indiana Resource Center for Autism offers a comprehensive site that can cover a variety of visual supports at:
https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=3766&utm_source=WhatCountsEmail&utm_medium=IRCA%20Reporter&utm_campaign=Video%20Self-Modeling:%20How%20To%20and%20Examples

Check out this book for more information: *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism*, Second Edition: Teaching Independent Behavior by Lynn E. McClannahan and Patricia Krantz. Available on Amazon.

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities: https://www.centerforautism.com/

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders can offer an overview as well as step-by-step instructions on how to implement visual supports:
http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/evidence-based-practices

A community of members offers thousands of social stories that can be downloaded for free on https://boardmakeronline.com/Login.aspx

Do2Learn.com offers picture cards that are printable on your computer:
http://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/overview.htm

You can learn how to make visual schedules on these two websites:
Handsinautism.org and https://handsinautism.iupui.edu/pdf/How_To_Visual_Schedules.pdf

Google Images, www.google.com/imghp, offers a wide catalog of photos to reference and print for creating your own supports.