

Using visuals

The use of visuals with individuals with autism has been an invaluable tool for communication and helping with understanding. Many individuals with autism learn and understand more easily when things are presented visually, whether it be an object, photo or line drawing. These options can be used with both children and adults on the autistic spectrum.

Visuals

Single pictures or photos can be used to represent objects and actions. These can be presented as reminders or to help explain a task. Alternatively a non-verbal individual can use them to communicate. The use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is a good example of using pictures as a tool for communication. Fluent users of PECS can use several pictures to make easily understandable and grammatically correct sentences.



Visual schedules

These can be used to help explain a series of actions or a timetable. An example of a visual schedule would be a series of pictures on the bathroom wall which reminds the client to flush the toilet, wash their hands, use soap, and dry their hands. Another example would be a series of pictures that give a timetable for a child's day at school. The child can see what it is happening next and he can take down each picture as he finishes each task, so he can see his day progress. Visual schedules can be used to:

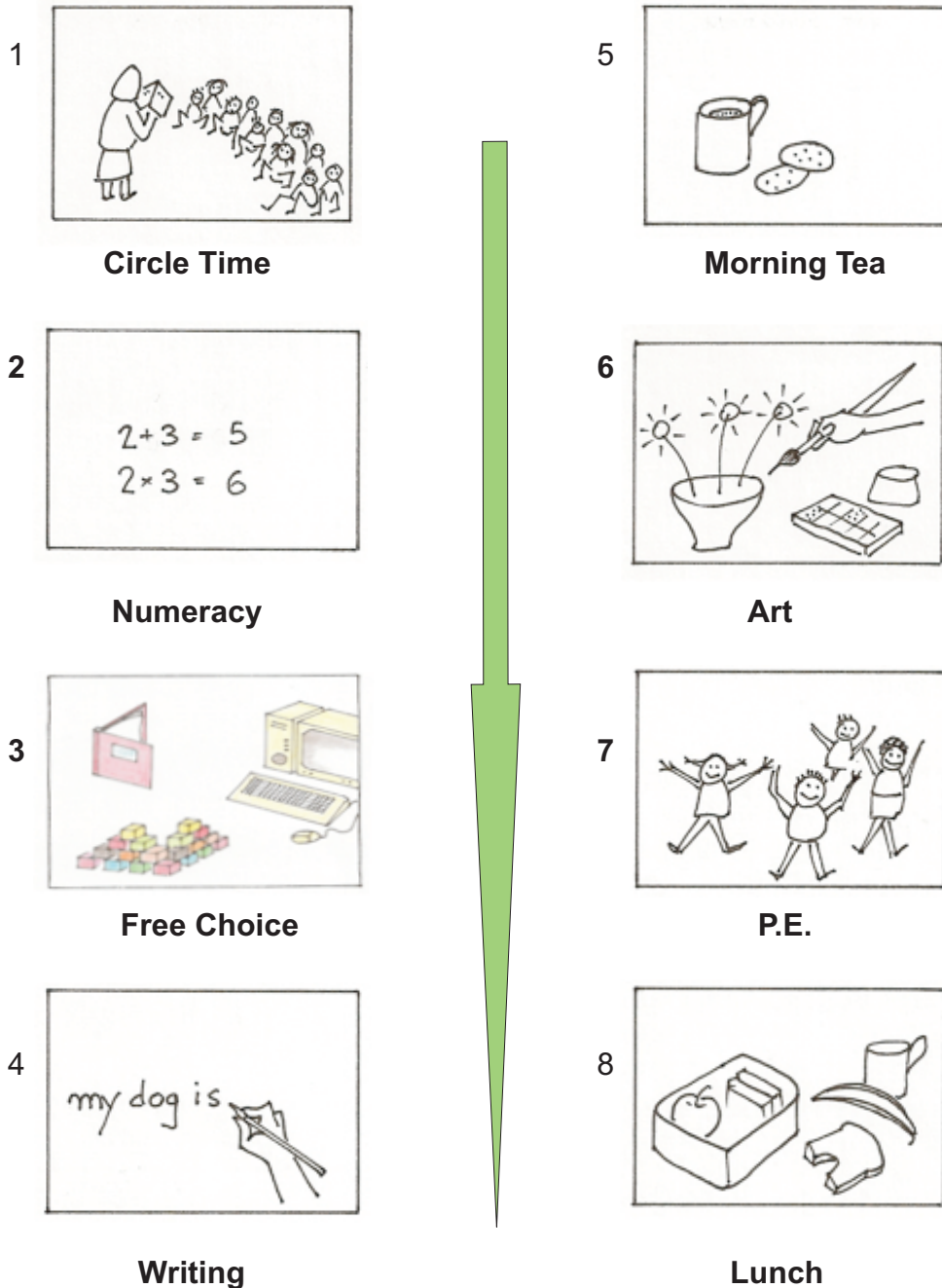
Reduce anxiety - the individual is aware of their routine.

Motivate - the child can see a reward on their schedule if they finish their work.

Manage behaviour - certain favourable activities are scheduled at certain times of the day. This teaches the child that they cannot just do a certain activity whenever they like, and prevents tantrums when they are not allowed to do that activity outside scheduled times.

Visual schedules can also be in calendar or checklist form.

Visuals can also be used in the classroom to facilitate learning, help with tasks that are more abstract, and make activities more interesting.



This is a very simple example of a visual timetable for a school aged child. The timetable works downwards and the child can remove each picture as he achieves each lesson or activity. Numeracy and writing are two of the harder subjects so they are divided by a Free Choice period to give the child some down time. More Free Choice options can be distributed throughout the timetable as required. The Free Choice options also act as a reward for achieving or taking part in certain activities.



Social stories

Social stories are easily produced, focus on real life situations and can be used repeatedly, as, and when required. The stories can be written with visuals to help with understanding. They offer the child information on a particular social situation and focus on who is performing certain actions, why they are performing those actions and behaving in a certain way. Stories can provide time and place related information about when and where things might happen. The story can focus on particular areas of need such as social skills or communication, and can also provide the individual with socially appropriate responses.

For more information on visuals, visuals schedules, social stories and classroom strategies to help individuals on the autistic spectrum see www.icommunicatetherapy.com



To learn more about autism, autistic spectrum disorders and strategies to enhance communication, you can read about and purchase books on our website www.icommunicatetherapy.com. Click this link to see our online Resource Centre.

Suggested Reading

Suggested Reading:

1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Veronica Zysk and Ellen Notbohm

Playing, Laughing and Learning With Children on the Autism Spectrum: A Practical Resource of Play Ideas for Parents and Carers by Julia Moor

Overcoming Autism: Finding the Answers, Strategies, and Hope That Can Transform a Child's life by Lynn Kern Koegel and Claire LaZebnik

Self-Help Skills for People With Autism: A Systematic Teaching Approach by Stephen R. Anderson, Amy L. Jablonski, Vicki Madaus Knapp, and Marcus L Thomeer

Activity Schedules for Children With Autism: Teaching Independent Behavior by Lynn E., Ph.D. McClannahan and Patricia J., Ph.D. Krantz

Visual Supports for People With Autism: A Guide for Parents and Professionals by Marlene J. Cohen and Donna L. Sloan

Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community: Strategies for Individuals with Autism and Asperger Syndrome by Jennifer L. Savner, Brenda Smith Hyles, and Brenda Smith Myles

A Picture's Worth: PECS and Other Visual Communication Strategies in Autism (Topics in Autism) by Andy, Ph.D. Bondy and Lori Frost

Solving Behavior Problems in Autism (Visual Strategies Series) by Linda A. Hodgdon

Visual Language in Autism by Howard C. Shane and Sharon Weiss-Kapp

The New Social Story Book : Illustrated Edition by Carol Gray

My Social Stories Book by Abbie Leigh White, Carol Gray, and Sean McAndrew

The Social Skills Picture Book Teaching play, emotion, and communication to children with autism by Dr. Jed Baker

Comic Strip Conversations by Carol Gray