

# Family Focus Newsletter



## Helping Children on the Autism Spectrum With Transitions

Everyone must change from one activity to another and from one setting to another throughout the day. Whether at home, school, or in the workplace, transitions naturally occur frequently and require each of us to stop an activity, move from one location to another, and begin something new. Individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) may have greater difficulty in shifting attention from one task to another or in changes of routine. This may be due to a greater need for predictability (Flannery & Horner, 1994), challenges in understanding what activity will be coming next (Mesibov, Shea, & Schopler, 2005), or difficulty when a pattern of behavior is disrupted. A number of supports to assist

individuals with ASD during transitions have been designed both to prepare individuals before the transition occurs and to support the individual during the transition. When transition strategies are used, individuals with ASD:

- Reduce the amount of transition time;
- Increase appropriate behavior during transitions;
- Rely less on adult prompting; and
- Participate more successfully in school and community outings.

Transition strategies are techniques used to support individuals with ASD during changes in or disruptions to activities, settings, or routines. The techniques can be used before a

transition occurs, during a transition, and/or after a transition, and can be presented verbally, auditorily, or visually.

The strategies attempt to increase:

- predictability for individuals on the autism spectrum and
- to create positive routines around transitions. They are utilized across settings to support individuals with ASD.

Studies have indicated that up to 25% of a school day may be spent engaged in transition activities, such as moving from classroom to classroom, or to new activities.

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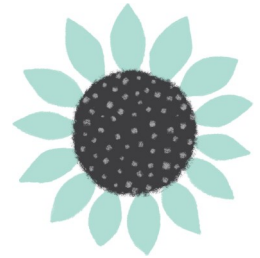


Some individuals with ASD may have difficulties associated with changes in routine or changes in environments, and may have a need for “sameness” and predictability (Mesibov et al., 2005). These difficulties may eventually hamper one’s independence and limit an individual’s ability to succeed in community settings. A variety of factors related to ASD may contribute to these difficulties during transitions. These may include problems such as:

- Understanding the verbal directives or explanations that are provided; especially multi-step directions related to upcoming activities.
- Difficulty sequencing information and recognizing relationships between steps of an activity.
- Recognizing subtle cues leading up to a transition (i.e. students packing up their materials, teachers wrapping up their lecture.)

*Kara Hume, Ph.D., Indiana Institute on Community & Disability, IU, Bloomington, IN*

## Tips From KVC Pediatrics: Transition Strategies



Children with ASD are more likely to have restrictive patterns of behaviors that are hard to disrupt, thus creating difficulty at times of transitions. Some children with ASD may also have greater levels of anxiety which may impact behavior during times of unpredictability and transitions. The following transition strategies may be helpful.

**Preparation Strategies.** Break down skills into steps, model targeted skills then provide practice.

**Remember the purpose of discipline.** It is to teach your child socially acceptable ways of expressing natural desires and drives. Discipline guides your child into adulthood.

**Understand that all behavior is communication.** Listen to what your child is telling you. When the request to pick up her toys results in a full-out tantrum, ask yourself, “What is she really trying to tell me?”

**Successful discipline is geared to the child’s developmental age.** Don’t expect a child of any age to perform something he or she is not ready for developmentally.

**Children need positive reinforcement.** Reward your child for doing right with smiles, hugs, attention, praise and thanks. Rewards do not need to be toys or candy.

**Never hit or shake a child.** It’s against the law for foster parents. Hitting is not a useful discipline tool for children. Hitting and other physical punishment are not effective because they teach a child that it is okay to hit people, may make children much too angry to be sorry for what they’ve done and can hurt a child physically.

**Discipline is best taught by example.** The lessons you teach your child come from what your child sees you do, not what you say.

**If what you are doing is not working, change it!** Your best efforts, even those that worked in the past, may break down. Try to keep sight of your basic principles and always cherish your relationship with your child.

**The important thing is not whether your child behaves in the next few minutes or this week.** The really important thing is how your child turns out five, ten or twenty years from now.

## Fun With Kids Corner: Colored Ice Cubes

**Materials Needed:** three ice cube trays, red, yellow and blue food coloring, three plastic glasses and water

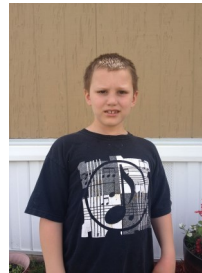
**How to Make It:** Tint the water with food coloring and freeze to make one tray of red ice cubes, one tray of yellow and one tray of blue. Place three clear plastic glasses on the table and put a different colored ice cube into each glass. Periodically, have the children observe as the ice changes to colored water. Then place a red ice cube and a yellow ice cube together in another glass and have the children observe as the ice melts and creates orange. Repeat the process to make other colors.



## Adoption Profiles



Mosharay, age 15, is a well-behaved and happy-go-lucky young lady. She enjoys drawing, listening to music, playing outside and going swimming. Mosharay is in the choir at school and loves to sing. Her favorite class in school is Language Arts and she loves to read. She will need additional supports in place at school to be successful. Mosharay gets along well with peers and adults. At times, she can be easily influenced by her friends. She would do best in a family that is very patient and loving. (R9064)



Meet Joseph, age 9, a great kid, who prides himself on being helpful to others. He is often described as very polite and sweet. He enjoys riding his bike and being outside. When he grows up, he wants to be a mechanic. Joseph is learning to appropriately regulate his emotions and is making great strides. Joseph would do well in a family that can spend time with him and engage him in activities. A strong, committed family that is full of understanding and structure is something Joseph would thrive in. (R18166)

Please call 1-888-655-5500 or visit [www.kvc.org](http://www.kvc.org) for more information about adopting Mosharay, Joseph or other children.

KVC is a Child Placing Agency licensed by KDHE. Our staff hold licenses under the BSRB for their respective disciplines.

## Featured Foster Family

KVC is happy to spotlight Alexander Shultz who was nominated by Suzanne Lundberg.

Alex recently accepted responsibility for placement of three teenage boys as a Non-Related Kinship home. Alex and the boys are from a small, rural community. He has known the boys for several years and has been aware of family concerns. When the boys entered foster care, he was willing to begin the licensing process immediately. Accepting responsibility for three teenage boys is amazing! Alex secured the boy's Kan Be Healthy and dental exams within two weeks of placement. He also completed all of the necessary changes in his home for regulatory compliance with KDHE without any hesitation. He ensured the oldest youth had senior pictures and planned a high school graduation celebration. Alex has taken in stride the change in his role and responsibility for the boys from a community friend to foster parent. He has diligently worked through the required classes and managed to make it through some intense behavioral challenges and resistance initially presented by the boys. His love for the boys shows in everything he does and in his dedication to ensuring stability within their home and community.

Please congratulate Alex and thank him for his work in caring for the children we serve.

## Trauma Systems Therapy Training

If you have not completed Trauma Systems Therapy training (TST), you may do so on-line by going to [www.freestatesocialwork.com/kvc](http://www.freestatesocialwork.com/kvc) and entering the custom training code **kvc123**. The training can also be completed via a self-paced workbook. If you have any questions, or would like to complete the self-paced workbook training, please contact your Family Service Coordinator.



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KVC is accredited by The Joint Commission.  
KVC is a member of the Child Welfare League  
of America and a recipient of United Way

B. Wayne Sims, President/CEO  
KVC Health Systems, Inc.

Chad Anderson, President  
KVC Behavioral Healthcare

Nancy Snyder Killingsworth, Editor

## Foster Parent Advisory Board



**KVC's Foster Parent  
Advisory Board wants  
YOU!**

Join other foster parents  
and help create  
opportunities for  
improved communication!

The board meetings are  
on the last Wednesday of the month at the  
KVC Lenexa office, 7940 Marshall Drive,  
Lenexa, Kansas 66214.

**July 30<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00 p.m.**

**August 27<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00 p.m.**

For more information and to RSVP, please  
contact Stacy at [syowell@kvc.org](mailto:syowell@kvc.org).

## Recruitment Finder's Fee

A monetary award of \$300 will be given to a foster  
parent who refers a potential foster family candi-  
date to KVC. The award will be paid once a family  
has completed the following:

- TIPS-MAPP/PS-DT Training
- Licensing process
- Takes first placement

