Visual Schedules & Priming Strategies: Integrating Behavioral Strategies in Transition Support for Persons with ASD at Misericordia Home

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PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS PROGRAM

The Personal Effectiveness Program (PEP) is a developmental training program in Misericordia that was developed for those who aren’t able to properly adapt to the demands of a typical occupational or vocational setting. The program and its environment are designed to appropriately cater to the behavioral needs of residents, while also promoting improvement in adaptive behaviors that are necessary for efficient participation in residents’ various training programs. The instructors and interns in this program help in enhancing various skills in residents (e.g. decision making, concentration, help-seeking behaviors, etc.) with the help of interactive and sensory-based technology.

SOCIAL JUSTICE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The SJI Program is an experiential learning opportunity for students interested in servicing the Chicago community at multiple sites. The program emphasizes the values of social justice and community development. Interns spend around 250 hours between their internship sites or in class, examining how to become more proactive in understanding societal structures and dynamics. In class, we look at topics like intersectionality, effective leadership, and allyship as means of addressing the need for social justice across several dimensions of contemporary society.

VISUAL SCHEDULES

These activity schedules are usually used as a support system that feature various images in chronological sequence of the individual’s daily routine. This method has been promoted more than other behavioral strategies because it can contribute to the predictability of the individual’s day, while also benefiting from the visual-learning skills present in a number of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Sevin et al., 2015).

In order to maximize the effectiveness of this strategy, instructors avoided using verbal cues, so schedule-following would only occur when prompted by the stimulus, which was only the schedule. As a result, on-task and on-schedule behaviors were significantly reduced with the addition of the visual schedule. Additionally, the schedule-following actually generalized, becoming independent of a specific number or event sequence, while still not requiring any additional verbal cues (Sevin et al., 2015).

Individuals with ASD also responded to the incorporation of visual schedules by having more frequent, self-initiated looking at the schedules, and they showed an increase in both approach behaviors and positive vocalization toward the schedule. In tandem with those results, there was a more than 50% reduction in tantrum behaviors at transition periods after introducing the visual schedules (Sevin et al. 2015).

In addition, there was incredibly positive evidence supporting the efficacy in incorporating visual schedules across a variety of targets, which include self-regulation in challenging behaviors, play, transition and independence. Overall, there were no difference in the function of the target behavior, the severity of the individual’s ASD, communication abilities, or even the method of visual schedules (Sevin et al., 2015).

PRIMING STRATEGIES

Within priming strategies, a person is exposed to components of an upcoming event or task prior to the actual execution or participation. In certain cases, the demonstrations can occur in a different setting, and in other cases, there may be a pre-activity demonstration that occurs immediately prior to the activity which will occur later on (Sevin et al., 2015).

Instructors and caretakers can utilize various modalities of presenting a primer, which can benefit from the strong visual learning abilities in certain individuals with ASD. A video priming procedure was developed to demonstrate activities being done in the point of view of the individual with ASD, which was mainly used to support those that exhibited disruptive/problem behaviors while transition in their daily routine. They were exposed to recorded videos prior to going into transition periods and received a reward for watching the video, e.g., toys, praise, etc. (Screibman et al., 2000).

In the case of using the video priming procedure, there was a significant decrease in tantrum behaviors when including the video method into instruction. There was rapid, positive response to this modality in some cases, and in others, there was a need for a larger volume of exposure to the recorded videos; however, both resulted in positive results overall for all of those being observed (Screibman et al., 2000).

Within priming strategies, researchers recommend that priming sessions be completed before the actual event, that there should be a relatively low demands while engaging in the priming session, and that there should be a potential source of reinforcement in the priming session (Zanolli et al., 1996).

REFERENCES


