



# Successful Transitions: Tips for Making Change a Positive Experience

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# My Story



# How about you?

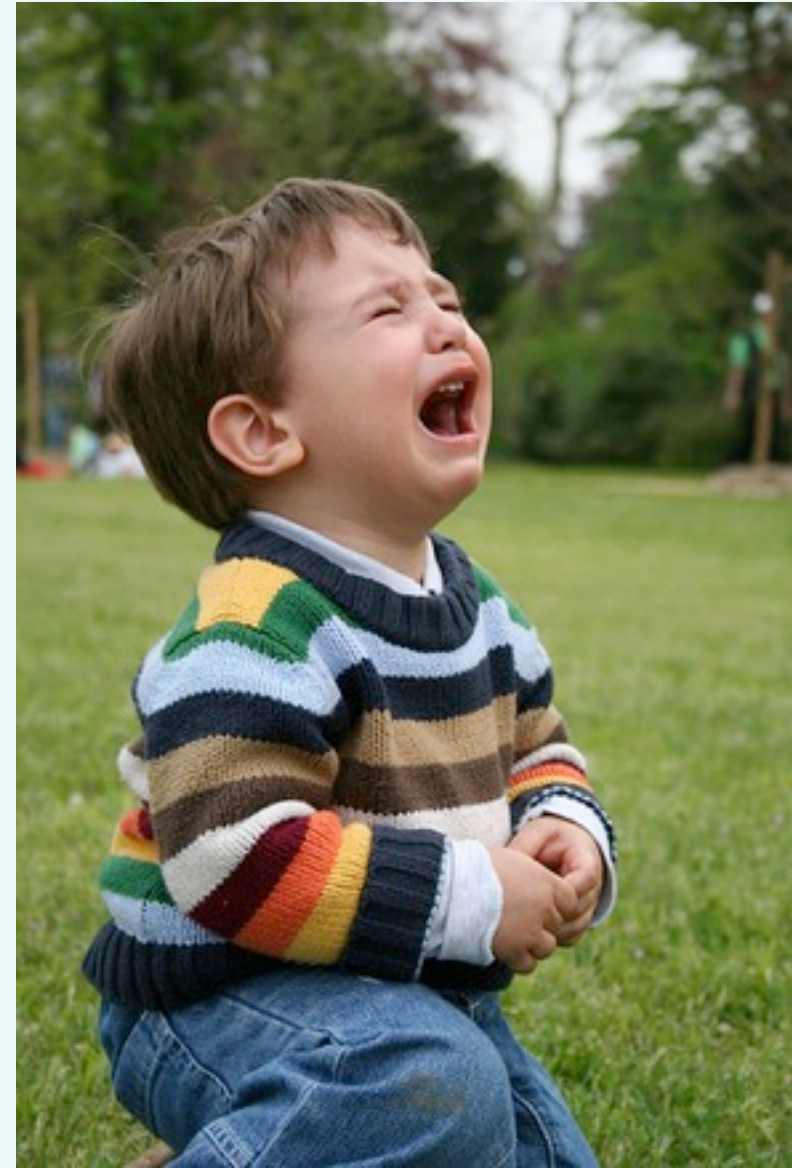
- Tell me about yourself
- What do you hope to learn today?
- Ground rules:
  - Got a question? Ask it.
  - Participation is key to learning
  - Have fun

# Agenda

- Why are transitions challenging sometimes?
- 3 Key Tips for making daily transitions more successful
- Assessment to determine what transition skills your child needs to work on and which transition skill strengths that your child has
- How to prepare those in the new environment for your child
- How to prepare your child for the new environment
- Strategies that can be used in the classroom to assist with transitions



# Transitions



# Why are transitions a challenge sometimes?



# Transitions

- Most transitions that we initiate with individuals with autism involve moving from a **preferred activity to a non-preferred activity**
- This probably even applies to most individuals in general
- So of course, it can be challenging!





# Exercise #1

- Think of a transition that is difficult for an individual with autism
- Write down:
  - What were they doing before the transition? Was this a preferred or non-preferred activity?
  - What happened during the transition? How long did it take?
  - What were they doing after? Was this a preferred or non-preferred activity?



# Transitions

- Even if the child is transitioning to a preferred activity, deficits in understanding language can also make transitions challenging.



# Making Transitions Successful

- Step 1: **Minimize** the number of transitions per day
- Step 2: Start with **small transitions** during the individual's daily routine using the tips that we're going to discuss this tonight
- Step 3: Then tackle the **major life transitions** (e.g., camp, school, work). We'll talk about this next time

# Tip #1

- Make the environment that the individual is transitioning to more fun!
- Use preferred items to guide the individual as they move from one activity to the next
- Deliver preferred items for “transitioning” nicely
- Change aspects of the next environment (e.g., is the work too hard? can I make the activity more interesting)
- Introduce the occasional preferred to preferred activity transition

# Exercise #2

- Go back to your example of the transition that was challenging:
- How you make the environment and the transition itself more fun?
- What can you do to reinforce transitioning “nicely”?



# Tip #2

- Increase predictability about the upcoming transition
  - Use a count down, visual timer
  - Visual supports (e.g., first/then, visual schedule, visual timer)
  - Use priming exercises (e.g., social stories, watch a video model)
  - Key = practice, practice, practice

# Tip #2 – Visual Supports



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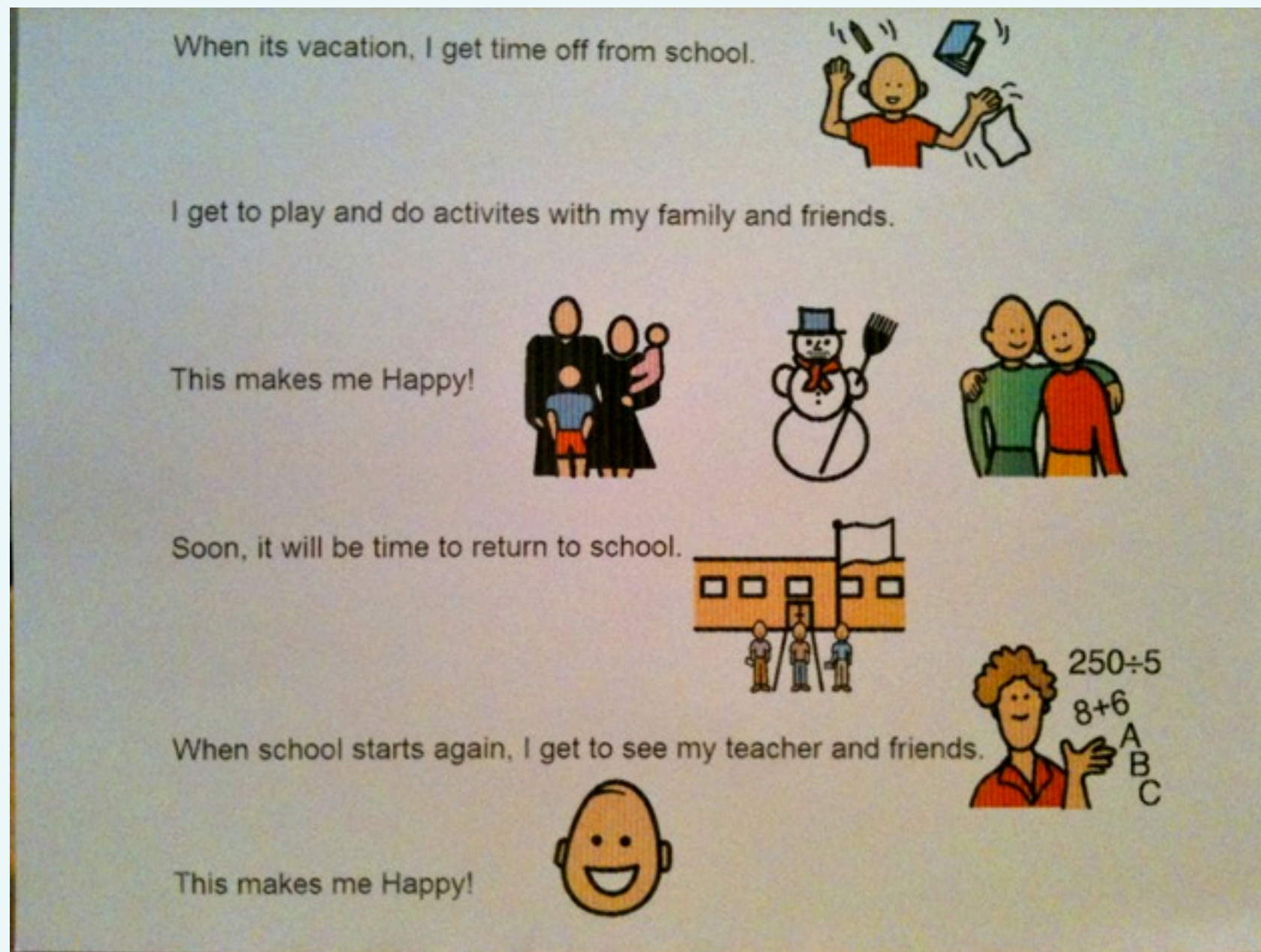




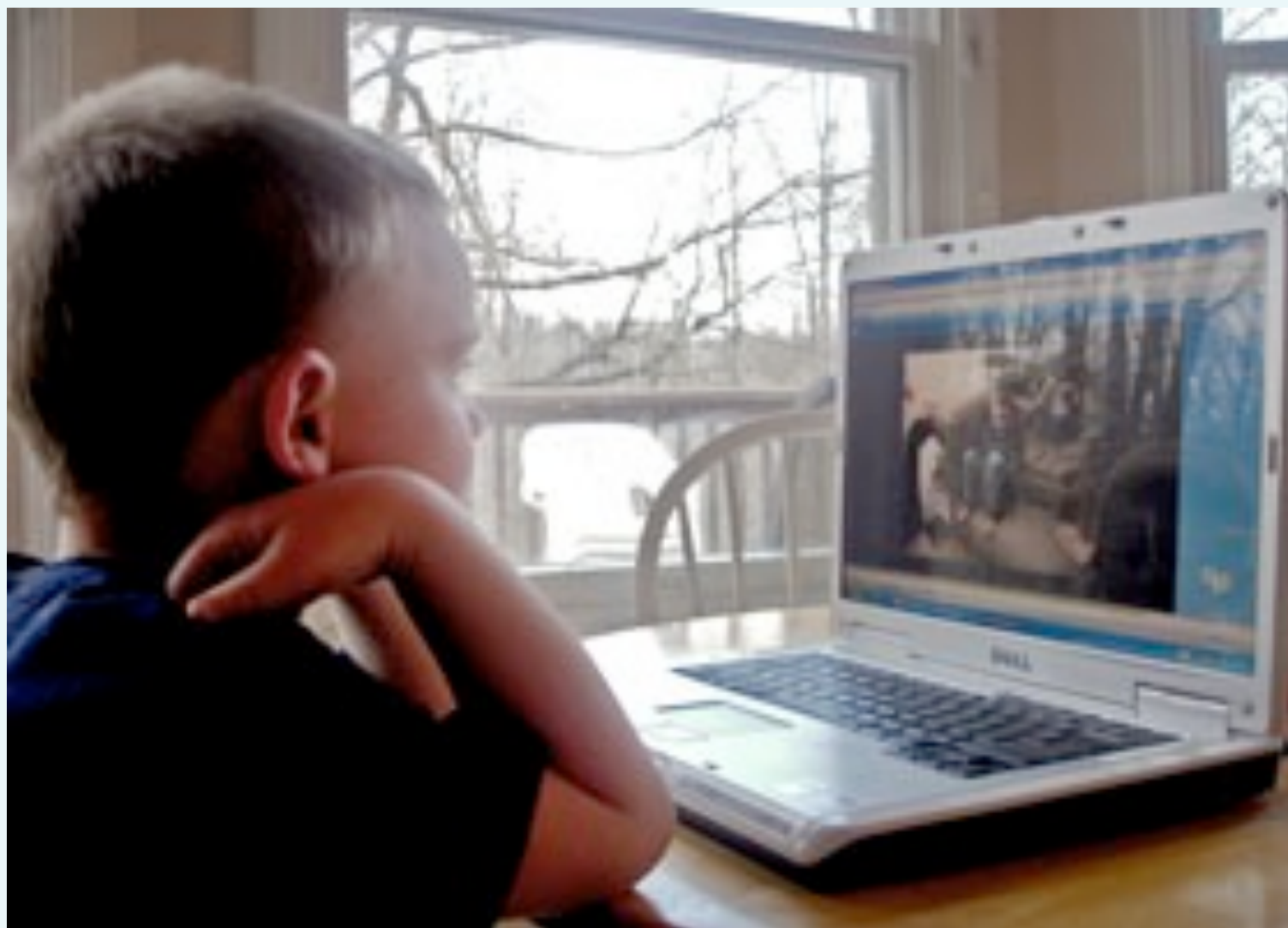
# Tip #2 – Visual Timer



# Tip #2 – Social Stories



# Tip #2 – Video Model





# Tip #2 – Video Model Example





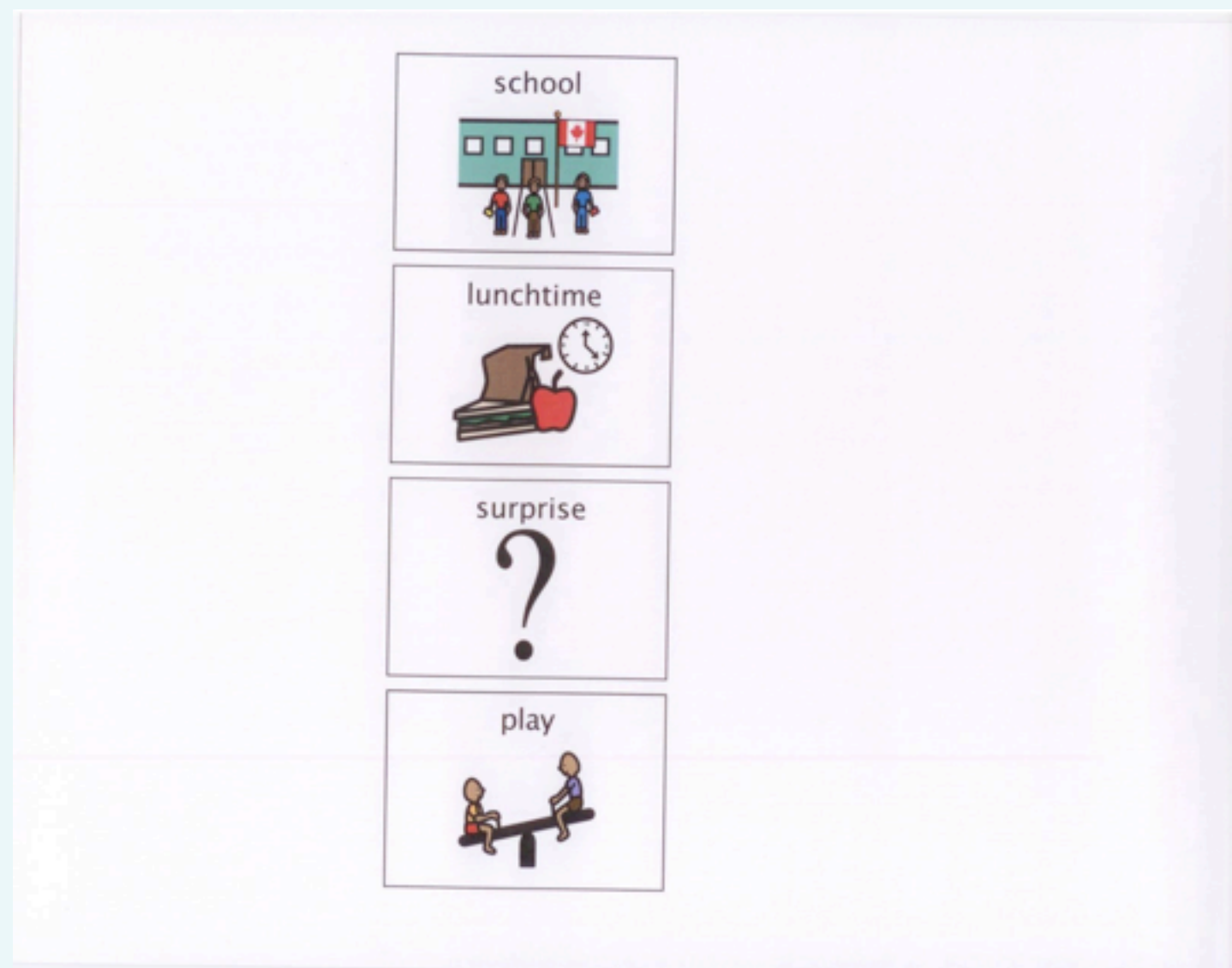
# Exercise #3

- Go back to your example of the transition that was challenging:
  - How could you use a strategy from Tip #2 to make transitions more successful?
  - Caution: Don't use Tip #2 alone. Remember, you need to use Tip #1! You need to address the issue of moving from a preferred to a non-preferred activity first.

# Tip #3

- Once you've started implementing tip #1 and #2 and all is well.....Practice unexpected transitions
- Use the visual schedule to help:
  - Occasionally change the order of activities
  - Introduce a surprise card

# Tip #3 – Surprise Card



# Summary

- Transitions can be challenging because:
  - Involves moving from a preferred activity to a non-preferred activity
  - Inability to understand the language involved in the transition

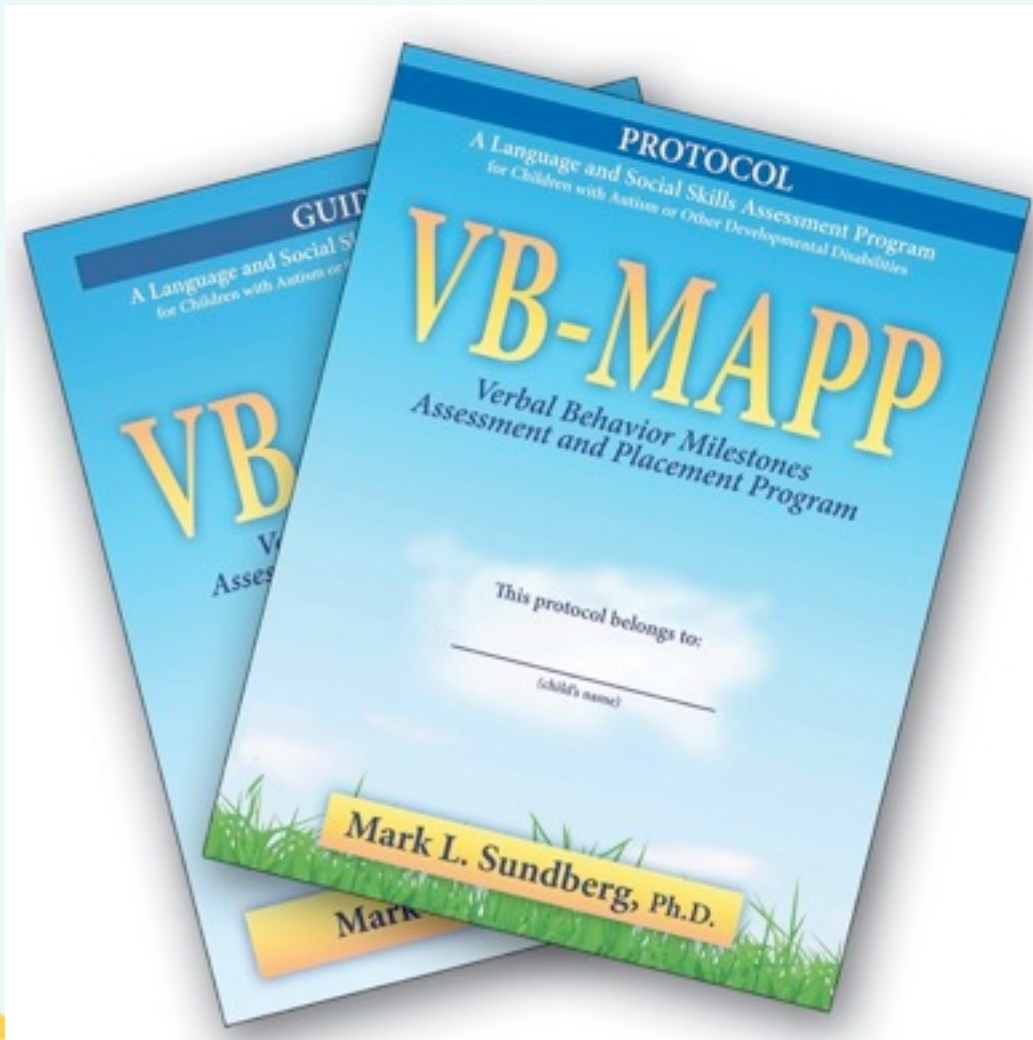




# Summary

- How to make transitions successful:
  - Minimize the # of transitions
  - Start with small and successful transitions
  - Tip #1: Make the transition and next activity more fun
  - Tip #2: Increase predictability about the transition
  - Tip #3: Introduce a surprise card
  - See tip sheet for summary of these

# Assessment of Transition Skills



- Verbal Behavior-Milestones Assessment Placement Program (Sundberg, 2008)  
- Transitions Subtest

# Assessment of Transition Skills

- VB-MAPP Areas to consider:
  - Instructional Control (e.g., following instructions)
  - Challenging behaviour
  - Ability to follow classroom routines

# Assessment of Transition Skills

- VB-MAPP Areas to consider (con't):
  - Functional Communication Skills (e.g., requesting for items, requesting for the removal of things)
  - Social skills (e.g., how the child initiates social skills, how the child responds to instructions from other children)
  - Ability to work independently on academic tasks

# Assessment of Transition Skills

- VB-MAPP Areas to consider (con't):
  - Generalization of Skills across time, settings, behaviours, materials, and people
  - Range of items and events that function as reinforcers
  - Rate of acquisition of new skills
  - Retention of new skills



# Assessment of Transition Skills

- VB-MAPP Areas to consider (con't):
  - Learning from the natural environment
  - Transfer between the verbal operants without training (e.g., learn as name as a request and can use it as a label)
  - Adaptability to change

# Assessment of Transition Skills

- VB-MAPP Areas to consider (con't):
  - Spontaneous behaviours (e.g., doesn't require an adult to prompt it)
  - Self-directed play and leisure skills
  - General self-help skills
  - Toileting skills
  - Eating skills

# Assessment of Transition Skills

- VB-MAPP Transitions Subtest: complete this subtest well in advance of the transition (even 6-12 months before)
- Based on these results consider areas to teach your child ahead of time
- Summarize the results for the next environment

# Preparing the next environment



- It's not just about preparing your child but also preparing the next environment
- Start with setting up a meeting with the next environment asap
- Prepare a list of questions to ask ahead of time
- All key players should be at the meeting

# Preparing the next environment

- Some questions to consider:
  - What types of support will my child be offered in this environment (both staffing and materials)?
  - What steps will be taken to adjust the environment to suit my child's needs (e.g., curriculum adjustment, augmentative communication systems)?
  - What types of experience do the staff have in working with children with autism?
  - see [www.breakthroughautism.ca](http://www.breakthroughautism.ca) In the News Section for more questions



# Preparing the next environment

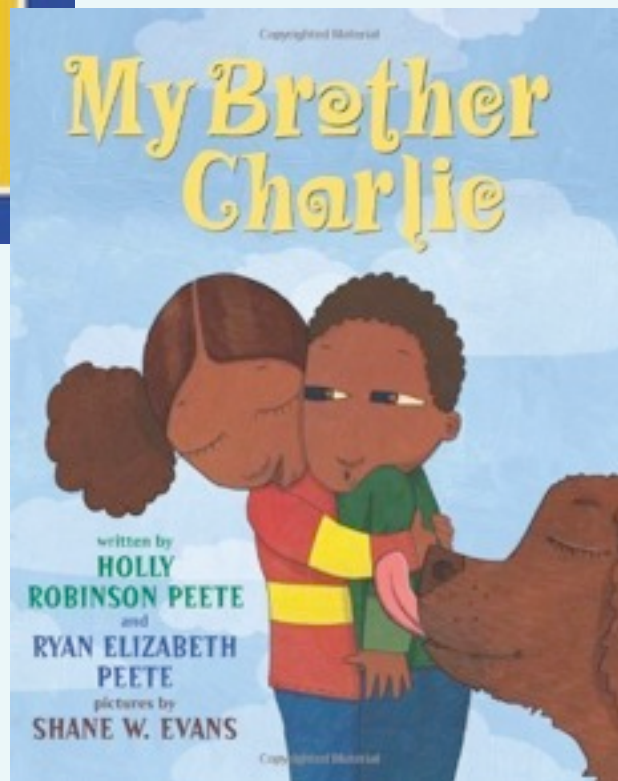
- Develop a formal transition plan
- How many hours will your child start in the next environment?
- Will those hours be gradually increased?
- What will the first few days look like?
- Will there demands be faded in slowly?
- If your child exhibits challenging behaviour, what is the plan for this?
- Be proactive!

# Preparing the next environment



- Prepare the peers in the next environment:
- Peer awareness training
- Peer buddies

# Preparing the next environment



- Peer awareness training:
  - Introduce activities to the peers in “child-friendly” language to teach them about autism in general
  - Teach the peers specific strengths and areas of need about the child with autism that will be in their class
  - Encourage discussion about the topic

# Preparing the next environment



- Peer buddies:
  - Great for modelling skills
  - Great for prompting the child to engage in social skills
  - Great for delivering reinforcement
  - Consider peer mediated social skills interventions



# Preparing the next environment



- Who should be the buddy for peer buddies:
  - “The helper” in the class
  - A child who is persistent
  - Even a little bossy
  - Has age appropriate interests
  - Is a social butterfly



# Preparing the next environment

- Skills to target for peer buddies program (adapted from Pierce and Schreibman [1995]):
  - Paying attention
  - Child's choice
  - Varying toys
  - Models of appropriate social behaviour
  - Encourage conversation
  - Turn taking

# Preparing the next environment

- Key to peer buddies program (adapted from Pierce and Schreibman [1995]):
  - Peer buddy delivers instructions
  - Peer buddy delivers the prompts and/or models behaviour
  - Peer buddy deliver the reinforcement
  - You teach the peer buddy what to do

# Preparing your child

- Consider the VB-MAPP transitions assessment
- What are the key skills that your child needs to work on to get prepared for the next environment?

# Preparing your child

- Key skills that your child can learn ahead of time to help make them successful in a group setting (adapted from Hanley et al., 2007):
  - Instruction following (e.g., responding to name, one step instructions, two step instructions)
  - Functional communication (e.g., “help me, please”, “excuse me”, “may I...”)
  - Tolerance for delay (e.g., waiting 30 sec. for adult- or peer-mediated event)
  - Friendship skills (e.g., saying thank you when you get something, offering or sharing, comforting others in distress)

# Preparing your child

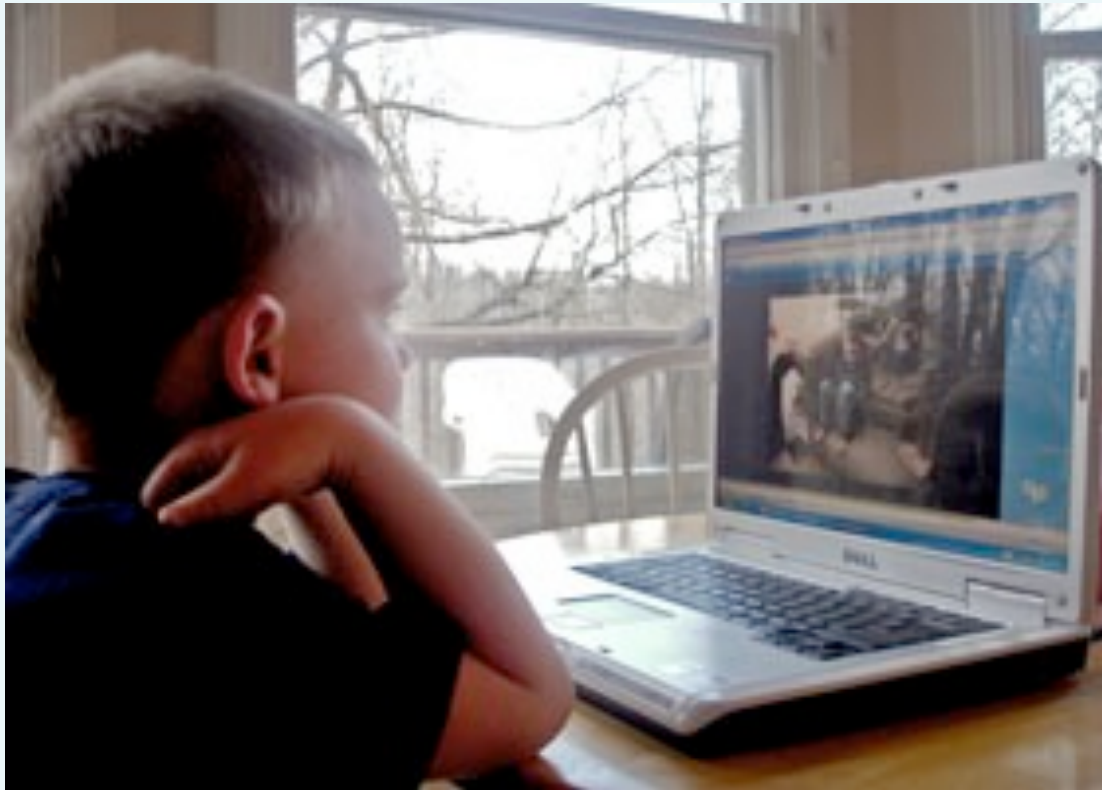
- How to teach group skills:
  - Introduce each skills by verbally describing it (if appropriate)
  - Model the skill
  - Immediately, practice the skill with your child
  - Provide immediate feedback during the practice
  - Set up opportunities during the day to practice in “real-life”
  - Provide immediate feedback during these times



# Preparing your child

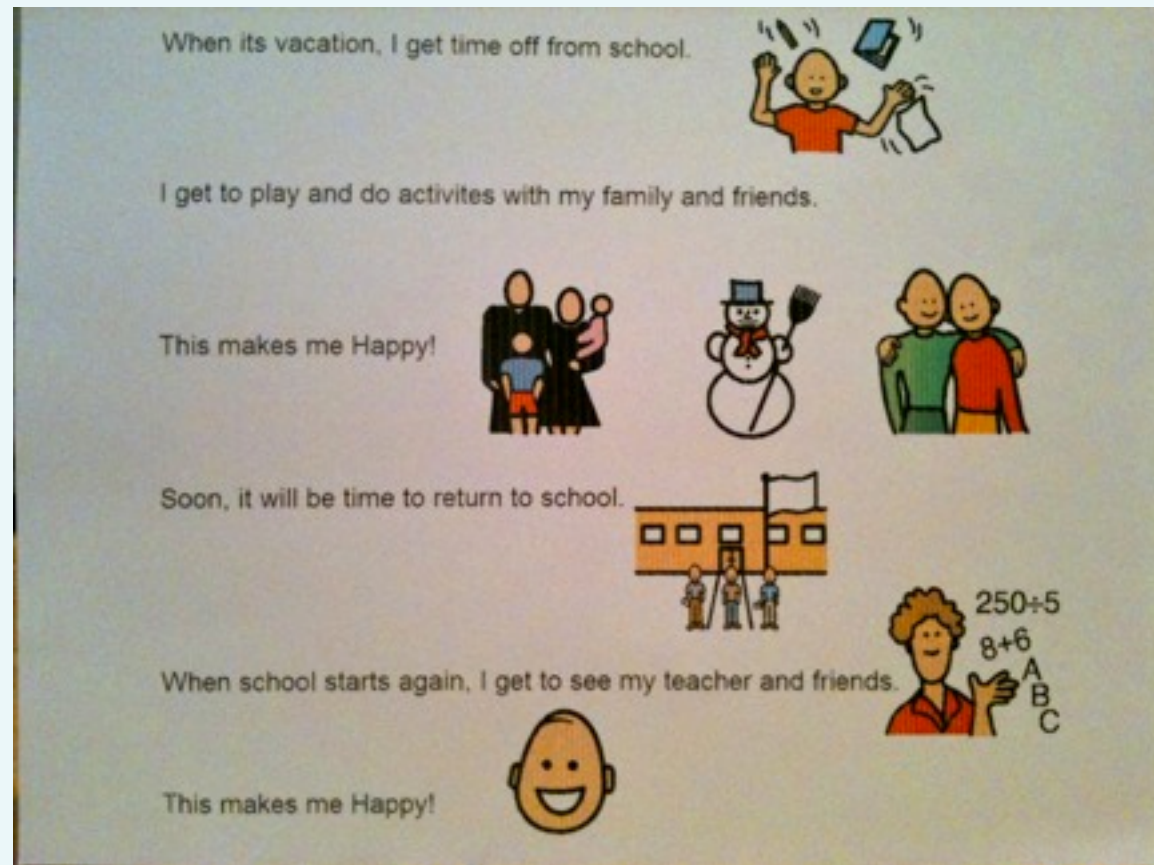
- Consider priming exercises for specifics about next environment:
  - Visits to the next environment
  - Start introducing aspects of the schedule of the new environment beforehand (e.g., circle time, snack time)
  - Video Modelling and/or pictures
  - Social stories

# Preparing your child



- Key considerations for model:
  - If possible have a peer be the model
  - Use items that will appear in the actual environment
  - Allow the child to see the model getting reinforcement
  - Show clear demonstration of the steps that you want the child to perform
  - Practice right after

# Preparing your child



- Key considerations for social stories:
  - The child should have at least basic conversation skills
  - Include real pictures when possible
  - Include the reinforcers in the story
  - Break down the steps clearly
  - Practice right after

# Summary

- Keys to preparing for major life transitions:
  - Do a comprehensive assessment on the child's skills
  - Prepare the next environment
  - Prepare the child for the next environment
  - Remember: It's never too early to start planning!





# Tips for helping your child to succeed in the classroom

- The initials days/weeks at school should all focus on helping establish to your child that school can be fun!





# Tips for helping your child to succeed in the classroom

- First, consider your child's schedule:
  - How can you set up your child's schedule for success?
  - Prepare a schedule ahead of time that **slowly** increases your child's hours of the day at school
  - Then begin to increase the hours at school based on your child's success

## Tip #1: Scheduling

- First, consider your child's schedule (con't):
  - Consider also what subjects/activities your child should start out with at school.
  - Start them during activities/subjects that they find enjoyable (e.g., if your child likes music, start them during music class).

## Tip #2: Classroom Strategies

- Second consider strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to set-up them for success:
  - Remember all of the visual strategies that we talked about
  - Modelling using peers or adults can be a very effective strategies

## Tip #2: Classroom Strategies

- Behavioural Skills Training (especially great for social skills):
  - Instructions
  - Model
  - Role play
  - Feedback

## Tip #2: Classroom Strategies

- Self-regulation:
  - Set-up a goal system for key areas that the child can receive reinforcement for
  - Teach them how to monitor their own behaviour and give themselves points or stamps or checkmarks when they perform the skill
  - Then they can “cash” the points/stamps/checkmarks in for a reinforcer

# Self-regulation example

## My Daily Goals

IF I GET....	I CAN HAVE ...
3 goals	
2 goals	
1 goal	
no goals	I need to try again.

MY GOALS	circle one	
1	YES	NO
2	YES	NO
3	YES	NO

Today I did a great job.....	Next time I will try to...

\*\*\*\*Disclaimer: this needs to be individualized for each child's needs and may or may not be appropriate depending on the child's needs



## Tip #2: Classroom Strategies

- Class-wide reinforcement systems:
  - Fantastic way to help all children in the class
  - Select a common goal for all of the children
  - Research shows that children will even start to regulate each other's behaviour and help each other out
  - Suggestive praise also works well

## Tip #3: Curriculum Selection

- Individualized Education Plan (IEP):
  - Important to spend time to develop a truly “individualized” plan (not just cookie cutter strategies)
  - Consider what is doable in the classroom
  - Select a goal and break it down into small steps

## Tip #3: Curriculum Selection

- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (con't):
  - What type of adult or peer assistance is necessary to set the child up for success?
  - Are other resources required (e.g., computers, smartboards)
  - Ensure that there are provisions for reinforcement
  - Caregivers and teachers can work on the same skills at the same time to maximize the child's success

## Tip #4: Making Friends

- Consider playdates, birthday parties, etc. for opportunities for smaller group interactions
- Implement the peer buddy system
- Depending on your child's skill level, think about the "hidden curriculum" (i.e., nonverbal language, unspoken social skills)
  - E.g., <http://www.amazon.ca/The-Hidden-Curriculum-Understanding-Situations/dp/1931282609>

## Tip #5: Safety Skills

- Important to teach safety skills at school and at home. Consider some of the following:
  - Abduction prevention (stranger danger)
  - Concept of privacy (e.g., private vs. public)
  - Walking nicely (i.e., not bolting)
  - Not touching hazardous materials

## Tip #5: Safety Skills

- Behavioural Skills Training is a fantastic way to teach safety skills.



# Summary

- Keys to helping your child be successful in the classroom:
  - Establish school as a fun place!
  - Consider altering the schedule to set your child up for success
  - Implement behavioural strategies to teach your child a variety of skills
  - Take the time to be involved in the IEP to ensure appropriate curriculum selection
  - Work together with the school to help your child make friends
  - Consider teaching your child important safety skills

# Thanks for your participation!

