



## 10 TIPS WHILE WAITING FOR BEHAVIOUR SERVICES

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### 1. Know what you are looking for

- People that we support often have complex behaviours.
- Need to develop good operational definitions that paint a clear picture. Describe it in observable and measure way. E.g. temper tantrum: whenever John hits, screams and/or yells for longer than 30 seconds.
- Avoid emotional terms: John is being a brat.
- Avoid psychiatric terms: John is obsessing over his favorite movie. Instead, state it this way: John repeatedly watches the same movie.

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- Prioritize the problem behaviours
  - which ones impact the safety of the person, others, support staff,
  - which ones effect the quality of life of person.
- Data
  - Begin to take data on the problem behaviour often using ABC charts.

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## 2. Rule out the medical!

- Infections
- Urinary tract Infections
- Hunger
- Dental problems
- Pain
- Constipation/digestive concerns
- Sleep disturbances
- Adverse reactions to medications
- Psychiatric conditions: hallucinations, depression, anxiety, mania, psychosis, OCD, self-harm

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## 3. Prevention

- If you rearranged items, events, or people, could you prevent the behaviour from occurring?
  - What was happening just prior? Just came in from bowling
  - Where does it usually occur? Bathroom, bedroom
  - What time of day?
  - Who was around?
  - What was the noise level?
  - How active was the person or those around him?
  - How well does the person sleep?
  - What is the person's history
- Provide the individual with a regular routine and structure that is supported and maintained (including all aspects of need, Bio-Psycho and Social, i.e. exercise, meaningful activity and social outings).

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- What are the steps you can take now?
  - Person who acts out when returning from bowling may need some additional support after the transition.
  - Mornings are always difficult, so tasks may need to be presented at a slower pace.
  - Jim always reacts when Mary is around, monitor them.
  - Perhaps the people you support do not appreciate your music.
  - A better night time routine may assist in better sleep hygiene. E.g. no coffee after supper, no scary movies in the evening. Having a glass a milk and dimming the lights.
  - Fall can be difficult with the change of clothing for the cool weather, so slowly introduce a preferred article of clothing.

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- Have Sensory Integration Disorders identified early, to better determine the cause of behaviours (especially in individuals with FASD, Autism, etc.) and supported accordingly.
- Modify communication approaches to increase understanding (simple, clear, concrete, increased visual cues).

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### 4. Rapport

- If you pay attention to a behaviour it generally it will be repeated.
- Instead of telling someone “stop that, don’t go there” rephrase it stating what you want them to do.
- Catch the person displaying a more desired behaviour, even if it is for a brief moment.
- Try 5:1 ratio, five positive comments for every corrective comment.
- Complete a reinforcement survey.
- Be a reinforcer refresher – refresh yourself at the start of your shift with a quick hello, also end your shift in the same manner.

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### 5. Consistency

- All providing support have the same goal of providing a high level care.
- Consistency is not necessarily conformity.
- Examine your care giver style
  - We bring to the job our own unique personality and narratives.

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- Styles
  - Permissive - allow a great level individual choice and freedom.
  - Authoritarian - provide a great deal of direction and instruction.
  - Relational - meet the person where they are at - a balance.
- While we will all want to be relational, we have a tendency on one edge of the spectrum or the other.
- Need to know what that tendency is and then make corrections to strive for the middle.

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- ### 6. Boundaries
- Set boundaries through setting limits
  - Set only a few important limits
    - To many will only confuse and are not enforced.
  - Set reasonable limits
    - Reasonable for the person you are supporting.
  - Be consistent.
  - Limits should be stated positively.
  - State limits clearly.
  - Explain the reason for limits.

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- ### 7. Environments
- Walk through the physical environment
    - Is it safe? What could be thrown?
    - Are there clear paths to make a quick exit?
  - What is condition of the environment?
    - Are there small things that need repair, e.g. holes in the wall?
  - Is the environment cluttered or is it too barren?
  - Consider sounds/smells, use visual cues where possible.

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## 8. Visuals

- The use of a visual schedule can assist organizing, communicating, and teaching.
- Often a lot of resistance to visual schedules is not “age appropriate”.

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### Visual Tool Mini Test

\*taken from 'Visual Strategies for Improving Communication: Practical Supports for School and Home'  
Linda Hodgdon (1995)



- Do you have a calendar that you write things on to organize your life?
- Do you have a list of “things to do” on your desk or refrigerator?
- Have you ever pointed to a picture in an advertisement or a menu to show someone what you want?
- Do you make a shopping list before going to the store?

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- Do you ever read a sign to tell you what line to stand in or what door to exit from?
- Have you ever followed a recipe in a cookbook to create a delicious dinner entrée?
- Do you ever write notes to your family members reminding them to do things?
- Do you ever scan the menu to evaluate your choices before ordering?



If you answered **YES** to any of the above you rely on visual cues.

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### Why Use Visuals?

- When language delays are a factor, individuals with developmental disabilities often do not respond well to vocal language alone.
- Individuals with developmental disabilities often have difficulty identifying the most relevant cues.
- To clarify communication and organize thinking.
- It draws on visual scanning and rote memory strengths.
- Supports expression of wants/needs/protests/refusals, i.e. "I want...".

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- Provides a concrete way to teach concepts such as time, sequence, cause/effect.
- Helps establish and maintain attention.
- Quick and easy!
- Gives structure to understand and accept change.
- Understand social rules, reduce perseveration, being "stuck", decrease problem behaviours, and make transitions less stressful = prime for situations.
- Visuals can help facilitate social interactions, play, and language = inclusion.

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### Visual supports typically used by adults

- Day-timers, planners, calendars
- Clocks, watches, timers, cell phones
- To-do lists, grocery lists, post-it notes
- Photos/pictures
- Road signs
- Labels, colour codes
- Highlighted, underlined text
- Objects... (who hasn't left out the vacuum and "hoped" another family member would notice!)




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**Interesting tidbit:**

**“Visual information is processed  
25% faster  
than auditory information.”**

\*quote by Dr. C. Cunningham, Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University

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**But I want the individual I  
support to talk!**

- The use of visuals do not prevent children or adults with developmental disabilities from talking!
- Visual tools improve overall communication.
- Visual tools reduce frustration.
- Visual tools reduce challenging behaviour situations.
- Visual tools increase adaptive skills.

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**When to use visual supports:**

- Establishing a routine or schedule.
- Give directions or information.
- What’s happening, changes, choices, who is coming.
- Communicate about past, present, and future.
- Establish rules.
- Improve social skills, teach self-regulation, vocabulary, etc.
- To learn concept more quickly (vs. just giving verbal directions).

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## What kind of visual supports are there?

- Schedules (monthly, weekly, daily, hourly, etc.)
- Written/picture cues
- Picture Communication Boards
- Topic Lists
- Task Analysis Board
- Idea Folder
- Self-Monitoring Charts
- "Feelings" book
- Picture Diary
- Token Board
- Picture contract
- Scripts
- Visual display of rules
- Checklist of things to do
- Calendars
- Regulating voice volume cue
- Visual recipes
- Break card availability
- Social stories
- Use of the universal "No"/"Not Available" symbol
- Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS)

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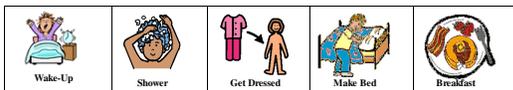
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## Common examples:

- Daily activity schedules



- "First....Then..." boards




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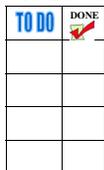
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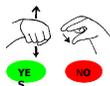
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- "To Do" checklists



"Yes/No" boards



Emotion cards:  
"I'm feeling..."



- "I want...." strips



Visual aides/signs




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- Break cards 
- Social stories
- Comic strips
- Stress Thermometers 
- Feeling Faces 

Tokens 

Power cards 

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### How to use visual supports:

- **Make it fun!** Use symbols of preferred items, places, people. 
- **Functional:** Make visuals at the symbol hierarchy that the individual you support understands. Use symbols they already know, take pictures of their environment.
- **Un-Intrusive:** Pair the visual with language. (i.e., Say "snack time" when picture of snack is shown.)
- **Natural:** Use it continuously and throughout the day to support language. Replicate visuals used at home to work and school.

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### Symbol Hierarchy

Concrete

Easiest = use with early learners

Objects  
Colour Photos  
Black & White Photos  
Coloured Line Drawings  
Black & White Line Drawings  
Written Words

Most Difficult = use with advanced learners

Abstract


School bus

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## Examples of visual schedules




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## Choice Boards

- Presents options from which an individual can currently choose.
- Can include activities, chores, reinforcers, behaviour.
- Offers opportunities for expressive communication and interaction (turn-taking).
- Gives staff or caregiver control while offering some freedom of choice = "forced choices".
- Tip: only pre-load the board with the options that are readily available and possible at that time!
- Quick and interchangeable – change the Velcro pictures.
- Positive based support.

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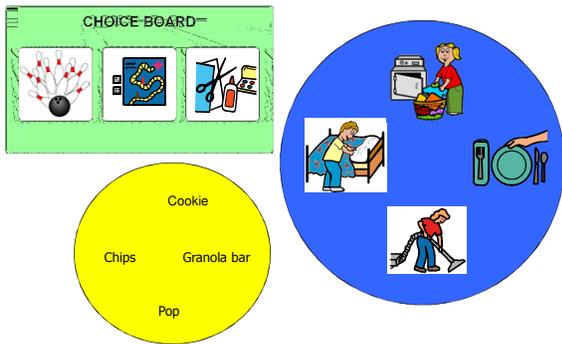
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## Examples of choice boards:




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## Summary:

- A major function of communication is to give information to others.
- Typically the school/home environment provides the majority of information vocally. But, we all take in information different ways!
- It is frequently *assumed* that the individual already knows or remembers the needed information.
- This assumption results in information not being given at all.
- Visual supports, such as schedules and calendars, are tools whose primary function is to provide information in a logical, structured, sequential way.
- Last thought – Think how you could incorporate visual supports into your environment.



**Visual supports = give information.**  
GET CREATIVE AND HAVE FUN!



Good Job!

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## 9. Functional Activities

- What is in the life of the people we support that gives them meaning and purpose?
- What are those activities?
- Offer a menu of activities or choices.
- May need to provide skill development to build new competencies.

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## 10. Debriefing

- How do you develop rapport the person your are supporting after a problem behaviour?
  - Do not take it personally but determine the communicative intent.
  - This may be a good time to have a teachable moment for a more suitable response next time.

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• From the Individual's perspective  
– What did you learn from this experience?  
• what went well  
• what you would do differently next time

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• From the Support staff's perspective  
– What did you learn from this experience?  
• what went well  
• what you would do differently next time

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**Summary**

- There are many things that you can do before a Behaviour Therapist arrives to assist you.
- Prioritize the challenges and then systematically address the issues.
- Look for ways to develop the competencies of those providing support, maybe they need to learn sign language or understand mental illness.
- Hang in there, few of the problems were developed overnight and it will take time to address them.

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