



CAPTAIN X NEWSLETTER

Volume 9
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Winter Edition



As the Covid-19 number of infections continue to rise across Riverside and San Bernardino counties, we need to prepare for a different way of celebrating the holidays.

Individuals with autism may have a particularly difficult time adjusting to the non-traditional family events so it is important to plan ahead of time.

As a family, it is important to make a decision on the following areas as soon as possible and prepare visual supports to help frontload individuals with autism on what to expect:

1. Who will be present during the holiday celebrations.

Listing down the names of the family members and friends who can and can't join the celebration will alleviate possible stress for individuals with autism. A photo album may also be a great visual support to use.

2. Safety is very important when celebrating with family members and friends.

It is important to practice wearing a face mask and observe social distancing when celebrating the holidays (see page 4 for sample visual support).

3. Since 2020 has been a year like no other and the holiday celebrations will be non-traditional, it is probably best to lessen the demands during this time. We should focus our energy on what we can control and stick to the most important routines.

Our priority should be to keep our families healthy and safe. Happy Holidays!

Evidence-based practice in focus: Functional Communication Training (FCT)

What is FCT?

Many learners with autism display inappropriate, maladaptive, and even aggressive behaviors towards others and themselves. Often, these behaviors stem from difficulties with communication, leading to unexpected and often undesirable methods to obtain certain wants, needs, and interests. Functional communication training addresses these interfering behaviors by systematically identifying the function of the behavior and providing a replacement behavior in the form of appropriate communication that will enable the learner to get his or her needs met in a more acceptable way.

Why use FCT with my child?

- FCT is helpful for learners with social communication deficits and challenging behaviors, because it provides a more acceptable form of communication to achieve the same desired outcome.
- Some of the problematic behaviors that can be addressed by FCT include aggression and self-injurious behaviors, tantrums, running away, and/or disruption.

What activities can I do at home?

- Think about challenging behaviors your child exhibits as a form of communication and try to identify other ways to communicate that need.
- When trying to develop an alternative way for your child to communicate a need (such as requesting a favorite toy), think of the simplest and easiest way to do that. For example, can the child learn to point to a picture of the desired toy or the toy itself?
- Remember to honor the request each time in the beginning until the child accepts the “new way” really works.
- Once they are successful with the replacement behavior, you can then begin teaching to tolerate being told “no” or “not right now.”

Steps for Implementing

1. PLAN

- Identify the problem behavior appropriate for FCT (for example, hitting his brother).
- Determine the function of the interfering behavior (for example, to gain access to his brother's toy).
- Choose a replacement communicative behavior (i.e., a more appropriate way to request the toy).
- Ensure all team members are familiar with the replacement communicative behavior.
- Gather and organize supporting materials.

2. USE

- Teach use of the replacement behavior using a most to least prompt hierarchy (provide as much support as needed for the correct behavior to occur and reduce/fade prompting as appropriate). For example, to request a toy, you might take the student's hand and help him point at the toy.
- Reinforce the replacement communicative behavior (for example, after pointing at the toy, you praise, “Oh, you want the toy,” and give access).
- No longer reinforce problem behavior (don't give toy when hitting)
- Practice with different people and in different settings.

3. MONITOR

- Collect data on the interfering behavior and learner's replacement communicative behavior.
- Determine next steps based on the learner's progress.

For more information, visit: www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu

Evidence-based practice in focus: Visual Supports (VS)

What are VS?

VS is an evidence-based practice for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from 3 to 22 years old. Visual supports provide key information in the form of objects, photographs, drawing, or print to help learners with ASD. Visual supports may include, but are not limited to, visual boundaries (visually defining a space where an activity occurs), visual cues (graphic organizers and visual instructions), visual schedules, and visual communication supports.

Parents' Corner

Why use VS with my child?

- Visual supports provide expectations for the learner, increase on-task behavior, and promote independence.
- Research studies have shown that visual supports have been used effectively with many age groups to achieve outcomes in the following areas: behavioral, cognitive, communication, play, social, academic, adaptive, motor, and school readiness.

How can I implement VS at home?

- Develop a schedule for a routine (such as going to bed or getting ready for school) or an activity (such as taking a shower or going to the bathroom) using pictures, words, or an app.
- Take pictures of your child's favorite activities and then place on a board. Your child can select an activity from the choice board.
- Place Visual supports in strategic places around the home. View the videos in the two links below to see examples:
Autism House, Part 1:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doDj1ff1ffM>
Autism House, Part 2:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGufwa9m7Ic>
- Several apps and programs are available to help create visual supports:
Pictello:
<https://www.assistiveware.com/products/pictello>
iPrompts:
<https://www.neurodevelop.com/iPrompts>
LessonPix:
<https://lessonpix.com/>

Steps for Implementing

1. PLAN

- Identify visual supports needed to acquire or maintain target skills
- Develop/prepare visual support for learner based on individualized assessments
- Organize all needed materials

2. USE

- Teach learner how to use visual support
- Fade prompts as quickly as possible when criterion met
- Use visual supports consistently and across settings

3. MONITOR

- Collect data on target behaviors and use of visual supports (independence during use and progress through forms/types of supports)
- Determine next steps based on learner progress

Resources



1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	
15	16	17	18	
	19	20	21	
	22	23	24	

Santa's beard is very bare, on his chin there is no hair!
So each day add a puff of white, then when it is full, he will come that night!

Materials required: Cotton wool and PVA glue



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TOP TIPS FOR A HAPPY 'SENSORY' CHRISTMAS

The Christmas season fills winter days with bright lights, seasonal music and the smells of Christmas baking. These sensory experiences can be overwhelming for many children and young people with autism. While some will enjoy the bright colours, the carols and the Christmas treats, others will feel overloaded by all the stimulation and dislike the changes to routines and places.

These tips will hopefully make the festivities more calming and enjoyable for all:

1. Introduce decorations gradually. Do not decorate the whole house in one evening, as all these visual changes may be visually overwhelming for the autistic child or young person. Put up a few decorations each day so that they have time to get used to the changes.
2. Allow the child or young person to see and feel the decorations before they go up and involve them in choosing decorations and where to place them.
3. If possible, offer a choice between coloured lights or white lights, and between static lights and twinkling lights. Many lights have a choice of settings, so the child or young person can then choose what type of lighting is most tolerable.
4. Be aware that some lights and other battery or mains powered decorations can produce a sound (e.g. humming noise), and may need to be switched off or moved if causing upset.
5. Consider where decorations are placed. It may be too distracting to have them near the place where homework is completed or meals are eaten.
6. Keep an area or areas of the home and school free from decorations. It is important to have places where there are no decorations as this will minimise sensory stimulation.
7. Keep rooms well ventilated when baking, cooking or engaging in Art and Craft activities, in order to neutralise odours.
8. Do not expect the child or young person to eat the traditional Christmas dinner. The unfamiliar tastes, texture and smells may be overwhelming so allow them to celebrate Christmas by eating their favourite dinner.
9. Consider leaving presents unwrapped. Some children and young people may not like the bright, patterned paper or may feel anxious when presented with something they do not recognise. They may find it easier to clearly see the item.
10. Check with the child or young person before purchasing a Christmas jumper or pyjamas for them. They may dislike the texture of the jumper, or the unfamiliarity of the new item of clothing, and they may prefer to wear familiar clothing instead.
11. If crackers are going to be opened during the festivities, the child or young person may need to be prepared for the noise. Open a cracker to show them what makes the noise or consider making your own crackers with the snap removed.
12. Continue to provide calm breaks as part of the daily routine. Taking a break from festivities and the sensory stimulation will help the child or young person to remain calm and to enjoy the Christmas season.



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I am wearing my face mask



Wearing a Face Mask Punch Card:

1. Cut the visual on the left.
2. Each box represents a specific time the individual of autism should wear the mask. Determine the duration that works best for your child. Example: one box = 5 minutes.
3. Set the timer. When timer goes off, you may punch a hole, cross off or put a check mark on the box.
4. After earning 10 boxes, child will earn a reward.