



The Autism Program

AT BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER

Time and transitions blog post

As a college student, I often have difficulty managing my time and finding enough hours in the day to get everything done. The concept of time is abstract and difficult for many people, and can be even more complex for someone affected by autism. Spurred by one family's question about how to best support their child's understanding of time and transitions, I thought it would be fun to brainstorm some ideas to make the topic more approachable for kids with autism.

“First, Then” Visual boards

If your child struggles with transitions between activities, it could be fun to pair a timer with a “First, Then” visual board. Kitchen timers, cell phone timers, or anything similar could be an easy way to count down to the next activity! Pairing a timer with a visual board might minimize the back and forth that can sometimes draw an activity out past the decided length of time.

Choiceworks makes a wonderful app for iPhone that allows visual schedules to be paired with timers as a fun alternative to making visual boards.



<http://www.autismclassroomnews.com/2013/05/visual-schedule-series-first-then.html>

Utilize what they love

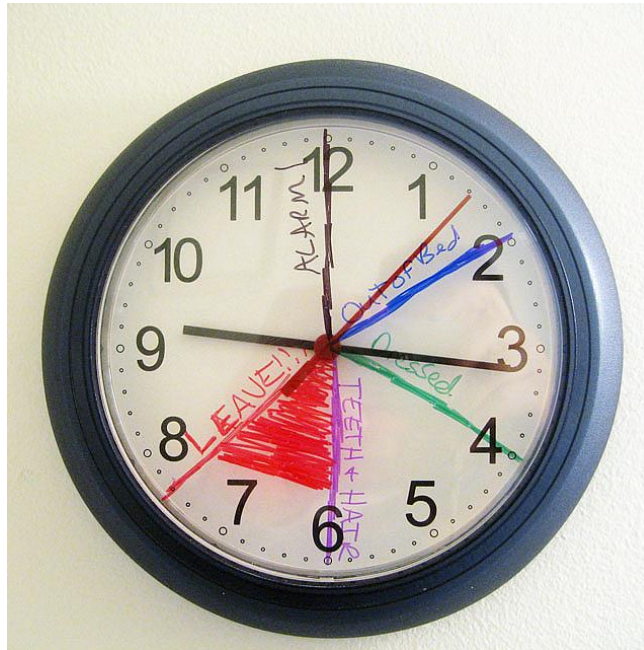
If he or she loves Dora the Explorer, Barney, or any show for that matter, utilize their favorite songs as timers! When Dora is done singing, it's time to clean up. This might make an otherwise uncomfortable transition more fun and enjoyable.

This can be as simple as singing the ABCs twice for tooth brushing, singing the “clean up song,” and other favorites!

Color-coded clocks

You can even make your own home made visuals to help your child understand the clock face. This can range from making a home made manipulative clock, which you can use to show children, “when this clock matches the big clock, it’s time to move on to our next activity.”

Another option is to color code your wall clock, to four quarters with different colors. You can give prompts like, “when the little hand is in the blue zone, it’s time to move on to our next activity.”



http://farm4.staticflickr.com/3184/2928471974_29c36de748_z.jpg?zz=1

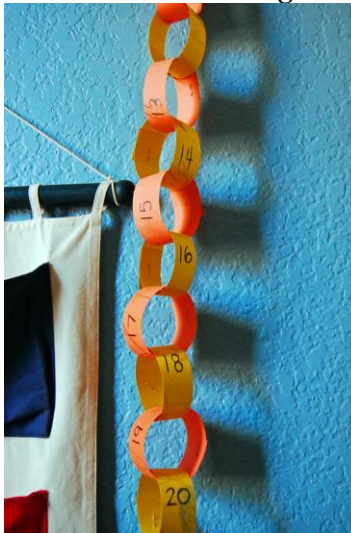
This mom drew a schedule right on to her clock with dry erase markers!



<http://clutterfreeclassroom.blogspot.com/2012/11/color-code-your-clock-with-plastic-wrap.html>

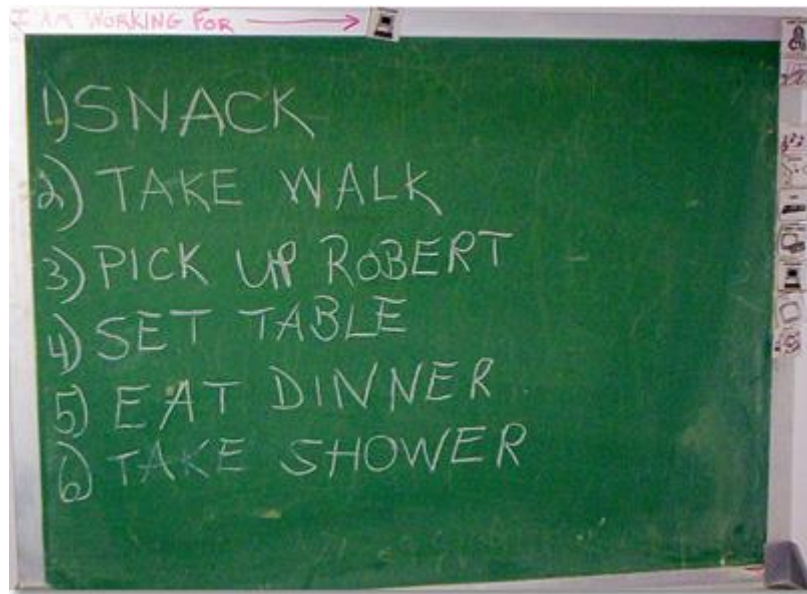
This teacher used colorful plastic wrap to organize her clock!

Some kids may be ready to take a more active role in learning how to measure time. No one knows your child better than you, so utilize their talents and interests to help them learn! If a child is interested in arts and crafts, making a fun and colorful construction paper chain to count down days or hours could be a great option.



<http://thenestingspot.com/2011/09/>

If your child loves to write, you could help them write out a list similar to a first, then board. The schedule will seem much more fun if your child feels involved in making it!



<http://www.lucasworks.org/visual-schedule-autism.html>

When supporting your child's understanding of time, there are some great ways to utilize what you already have, just like the clock examples above! Whether it's a wall clock, a digital clock, or an electronic timer, you should get creative and be consistent with how you are utilizing them. The most important thing to remember when using these visuals and prompts is consistency. Sticking to your instruction and setting boundaries will help reinforce positive behavior, encourage your child's learning, and make transitions a cinch!

These are just a few easy and fun options to help ease the concept of time and transitions. Below I have posted a link from "the Friendship Circle Blog" which has compiled a great list of more visual timers. If you have other suggestions, please leave them in the comments section!

<http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2012/11/06/20-visual-timers-for-children-with-special-needs/>

Jackie is a Northeastern University senior studying Human Services, with a specialization in counseling psychology. She has previously worked with the Autism Speaks New England chapter primarily in fundraising, event planning, and general family support. Currently, Jackie is applying to graduate programs in clinical psychology, with the eventual intent of obtaining a doctorate level degree and privately practicing. We are excited to have Jackie on board where she will be helping to connect families with community resources and working on creating a project that will focus on the hospital experience through the eyes of the child.

