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Faith and Disability
Conference
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STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRIES: STARTING WITH OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Workshop Purpose

- Provide participants with strategies and supports to help families and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities experience success in:
 - Classroom-based activities
 - Group worship
 - Special activities within the religious setting

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Characteristics of ASD

- Social Communication
 - Challenges with understanding and responding to unspoken, assumed, abstract, or subtly changeable rules
 - Challenges with using language and nonverbal communication (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures) consistently across contexts, especially situations that are new, overwhelming, or challenging

Personal space/ Reading body language

Understanding when rules still apply and when they change

May be able to communicate in certain situations, but not when overwhelmed or content is abstract

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Characteristics of ASD

- Restricted Interests/Repetitive Behaviors
- Difficulty with transitions and change
- Rigidity/rituals surrounding items or activities
- Repetitive movements, use of objects, or speech
- Atypical sensory responses
- Intense focus on specific topics and/or items

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What does this mean?

• When children with ASD respond in a way that is different than we expect, it is often rooted in these areas of difficulty, rather than an inability to learn, purposely not listening, etc.

Challenges with following directions, taking turns, transitioning between activities

Social Communication Deficits

Presence of Restricted, Repetitive Behaviors

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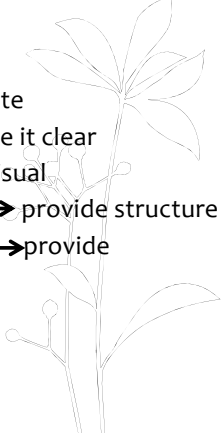
Applying Framework to Other Disabilities

- Consider “visible” vs “invisible” disabilities
- All behavioral/neurodevelopmental disabilities can impact:
 - Using and understanding language
 - Motor skills
 - Impulsivity/inattention
 - Behavior regulation
 - Cognitive ability

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What can we do?

- Abstract → make it concrete
- Unspoken/assumed → make it clear
- Verbal only → make it visual
- Environment unstructured → provide structure
- Environment overwhelming → provide predictability



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Taking Action

- Work with parents to determine what would be appropriate for their child
- Determine modifications to the activity
- Decide how to prepare the child for the activity
- Decide what supports and strategies to use during the activity

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Parent Questions

Parent Questionnaire

- What are your goals for inclusion for you and your family?
- How does your child currently communicate?
- What type of supports have been successful with your child at home, school, or in the community?
- How do you reward your child's good behavior (for example, favorite activities, type of praise, points, etc.)?
- What does your child enjoy doing?
- What are your child's strengths?
- What types of activities are particularly challenging for your child?
- What triggers often upset your child in his/her environment (for example, certain sounds, lights, textures, activities, etc.)?
- Are there certain behaviors we may expect to see when your child is upset?

Tell Me About Your Child

CHILD'S NAME: _____

- List 3 words that best describe your child's personality and character (for example, outgoing, shy, etc.)
- What motivates your child?
- What activities does your child enjoy?
- What activities are most difficult for your child?
- What is the best way to reward if your child is having a hard time in class?
- Are there any personal or physical problems/factors I should know about?
- Is your child a visual learner, an auditory learner, a kinesthetic learner, or a combination?

Here are some clues to use if you are unsure:

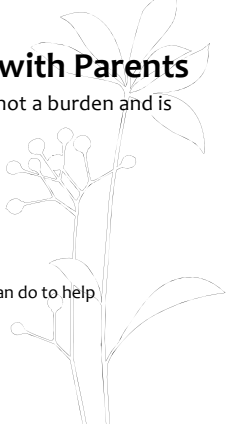
- **Visual learners** take notes, doodle, draw, tend to sit at the front, are usually neat and tidy. They close their eyes to visualize or remember something, but something to watch if they are bored. They do not mind if you are writing, are attracted to colorful or spoken language (in or out of class), prefer (often) to be taught from auditory and kinesthetic materials, and will gesture accordingly.
- **Auditory learners** often when they can hear but don't always pay attention to what is happening in front, may be distractible (often in class), but can explain why they are missing what they are writing, hear or talk to themselves or others when bored, absorb knowledge by reading aloud, remember by verbalizing lessons for themselves, and may have difficulty writing (miss or disagree or having conceptual assignments due soon).
- **Kinesthetic learners** need to be active and take frequent breaks, speak with their hands and partners, remember what was done but have difficulty reading what was said or seen, find reasons to leave or move when bored, only do what they can do directly experience or perform, who likes such as reading, construction, engineering, and will help their partners and learn by doing (for and tasks that involve handwriting, materials, or near the door or computer when others they can easily get out and move around), are uncomfortable in classrooms when they feel uncomfortable for hands-on experiences, communicate by touching, and appreciate physically expressed encouragement, such as pat on the back.

Other comments: _____

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How to Communicate with Parents

- Help parents know child/family is not a burden and is welcome
- Initiate interactions
- Encourage
- Ask for feedback
- When a child is having trouble
 - Ask parent if there is something you can do to help
 - Continue talks / ceremonies
 - Know where to offer quiet spaces
- Know your limitations

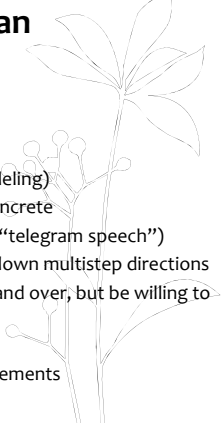


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Communicating with an Individual with ASD

• If you give a direction...

- Provide extra cues (pointing or modeling)
- Keep language simple, clear, and concrete
- Minimize length of your directions (“telegram speech”)
- Give one direction at a time; break down multistep directions
- Do not repeat your directions over and over, but be willing to rephrase or restate if needed
- Give child time to comply/respond
- Make “do” rather than “don’t” statements



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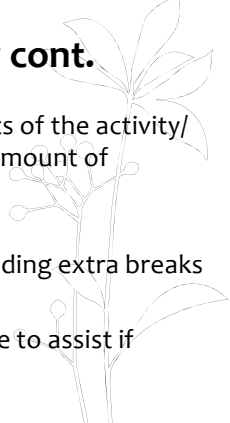
Modify the Activity

- Decrease lag time to and from activity
- Involve child in only certain parts of an activity or for shorter amounts of time
- Change the order of the activity

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Modify the Activity cont.

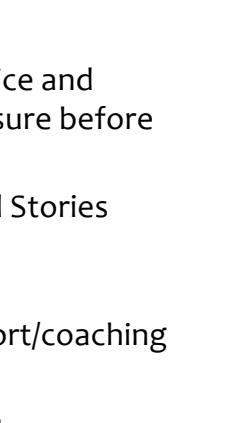
- Take out less essential parts of the activity/ temporarily decrease the amount of demands
- Break up the activity, providing extra breaks
- Have extra people available to assist if needed



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Prepare the Child

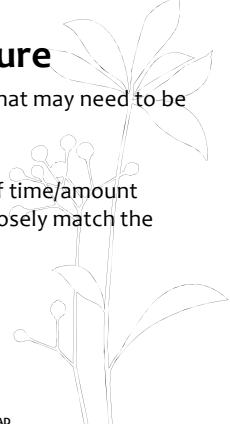
- Practice and exposure before
- Social Stories
- Peer support/coaching



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Practice and Exposure

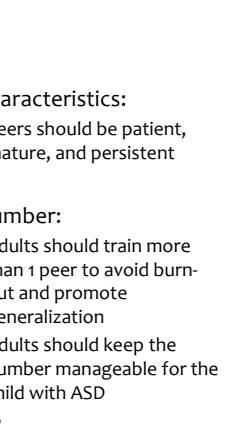
- Identify specific skills or tasks that may need to be practiced before the activity
- Gradually increase the length of time/amount required of the child to more closely match the activity's demands



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Selecting Peers


- Age:
 - Peers should be of the same age or slightly older
- Characteristics:
 - Peers should be patient, mature, and persistent
- Number:
 - Adults should train more than 1 peer to avoid burn-out and promote generalization
 - Adults should keep the number manageable for the child with ASD
- Availability:
 - Peers should be consistently present at religious activities
 - Peers should be willing to participate



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Training Peers

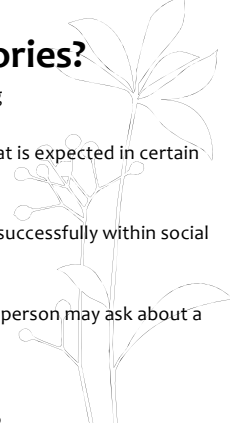
- Introduce the goals
- Describe the child
- Explain the strategies
- Practice
- Check for understanding



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What are Social Stories?

- Used for priming and pre-teaching
- Used to help individuals know what is expected in certain situations.
- Prepare individuals to participate successfully within social activities.
- Answers “Wh” questions another person may ask about a new situation.



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Social Stories: Singing in Church

Most Sundays my family goes to church. My parents like to go to church.

Sometimes during worship there is singing. I like to sing! Sometimes the choir sings. Sometimes everyone sings. I will know when it is my turn to sing by watching the choir director. When he stands facing the choir, it is my turn to listen. When he stands facing the crowd and moves his arms, it is my turn to sing. If I am unsure, I can ask my parents.

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Supports and Strategies

- Increase use of visuals
- Incorporate reinforcement

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What are Visual Schedules?

- What?
 - Visual representation of what is going to happen within a larger activity or portion of the day.
- Why?
 - Shows a predictable sequence of events.
 - Decreases anxiety.
 - Makes expectations clear.
- How?
 - Direct individuals to schedule at each transition and immediately begin activity.
 - Schedule should incorporate both preferred and non-preferred activities.

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Small and Large Group Worship

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Small Group Worship

Church School

- Table work
- Prayer
- Bible verse
- Story
- Questions/Answers
- Song
- Game
- LEGOS!!!

Sunday School – Sep 16, 2017

- **Group Activity**
 - I read the first verse of the assigned passage. I read aloud the first question on the group worksheet. I answer the question from the verse that I read.
 - The person to my right will read the next verse and read aloud the second question on the group worksheet. He or she will answer the question.
 - Every person in the circle will follow these directions. The last person to read will be the person sitting to my left.
 - After everyone reads, Mr. Smith will ask a few more questions about the verses we read as a group.

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Special Services/Ceremonies

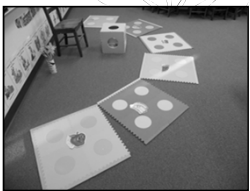
December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Notes:				1	2	3
4 Candlelight service	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 Candlelight service	12	13	14 Church supper	15	16	17
18 Candlelight service	19	20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Service
25 Christmas Service	26	27	28	29	30	31

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What is Environmental Arrangement?

- Having clear visual boundaries
- Minimizing distractions
- Presenting rules in visual format
- Clarifying other expectations visually



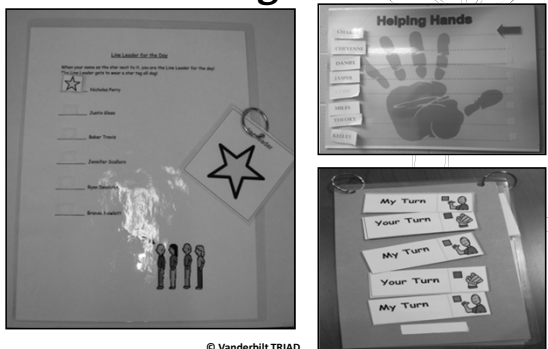
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Defining Locations and Boundaries



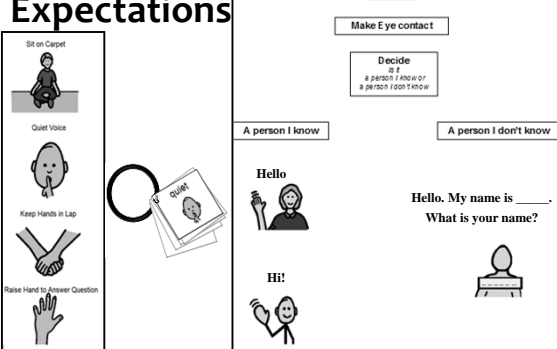
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Communicating Roles



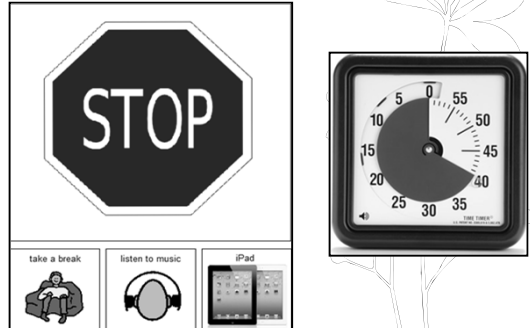
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Clarifying Expectations




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Providing Limits



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Making Abstract Content More Concrete



www.theinclusivechurch.com

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Promoting Participation in Group Activities

www.theinclusivechurch.com

Reinforcement

- What is it?
 - Something a child is willing to “work for”
- Why is it important?
 - Different social motivation
 - Task demands
- How do I use it?
 - Clear, immediate, and specific

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First-Then Boards

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Token Boards

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Token Boards + Visual Schedules

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Token Boards + Visual Schedules

Activity-Based Behavioral Support

Worship Service

Walk into auditorium
 Sit down in seat
 Sing 2 songs
 Close eyes during first prayer
 Take 1 page of notes during lesson
 Close eyes during second prayer
 Walk out of auditorium

Time-Based Behavioral Support

Ride in elevator for 5 minutes!!

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Case Scenarios	
Challenge	Modification/Supports
Child struggles with transition to small group worship setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine order/length of events in classroom that would increase chances of a successful transition • Provide visual schedule before transition to class to increase momentum • Provide reinforcement for each transition • Provide object for transition • Decrease amount of words during transition • Minimize reaction to challenging behaviors and keep transition smooth and efficient

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Case Scenarios	
Challenge	Modification/Supports
Child becomes upset during circle time when the lesson is being presented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially decrease how long child is in circle • Provide a visual breaking down each activity during circle time for child to follow • Provide something child can hold that relates to the lesson • Provide a timer showing length of lesson/circle time • Provide reinforcement for specific participation behaviors


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Case Scenarios	
Challenge	Modifications/Supports
Child has difficulty following directions during their role in a religious ceremony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide if activity can be modified in some way to make it easier to follow directions • Decide if expectations can be altered to ensure success • Practice role outside of ceremony • Add visual supports to clarify instructions • Provide clear reinforcement for following each instruction

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Case Scenarios	
Challenge	Modifications/Supports
Child has trouble sitting throughout the entire group worship service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice appropriate sitting outside of service • Set scheduled breaks to take a walk before child begins moving around instead of waiting and responding to challenging behavior by providing breaks • Add visual supports to clarify "appropriate sitting" in service • Reward child's quiet sitting for short portions of service by taking walk or providing another reward • Visually indicate length of service, breaks, and rewards

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Want More Information???

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Religious Inclusion Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://faithanddisability.org/webinar/ • www.theinclusivechurch.wordpress.com • www.aaidreligion.org • The National Library Service offers direction on ordering bibles and other sacred texts in special media: http://loc.gov/nls/reference/circulars/bibles.html • Carter, Erik. (2007). <i>Including People With Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, and Congregations</i>. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing. • Lee, Amy Fenton (2013). <i>Leading a Special Needs Ministry: A Practical Guide to Including Children and Loving Families</i>. Orange Publishing. <p style="text-align: center;"><small>© Vanderbilt TRIAD</small></p>

Strategy and Support Resources

• Social Stories

- <http://www.educateautism.com/social-stories.html>
- <http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies-and-approaches/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations/how-to-write-a-social-story.aspx>
- <http://www.thegraycenter.org/social-stories>

• Live/Video modeling

- <http://www.modelmekids.com/video-modeling.html>
- <https://www.haringcenter.washington.edu/sites/default/files/file/VideomodelingTipSheet.pdf>
- <http://www.videomodelingforautism.org/vmfa/do-it-yourself>
- <http://www.socialskillbuilder.com/index.htm>

• Visual Supports

- <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/visual-tools>
- www.do2learn.com

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Parent Questionnaire

- What are your goals for inclusion for you and your family? _____

- How does your child currently communicate? _____

- What type of supports have been successful with your child at home, school, or in the community? _____

- How do you reward your child's good behavior (for example, favorite activities, type of praise, points, etc.)? _____

- What does your child enjoy doing? _____

- What are your child's strengths? _____

- What types of activities are particularly challenging for your child? _____

- What triggers often upset your child in his/her environment (for example, certain sounds, lights, textures, activities, etc.)? _____

- Are there certain behaviors we may expect to see when your child is upset?

Tell Me About Your Child

Child's Name: _____

- List 5 words that best describe your child's personality and character (shy, competitive, talkative, giving, etc.): _____
- What motivates your child? _____
- What upsets your child? _____
- What activities does your child enjoy? _____
- What activities are hard for your child? _____
- What is the best way to respond if your child is having a hard time in class? _____

- Are there any personal or physical problems/factors I should know about? _____

- Is your child a visual learner, an auditory learner, a kinesthetic learner, or a combination?

- Here are some clues to use if you are unsure:
 - o Visual learners take numerous, detailed notes, tend to sit in the front, are usually neat and clean, often close their eyes to visualize or remember something, find something to watch if they are bored, like to see what they are learning, are attracted to written or spoken language rich in imagery, prefer stimuli to be isolated from auditory and kinesthetic distraction, and find passive surroundings ideal
 - o Auditory learners sit where they can hear but don't always pay attention to what is happening in front, may not coordinate colors or clothes, but can explain why they are wearing what they are wearing, hum or talk to themselves or others when bored, acquire knowledge by reading aloud, remember by verbalizing lessons to themselves, and may have difficulty reading maps or diagrams or handling conceptual assignments like math
 - o Kinesthetic learners need to be active and take frequent breaks, speak with their hands and gestures, remember what was done but have difficulty recalling what was said or seen, find reasons to tinker or move when bored, rely on what they can directly experience or perform, activities such as cooking, construction, engineering, and art help them perceive and learn, enjoy field trips and tasks that involve manipulating materials, sit near the door or someplace else where they can easily get up and move around, are uncomfortable in classrooms where they lack opportunities for hands-on experiences, communicate by touching, and appreciate physically expressed encouragement, such as a pat on the back
- Other comments: _____

Using a Social Story™ Tip Sheet



VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER
TREATMENT & RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

What is a Social Story™?

Many people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other related disorders benefit from having a written guide for situations that may be new, scary, or confusing. A Social Story™ is a helpful way to provide that guide.

The goal of a Social Story™ is to help your child understand the situation and to help decrease anxiety that comes from entering an unknown situation. Social Stories™ can be used to describe other unfamiliar social situations or environments such as a birthday party, school field trip, having a substitute, etc. Social Stories™ give individuals social information through pictures and text instead of spoken word, which can be difficult for individuals with ASD.

Social Stories™ are part of a category of interventions known as story-based interventions or social narratives. They have had significant research showing the effectiveness of their use to be considered an established treatment for children with ASD. For more information about evidence-based treatments, go to The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders at <http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/>. Social Stories™ were created by Carol Gray; for more information visit, www.thegraycenter.org.

How Can I Use It to Help Prepare my Child for Religious Inclusion?

If knowing the details about an event ahead of time will relieve anxiety, have your child read the story a few days prior to the visit. By reviewing the story, it will help create predictability about a new or unknown social situation and environment. While reviewing the story with your child, you can answer other questions your child may have.

If reading the story ahead of time will make your child more anxious, wait until just before (for example, the morning of or in the car on the way) to give them the story. Have your child read the parts of the story that explains what is happening at each particular step during the visit.

Tips for Writing a Social Story™

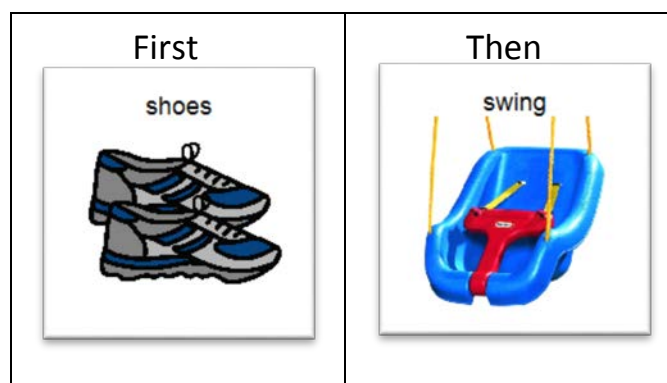
- Describe what is going to happen in the situation rather than directing your child on what they should do.
- Accurately describe the situation in detail. Focus on aspects of the situation your child may find difficult (for example, meeting new people, waiting in a waiting room, or certain lights and smells).
- Focus on important social cues, events that might occur, actions or reactions that might be expected, and why the event is occurring.
- Write from your child's perspective (for example, such as "I will be going to _____. I may..." or "John is going to _____. He may...").
- Uses positive, concrete language.
- Do not write in absolutes. For example, instead of writing "I will get a map that I will be able to use while visiting _____," write "I may get a map that I will be able to use while visiting _____".
- Some children may respond best to breaking down each task that will occur during the procedure in a detailed way. This may make other children more anxious and, for that child, a more general story might be better.

First-Then Board

What is it? A First-Then Board is a visual display of something your child prefers that will happen after completing a task that is less preferred.

When is it useful? A First-Then Board is helpful in teaching children to follow directions and learn new skills. A First-Then Board motivates children to do activities that they do not like and clarifies when they can do what they like. It addresses language understanding as well as

compliance and behavior. A First-Then Board lays the language foundation needed to complete multi-step directions and activities and to use more complex visual systems.



How do I teach it and use it?

- Decide what task you want your child to complete first and place it in the “first” box.
- Choose or have your child choose from a choice board the preferred item or activity that your he/she can have immediately after the “first” task is done and place it in the “then” box. This preferred item/activity should be motivating enough to increase the likelihood that your child will follow your direction.
- Present the board to the child with a brief, verbal instruction. Try to use the least amount of words possible. For example, before beginning the “first” task, say, “First, put on shoes, then swing.”
- If needed, refer to the board while your child is doing the task. For example, say “One more shoe, then swing” when your child is almost done. Avoid repeating the direction over and over.
- When the “first” task is completed, refer back to the board. For example, say “All done putting on shoes, now swing!” and immediately provide the preferred, reinforcing item or activity.

In order to teach children the value of the First-Then Board, you must give them the reinforcing activity or item after they complete the “first” task, even if you needed to prompt your child through completion. Otherwise, your child may not trust the board the next time you use it.

What if challenging behaviors occur? If you think challenging behaviors may occur, introduce the First-Then Board for a task that your child usually completes willingly and successfully. If challenging behaviors occur, continue by physically prompting your child to complete the “first” task. Keep your focus on the task rather than on the challenging behavior. Even if it is necessary to prompt the child to complete the task, it is important to still provide the reinforcing item or activity. The focus of the board is on completing the “first” task, and not on addressing challenging behaviors.

If challenging behaviors become more difficult to control, it may be appropriate to consider behavioral consultation with a professional to address these behaviors directly.

Religious Inclusion Action Plan- Parent

1. Choose one religious activity in your family's life for which you would like to focus on helping your child be more successful:

2. How would you like to see your child more successfully participate in this activity?

3. What are your child's strengths?

4. How might your child's challenges with social communication and restricted/repetitive behaviors impact his/her inclusion in the religious activity you chose?

5. What are some supports that have helped your child be successful in other group activities in the past?

6. Identify some potential ways to **modify** the activity you chose:

- Decrease lag time to and from activity_____
- Involve your child in only certain parts of an activity_____
- Involve your child in the activity for shorter amounts of time_____
- Take out less essential parts of the activity_____
- Change the order of the events within or surrounding the activity_____
- Break up the activity/provide extra breaks_____
- Temporarily decrease the amount of demands_____
- Be available or have someone available to assist your child_____
- Other modifications_____

7. Identify some ways to **prepare your child** for the activity you chose:

- Practice certain parts of the activity_____
- Expose your child to the activity beforehand_____
- Use social stories_____
- Use peer support/coaching_____
- Other ways to prepare your child_____



Religious Inclusion Action Plan- Parent

8. Identify some ways to **use visual supports and reinforcement** during the activity you chose:

- Change current verbal instruction to increase understanding (less words, more concrete, clarify expectations, pair with visual)_____
- Use physical environment to clarify expectations_____
- Incorporate timer or other limit setting visuals_____
- Use schedule to aid in transitions/promote independence_____
- Use first-then board to promote compliance_____
- Incorporate token system_____
- What reinforcers will you use?_____
- What appropriate behaviors will you reinforce?_____
- Other ways to use visual supports_____

Additional Notes:

Action Plan- Religious Educators

1. Choose one religious activity for which you would like to focus on helping children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other disabilities be successfully included:

2. What kind of participation does this activity require?

3. How might an individual with ASD's challenges with social communication and restricted/repetitive behaviors impact his/her successful inclusion in the religious activity you chose?

4. If you have already included children with disabilities in your activities, what are some supports that have supported successful inclusion in the past?

5. What are some questions you may want to ask parents of children with disabilities in preparing for their successful inclusion?

6. Identify some potential ways to **modify** the activity you chose:

- Decrease lag time to and from activity_____
- Involve your child in only certain parts of an activity_____
- Involve your child in the activity for shorter amounts of time_____
- Take out less essential parts of the activity_____
- Change the order of the events within or surrounding the activity_____
- Break up the activity/provide extra breaks_____
- Temporarily decrease the amount of demands_____
- Be available or have someone available to assist your child_____
- Other modifications_____

7. Identify some ways to **prepare the child** for the activity you chose:

- Practice certain parts of the activity_____
- Expose the child to the activity beforehand_____
- Use social stories_____
- Use peer support/coaching_____
- Other ways to prepare the child_____



Action Plan- Religious Educators

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- Incorporate token system_____
- What reinforcers will you use?_____
- What appropriate behaviors will you reinforce?_____
- Other ways to use visual supports_____

Additional Notes:

