



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Preparing for Transitions Between Activities

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism” is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

Many children with autism have difficulty being flexible or switching activities ,especially if they’re moving from a preferred activity, such as playing with video games, to a non-preferred activity, like taking a shower or doing homework.

The best way to try to avoid difficulty with transitions is to prepare for them ahead of time. Children with autism don’t like to be surprised when they’re faced with a task that they may not prefer to do. So parents should always try to prepare their child as much as possible for what’s coming next. It can be helpful to give a warning which can be a signal associated with time , such as a warning that there’s five more minutes. Or for kids who have trouble understanding abstract concepts like time, maybe letting them know that they have a certain number of opportunities to complete their game, maybe one more round on your game or three more chances, one more episode and then we’ll switch to something else.

If a child has trouble understanding language , you can give them a visual cue such as turning the lights on and off or giving a signal with your hands to indicate that a transition is about to occur.

You can never be prepared enough when bringing your child with autism somewhere or when transitioning from one task to the next. It’s always a good idea to try to anticipate what could go wrong and try to prepare your child for that as much as possible. Many kids with autism have difficulty with a morning routine, so parents can try to avoid challenges with transitions ahead of time by preparing the child’s outfit, for example, the night before, setting out the breakfast dishes, making sure that the backpack is prepared.

For some kids, it’s too difficult to transition from a highly preferred activity to something much less preferred, so it might be a good idea to avoid highly preferred activities when you know that a potentially challenging transition is coming up. So, for example, it might be wise to not allow your child to watch t.v in the morning if it’s too difficult for him to transition from television to leaving for the school bus. Maybe there could be some other activity that’s easier for your child to transition from, such as reading a book or having some quiet time with mom or dad.

It’s a good idea to try to be flexible because it’s hard to anticipate every possible scenario that could occur. So, for example, if you’re planning on taking your child to an amusement park, but the child’s favorite ride is not available , it’s a good idea to suggest other alternatives that could also be fun in case your child doesn’t have the opportunity

to do what he or she wants to do. So always be prepared for different scenarios and let your child know that nothing is definite, nothing is guaranteed.

Parents should try to be consistent in setting limits. So, if you need to leave somewhere in five minutes, make sure you give your child enough time to transition, but try to stick to the limit that you set. It can be very tempting to extend the time frame to allow the child to have extra time, but that's teaching the child that the more they try to push your buttons, then the more they have flexibility.

Families with multiple children face additional challenges in trying to accommodate the needs of all of their children and get the entire family to different activities. It's always a good idea to prepare all of the children, not just the child with autism, for different activities that may focus on the sibling rather than the child with autism. One way that families can prepare is to pack a bag of preferred activities for the child; coloring books, crayons, books, whatever the child's interested in so that if he or she has to attend a sibling's activity that's less preferred, it can be more exciting and there could be less difficulty coping with that transition.

Transitions can be difficult for everyone and they can be stressful on the entire family. The key is to try to prepare and to try to anticipate when things could go wrong. Children's Specialized Hospital has many, many resources available to help families dealing with autism on this topic and many other issues.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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