

No.18

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Autism Spectrum Disorders - Newsletter



Understanding ASD, Autism and Asperger
Anna Tullemans - Consultant

Welcome to term 4 and some great fun. This is the time of year when we should be thinking about transition for our students. So this newsletter is dedicated to **why** we should do, and **how** we go about a transition process. The ideas contained in this newsletter will cover both primary and secondary school. At this time, it's always a great time of year although we can feel a little overwhelmed by now with our calendars so full of end of year activities. Keep your humour and remember when you are working with our children to be creative and have fun. Anna Tullemans

The Importance of Transition Planning

It is an exciting time for children when they are about to enter pre-school or school for the first time or, move on up to high school. A time that is full of excitement and nervous tension. These feelings make children look forward to this new time with excitement, anticipation and delight. However these same feelings may be the cause of anxiety in our children with ASD due to their sensory sensitivities, inability to adapt to new situations and lack of appropriate communication skills. This anxiety may create undesirable behaviours in the children and much anxiety to parents and teachers.

Children with ASD often have difficulty with changes in their routine and environment. They will need additional support and instruction in the skills that will allow them to be as independent as possible when changing school environments or moving to University or even into the workforce. An important strategy is to prepare the student for the changes that are about to happen. The following pages will give you strategies to make the change more successful for the student with ASD.

Mark this date in
your diaries

**Live chat with Sue Larkey
10th November 2011**

Join Sue and I on a live chat from 8pm Eastern Daylight Savings Time. You'll hear some great information and ideas on transitions and why they are so important to implement.

I'll be chatting about my experiences as a mum and the things that I found helpful for my son. Sue and I will also be chatting about the ideas and strategies that we have used for many of the students that we have worked with over the years.

Join us later on Facebook for some question and answer time. Give us your ideas on what has worked and what has not been so successful with your children. We're looking forward to hearing from you all. See you all on the 10th November.

******* Tip for Transition to Primary School**

Assess the new environment to determine what skills the student will need to be independent and successful. Pre teach these skills to the student.

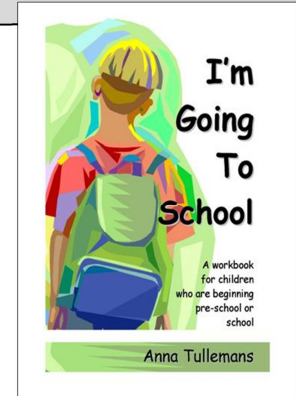
Talk with the student about the new environment and organise a visit.

If a visit is not possible consider videotaping, taking pictures, writing a social story and compiling a list of expectations for the new environment

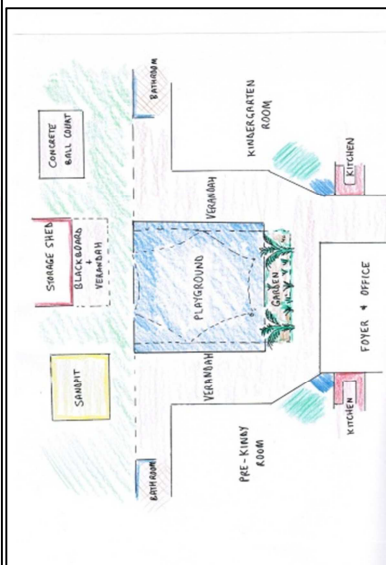
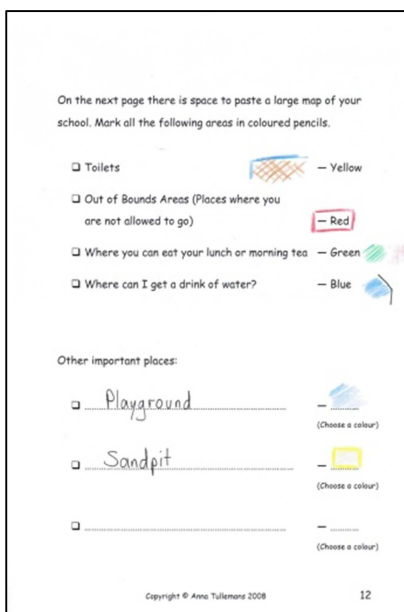
I'm Going to School Workbook

This is a great workbook for use with young children who are transitioning from home to preschool, from preschool to school, from year one to year two etc up to about year 5, or when the child is changing schools.

It is a workbook that both student and, teacher or parent can work on together. The idea is to paste a series of photographs and drawings into the book and write some appropriate words regarding the changes that are about to happen eg:



- Paste a picture of the new school, discuss what are the differences between the old and the new
- Paste a picture of the classroom, discuss the differences between the old room and the new room
- Show pictures of school uniforms, school buses, and the school in general
- Place pictures and maps of the school, hand drawn or from Google maps
- There are extra pages in the book as well so you can add other pictures and drawings that are important to the child, such as:
 - His/her home, His/her room
 - His/her pet, His/her favourite toy/game
 - All things that remain unchanged



Here is an example of how to fill out the book. The different areas are marked out in corresponding colours. This helps the child to familiarize himself with the layout of the new playground.

******* Transition Tip**

The book can be used as a visual guide to help lessen the anxiety of change. Once the workbook has been filled the child can keep returning to the pages to refresh his memory of the new experiences he is about to have in a relaxed and friendly and comfortable atmosphere.

******* Transition Tip**

Have a photo of the student in the staff room with some simple strategies for staff to use when they encounter the student. For example: 'when the student is stressed or shows high anxiety, don't ask too many questions'.

Transition to Middle and High School

The transition to middle school and high school is difficult for most students, but will likely have more stressful and long lasting effects on the student with ASD than on the typical student. Fear of the unknown, the need for monumental changes and the inability to imagine a favourable outcome, can all combine to make this unavoidable step in school life a time of great fear and dread. To make the experience as positive as possible, parents and teachers must be proactive in transition planning. Transition can't be thought of as a 'once only deal'. It must be viewed as an ongoing process that addresses the changing academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of the student.

3 Steps for successful transition to high school

1. Identify the needs and the needed supports of the student. Ensure that all supports are in position **before** the transition begins. This includes:
 - a. Identifying key people whom the student can talk to or go to for help
 - b. Identifying peers who may help the student adjust to the new school and who may be able to accompany him to various locations around the school
2. It is imperative that to make a transition program successful it includes training in regards to ASD, for the new school personnel. This includes:
 - a. Teachers,
 - b. Teacher aides,
 - c. Other significant people in the school including the school secretary, and the maintenance man (our ASD people may be more interested in the lawn mower at lunch time rather than playing with other children)
3. Ensure the student has adequate time and preparation for the move by looking at the differences between the two placements. This includes:
 - a. Noting the differences between the previous classroom or school compared to the new classroom or school
 - b. Noting the classmates who are the same and those that are different from the previous year
 - c. Include a familiarization with the physical setting of the grounds and an introduction to the school personnel
 - d. Don't forget to explain the rules of behaviour
 - e. Teach the differences in playing rules at high school compared to primary school
 - f. Make a collage for the student of pictures and /or names of people the student will encounter in the new setting

******* Transition Tip**

Don't forget to use parents as an important and valuable resource. They live with the teenager! They have read and learned much about ASD. They can give you many valuable insights to their child and his/her intricate challenges and strengths. They may even make great debrief partners at the end of the day!

The Essential Guide to Successful Secondary School

This book has some great proforma that are easy to fill out. They will aid the teacher, the student and the parents to make the transition to high school much easier and less stressful.

This first proforma is for parents to fill out. This page relates to how your child reacts to situations. It includes things like:

- What are my child’s triggers
- What are the important things to know about my child such as any sensory issues, what are the signs to look for which mean “I am getting close to shut down”, or “I can’t deal with this anymore”
- Best way to approach my child if he does have a meltdown
- What are the preferred strategies when he does have a meltdown
- What are the preferred strategies for the siblings (ie do you want them involved if there is an incident?)

The second proforma is for the teacher to fill out. It only requires yes, no and short answers. It covers areas such as:

- Academic, Communication, Behavioural, Social Skills and, General Comments areas

Transition Profile

Taking time to fill in the following forms will be most helpful for the staff working with the student. It is recommended the forms are completed at the end of the year or any change over of staff throughout the year. Please copy the forms and have all relevant people complete. (Teacher, Teacher Aide, Specialist teacher, Parents)

Student _____
 Form Completed By _____
 Date _____

Academic

- Does the child have adequate fine motor skills?
- Can they take notes?
- Will the student need a modified curriculum, and if so, in what?
- What is the student’s learning strengths?
- What is the student’s learning weaknesses?
- Does the student pick up verbal cues? (Two and three step instructions)
- Does the child have independent working skills?
- When is the student independent and successful?
- When does the student need assistance?
- Does the student complete work in the allocated time?

General Comment

Communication

- Can the student ask for help? How?
- Does the student raise their hand to seek adult assistance?
- Can the student make choices?

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Summary Profile of Student

Student name:

Strengths:
 a)
 b)

Challenges:
 a)
 b)

Things that may trigger a meltdown:
 a)
 b)

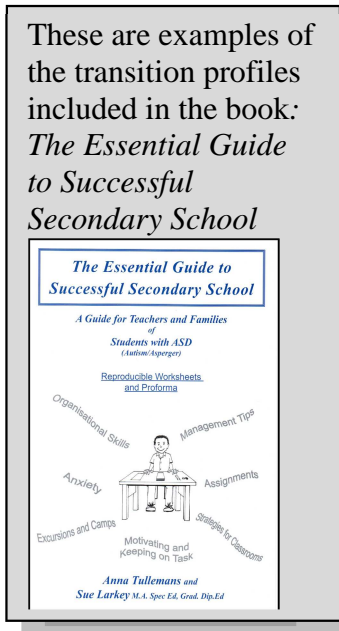
Behaviours exhibited before meltdown:
 a)
 b)

Best way to approach student when meltdown occurs:
 a)
 b)

Important Sensory Notes (eg highly sensitive to light touch, noise etc):
 a)
 b)

Preferred management strategies:
 a)
 b)

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“In order for many on the autism spectrum to join the workforce, their sensory sensitivities must be ‘smoothed’, communication skills built and anxiety reduced....The most successful, work hard, are on time, constantly upgrade their skills, and try hard to get along with their colleagues”-Temple Grandin in *Developing Talents (2004)*

Remember: Having social skills, being organised, controlling anger, living up to expectations are all skills that can be learned in high school and then transferred to the workplace.

******* Transition Tip**

Begin the planning from high school to adult life as early as possible. Drawing on what the student wants to do when he finishes school can help create learning opportunities for the student that will make sense and will make him want to learn these concepts.

Transition Planning from High School to Adult Life

Transition planning is a shared responsibility among the parent/guardian, school and adult service providers. It should be a collaborative enterprise which identifies the desired post-school outcome, which should ultimately be the driving force. This collaborative effort should include:

- Planning the target outcomes desired for adult life
- Specific current needs
- A plan for addressing those needs
- Identification of the agencies/persons responsible and
- Time lines

The role of school personnel is to continue to provide opportunities for the student to develop skills for work and independent living. The day-to-day program can include instruction for the student to increase his functional skills and community based training.

For some students, we may require more focus on academic abilities, especially for those who are capable of attending universities. For these students a greater emphasis on academic preparation and the development of job related skills may be beneficial.

For other students, the program may focus on work experience, community based training and self-care.

In general however, the school program should prepare the student in the following way:

- Provide a variety of work experiences to help the individual determine his preferences
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities and social events
- Help with developing a resume
- Training in social skills for a job placement
- Teaching appropriate dress and hygiene for the workplace
- Training in self-management

Following are some tips for the high school students who are **preparing for the workplace**:

- Make gradual transitions by starting to work for short periods
- Seek out volunteer positions
- Seek out supportive employers. Find employers who appreciate special talents and who need those talents
- Find mentors that can help your teen learn important social and job skills
- Develop special skills that others will value (especially if that special skill is a favourite activity)

******* Transition Tip**

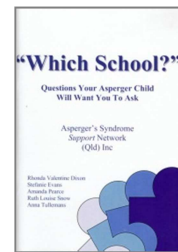
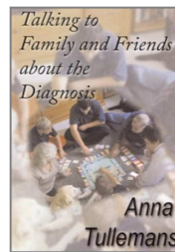
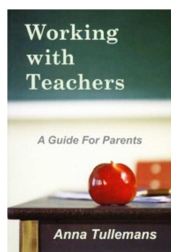
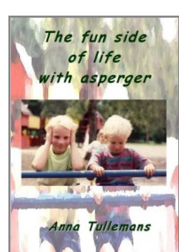
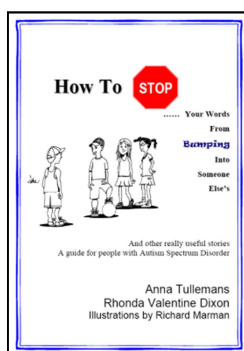
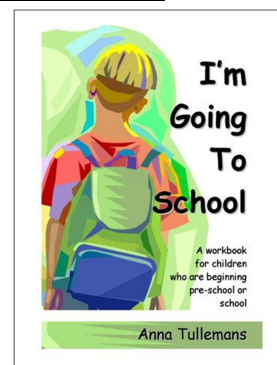
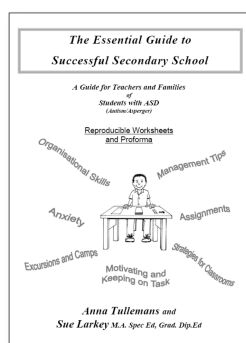
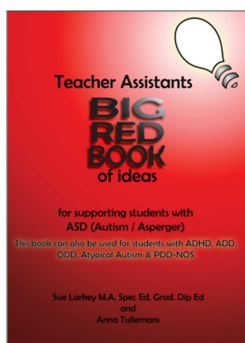
To ensure work readiness the student must be able to:

- Follow instructions
- Travel independently
- Manage behaviours
- Work without direct supervision
- Tolerate reasonable and expected changes as well as some unexpected changes
- Tolerate physical proximity
- Be independently motivated to work
- Seek assistance when needed
- Wear appropriate clothing
- Understand the concept of quality control
- Maintain a reasonable rate of productivity

Discuss these with the student so he understands the expectations of what he is learning and the need to learn how to do these things. Remember they are adult learners: there needs to be a concrete reason to learn a skill.

To order books email Anna at: annatullemans@gmail.com or call her direct - **OR** use the order form below.

Remember to include a return name and address



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Or send a cheque with your details to the address below.

- \$50 The Essential Guide to Successful Secondary School
- \$45 Teacher Assistants Big RED Book of Ideas
- \$45 Teacher Assistants Big BLUE Book of Ideas
- \$30 How To stop Your Words From Bumping
- \$25 Talking to Family and Friends
- \$25 Working with Teachers
- \$20 I'm Going to School (workbook for students entering school or transitioning)
- \$12 Fun Side of Asperger

Remember to include a return name and address to this order form

Prices include postage within Australia or New Zealand only (October 2011)

\$.....Total

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