

Preparing, Navigating, Transitioning... Oh My! How Visual Cues Can Help

*Contributed by Meegan Winters,
MA Special Education, ASD, CI, ZA,
CEO/Co-Founder | Able Eyes
Video Modeling/Virtual Tours*

www.AbleEyes.org



If you are a parent, a caregiver, a teacher, or a relative of a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), you already know that transitions, changes in routine and new experiences can be extremely stressful. We want the best for our loved ones. All of the experiences we remembered as children. All of the field trips that the other children are going on. But, at what expense? Causing stress for everyone involved? Crying? An anxiety attack? A tantrum?

Research shows that using visual cues during a transition can decrease challenging behavior and increase compliance following transition demands. Visual cues can include but are not limited to: picture cards, physical gestures, tactile items, video, and/or other means of technology. These methods can assist individuals with ASD during transitions to redirect attention to another activity, oftentimes resulting in less stress for the individual transitioning.

Picture Cues

Picture cues can vary significantly; stick figures, animated pictures, or actual photographs all serve as powerful tools to help someone on the spectrum redirect attention and prepare for an upcoming transition. Thanks to the internet, we have unlimited access to such pictures. Printing them off to carry in a purse or simply pulling them up on a phone can be the difference between a stressful experience or an enjoyable experience. Using simple language such as “library is next” while holding up a picture of a library will redirect attention to the upcoming event, while providing time to adjust mentally before being physically required to transition.

Physical Gestures

Simple, consistent, clear physical gestures can serve as another way to provide visual cueing. Prior to a transition; something as simple as a point in the direction of the transition paired with adequate processing time (this can be up to 30 seconds or even longer...so be patient).

Tactile Transition Items

If tactile items resonate with your loved one or they have a vision disability, then this could be your answer! Start a shoebox of items representing transitions. Examples might be:

cont.

Transition

Car Ride
 School/Bus Ride
 Walk
 Grocery Store
 Meal Time
 Brush Teeth
 Shower

Tactile Items

Hot Wheels car
 Toy Bus
 Mr. Potato Head Shoes
 Plastic Grocery Bag (be careful with safety using a bag)
 Plastic apple
 Toothbrush
 Loofa

This shoebox can be carried with you everywhere. Include small items representing each transition planned for the day. Prior to mentioning or starting a transition, hand the item to your child, then allow enough time for processing before starting the transition. This system may take some time to practice consistently before the child understands the transition associated with each item so be patient...

Video Cues

Video Modeling is a research based strategy for teaching individuals on the spectrum that tend to learn best through visual means. The internet houses endless options for video modeling videos demonstrating how to complete a skill which can also be used as a transition cue (many are free). An example might be “going to the dentist.” Prior to going to the dentist, view the “What to Expect When Going to the Dentist” video showing what one might experience. This will mentally prepare your child for what’s to come. BE CAREFUL what you search though!!! Imagine trying to teach your child how to take his/her shirt off as an independence skill. As you can imagine, you might come up with videos you’d prefer not to see...

Apps

Have you ever heard the term “There’s an App for That!”? Well...that is true for transition tools as well. Visual schedules, visual cues, and picture libraries can all be found in the App store.

Virtual Tours

Lastly, virtual tours can be a life saver as a transition tool and easily accessible from your phone! If you have ever explored Google Maps through the streets of your local town, now you can see inside of buildings! Businesses that choose to do so can have a virtual tour of their business or office to allow visitors to explore the space prior to physically visiting. Incredible right? Check ahead of time on the business website, Google Maps, or Able Eyes to explore inside so you can “Know Before You Go.”

Now more than ever, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, we as service providers and caregivers need to be prepared for the unexpected. Doctor visits may not look the same, a trip to the grocery store may be curbside, school may be online... Pretty much life as we knew it may have changed in 2020. This will (and has) caused even more unexpected transitions, unknown expectations, and uncertainty for all people. If your child is struggling, please know it is to be expected. Choose from any or all of the techniques above to help alleviate



TRANSITION PLANNING SERIES



This past month AAoM hosted three virtual panel discussions in the areas of healthcare, education and employment transition planning. AAoM understands that each child's transition into adulthood is a unique path and we are here to help. To view our dynamic panel discussion with experts in the field to better help navigate next steps in your own journey click [here](#).



Direct Support Professionals Initiative

Contributed by AAoM's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

During this year of uncertainty, the Autism Alliance of Michigan created the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEI). Part of our mission is to provide families with information that can help the community at large. This year Michigan Legislators passed a temporary \$2 wage increase to Direct Support Professionals (DSP) during the pandemic to honor the crucial care they offer to thousands of individuals with developmental disabilities, especially those with higher needs. With 40% of the DSP workforce being individuals of color this is a topic the Committee is interested in highlighting. A staggering 54% of DSP's currently rely on public assistance to maintain a living wage. This legislative effort clearly displays the pay inequity DSP's earn compared to their counterparts. In the season of giving, AAoM DEI is asking you to please take the time to learn more about [DSP's crucial](#) role in the [pandemic](#) and reach out to your state [legislators](#) here to make your voice heard in encouraging the wage increase to continue on permanently after 2020. Stay tuned for more to come from DEI!



Upcoming Community Events



December 8th: [FALCONERS Wonderland of Lights](#)

December 7th: [PRE-EMPLOYMENT SKILLS TRAINING – For Adults with ASD](#)

December 13th: [ASK Winter Wonderland Drive-Through Santa Visit!](#)

December 15th: [A Forum on Financial Planning for People With IDD](#)

December 15th: [Christmas Virtual Party](#)

December 22nd: [Tuesday Tales](#)

December 23rd: [UP'n Moving](#)

December 27th - December 31st: [The Fowler Center Winter Camp](#)

January 7th: [The After I'm Gone Program "Estate Planning for your Future"](#)

January 11th: [Noque Event!](#)

January 12th: [ASK VIRTUAL Support Group Discussing Transition Planning with Disability Advocates](#)

January 13th: [Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy](#)

January 14th: [Behavior Intervention in a Virtual World with Special Education Mediation Services](#)