



Supporting Smooth Transitions

For Learners with Special Needs

Presented by

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Reasons Transitions May Be Hard



Executive Functioning or Attention

Shifting attention, stopping, starting, and holding the next step in mind can be hard.



Leaving Reinforcing Activity

The child is being asked to stop something rewarding, not necessarily refusing the next activity.



Episodic Memory

They may know what comes next, but cannot easily access the memory which is usually enjoyable or manageable.



Comprehension

The child may not clearly understand what is happening next, where they are going, or what is expected.

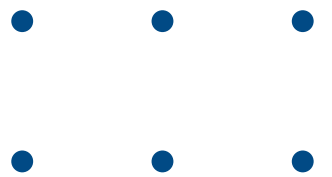


Read the Signals

Before a meltdown or tantrum, there are often signs that a transition will be difficult.

Protesting or
behavioral protesting

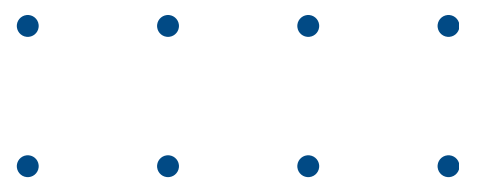
Difficulty stopping
current activity



Repeated
Requests for one
more minute

Bargaining

Ignoring



Reactive Strategies



Make a “save plan”

Take a picture of how the activity is being left or designate a time on the calendar/schedule to finish.



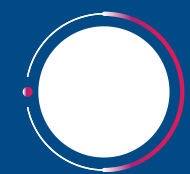
Build a “hook” to next activity

Give your child a job, role, or item to carry. You can also assign a way to move from one location to the next (i.e. let's stomp to the car).



Reduce language

Adults often try to explain, encourage or convince using language. For many children, this increased cognitive load can exacerbate the reaction.



Introduce a bridge activity

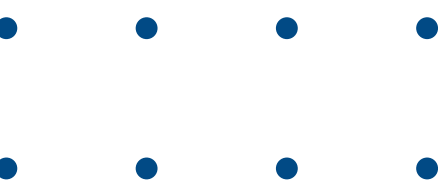
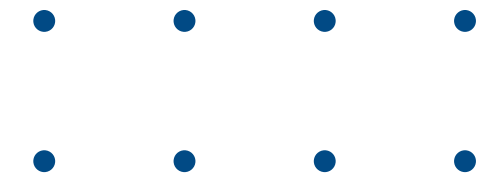
Introduce another reinforcing activity that is closed-ended (i.e. 10 piece puzzle). In this way, you can provide a proactive expectation.

Proactive vs Reactive

Proactive strategies are those which are applied before the problem ever arises. This is the most ideal way to teach because the child is not in a “hot state,” and they are available for learning.



Proactive Strategies



Preview

Discuss the transition before ever starting the activity



Role Play

Role play when your child is calm and use transition strategies for micro-transitions that are not emotionally charged.



Use Visuals

Picture schedule
First-then card
Written checklist



Countdown Timer

Verbal time checks and countdowns

Make it a game with a positive spin



Settings

Picture To Reveal



Theme Selector



Change App. icon, background and timer image

Child Mode

On



Disable buttons when the timer is running

Reveal Picture

On



The ending picture is gradually revealed during the countdown

Show Digits

Off



Show digital countdown in the center of the timer

Play Ticking Noise

Off



Sneaky Pause

Off



Continue to play the ticking noise when the timer is paused

Longer Timers

Off



Allows the time to be set in hours and minutes

"Hey Siri, Start Countdown Timer"



Add to Siri

Proactive Strategy

Episodic Memories

Episodic memory is a neurocognitive (brain/mind) system, uniquely different from other memory systems, that enables human beings to remember past experiences.



**Photos to capture
positive emotions
of event**

**Cue the
memory**

**Review the
photos prior to
the transition**



Proactive Strategy Social Story

**Goal: reduce uncertainty and
increase predictability.**

A short, individualized story, usually with pictures, that explains what will happen and the desired behaviors of the child.

Read when the child is calm — not for the first time during a meltdown.

1

Identify the specific situation

Choose one situation that is confusing, difficult, or unpredictable for your child.

Keep the topic narrow—for example, “getting a haircut,” rather than “having good behavior.”

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• • • •

2

Investigate

Ask yourself what is making the situation difficult. Is the student unsure about what is going to happen? When will something happen?

Describe what will happen
Give clear, factual information about the situation. Include the important who, what, where, when, and why.

3

Suggest and Reassure

Write the story in first person. Instead of describing what they shouldn't do, tell them what they can do.

Example: “If I need more time, I can ask, ‘One more minute?’”
“If I feel angry, I can use my talker to say, ‘I’m mad’”

Social Story

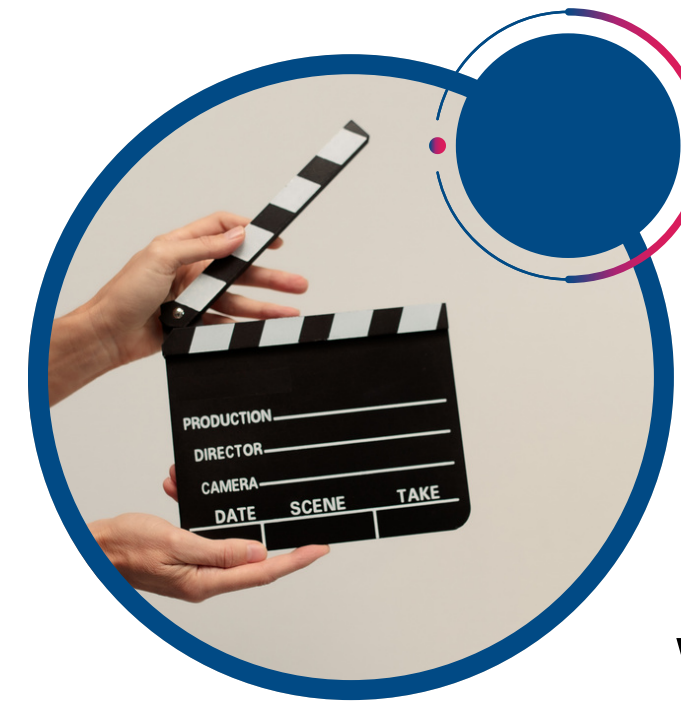
Helpful Tips

Keep the tone positive.
Avoid statements such as "Everyone will be happy if I behave." Describe the situation and teach useful information instead of using the story as a behavior contract



Match the format to the learner

Whether portrayed as symbols, a comic book, a phone checklist or note... social stories should be respectful of age and ability.



Role Play

Do a dry run or role play. Apply the social story to situations that are not emotionally charged.

Words such as usually, sometimes, may, often, and I can try are safer than always, never, or I will. Real life does not always follow the script.

Revise

If the social story does not seem to be "hitting home," revise it.



Social Story Resources

Jill Kuzma, M.A., CCC-SLP
<https://jillkuzma.wordpress.com/>

TheNoraProject
thenoraproject.ngo

Carol Gray Social Stories
www.carolgraysocialstories.com



Thank you



New Client Consultation

Free 15 minute consultation

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Questions?

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