

**ECI WEBINAR SERIES:
PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR
WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH
AUTISM**

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PART 2: STRUCTURING THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

We will focus on two key overlapping areas:
Safety and Structure that Promotes Learning

- ***Safety first (and Behavior Second)***
 - Many young children are already toddlers when they are identified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and they often move----a lot!
 - Because of communication problems, their movement and exploration in and outside of the home can be a concern.
 - Young children with autism may also have specific sensory issues that create risks for their safety.
 - Many suggestions for safety may also reduce frustration and prevent behavior problems.



PART 2: STRUCTURING THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

- ***Structure that Promotes Learning.*** Areas of discussion in this portion of the webinar will include:
 - Managing movement
 - Controlling materials
 - Orientation of adults to the child
 - Indicating beginning and ends
 - Teaching the structure (will be a bigger focus in the routines portion---next webinar)



PART 2: STRUCTURING THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

- There is also information included on using visuals in the environment, which impacts safety as well as learning.
- This information will be integrated into the other two sections so that you see how these tools can be used effectively in a comprehensive approach.



PART 2: STRUCTURING THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

- Some of these basic recommendations are important for *all* young children.
- Others are of greater concern in families with a child who has autism.
- The key sources for this section of the discussion include:
 - *Early Start for Young Children with Autism / PDD* by McConnell and Ryser. (2006) Austin: PRO-ED.
 - *More than Words* by Sussman. (1999) Toronto: The Hanen Program



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Furniture

- Limit the need for excessive movement and make transitions from one area to another easy.
- Move furniture away from shelves or places where the child may climb.
- Use gates or barriers to provide safety from falling down steps or to limit access to certain areas in the home.



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Locks

- Make sure there are fire safe locks on exterior doors. For children who run away (“elope”), having locks on the doors can prevent them from leaving.
- Safety locks on cabinets and drawers should be used, especially in kitchens and bathrooms.



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Windows

- If a child likes to climb out of windows, locks should be placed on them.
- Glass panes can also be replaced with Plexiglas to prevent injury.



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Electrical Outlets and Appliances

- Electrical outlets should be covered and access to electrical appliances limited.
- The door to the room with the washer or dryer should be locked to prevent access.
- Many young children with autism have a fascination with how things work which, combined with an “unawareness” of danger, makes them very vulnerable.



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Organize and Lock Away Dangerous Items

- This includes things that can be ingested (cleaning supplies, pesticides, etc.).
- A poison control center phone number should be readily available.
- Some items will require supervision, including scissors, knives, lighters, matches, the TV, etc.



SAFETY FIRST AND BEHAVIOR SECOND

Bath Items and Toys

- Some children with autism have a fascination with water. It is a good idea to keep bath toys up and unavailable until an adult is present for bath time. This may prevent the child from turning on the water and filling the tub in order to play with the toys.
- Again, a plastic bin or bag can be used for organization.



SAFETY FIRST AND BEHAVIOR SECOND

Fire Safety

- Safety covers can be placed over knobs on stoves.
- For children who can understand basic social stories, these can be used to explain fire danger as well as what they should and should not do in case of a fire.



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Identification Options

- Once a child with autism becomes mobile, parents should consider some form of identification.
- If the child will tolerate wearing a medical ID bracelet or necklace, these are options.
- Some parents also use specially designed tracking devices, perimeter systems, or service dogs for children with ASD who escape and run away.



Additional Information:

National Autism Association Website

<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/safetytoolkit.php>

Get an ID Bracelet for your child.

Include your name and telephone number. State that your child has autism and is non-verbal if applicable. Here are some examples.

<http://www.medicalidstore.com/>

<http://www.mypreciouskid.com/medical-id-bracelet.html>

If your child will not wear a bracelet or necklace, consider a temporary tattoo with your contact information. Tattoos with a Purpose are available at <http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/products.php?cat=48>

Consider a personal tracking device.

Ion Kids Tracking Wristband

<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/products.php?cat=34>

<http://www.ion-kids.com>

Provides notification to parent when child wanders past a pre-set distance. Allows parent to track child while still within a 500 sq. yard area. Waterproof wristbands are available.

Project Lifesaver Tracking Systems

<http://www.projectlifesaver.org>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8eZf9nzJ28> Video

Project Lifesaver works in coordination with local rescue personnel. Search equipment is housed and maintained by local police or fire departments. At-risk individuals are provided with a transmitter wristband which is replaced monthly. Initial setup and personnel training costs approximately \$3,000. For a program DVD and package to present to your local first responders, please contact Project Lifesaver at www.projectlifesaver.org.

Care Trak Transmitters

<http://caretrak.com/>

Care Trak utilizes the same technology as Project Lifesaver, tracking equipment can be operated by a caregiver or by local law enforcement.

Emfinders

<http://emfinders.com>

Cellular based locator systems.



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Alert The Neighbors

- Parents can decide what information to share with neighbors. For example, if a child wanders or is drawn to cars, parent should let them know.
- If the child with autism does not speak and/or respond to his name, neighbors may think he or she is deaf.
- Parent should explain to neighbors how to their child back into your house or how to contact you if he or she is outside alone.
- If the child has sensory issues, parents may want to explain those, too.



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Teaching Safety

- For children who are old enough, several strategies and tools can be used to teach safety, including:
 - Social Stories
 - Activity Schedules
 - Visual Rules
 - Signs/Charts
 - Peer and Adult Modeling
 - Positive Reinforcement for Appropriate Behavior
 - Consistent Consequences for Unsafe or Inappropriate Behavior



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Labeling Everyday Items

- Parents can begin to use visual labels (symbols, photos, words, textures) for functional items.
- By labeling the environment, parents can help a child with autism better understand what is expected. This may help prevent undesirable behaviors.
- Also, the child may learn the function of an item more quickly.
- In addition, some labels may help reduce resistance to specific tasks (e.g., labeling drawers in which the child must put his clothes).



SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Organizing Everyday Items

- Organizing functional items in see-through plastic bins and boxes with visual labels can help promote communication and cooperation.
- Organization, order, and structure in the environment can reduce frustration and may decrease inappropriate behaviors.
- We will also discuss access to toys and materials relative to interventions.

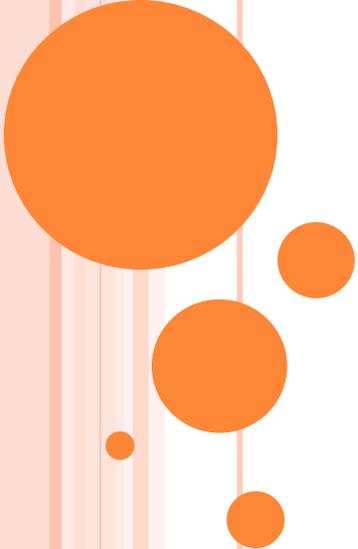


SAFETY FIRST (AND BEHAVIOR SECOND)

Visual Cues and Signs

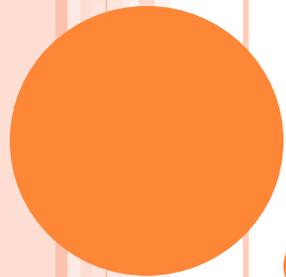
- Dividers, tape boundaries on the floor, and signs are great for setting boundaries with constantly saying “no.”
- For example, the use of STOP signs on doors, drawers, furniture, and appliances often helps children understand that these items or areas are off limits.





ORGANIZATION, LABELING, AND VISUALS

Some examples and illustrations



ANY QUESTIONS?

We will take a few minutes to allow you to submit questions.



QUICK CHECK ON SAFETY

Which of these is true?

- A. There is an interactive fire safety storybook called *I Know My Fire Safety Plan* for children with ASD, produced by the National Fire Protection Association.
- B. *Project Lifesaver* is a rapid response partnership between law enforcement officials for people with Alzheimer's, Down Syndrome, and Autism. It relies on special training and radio locator tracking systems (transmitters).
- C. Both A and B are true.



STRUCTURE THAT PROMOTES LEARNING

There are some very simple steps parents and interventionists can take to ensure that any therapy, teaching, or structured play session goes well.

- First, you will want to consider *movement management and materials control*.



MOVEMENT MANAGEMENT AND MATERIALS CONTROL

- If you are working with a young child with autism, especially one who wanders, runs, climbs, or is otherwise difficult to keep in one spot, your environment should be structured for success.
- This means managing movement and controlling materials.



MOVEMENT MANAGEMENT AND MATERIALS CONTROL

- ***Basic, simple ways to start with movement management and materials control:***
 - Create a small, contained space.
 - If the family does not have a separate room, use a corner of a room.
 - Define the space and ***Use what the family has available***. For example:
 - a blanket or small rug,
 - tape to outline a space on the floor,
 - cushions to create a soft “wall,”
 - a small table,
 - the kitchen table
 - Others????

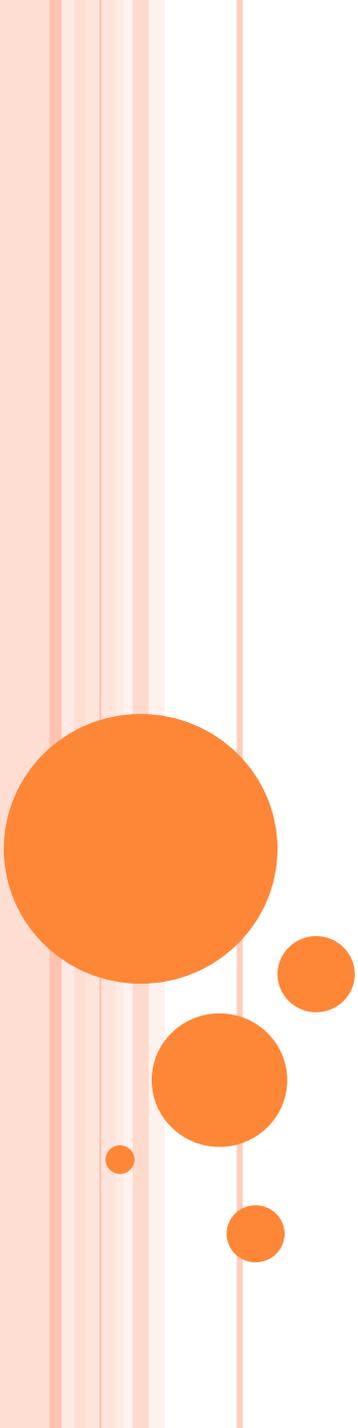


MOVEMENT MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF MATERIALS

You should also control the materials in the space that you are going to use.

- You can still allow for choices, but the choices can be structured.
- Many young children with autism are easily distracted, so you may want to present one activity at a time. You can do this by:
 - Arranging two or three activities in a row and putting other materials away
 - Controlling access and presenting two choices
 - Putting materials in see-through containers and requiring communication from the child.
 - Using the “If-Then” format-----non-preferred first; preferred second.





MOVEMENT MANAGEMENT AND MATERIALS CONTROL

**Some examples and
illustrations**

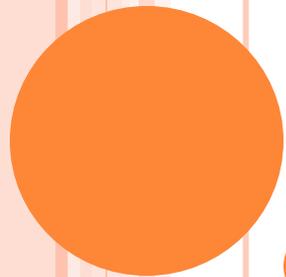
MOVEMENT MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF MATERIALS

We will view a *short video clip that shows examples of these strategies.*

What to look for:

- The materials----in a duffle bag, controlled by Elisa and “cleaned up”
- One material at a time used in an activity
- A small rug as a work/play area
- A required choice for one toy at a time
- No escape; sticking with the task
- Other strategies related to specific skills include: a routine and waiting to elicit language (“Ready, set, go;” movement breaks (the adult respects the child’s style; language is a focus)
- Others??





ANY QUESTIONS?

We will take a few minutes to allow you to submit questions.



ORIENTATION OF ADULTS TO CHILD AND INDICATING BEGINNINGS AND ENDS

- The orientation and positioning that adults should use relative to a child may change. In our first video clip today, we saw the interventionist working with the child in her lap, from behind. There was a specific purpose related to the activity.
- In the next video clip we will see the two adults position themselves with one behind the child and one in front of the child. Again, a specific purpose. This orientation allowed Mom to be an active part of the activity and to get the feel of it with her child.
- Often with children who have autism, a face-to-face position will work best.



ORIENTATION OF ADULTS TO CHILD AND INDICATING BEGINNINGS AND ENDS

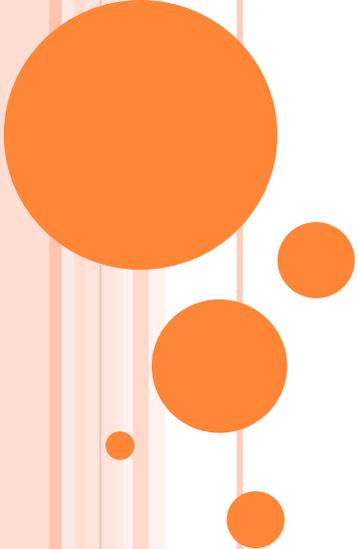
- It is also helpful to indicate the beginning and the end of an activity. This can be done many different ways, including the use of :
 - A timer
 - A specific sign or phrase (“All done;” “Finished”)
 - A song or movement (the “clean up” song)
 - A repeated routine that always starts and ends the same way
 - Others??



TEACHING THE STRUCTURE

- The most effective method for teaching the child what the structure means and helping the child get comfortable with the structure is to use it consistently and repeatedly.
- Many young children with autism may resist structure and routines but they are often less anxious and more cooperative once they learn what is going to happen to them and get comfortable with it.





ORIENTATION AND BEGINNINGS AND ENDS

**Some examples and
illustrations**

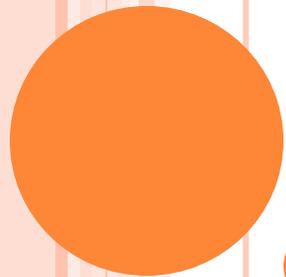
ORIENTATION AND BEGINNINGS AND ENDS

We will view a *short video clip that shows examples of these strategies.*

What to look for:

- In this segment, the two adults are positioned behind and in front of the child. This allows for movement control, modeling for Mom, and a setting that fits a specific skill (turn taking).
- The adult is the one who defines the beginning and end of the activity and then requires the child to do the same.
- The “clean up” song is consistently used as the cue for completing the activity and re-organizing materials.
- Still, the child’s learning style is respected.
- Others??





ANY QUESTIONS?

We will take a few minutes to allow you to submit questions.



ACTIVITY

You should have a copy of a form for use in this activity.

The form includes a table and is entitled,
“Additional Ideas for Environmental Structure”

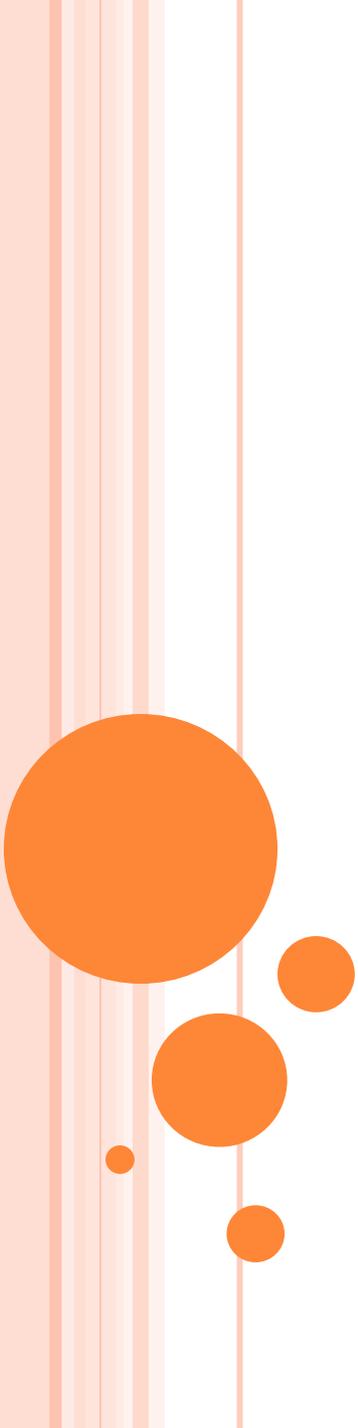
You will now have some time to discuss additional ideas and contribute them online. Please share with others in your group.



Additional Ideas for Environmental Structure

What are some environmental structure ideas you have found effective as you work with young children who have autism? Consider these three key areas:

<i>Ways to Keep the Child Safe</i>	<i>Ideas for Managing Movement and Controlling Materials During a Teaching/Play Session</i>	<i>Ideas for Positioning and Indicating Beginnings and Ends During a Teaching/Play Session</i>



ANY FINAL QUESTIONS?

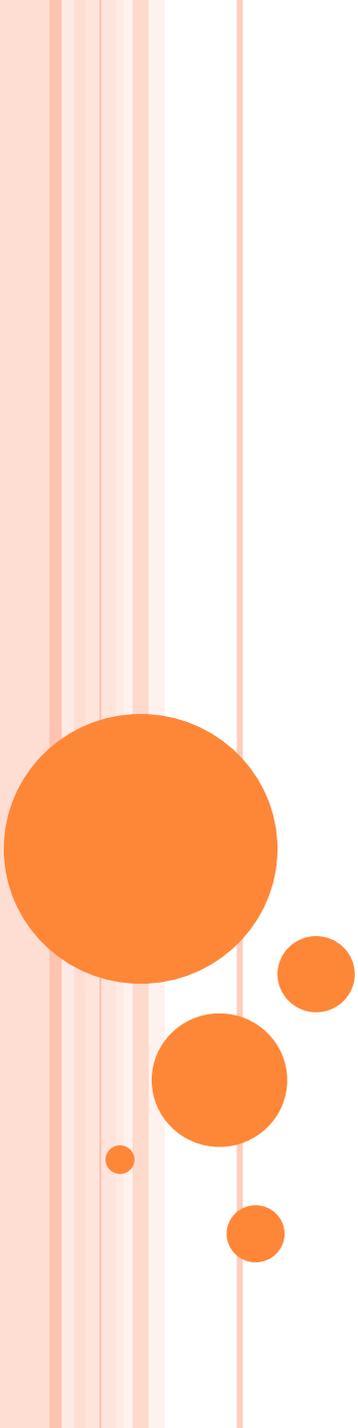
We will take a few minutes to allow you to submit questions.

SUMMARY

In this webinar, we have discussed environmental structure, including:

- Methods of establishing a safe environment for the young child with autism.
- The relationship between a structured environment and a child's behavior.
- Ways to structure the environment for learning, including managing movement, controlling materials, positioning of adults and the child, and indicating the beginning and end of a teaching or play session.





LOOKING AHEAD

Our next webinar will be on Tuesday, August 10th at 9:00 a.m.

The topic will be *Embedding Learning into Daily Routines*.