

TIPS FOR TRANSITIONING 2023

*Strategies, Tips & Resources
For School & Home*





TIPS FOR TRANSITIONING 2023

Transition includes change in teacher, change in room, change in students in the class not just when starting preschool, but, primary school, high school and beyond. The nature of autism is such that transitions can be extremely stressful, no matter what age or how BIG or SMALL the change may be.

CHANGING TEACHER IS LIKE... MOVING TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY

For the child with Autism moving to a new teacher, classroom or campus is like moving to foreign country. There is a different language (e.g. one teacher says 'pack away', new teacher says 'clean up'). Teachers and other students have different facial expressions and body language to interpret, new rules, new schedules, new smells, different pencils just to mention 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 behaviour can be managed by effective planning and transition strategies.



This article aims to give you ideas, strategies and solutions to managing transition and have in place strategies ready to make 2020 a success!

The key issue in transition is managing anxiety, put simply: *Managing Change = Managing Anxiety.*

There is so much information to pass on for the Transition to be successful, I have listed some checklists and ideas to make this easier:

- ✔ 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.



TRANSITION STRATEGIES 2023

We need to consider all the changes and pre-warn the child. Many children with an ASD have a script in their minds for everything that happens in their day so it is very important with any change we offer a script to explain any changes in advance.

CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

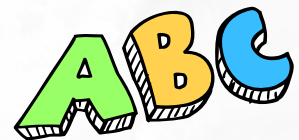
- **Sensory/Environment:** New sounds, movements, uniforms etc. For example with secondary students it is important they get to experience a busy locker area as part of transition. Too many people take them on a tour when no one is in the school.
- **People:** Who will be their teacher, assistant, which students will they know, who to go to for help, getting to know office staff, etc.
- **Visuals:** Map of the school with toilets, classroom, bags, office, library, etc.
- **Video / Film on Ipad:** Video of the new school, environment, and teachers is wonderful as they can play over and over. Make sure you show the environment HOW it actually looks; for example video of busy locker area, playground full of students rather than empty.
- **Social Scripts / Photo Books:** Create social scripts or photo books that show the child information. Many Asperger's children need "reasons": Why do I have to change teacher?, Why do we have to move classrooms? Why can't I stay with my friends? You can create social scripts that explain this and they can refer back to.
- **Photos:** Class teacher, important staff, toilets, bubblers, etc.
- **Playground:** Routines and activities, equipment, games in playground.
- **Do they want friends?** Who do they know already? Clubs they can join.
- **Lunch routine:** Practice using lunch box, container, drink bottle, etc.
- **Calendar:** Use a calendar to show when their visits will be and they will start in the new class.
- **Getting to school:** Bus, walk, car. Practice the routine, discuss what to do if late or raining. (Some students are best dropped off right on bell others love morning activities in playground).
- **Calming Strategies:** Ensure the child knows where in the new environment they can go to calm or access their sensory tools.



TOP TIPS FOR CHILDREN STARTING SCHOOL IN 2023

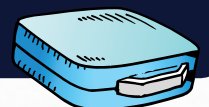
Please ensure they can:

- 1 Manage their lunch box.
- 2 Screw and unscrew drink bottle top.
- 3 Cope with glad wrap.
- 4 Open food packets/containers. (Avoid sending yoghurts, tinned fruits they can't open.)
- 5 Zip and unzip school bag – a larger bag is generally easier for your child to get things in and out of.
- 6 Wear a hat. (Most schools require a sun hat.)
- 7 Put on shoes and socks. (Use pull-ons or those with velcro fastening.)
- 8 Put on and take off jumper and coat.
- 9 Practice wearing the uniform and identify any sensory issues.
- 10 Teach school routines and rules (i.e. How to put your hand up) Great resource: How to stop your words from bumping by Anna Tulleman and Rhonda Dixon.



IDEAS TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL ORIENTATION /TRANSITION

- ✔ Visits: One visit a week over a few weeks is often best.
- ✔ Visits for secondary students: Get another student to show the ASD student around, that way the older student can let them know about "other rules", for example "that is where the smokers go!" There are so many HIDDEN rules in schools and the other students are the best to point these out.
- ✔ Reverse transition: Staff go and visit the student in their current environment. This gives staff valuable insights into the child's current interests, how they play, interact and communicate and strategies used with the child.
- ✔ Top Tip! Invite in before school starts: Most teachers set up their classrooms before the first day. It is worth inviting the student with ASD to visit to see "where to put their bag, their belongings, their seat, line up, class rules, where to ask for help, class list - discuss who they know already", any structures that will make day one calmer for everyone!



SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

It is very important we start preparing student for post school options. A great starting point is getting teenagers involved in volunteer work. The school holidays are a great time to volunteer, checkout the volunteer websites as they have many options available. Jeanette Purkis has written a fantastic book *The Wonderful World of Work* and has kindly written a tip sheet for this Newsletter.

- ✔ **Start the conversation** around employment with the young person early. Ideally, this should happen when they are 13 to 15 years old. That way, the transition from education to work will be less scary and unpredictable.
- ✔ **Ascertain the young person's anxieties** around working and address them. Once again, the earlier this happens, the better.
- ✔ **Focus on the young person's potential and strengths** rather than their problems and deficits.
- ✔ **Work on building** the young person's sense of self-esteem and self-worth.
- ✔ **Education is very important in terms of success in the workplace.** Try not to view education as a trajectory from school to university to professional job. Instead, see it as a journey, encourage the young person throughout their education journey, whatever they decide to study.
- ✔ **Help the young person find a mentor.** A good candidate might be an employed person with ASD that the young person admires and/or enjoys spending time with.
- ✔ **Encourage a positive view of employment.** Give some examples of employed and influential autistic people such as Temple Grandin or Anita Lesko.
- ✔ **Have a 'career day'** where the young person can talk to different people about their jobs. People could be drawn from your own friends and relatives.
- ✔ **Think about what kinds of jobs your child or student might be good at and enjoy.** You can approach businesses and create a job for them based on their strengths rather than having them apply for advertised jobs which may be inappropriate.
- ✔ **Talk about workplace communication.** Practice using role plays if you like.
- ✔ **Do some research** about disability employment service providers in your local area. Be proactive and encourage the employment service to engage with your child/student.
- ✔ **You can work through *The Wonderful World of Work: A Workbook for Asper teens* with the young person.**



Check out Jeanette's Tip Sheet: Success in Employment – Tips for Asper teens – download free on www.suelarkey.com.au



13 SEPARATION ANXIETY TIPS FOR *Children With Special Needs*

Separation anxiety from people, friends, objects and pets is really common for children with special needs.

I came up with these 13 tips just for you, as well as reaching out to my online Facebook community for more examples!

1 Transition starts **the day before**. I talk about this a lot – you may recognise it from my Live Virtual Events in 2020! Don't forget I'm running these Live Virtual Events again this term!



Tina Gallagher

Our teacher last year had a toy cat that greeted our son at the gate and kept him company all day. Made such a difference. On the last day of school last year she gave him a book of all their adventures together. They also had a friend waiting at the gate and 'jobs' to do before school. 'Kissing hand' is also good book.

Love · Reply · Message · 1d · Edited



Prem Dana Takada

A lot of transition objects- toys/ favourite things

Like · Reply · Message · 1d



2 Use **transitional objects**.
These can be from home or waiting at school.

3 Have a **routine**. Stop problems before they happen!

4 Use Time + Schedules or use a portable timer with a schedule.
I'm having a SALE on timers on my website – **10% off ALL timers!** **CLICK HERE** to see more.

5 Exercise!

6 Use the stepladder approach. Step by step help children become more used to situations where they might feel separation anxiety. Check out **THIS PODCAST** which is a great example of a step by step approach.

7 Allow for checking, stimming and scripting. This is often important part of a child's routine to reduce anxiety – **don't rush them!**



8 Use **social scripts** to equip the child. **CLICK HERE** for more information.



Rachel Ratkowski

A social story that was read at school at home works the best. It reminds her that she can look at the schedule at school when she feels anxious and at the end of the schedule she'll be picked up by mom or dad. We tried a locket with my photo which helped a little but it has become a bit of an obsession. We also look at the calendar every night and morning so she knows when the next "no school" day will be. Even with all this, It's still a struggle most days.

Like · Reply · Message · 19h



Jenny Asha

It sounds strange but I would kiss my son on the back of his hand while wearing lipstick, leaving an imprint. I told him 'This is my love staying with you all day even when I'm not with you.' He adored that and would come home saying 'Your love stayed all day', even though he'd washed off the lipstick. Now he's older and not anxious he still asks for a hand kiss sometimes.

Like · Reply · Message · 21h



9 Create a **Separation Plan**. Make sure everyone is aware of it.

10 Teach **emotional regulation**. Check out my **Emotional Regulation Masterclass HERE!**

11 Have a **communication plan**.

12 Use a **combination** of strategies! You know what I say: to know someone with autism is not to know autism. Not every strategy will work for every child!

13 **GO with your GUT!!**



Don't just listen to what I have to say!

Here is more advice and comments from other parents, carers and teachers. To see more join my facebook community [HERE](#)



Sandy Hodges

Two of my students went through a period of this at different times last year. I gave them a job to do on arrival and it was the same task ea h day. One of them would walk to the print room and collect the photocopying with me and the other one had the job of setting up literacy stations. Often he would set one activity up and then off he would go out to play but other days he would stay in all morning but he knew it was part of his morning routine. It needed to be the same each day for it to be successful.

Like · Reply · Message · 20h



Rebecca Bright

I found taking our son to my work helped as he knew where I was during the day

Like · Reply · Message · 22h



Elise Tegan

The main thing that made a huge difference for us was simply not allowing the school to handle a child with anxiety the way they normally would. It DOES NOT help a child with anxiety to be forcibly held or prevented from accessing the person who provides safety and comfort in the morning. The school laughed at us originally for suggesting that it needed to be a very flexible and no stress process, but we (parents and asd advocate) showed them how effective it can be. A simple plan was all that was needed- the anxiety struck in the morning for us, so he would go to the library for a period of time and play lego before being reintroduced to the classroom by the teacher. Worked amazingly. His confidence grew and his perspective of school began to change. It was no longer this big scary place, it was much more relaxed. His social skills really took off once his confidence grew too. He is now looking forward to grade 1 this year 😊

Active Contacts (0)



Alicia Livingston

Yes just a nervous time getting ready to head back to school 🙄😭

Visits to classroom in the holidays.

Reassurance of where I am during the day.

I try to say that his danger checker is tricking him.

On the drive to school we take turns saying 2 great things to happen that day.

Still breaks my heart seeing his pain tho. I will be a mess even after I've prepped him!

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT

Download the "Student Profile" and other helpful Tip Sheets from:

suelarkey.com.au/tip-sheet/

Suggested Reading to Support Transition

I know many of you who get this e-newsletter have my books which have lots more ideas and resources on Transition. For more information I suggest you refer to these books:

- ✔ *Making it a Success* by Sue Larkey (page 115-116)
- ✔ *The Essential Guide to Secondary School* by Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans (page 79)
- ✔ *The Early Years* by Sue Larkey and Gay von Ess (page 82)
- ✔ *From Anxiety to Meltdown* by Deborah Lipsky (page 172)
- ✔ *I'm Going to School* by Anna Tullemans
- ✔ *How to stop your words from bumping* by Anna Tullemans and Rhonda Dixon

