Visual Supports

What are Visual Supports?

Visual supports are tools that are used to increase the understanding of language, environmental expectations, and to provide structure and support for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). They facilitate understanding by remaining static or fixed in the individual's environment. If verbal language, which is considered transient or fleeting, is the only method used to communicate expectations, provide support and increase an understanding of language, then individuals with ASD may have extreme difficulty.

Why use Visual Supports?

Individuals who have ASD often times develop stronger visual skills than auditory skills. Visual supports allow them to use this visual strength to process, organize, remember, and respond to information thereby allowing the individual to more easily participate in the communicative process. Visual supports also allow important information to remain accessible in the individual's environment. This can reduce the stress levels and inappropriate behaviors that individuals with ASD may exhibit when they cannot effectively communicate or when they do not understand the expectations of the environment.

What can Visual Supports be Used for?

Visual supports are commonly used to communicate choices, organize daily schedules, give direction, explain rules or expectations, aide in transition, or provide appropriate actions to individuals with ASD.

What are some Examples of Visual Supports?

- ★ Photographs
- ★ Calendars
- ★ Food labels
- ★ Objects
- ★ Written words
- ★ Schedules
- ★ Picture symbols

Getting Started:

1. Decide what the supports will be used for.
    Example: provide choice of snack.

2. Choose the type of supports that best meet the needs of the individual.
    Example: black and white icons, digital pictures, or objects

3. Gather the necessary pictures, icons, objects, etc.
    Example: picture of apple or carrot, logo of McDonalds or Wendy's, bags of chips or Skittles, etc.

4. Make the supports durable.
   Example: laminate, attach Velcro, and make multiple copies.

5. Choose where and when the support will be used.
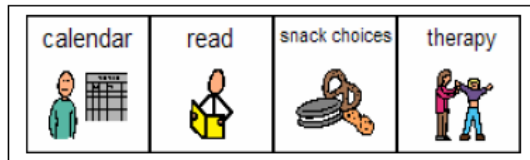   *Example:* mount choice board on refrigerator or schedule on student's desk.

6. Teach and implement the support.

Examples:

Snack Choices

carrot	McDonald's	apple
chips	skittles	Wendy's

Visual Schedule

calendar	read	snack choices	therapy

Additional Resources:

Books

Hodgdon, L. (2000). *Visual Supports for Improving Communication.* QuirkRoberts: Troy, Michigan.

McClannahan, L.E., & Krantz,P.J. (1999). *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism.* Woodbine House: Bethesda, MD.

Websites

www.usevisualstrategies.com: Use Visual Strategies

www.trainland.tripod.com: Beyond Autism PECS, Pictures/Icon Pages

www.do2learn.com: Do 2 Learn

For Purchase

www.mayer-johnson.com: Boardmaker

www.slatersoftware.com: Picture It

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