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Linda Hodgdon's Newsletter

Another View: Effective Solutions for Autism, Asperger's & More. . .



June 2010 : Volume VI, Issue 6

Thousands of people have been registering for my special webinars. I did one with Marianne Bryant last week. Verlene wrote, ". . . I really liked the "NoBus" story about the heater."

Yes, it was a great story. So was the one about softened butter. Marianne is a wonderful story teller and her stories help us so much in understanding the nature of autism. See below for how to access the webinar. There is no charge, but it will only be available for a short time.

And another important topic. I received an email recently that highlighted a common problem. She started, "I have met professionals and parents that think older students don't need them [visuals] ... that they have "outgrown" them and do not use them."

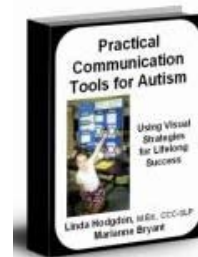
Wow!!! Unfortunately, that's one of the biggest challenges for proponents of visual strategies. The other big challenge is when everything needs a bit of tweeking. These two emails led me to think about preventive maintenance and re-evaluation.

Read on . . .

Linda

In This Issue

- Preventive Maintenance: Re-evaluating Your



**Practical Communication
Tools for Autism:
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Use of Visual Strategies

- Don't Miss the *F*R*E*E* Webinar – Limited Time
- Limited time for this one too
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Preventive Maintenance: Re-evaluating Your Use of Visual Strategies

This works at the end of the school year. But it works if you are in the middle of a school year, too. It's called preventive maintenance. It's important to take time once in a while to do an inventory – regroup – reevaluate. Is your visual tool collection doing the job you need? Is everything "up to snuff?" (How's that for an idiom?) Here are some questions to guide your evaluation.

Which visual tools do you use the most?

Whether you use 5 visual supports or 50, there will be some favorites in your collection. Why do those work so well? Is it the size or shape or purpose? Keep that in mind as you answer the next question.



Is there something you made that isn't working like you thought or needed?

If you made it and you aren't using it, something is wrong. Perhaps you need to go back to the beginning and rethink the situation. Sometimes we make visual tools that don't really target the essence of the situation like we thought they would. Maybe it's the wrong picture or the wrong color or whatever. If it doesn't work, don't get discouraged. That can happen. Just put that one away as a reminder and start over. We can learn just as much by finding out what doesn't work as we can be figuring out what does work.

What is the physical condition of your tools?

Does something need to be redone, refreshed or revised? Well used visual tools will get worn out. That's not a bad thing. It's actually good because that means you are using them. Just be aware that sometimes things need to be redone to make them efficient. I have seen situations where students are supposed to respond to visual

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supports that are a “big ragged” (to put it nicely). Especially when those tools get hard to manage or hard to see, it’s time for new ones.

Do you have multiple copies of the most important tools?

You MUST have multiple copies of those most important visual supports. That means the tools that are used the most often or the ones that are most critical to keeping the environment peaceful. When you are making a visual tool, it’s usually just as easy to make five copies as it is to make one. That’s a time saver in the long run.

Keep this in mind. Having multiple copies may not mean using all of the copies at the same time. Sometimes you WILL want to use multiple copies. For example, use the multiples when you need them in different locations or if each staff person needs their own copy. Otherwise, you can find it more efficient if you use one and put the others away until you need them (i.e. when one gets too scrubby to use – like in the example above). Too many copies floating around can make it harder to navigate and easier to lose important tools.

Do you have visual supports to help teach what your students need to learn?

I love to look at a student’s IEP and mark which skills to be learned can be enhanced with visual strategies. In my experience, almost everything on that IEP can have a visual strategy component in some way.

We think about using visual strategies for managing day to day routines and behaviors. Just don’t forget that visual strategies can be used to support most learning. For example: Students may need help with class participation, either asking for help or volunteering information, working in groups, organization, self monitoring their academic progress, homework completion and lots more. You can teach any of these skills with visual supports.

Have you reduced your use of visual supports or stopped using them?

Here’s part of an email I received recently. “I have met professionals and parents that think older students don’t need them [visuals]...that they have “outgrown” them and do not use them. What suggestions do you have to help them see the value of visuals?”

Unfortunately, I get this question. Too frequently. And the people who say visuals aren’t necessary are the same

ones who complain because that student or adult does _____. Then they start to list the problems and behaviors.

Here are some things to remember.

1. As students get older they may use visual supports differently than they did when they were younger. They may not need the same tools for the same reasons. In the best environments, the use of visual strategies “morphs” to meet the changing needs.
2. Visual tools are often used to teach new skills. Once students learn those new skills they may not need those tools in the same way they did when they were learning the skills. Some students won’t need the supports any more. Others will still need them or want to use them “just because.”
3. Some visual tools, like those used to **give information**, are life long. Giving individuals visual supports and strategies to organize their lives helps develop independence and helps them reduce anxiety, have more appropriate behavior and many more elements for quality of life.
4. Our students can learn routines. The good part about that is that they will learn the routines in a particular classroom or at home. The bad part is that they may not be able to handle it when the routines change or when they move to different environments. That is when the visual supports become particularly helpful for giving them information (see number 3 above).

It’s like taking your car in for a checkup

We call that preventive maintenance.

It’s wise to pick a time periodically to do a quick inventory and evaluation of what you are doing with visual strategies . . . what’s working best

and why. That will help you to keep tweaking and changing what you need, so your use of visual supports will continue to be a powerful force in helping your students succeed.



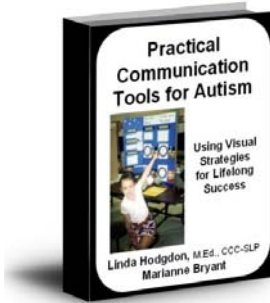
Don't Miss the
*F*R*E*E* Webinar
Limited Time

I interviewed Marianne Bryant in a webinar titled: **8 Tips for Creating Success with Visual Strategies**. Did you

attend? Marianne is a great story teller. She shared very practical insights and ways that she has used visual tools with her daughter with ASD. There is still a little bit of time to access this program for ***F*R*E*E***. Better hurry! It will be there for another week and then it will come down. You can view it at www.UseVisualStrategies.com

Limited time for this one too

I co-authored a book with Marianne Bryant titled **Practical Communication Tools for Autism: Using Visual Strategies for Lifelong Success**. This book has been offered at a special introductory price for April Autism Awareness month. Well, April is done. After another week, the special introductory price will be done too.



Marianne is the Mom of a daughter with ASD. I have known her for a lot of years and I am always impressed at how she has learned to use visual strategies for all the “little things” that have created a “big difference” so her daughter has been able to achieve success. **Practical Communication Tools for Autism: Using Visual Strategies for Lifelong Success** is packed with lots of great insights and ideas.

Go [HERE](#) for more info

AFO Members ONLY



AutismFamilyOnline.com continues its webinar series this month with **Video 101: Getting Started is So Easy Even a Caveman Can Do It**. We will be sending an email that has all the details to all AFO members. Watch your email.



Are you a member? Access articles on important topics, pictures to download, printables, discussion forum to ask your most pressing questions along with this **BONUS** webinar series. The theme for this webinar series is **Using Video to Teach Skills for Individuals with ASD**. This webinar is ***F*R*E*E*** for members of AutismFamilyOnline.com

Not a member?

Go to [Autism Family Online](http://AutismFamilyOnline.com) to check it out.

Things of Interest



Shonda Schilling shares what it was like to deal with the news of her son's **Asperger diagnosis** against the backdrop of the **2007 Boston Red Sox World Series** victory in which her husband, **Curt Schilling**, played a major role.

ASQ's summer 2010 issue features **Dr. Brenda Smith Myles** (social skills supports); **Dr. Nancy Perry** (executive function skills); **Donna Richards** (tips for IEP meetings); and social worker **Judy Gruenfeld** (THE SYSTEM). **Dr. Gena Barnhill** weighs in on the controversial recommendation to remove Asperger's Disorder from DSM-V. Also weighing in on this important issue are: **Dr. Tony Attwood**, **Dr. Barry Prizant**, **Jennifer Twachtman-Reilly**, and **Dr. Liane Holliday Willey**. And, as always, there is much to report on the research front.

Coming attractions for the August 2010 issue: **Dr. Arnold Miller** and **Carol Hilliard** on the development of reading skills; **Dr. Lee Wilkinson** on practical strategies for addressing the under-identification of more capable children with ASD; **Linda Murphy** on episodic memory; and **Michael Frandsen** on the importance of sports. All that and our outstanding regular columnists: **Barry Prizant**, **Teresa Bolick**, **Liane Holliday Willey**, **Alyson Beytien**, and **Jennifer Twachtman-Reilly**.

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www.ASQuarterly.com

About Linda

Linda Hodgdon, M.Ed., CCC-SLP is a Speech-Language Pathologist and a Consultant for Autism Spectrum Disorders. She is the author of the bestseller, **Visual Strategies for Improving Communication**, one of the most recommended books in the field of autism.

Internationally recognized as a powerful and informative speaker and consultant, Linda has presented her insightful and dynamic workshops to audiences of educators and parents worldwide.

Click here for more information about [Linda's programs](#)



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****Do YOU have a success story from using visual strategies?**

Some of the best teaching results come from sharing ideas. Please send your story to office@usevisualstrategies.com with the subject line "my story". I will share some of these ideas in upcoming issues.

To ensure that you receive Linda Hodgdon's newsletter in your inbox (not bulk or junk folders) add office@usevisualstrategies.com to your address book.

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