

Using AAC for Transitions

Transitioning from one activity or setting to another serves as a valuable opportunity for incorporating high-tech AAC. Using AAC during transitions can reduce anxiety, build communication skills, foster independence, and support regulation!

Practical Tips for Using AAC During Transitions

Discuss Next Steps

When transitioning, use the AAC device to discuss where they are going next and what to expect when they arrive.

Acknowledge Feelings

Encourage individuals to use AAC to express how they feel (“I’m not ready,” “I’m excited,” “I need a break”) and validate their experiences.

Prime User to Transition

Remind the user with the AAC device that the transition is coming soon, giving them reminders at set time such as 5 minutes or 1 minute.

Add a Visual Schedule

If possible, add a visual schedule to the AAC device and use it to help the user understand what’s finished and what’s next.

Establish Consistent Routines

Use the same transition phrases on the device or set a timer to indicate each transition as consistency helps reduce anxiety.

Practice Carrying the Device

The AAC device should travel with the user throughout transitions when possible. Practice using shoulder straps or an accessible backpack.

Model Transition Phrases

Consistently model useful phrases to encourage AAC users to communicate during transition times. **Target phrases include:**

- ✓ “Clean up”
- ✓ “All done”
- ✓ “Time to go”
- ✓ “It’s time for ___”
- ✓ “Line up”
- ✓ “What’s next?”

Role-Play Transitions

Practice upcoming transitions through role-play, especially for new or challenging ones, to help individuals learn the vocabulary and routine in advance. Include community settings (like the doctor’s office or store) so AAC users feel more comfortable in unfamiliar places.

Offer Choices

Provide choices on the device during transitions to promote autonomy. If you aren’t able to offer a choice of what’s next, allow them to make a decision about how to get there to increase their sense of control. Ex: “Should we walk or jump to the room?”

Incorporating high-tech AAC devices into transitions helps individuals participate more fully in their daily activities. With consistent modeling and support, AAC can empower users to communicate their needs, make choices, and move confidently through each part of their day.

