

**MAKING IT A SUCCESS:**

Practical Strategies for Home and School for an Autism Spectrum Disorder

**Setting up for Success in 2010****Changing Teacher is like.... Moving to a Foreign Country**

For the child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) moving to a new teacher, classroom or campus is like moving to foreign country. There is a different language (eg one teacher says 'pack away' new teacher says 'clean up' Note: not the same thing!) Teachers & other students have different facial expression and body language to interpret, new rules, new schedules, new smells, different pencils just to mention but a few changes. This new 'foreign country' causes the child to feel enormous anxiety and stress, which in turn can lead to behaviour. This anxiety and behavior can be managed by effective planning and transition strategies.

This newsletter aims to give you ideas, strategies and solutions to managing transition and have in place strategies ready to make 2010 a Success! The key issue in transition is managing anxiety, put simply: Managing Change = Managing Anxiety

**Managing Anxiety for a child with an ASD is most successful when approached in two parts:**

**Part One: Child Preparations.** The issue often is the child does not understand their emotions, for example a feeling of sadness can often come out as anger. Teaching them how they are feeling is VITALLY IMPORTANT. See page 3 of Newsletter for ideas, resources on Teaching Emotions.

**Part Two: Teachers & Teacher Assistant preparation.** The New Teacher for a child with often is not know until December, which doesn't leave a lot of time to prepare for the transition. Below is some ideas of information, resources, strategies to start to ready to handover for 2010:

- List the Top 10 things you know that you wish you knew at the start of the year.
- Complete the Student Summary Proforma available from my website [www.suelarkey.com](http://www.suelarkey.com)
- Three Stages of Anxiety, list signs and strategies that have worked in 2009 (pg3)
- 9 Tips for Preventing Anxiety : Keeping Kids Cool (pg2)
- Handover resources such as Time Timer, Schedule, Sensory Toys, Visuals
- Professional Development/Training by watching DVD by experts (see pg 9 )
- Transition Strategies Ideas (see pg 11)
- Parents create a card with a photo of your child and inside some important information about your child: Things they love, Special Interests, Sensory notes and Diagnosis. This is a wonderful way to introduce your child and then can be used for relief teachers in the future. (PS: keep it brief!)

**IMPORTANT NOTE** – Many of these ideas and strategies apply for any changes in the child's life even going to the library, relief teacher and families may need some of these ideas of the holidays too!

To help prepare everyone I have included some ideas in this Newsletter and will be running some very special training days in November/December to prepare anyone working or living with ASD for a great 2010. **See back page for dates and venues**

**Sue Larkey****Autism Consultant****Training Days****See page 12 for details**

?? Jo shall we do FREE Postage here or Wendy DVD?

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## Tips for Preventing Anxiety : Keeping Kids Cool & Calm

Kate Horstmann & Joanne Steers have put together a fantastic new book full of 100s of ideas to help students with ADHD. I believe these strategies and ideas are fantastic for a range of students including those with an ASD. The book, is full of ideas for transition but also everyday school situations and provides easy strategies to implement. Kate has kindly put together the tip sheet below, from ideas in the book: **Helping Kids and Teens with ADHD in School A Workbook for Classroom Support and Managing Transitions** (order page 8)

### 9 Quick Tips for Helping Kids Keep Cool and Calm

- 1) **Get Organised.** Rushing is nearly always stressful, and so is forgetting things. Having clear systems for everyday tasks is vital, and so is scheduling regular 'chill out' times in between activities.
- 2) **Get Active!** Regular exercise is great for releasing tension and creates a natural 'happy buzz'. Getting active might be playing a sport, walking the dog, dancing to an MP3 or doing some push-ups.
- 3) **Have a laugh.** It is almost impossible to feel stressed while you are having a laugh or sharing a joke, so make sure that the young person has plenty of time to have fun each day!
- 4) **Break the mood.** You can also use humour and a playful approach when you want to quickly change a mood and create some 'breathing space'. This gives the young person an opportunity regain control and move away from feelings of blame or shame.
- 5) **Check the basics.** Getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet and drinking enough water are all vital ingredients in ensuring that the brain and body get the sustenance it needs to function effectively.
- 6) **Timing is everything.** Remember that specific strategies to help a young person deal with stress should only be used in the early 'rumbling' stages. Once the young person is 'exploding' no strategy will be effective and they could actually create additional problems. Prevention is the key!
- 7) **Don't add demands.** Learn to identify the early warning signs of stress that are unique to the young person and make sure you don't add demands or 'remind' them of what they should/need to be doing when they are in this stressed state. Focus on *avoiding* escalation by instead giving them a short break or by actually reducing demands.
- 8) **Lead by example.** Show the young person how to cope with stress in a positive way by doing it yourself, even if you have to practice 'faking it' at times! Staying calm yourself when dealing with difficult situations is an invaluable skill for both you *and* them (and it can take *lots* of practice!)
- 9) **Get it out in the Open.** Talk about stress on a regular basis - make it an important topic for everyone, discuss examples from TV, talk through your own stressors and swap ideas and strategies.

You can find more information and practical activities about this and a range of topics in new book '*Helping Kids and Teens with ADHD in School.*' Order page 8

#### GREAT NEW BOOK

Aust Authors!



JUST \$50

**HIGHLY recommend  
for all staff library's**

#### **Helping Kids and Teens with ADHD in School A Workbook for Classroom Support and Managing Transitions** by Joanne Steer and Kate Horstmann

This fun and interactive workbook is aimed at actively engaging young people with ADHD and supporting them. Each chapter focuses on a key issue, such as organization, homework, concentration and self-esteem. Using tried-and-tested strategies and top tips, this fully-photocopiable workbook will help adults to work collaboratively with young people to learn, test strategies, set goals and develop comprehensive support plans around individual needs. Suitable for use with individual children or group work, the book will help guide teachers, parents, therapists and support staff in helping young people with ADHD to overcome the challenges.

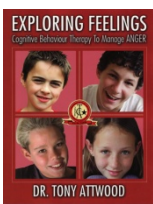
## Managing Anxiety: Teaching students about their Emotions

It was wonderful to see so many of you at my workshops with Dr Tony Attwood throughout the year. Tony's presentations are highly informative and empowering . I really enjoy running these workshops for you as Tony compliments much of what I say, but I also learn so much more myself every time.



Tony's work on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy is a very important for children with ASD. According to Tony people with an ASD need to work on feelings and emotions AT LEAST one hour EVERY week from early childhood right through to adulthood. The issue is not that children with an ASD DON'T have feelings or emotions – it's that they don't always understand their feelings or emotions and often don't have strategies to deal with them. Interestingly, Tony talks about how feelings of sadness or anxiety can often come out as anger. They need a way to vent their feelings and as some just don't know how to cry – they hit out instead. Teaching them to understand how they are feeling is a very useful tool in helping them to manage their own behaviour. Feelings of frustration or anxiety can very quickly escalate into major meltdowns but with an emotional toolbox children can learn to manage these feelings before they reaching boiling point.

Tony has written two WONDERFUL books which I think are a valuable resource for all schools and families. These fantastic workbooks are made to help children learn about emotions and manage their anxiety/anger. They can be used individually or in groups and set out in 6 easy sections. Easy to use and just what you need to make a difference to managing emotions! The session plans at the back of the book make it easy to use for parents and professionals.

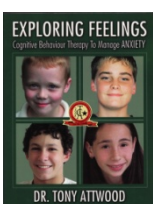


### EXPLORING FEELINGS: COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY TO MANAGER ANGER

|by Dr Tony Attwood

| \$45

Winner of a 2008 Teachers' Choice Award! This book provides a guide for caregivers and then the workbook portion asks children to identify situations that trigger their anger and find appropriate ways to respond. Many children, especially those with developmental delays, have trouble understanding or expressing their feelings. The result can be difficulty with anger management. Listing possible responses to situations – and the likely outcome of each one – allows the child to make informed decisions about which responses to choose (walking away vs. hitting).



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Winner of a 2008 Teachers' Choice Award! This book provides a guide for caregivers and then the workbook section allows children to identify situations that make them anxious and learn how to perceive the situation differently. Anxiety can be debilitating for anyone, but it can be especially confusing for a child. Learning about emotions helps children recognise connections between thinking and feeling, and helps them identify the physiological effects of anxiety on the body (sweating, increased heart rate, crying, etc.).

**A THOUGHT :** There are many students who are reduced school hours due to anxiety and anger. I would highly encourage families and schools to use these books as a tool to support full time attendance in education.

### Three Stages of Anxiety

Learning to recognise overload in students is very important. Getting in early and putting in place individual strategies is vital. Please ensure as part of transition this vital information is handed onto new staff. I find the easiest way to identify these signs is to ask "When they walk in the door HOW do I know they are having a bad day?" Each individual is different and will have different signs.



There are usually three stages to anxiety:

1. Build up
2. Survival mode
3. Meltdown

**REMEMBER** different strategies work for different students AND you will need different strategies for each stage.  
see 'The BIG RED BOOK of IDEAS for Teacher Assistants' for more information and ideas'

## REDUCE ANXIETY by using **TIMERS + SCHEDULES = SUCCESS**

Last Newsletter we introduced you to the new Portable Schedules and they have been a huge success. It has been wonderful to hear all the great ways they are being used.

 <p>Time Timers 1 hour</p> <p>Digital Bookmark 24 hour + Digital Clock</p>	<p><b>ADD</b> Visuals Words Objects etc</p>		<p><b>Consistency</b> <b>Routines</b> <b>Structure</b> <b>Positive Behaviour</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TIMERS</b> (When, How long)</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em;">+</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SCHEDULES</b> (What)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>= SUCCESS</b> (Understanding)</p>

### 8 Helpful ways to use Timers + Schedules with End of Year

- Concerts:** Create a Schedule of what is happening: Singing, Dance, Listening etc
- Change in Timetable:** Put the change of schedule on digital timer on their desk
- Visits:** Create a Schedule of WHAT they will be doing on visits and how long
- Exams:** Help the student know how much time to spend on each question, start & finish times
- Home:** Do you finish early on last day? Ensure you let the children know on the schedule what time
- Toilet & Drink:** Use the timer to create 1 hour drink & toilet breaks
- Anxiety:** Often in Term 4 there are many changes and this can increase anxiety. Create regular times for the student to have a break and relax. 10 minutes doing a favourite activity can stop a meltdown
- Free Time:** With any of school tidy ups sometimes students are given FREE TIME and many of our students this can be very stressful as often social time for other students. Make a schedule of activities they can do and who will be their buddy PLUS how long free time will be!

### Summer is the Perfect Time for Toilet Training!!

If you have a child over the age of three then make toilet training a priority this summer. Think "toilet timing" NOT "toilet training" and remember my three KEY strategies for success:

- NO NAPPIES
- ROUTINE
- CONSISTENCY



I have been really inspired by so many wonderful stories of toilet training success this year, especially from people with older children who have struggled to successfully toilet train in the past. By following the steps outlined in my *Tips for Toileting* book many people have successfully toilet trained their children within 1-2 weeks. It takes commitment from home and school but when you all work together as a team success comes quicker!

### BUY TOILET STARTER BUNDLES, RECEIVE A FREE TOKEN CARD AND SAVE!

**TOILET STARTER BUNDLE 1**  
20cm Time Timer  
Tips for Toileting Book  
FREE Token Economy Card



**TOILET STARTER BUNDLE 2**  
Portable Schedule with Digital Timer  
Tips for Toileting Book  
FREE Token Economy Card



**Order Page 8**

# Training Staff, Parents & Families





GREAT DVDs to Support Understanding

New Year often means new teachers and new support staff. It is important they are given training and understanding of an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The big challenge is finding the time, plus many teachers/teacher assistants do not find out until very late they are having a student with an ASD. Whether in that situation or just wanting some new ideas for 2010, watching a DVD can be a great way to gather knowledge, ideas and strategies.

I often think a miner would not be sent down a mine with no prior training YET often this is what we do in education. In the recent Journal of Special Education a key factor for successful inclusion was teaching training in special education.

Dr Tony Attwood at a recent workshop said

***"Without an understanding of Asperger's Syndrome, people make a moral judgment."***

<p><b>NEW 2009</b></p>  <p><b>GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT for families!</b></p>	<p><b><u>Understanding and Working with Autism: Wendy Lawson - \$50</u></b></p> <p><b>Wendy Lawson</b> is an adult with an autism spectrum disorder. Wendy prefers the word 'diffability' to disorder or disability and her research seeks to explore what being differently 'abled' means in the world of neuro-diversity. 1 hour DVD that gives you great insights and ideas from a person with an ASD. Wendy reflects on herself as a child, at school, teenage and beyond. Her insights give us valuable insights into people with an ASD, and how they interact differently.</p> <p>Live Recording of session held in Sydney 2009</p>
<p><b>NEW 2009</b></p> 	<p><b><u>DVD: Preparing for Success – \$50</u></b></p> <p><b><i>This is a live recording of a full day presentation. Includes 100s of great ideas and explanations.</i></b></p> <p><b>DVD PACK:</b> 3 x DVDs Sue Larkey: 2 Discs 149mins and Dr. Lee Sturgeon: 1 Disc 100 mins</p> <p><b>Dr Lee Sturgeon</b> Clinical Psychologist is an entertaining and informative presenter who specialises in the provision of practical behavioural interventions <b>1) An introduction to ASD 2) Anxiety management in ASD</b> with a focus on practical strategies.</p> <p><b>Sue Larkey</b> 10 Essential Strategies for Teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder</p> <p>Lots of practical and realistic strategies for school and home -Communication, Social, Sensory &amp; Behaviour.</p>
 <p><b>DVD</b></p>	<p><b><u>Dr Richard Eisenmajer - \$85 Imagine Having Asperger's Syndrome:</u></b></p> <p><u>A First Consultation with Dr Richard Eisenmajer PhD</u></p> <p>Using anecdotes and case studies from his clinical practice, well known Melbourne psychologist explains the main features of Autism Spectrum Disorder. He provides insights into how people with ASD experience the world around them and reasons why they either excel or struggle with everyday activities. Suitable for parents, families, teachers and other professionals and carers</p>
<p><b>DVD</b></p>  <p><b>Dr Norman Swann</b></p>	<p><b><u>New Dimensions Health Special:</u></b> This is perfect for a 1 hours staff meeting. It is a great beginning point for people who are new to an ASD and discusses diagnosis and strategies. The PD Pack comes with a discussion guide, handout, transcript of DVD and tips sheets</p> <p><b><u>NEW DIMENSION HEALTH SPECIAL on ABC with George Negus &amp; Dr Norman Swan</u></b></p> <p>As George Negus concludes <i>"I don't think I have seen a clearer explanation of Autism Spectrum Disorders"</i>.</p> <p><b><u>DVD &amp; PD Pack Ideal for Staff Training – \$88</u></b></p> <p>This includes everything you need to run your own staff training on ASD. Watch the DVD and do the activities to increase awareness and develop programmes for students with ASD.</p> <p><b><u>DVD (without PD Pack) – \$60</u></b></p>

\*\* Please note my diary is filling fast for 2010, please contact me asap if you would like a staff training session. If you would like to run a training session at your school/preschool in 2010 the above DVDs are fantastic to support learning and understanding.

## ***Rewards and Token Economy Systems***

Setting children up for success is so important; many children with an ASD need extra encouragement to have a go at new activities. Using tokens is a great visual system to reward children.

Some children do not like traditional rewards. For example I recently saw a teacher put a sticker on a little boy for great work, he spend the rest of the session trying to remove it from his top.

### **Rewards/Motivators**

Children with an autism spectrum disorder often do not have that natural desire to please like most children do. Nor do they see the point in doing something unless there is some form of motivation for THEM. As teachers/parents we need to be creative in motivating these children to work as they are unlikely to be motivated by the things that motivate other children. Rewards are KEY to any successful teaching programme.

Rewards need to be highly motivating to the individual child – using a child’s special interest is a fantastic reward. But remember special interests change, so too should your rewards! Rewards can wear out, so we need to change regularly and keep up the positives to keep up the motivation levels.

It is just as important to fade the frequency of rewards. A great tool to do this is a token economy system. They work much like a typical ‘star chart’ that many of you would use for other children. Tokens are highly VISUAL for a child with an ASD. They can see exactly what they have achieved and how much more they need to get to earn their reward.

### **How to use a token system**

Target ONE behaviour at a time. This could be sitting on the mat, completing a task, good communication, etc. It is very important that the goal can be quickly achieved and the child can quickly see the tokens building to get the final reward.

## **HOW TO USE TOKENS**

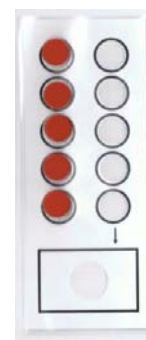
**\*\* Excerpt from ‘Practical Communication Programmes’ by Sue Larkey & Jo Adkins**

Let the child choose their reward and put it on the card in the bottom square (see below). Get some tokens (small ‘tiddly winks’ are great and you can purchase bags of these from \$2 shops or book shops). For every good model of communication (eg using PECS, pointing, attempting words, etc) praise the child and get him to move a token from the left side to the right side. For every bad model of communication (eg screaming, pinching, dropping to the ground) move a token back to the left side. When all of the tokens are on the right side let the child have their reward and start the system from the beginning again.

Make sure you have small achievable goals to begin with. Young children will have more motivation with 3-5 successes rather than 10! There are so many benefits of token systems – they are portable, easy to implement (children can pick up in half an hour with lots of quick successes!), and they are a great system for all ages – from the early years to secondary.

The token economy systems are easy enough to make yourselves (and templates can be found in our books *Practical Communication Programmes* and *Tips for Toileting*), however many people are finding it time consuming and expensive to source materials (Velcro dots and counters) for 1-2 token systems.

We DO now have these token systems available for purchase, or you can purchase our small Hook and Loop fasteners (Velcro) to make your own!



**Small token systems (5 tokens) - \$5.00**

**Large token systems (10 tokens) - \$10.00**

**Order page 7**

## SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR TRANSITION TO A NEW CLASSROOM/TEACHER/SCHOOL

**\*\* Excerpts from “Making it a Success” and “Essential Guide to Secondary School”**

The nature of Autism is such that transition can be extremely stressful.

Changes big and small can trigger confusion, anxiety and problems. A new teacher, new classmates and a new classroom can be particularly stressful. If the student is keeping the same teacher or teacher aide this is just one less change, however for some students it is the change of students or classroom that creates the confusion.

### **Typical Changes in a New School Year / Term**

Any of the following can create huge anxiety. Changes in timetable, different playground, new school books or pencil case, new classroom rules, new arrangement of objects, new teachers (i.e. Specialist teachers), new school administration (i.e. Principal), new students in class, new play areas.

### **Successful Strategies**

- Use visual timetables and visual cues to indicate changes.
- Send home timetable a.s.a.p. Then the parents can discuss changes and the student can learn the timetable
- Use photographs for example, new teachers, students in class or playground.
- Ensure the student has strategies to stay calm. This may include a quiet area, Walkman with calming music and favourite book or activity.
- If the student has difficulty finding their way from one class to another, allocate “Hall Buddies,” who helps the student find the next class.
- Allocate a place where the student can go if they get lost or to get help (ie. Front desk, School Library, Special Education Teachers classroom). Choose a place that is easy to find and always has an adult to quickly help the student, before they become anxious. Ensure the staff in this area know the student and can help. It is a good idea to have a folder with the student’s timetables, information, strategies this ensures the student can be helped quickly. Practice with the student going to this area when they are calm.
- If the student has difficulty with organisation put strategies in place to help i.e. For each class have required materials in separate bags in locker. (i.e. In Art bag, smock, pencil case, map to find classroom etc)
- The Playground can be a very frightening place. In the playground allocate an area for the student to play that will be within eyesight of teachers and has activities the student will enjoy. Other strategies include getting them to use the library at lunch times or joining clubs.
- Ensure communication is established with parents. (journal)

### **ORGANISE VISITS NOW! THIS IS VITAL FOR NEW TEACHER & STUDENT**

Organise visits to the new teacher/classroom during last month of school. Make sure the student has pre warning and visuals are a great way to do this. At first you may just send them to the teacher to “share a success” or “show a special interest,” make it VERY positive. Where possible keep the first visits brief so the student doesn’t get to overwhelmed.

If you have a Principal who believes they don’t know who the teachers will be explain the **EXTREME** importance for this student! Difficulty with change is part of this students disability. It is VITAL, just like other students wear glasses to make reading more successful. THIS STUDENT needs transition. SO DOES THE TEACHER, many teachers have never experienced Autism Spectrum Disorder. Knowing they are having a student as early as possible allows them to talk to other staff, professionals, attend workshops BEFORE they have the student in their class.

**\*\*\*COME to one of my ‘Orientation and Beyond’ Workshops.**