



# PARENT Connection

TPAS NEWSLETTER  
SUMMER 2009

## What is a Visual Schedule?

Written by Andrea Paszti and Stasia Rossinsky, Supervising Therapists, TPAS

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often have trouble with communication, social behaviours, and anxiety. Research shows that visual supports can be helpful, as many individuals with ASD have better visual skills than listening skills.

Visual schedules are used to introduce general activities, (e.g. going to the supermarket), a daily schedule, or what to expect within a daily routine (e.g. a bedtime routine that consists of a glass of milk, a bath,

brushing teeth, and reading a story). They give events predictability and direction which may reduce anxiety and problem behaviours.

To start, you should choose an activity or routine from your child's day and break it into small steps (about 5). Find a picture for each step that is needed to complete the routine and place the pictures in order in a photo album or on a schedule strip. Try to use only key pictures so that the schedule is not too long from start to finish.

Some children understand

the start and end of a task better when they can remove a picture from the schedule and put it away in a "finished" box or envelope once a step is done. This can help them remember to move on to the next part, and to see how much is left to do.

Another way to help reduce anxiety is to give your child choice within the schedule (e.g. glass of milk first or bath first?). The more you use the visual schedule, the more your child will become familiar with your expectations and this will

help to reduce anxiety.

These websites have some ideas and information to help you get started:

[www.connectability.ca](http://www.connectability.ca) - Register on this site to get free access to the visual engine to build your own schedules, as well as audiovisual workshops and articles on how to create schedules.

[www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/visual-schedules.html](http://www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/visual-schedules.html) - See this site for some visual schedule samples.

## The Importance of a Communication Book

Written by Beth Collier, Transition Coordinator, TPAS



As a parent, it is important to know that your child is working toward their goals and that everyone involved with your child is targeting the same things. Consider the following ideas to make your communication book useful to everyone. Include three current targets: a word, an independent activity, or a task. You can make check-

off boxes, so it is quick and easy to show if the targets were worked on today. Write down what your child did the evening before; this gives those involved with your child the information to engage in meaningful interactions. Try these few small changes to help make your child's learning experience smoother!

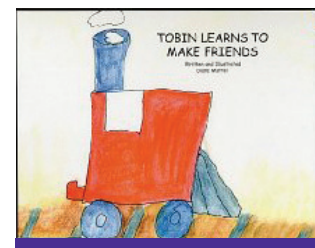
## Book Review

**TOBIN LEARNS TO MAKE FRIENDS** Author: Dianne Murrell

In this section, books/DVDs will be reviewed that are available through our Parent Library. If you are interested in any of these books/DVDs, please contact your Transition Coordinator or Julie St. Amant at Surrey Place Centre.

By: Tina Tatone, Parent

How do you make friends? Most of us do it so naturally we are not aware of how complicated the same process might be for our special children. In *Tobin Learns to Make Friends*, Diane Murrell outlines many situations useful in making and keeping friends. She uses train characters loosely inspired by the Thomas the Tank Engine series to illustrate friend-making strategies such as taking turns, not interrupting, and obeying the rules. It is also parent-friendly. The book is divided into short scenes and each of these scenes has a title indicating what strategy is being explored. Near the



end, the author recaps the friend making rules on a single page. Finally, she gives us all an escape clause, "Tobin does not always get it right...but because he tries very hard, all the other engines are his friends now."

This book is a popular introduction to social skills among our parents. Give it a try - see if your child likes it!

## Take a Break!: Using Independent Activity Schedules at Home

Written by Joanne Sedkowski, Instructor Therapist, TPAS

**D**o you want to increase your child's independence and reduce need for parental guidance during play? If you answered "yes" to both of these questions, Independent Activity Schedules (IAS) can work for you. Independent Activity Schedules are a simple way to get your child to independently complete a series of activities he or she already knows how to do.

Commonly, Independent Activity Schedules (IAS) are taught using a book that has pictures or words, for those children who are reading. Each page has an activity that the child is to complete. The child learns to look at the picture, find the activity, complete it, and tidy up independently. If the child needs help while learning to complete the IAS, provide physical guidance

from behind and only when the child requires it. Try not to talk or give directions while teaching the IAS, as the end goal for your child is to complete the entire schedule without help.

Once your child is able to use the schedule without difficulty, you can add more activities and use it

throughout the day. It is a good idea to involve your child in putting together the IAS and picking their favourite activities.

Putting an IAS together can be a rewarding experience allowing your child to be more self-directed in their daily routines.



## Upcoming events:

**Watch out for more events and training opportunities coming this fall.**

Please visit [www.surreyplace.on.ca](http://www.surreyplace.on.ca) for more information and other events

**Respite Information**  
Session – October 7th,  
at 2 Surrey Place

**Independent Activity Schedules (IAS): Incorporating Independence Into Your Child's Life** – October 14th,  
at 2 Surrey Place

**Funding Information**  
Session – November 11th,  
at 2 Surrey Place

**Parent Focused Workshops and Resource Fair** –  
November 14th, location TBD



## Fall Festival

TORONTO PARTNERSHIP FOR AUTISM SERVICES

**You are invited to our 1st Annual Fall Festival. Come and enjoy a day of fun!**

Fun carnival games for the kids, face painting, tattoos and so much more! Bouncy Castle and of course a good fall BBQ! We cannot wait to see you! Come have a fun day on us! Invitations will be arriving soon in your mailbox

› Saturday September 12, 2009 11:00AM – 1:00PM  
2 Surrey Place, Toronto ON • RSVP by August 31, 2009  
RSVP to Dawn Shaw 416-925-5141 ext. 2226  
[dawn.shaw@surreyplace.on.ca](mailto:dawn.shaw@surreyplace.on.ca)