

Choice Making

Choice making is difficult for students. It requires problem solving and understanding the consequences of the choice. For instance if they make the wrong choice they are stuck with an activity they don't like. This is why children tend to choose the same activity over and over again and insist on sameness. Another reason they sometimes choose the same activity is they like perfectionism. By doing the same activity they know how the activity looks, works and finishes. This makes them happy whereas unknown activities are unpredictable and can be scary.

Key Strategies in Choice Making

- Show them what to do if they make the wrong choice: eg put the book back on the shelf, rather than throwing it and choose something else
- Show them how to make choices
 - Start with easy choices such as one thing they really love and one thing they are not too keen on
 - Always start with only two choices
- Use a Choice making board with visuals.
- Make a chart of things that they like and don't like eg use food as an example as they are normally very clear of what they like and don't like in food.
- Use the “*First, Then...*” or “*When, Then...*” or “*Now, Next, Later*” (see the template on pg 47) to encourage them to try new activities. Always put their favourite activity last as a built in reward for trying new activities
- Always explain how to use any visual that you put into place. Don't just expect the child to know how to use it.



Choice making

I only ever gave Daniel two choices. He could wash the dishes now or in 10 minutes. There were no other choices to make. The end result was always going to be the same, but Daniel had some control over the choice - Anna Tullemans

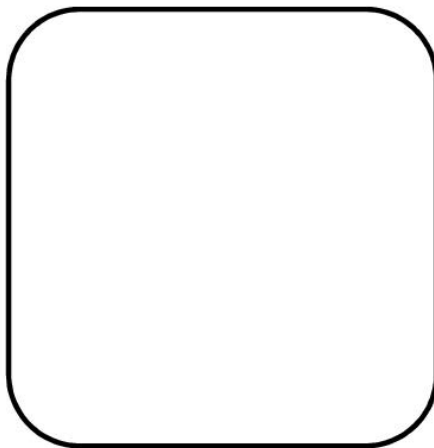


New Activities

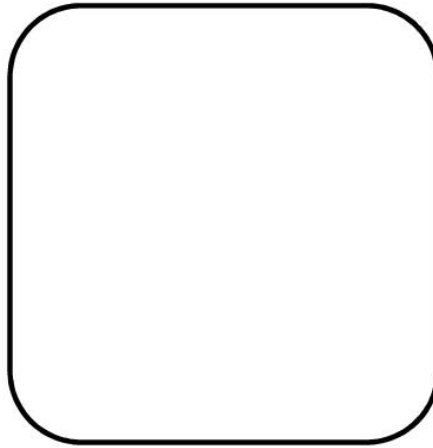
Sometimes it is important to encourage children to try a new activity without giving them a choice. In our experience sometimes when a child tries a new activity they love it.

My Name is:

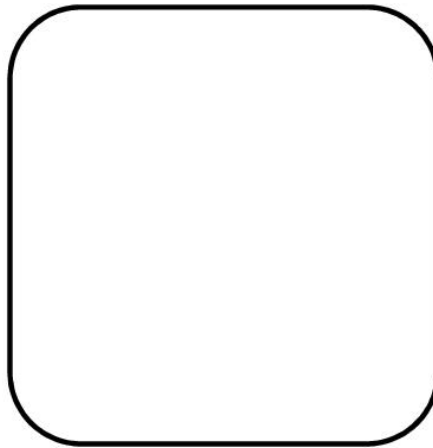
Now



Next



Later



.....

.....

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Visuals

Most children with ASD are visual learners or have strengths in visual areas compared to other areas. Many families have their children's hearing tested because of delays in language development in the early years. For a majority of children who have ASD the hearing test comes back perfect. The problem is Auditory Processing rather than a hearing loss. Auditory Processing means the child can hear but can't understand. People with ASD tell us language is confusing and as Temple Grandin writes "*I think in Pictures, words are like a foreign language*". Using visuals is a key strategy for students with an ASD.

It is important to realize that visual strategies are used to help students UNDERSTAND better. The visuals help students understand what we are telling them and comprehend more about what is happening in their lives. Visual strategies provide a way to help with memory and organised thinking. With the use of visual supports, many students are able to demonstrate more appropriate behaviour and social skills in their life situations.

10 Key Strategies for Visuals

1. Use a range of visuals. This can include real objects, photos, picture symbols, line drawings, written words.
2. Always couple a visual with speech and written word where possible.
3. When you make a new visual, make a copy for all environments to ensure consistency.
4. Ensure accessible for children to refer back to, eg leave a schedule up all day or attach to a lanyard to use outside the classroom or home.
5. Create visuals for routines, as it helps with sequencing. Eg: Brush Teeth, Wash Hands, and Work Routines.
6. One of the most important uses for visual strategies is to give information such as what is happening, what is not happening, what is changing, etc. This is normally on a schedule or timetable.
7. Visual strategies help students learn effective communication and may be used as their primary communication system.
8. Include visuals in your Social Scripts to increase understanding.
9. Attach visuals to the "*Now, Next, Later*" profoma on pg 447.
10. *Boardmarker TM* is a great visual pictograph system though expensive for schools and families where only a few children will use. *Pics for Pecs* is a more affordable visual pictograph system (available www.suelarkey.com).