

All visual supports
were evaluated using
single

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All of us transition from one activity to another and from one setting to another through out our daily life. Transition is the process of stopping one activity to move on to another new activity, and it is a process that occurs naturally whether at home, school, playground, or workplace. It is something that occurs so frequently with or without our knowledge. Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), struggle more when it comes to deviating their attention from one situation to another or changing from one task to another. They require well planned procedures to facilitate smooth transition and maximize instructional time with more structure, than their typically developing peers. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is characterized by a qualitative impairment in at least two of the three following areas; social interaction, communication, and restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities (Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-IV-TR), (2000).

These characteristics along with difficulties associated with changes in routine or environments, the need for "sameness" and predictability may also affect the fluidity with which transition occurs, for individuals with ASD. Specifically, the unpredictability and uncertainty of transitional situations may cause anxiety for many students with ASD. Difficulties during transition are also affected by problems in understanding verbal directives and attending to several simultaneous stimuli or cues (Mesibov, Shea, & Schopler, 2005). More often, difficulty in transition leads to problem behaviour such as aggression, tantrums, noncompliance and self-injury, which in turn significantly limits an individual's ability to complete an

activity independently across environments (Schreibman, Whalen & Stahmer, 2000).

There are several strategies to reduce transition difficulties out of which, one promising intervention for individuals with ASD are visual strategies. One such visual strategy is the use of visual timers for reducing the need for constant adult support while increasing independent and smooth transition. A study carried out by Dettmer, Simpson, Myles & Ganz in 2000, revealed a significant decrease in the latency period between the time the students were given the instruction to finish one activity and start another activity by using visual timers. The effectiveness of visual supports were evaluated using single subject reversal designs (ABAB) and they also discovered that using a timer as a visual support resulted in the decrease of the need for verbal and physical prompting by the instructor.

Cohen (1998), stated that most individuals with ASD are visual learners and not auditory learners, they require alternative communication methods such as visual timers to bring in more structure, routine and sequence that they require to their daily activities. In support with above research, Hodgdon (2000) further states that “ educators can give more and more verbal directions, but that does not mean that the student understands”. He further states that when these visual supports are used correctly used, they allow the individuals with ASD the freedom to engage in life, despite their impairments.

Visual timers are great devices to let the students know that an activity is going to be ending and it is time to get ready for a new activity. Visual timers

act as a cue to help the individual understand that time is running out and there is no more time allotted for the activity he or she is doing, and its time to check the schedule to know what the next activity is. Concepts related to time are abstract, may be confusing, for example statements like, " we will be done in a minute", " just a second left" etc. usually cannot be interpreted literally by students on the spectrum. It may be even more harder for individuals who have not mastered the skill of reading time. Therefore, presenting time visually with the help of a visual timer can make the concept of time more meaningful and worthwhile (Dettmer et al, 2000).