

Objects of Reference

Why use visual support?

Some children need additional support to understand and process language, objects can be used to communicate meaning and are particularly useful in initial stages of development when a child is not ready to use more abstract systems such as symbols

Objects of Reference

- Objects of Reference can support the development of understanding more abstract forms of communication e.g., photos, symbols, words
- Can be used to support understanding of the routine – by presenting a consistent object at key points in the routine
- Support development of independence by supporting the child to anticipate next event and make independent steps toward that activity
- Support the child to make choices or communicate that they do not wish to do something

Choosing Objects of Reference

- Objects of Reference are most useful if they are used regularly and consistently, firstly you need to identify a few key routine activities e.g., toilet, meals, outside, home etc.
- Objects of Reference are most useful if they are meaningful to the child so either used in the routine or something the child focuses on once they are engaged in the routine to be careful not to use something that changes regularly e.g., picking a glove that is only needed in winter. Occasionally a miniature can be used e.g., a doll's trike, but these are often more abstract and need to be considered carefully.
- Objects need to be small enough that you can bring them to the child
- If the object is not part of the routine, it is best to keep the objects in a consistent place that all staff are familiar with e.g., in a basket or bag placed on the same shelf or hook.
- Add a list of objects and their corresponding activity, and the script you are using

How to use Objects of Reference

1. Each time that activity is about to occur present the object to the child.
2. Say the same script each time e.g., "time for lunch" "time for a snack" or simply "snack"
3. Support the child to go to that activity/ routine even e.g., leading by hand keep the object with you
4. If the child refuses to go continue show the object calmly repeating the script and gentle guiding (on occasion a child may need an alternative manner e.g., enthusiastic)
5. When the child is familiar with the object of reference, present it to the child saying the script and pause for the child to take steps to independently go to the activity/ routine, if they do not lead them there e.g., two steps away

Ideas for objects of reference



Useful References and Links

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/visual-supports>

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Visual-Support-Children-Spectrum-Disorders/dp/1934575828/ref=sr_1_2?crid=ZRCWVVSU6YT9&dchild=1&keywords=visual+supports+for+children+with+autism&qid=1626869855&srefix=visual+suppo%2Caps%2C255&sr=8-2

