

# Autism Toolkit for Early Years

This toolkit has been produced by Carmen Bayandor and Jude Mountford Bristol Autism Team Early Years, to support Early Years settings to further develop their understanding of strategies for children on the autism spectrum.

**For children with autism, seeing is better than talking.**

**'If I can see it I can understand it'**

Visual resources will support children with autism in the following ways:

- ✓ To understand routines
- ✓ To support transitions
- ✓ To learn new skills
- ✓ To be independent
- ✓ To communicate
- ✓ To ensure consistency

# To understand routines



Today Toby is working with:



Carmen

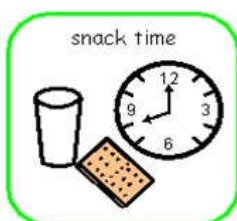
The child might like to know - 'Who will be working with me today?'

## Visual timetables

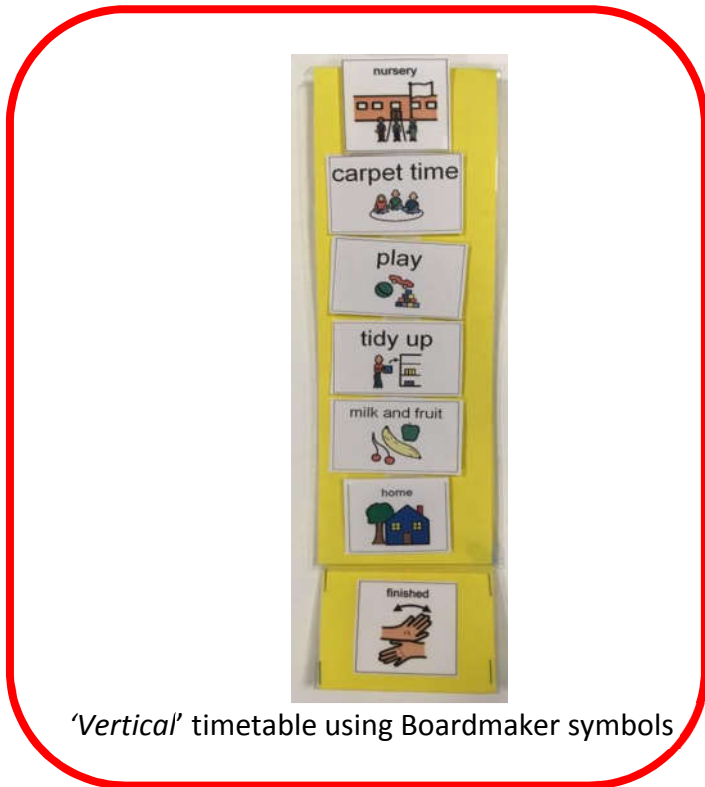
Children with autism often prefer to have a sense of structure and to know what to expect during the day, what activity they will be doing and when.

Introduce the visual timetable using only three or four visuals and gradually increase the amount of visuals over time. ***It is essential that the child interacts with the timetable at every transition by peeling off the visual and putting in a finished box or pouch.***

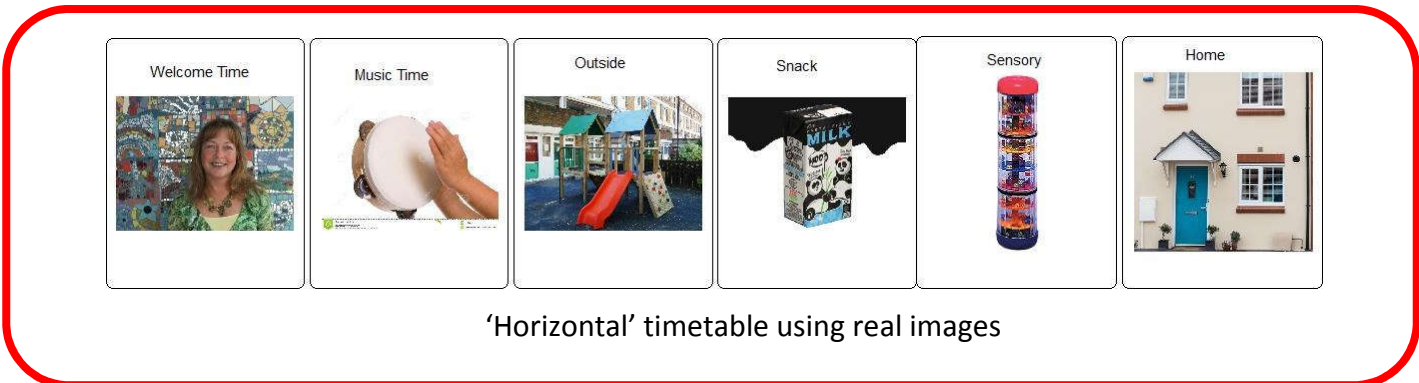
### Our nursery day



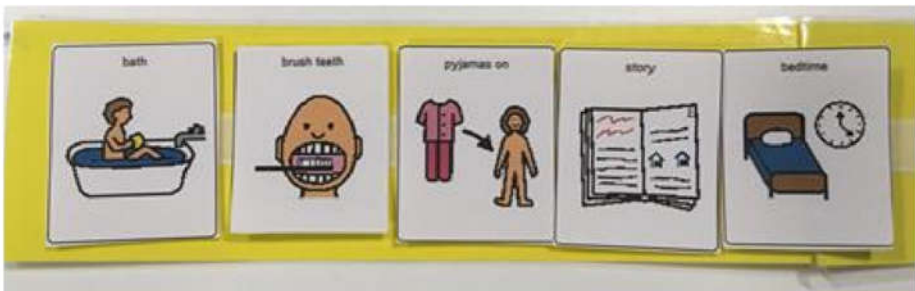
'Horizontal' timetable using Boardmaker symbols



'Vertical' timetable using Boardmaker symbols



'Horizontal' timetable using real images



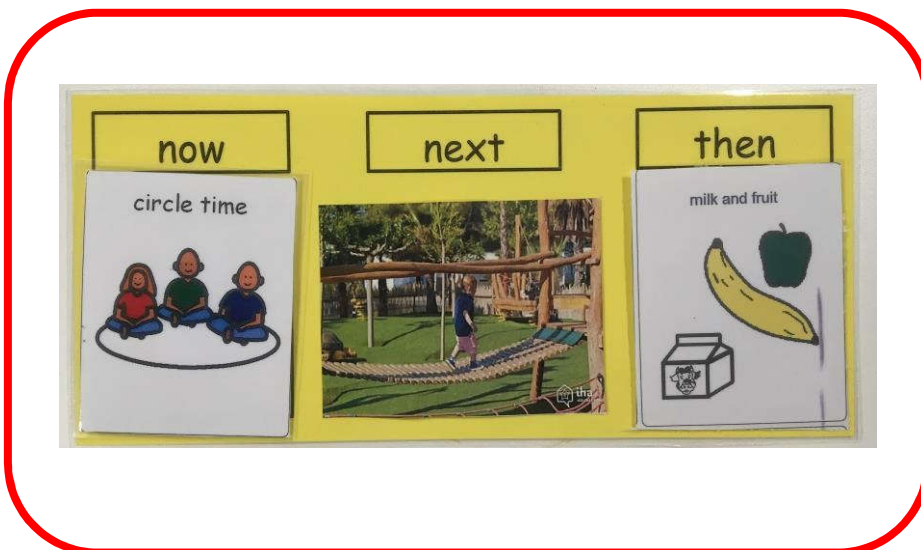
Home time tables to support routines



Some children may not yet understand photographs and pictures so will need activities represented using real objects



'Now and next boards' are arranged in a left to right format with two activities presented at a time. This helps the child to understand that events and activities happen in a sequential manner, not in isolation.



# To support transitions

Sometimes, young children with autism find it difficult to shift their attention from one activity to another. To prepare the child to change from one activity to another the following strategies may be useful:



Sand timers can be used to indicate how long an activity will last. For example: child's turn on the bike.

They can also be used to give a warning



Present countdowns to transitions in a visual way

## To learn new skills

To support a child with autism to learn a new play skill, plan dedicated time in a low arousal area. Use a start and finish box on a cloth to visually identify 'Billy's Play Time.' Identify a visually clear, close ended play item of interest to the child e.g. inset puzzle, stacking cups, or posting activity. Share the activity with child. You may have to do a lot of hand over hand at first, don't give up and repeat every day!



Build a stacker



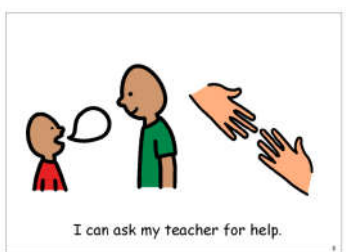
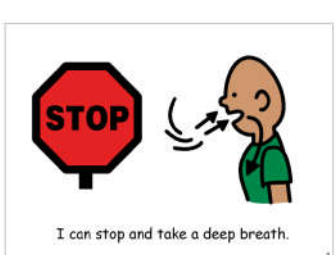
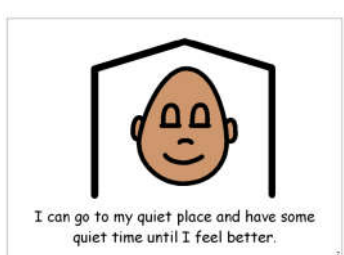
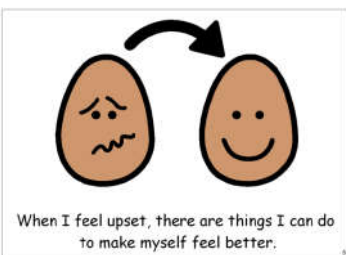
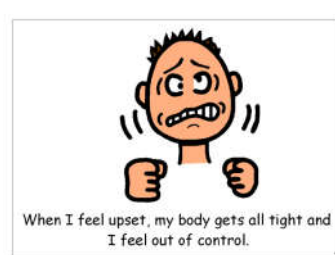
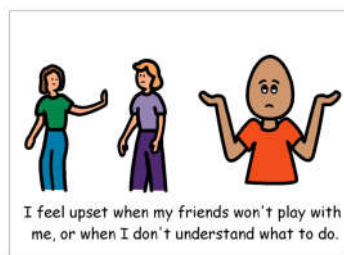
Build a rocket



Using special interest to learn to construct

# Social Stories

- Children on the autism spectrum can find many everyday social situations confusing.
- Social Stories™ (first created by Carol Gray), are brief “stories” about a situation, event or activity.
- Social Stories contain specific information about what to expect in that situation and why, as well as guidance on expected behaviour within that situation.
- They have a huge range of applications. They can be used to learn new routines, adjust to change, modify behaviour, develop social understanding or to reduce anxiety.
- Social Stories can take many forms, depending on what works best for the individual child, and what situation/scenario is being addressed.
- Whichever form is chosen, the social story will be most effective if it is introduced during a calm time, and shared regularly with the child, so that when they find themselves in the situation described, they already have a secure frame of reference for what to expect and how to manage the situation.






# To be independent

Use visual sequences to support children with autism to learn routines and sequential skills with greater independence

hang up coat and bag      find name      lunch box on trolley



Step by step independent arrival routine



toilet   pants   down   wee or poo   wee or poo   pants   up   flush   wash

Step by step toilet routine

wash hands



turn on   soap   wash hands   turn off   dry hands

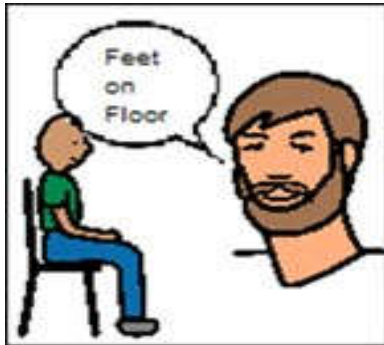
Step by step washing hands routine

# To support communication

## Your language

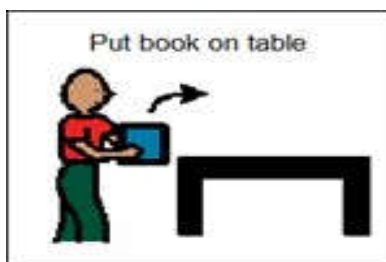
Children with autism may have a wide range of communicative ability. It is very important not to make assumptions about an individual child's skills solely on the basis of his/her diagnosis. Children with autism:-

- may not understand the need for communication
- may not initiate communication
- may fail to communicate clearly what they want or need
- may have difficulty with attention and listening skills, particularly in relation to verbal communication
- may have difficulty understanding language
- may have difficulties processing language, especially when combined with maintaining eye contact and nonverbal communication (gestures, body language).



### Use positive, directive language

- Always say exactly what you want to happen. For example: "James, feet on floor" rather than "James, stop kicking". The child may only process 'kicking' and continue with the behaviour.
- Another helpful strategy is to model the behaviour so that the child sees exactly what 'feet on floor' looks like.



### Use clear, non-ambiguous language

- Language should be as concrete as possible, i.e. relate to the 'here and now', particularly with younger children.
- Be aware that the child may not be able to understand personal pronouns such as 'he', 'she', 'they' or what words such as 'it' or 'there' refer to. Rather than saying "Put it over there" an adult needs to be specific, for example, "book, table."

## Attention and Processing

- Use the child's name first and wait until he/she is giving you their attention before speaking. This 'tunes in' the child to the fact that you are talking to him/her.
- The child may not recognise themselves as part of 'Puffin Group' or 'everyone' so may not respond to group instructions. Try saying "Liam, and everyone else, tidy up time."
- Wait for the child to respond before repeating yourself or giving further instruction. It can take up to 30 seconds for a child on the autism spectrum to process information.



# To ensure consistency

## One Page Profile

- A one page profile is a summary of what matters to a child and how best to support them in different contexts such as at home, at nursery and in the community.
- One page profiles capture important information about a child's strengths, challenges, interests and specific support needed to enable staff to personalise learning.
- They are used to inform action planning and outcome setting in order to make learning and development opportunities more meaningful and relevant to an individual child.
- One page profiles are a way for the child to have a voice in their support at nursery, and to have their strengths and what is important to them as an individual acknowledged.
- They are a highly effective way to share information between staff. For example, when supply staff need to cover a class or a pupil is transitioning from one class to another, a one page profile gives staff strategies to get the best out of each and every child.

My One Page Profile		
<b>Child Name:</b> Matilda Smith		
<b>Class:</b> 3		
<b>Age:</b> 8 years old		
<b>Things I like</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Swimming</li><li>• Riding the bikes with my friends</li><li>• Mashed potato</li><li>• Playdough</li><li>• Funky Fingers Box</li><li>• Reading</li><li>• Ipad Time</li><li>• Golden Time</li><li>• Horse Riding</li></ul>	<b>Things I don't like</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loud noises</li><li>• Sand</li><li>• Washing my hands</li><li>• Numeracy</li><li>• Tidying up</li><li>• Sausages</li></ul>	
<b>How you can support me</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk clearly and quietly to me, saying my name first</li><li>• Give me short activities to do</li><li>• Give my activities I can complete on the Ipad</li><li>• Reward me with stickers and praise.</li><li>• Encourage me to try new things, especially foods.</li></ul>		
<b>I am good at</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playing with my friends</li><li>• Swimming with school</li><li>• Reading 3 letter words</li><li>• Working independently using my Funky Fingers box</li><li>• Painting</li></ul>	<b>People who work with me say</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am friendly and play well with others</li><li>• I work hard in class</li><li>• I have good manners</li><li>• I am getting better at reading</li></ul>	

### Details to include

- A good one page profile is designed with children so that the sections reflect what is important to them. Sections might include:-
  - What really matters to the child from their perspective (even if others do not agree).
  - What the child likes/does not like.
  - Who the important people are in the child's life, and when and how they spend time together.
  - Important/ favourite activities and hobbies, and when, where and how often these take place.
  - Any different routines that are individual/ important to the child.
  - Important/ favourite activities.
  - Things to be avoided that can create anxiety for the child.

### USEFUL WEBSITES:-

- [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk) (National Autistic Society)
- [www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk) (South Glos Parent Carers)
- [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk) (Autism Education Trust)
- [www.findability.org.uk](http://www.findability.org.uk) (Findability – local information)
- [www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk) (Supportive Parents)
- [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk) (Autism Education Trust)

**For more information about South Glos' Local Offer see:**

**<http://www.southglos.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/care-and-support-children-families/local-offer/>**