

Teaching Functional Life Skills

Created by:

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Hope Through Treatment

Overview

- Identifying functional goals
- Developing a teaching plan
- Specific examples:
 - Independent activity
 - Toilet training
- Tips and Tricks

What are functional life skills?

- Self care skills (e.g., toilet training, dressing, washing/bathing, tooth brushing, mealtime skills)
- Household chores (e.g., putting possessions away, setting table, laundry, using vacuum, sweeping)
- Pre-vocational tasks (e.g., clerical tasks, cleaning tasks, yard maintenance, stocking, package preparation)

What are functional life skills? (continued)

- Community safety skills (e.g., crossing the street, stranger awareness)
- Health/hygiene related skills (e.g., using Kleenex, applying sunscreen/lip balm, clipping nails, menstrual hygiene, applying deodorant)

Identifying Goals

- Critical to select goals that are meaningful
 - Meaningful to the child/youth
 - Meaningful for the family
 - Prepare child/youth for future environments (transition planning starts with the initial IPP)
- One of the greatest “gifts” we can give to the children and youth we work with is **PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE**
- There are limited teaching hours per day – important to make them count

Identifying Goals (continued)

- Often tempting to focus only on areas of strength (skills that involve rote memory, visual spatial abilities)
 - Avoid building towers before a broad base is established
 - six year old who could sight read 500 words, but not toilet trained and unable to dress self
- Each goals must pass the “so what” test to ensure it is FUNCTIONAL

A Case for Teaching Functional Skills (from TASH Newsletter)

“he can put 100 pegs into a peg board, but can’t put quarters into a vending machine”

“he can fold paper into halves and quarters with an 80% success rate, but he can’t fold his clothes”

“he can putting a rain symbol on the calendar when it is raining, but he still goes out in the rain without a coat”

“he can put a cube in the box, under the box and beside the box, but needs help to put his garbage in the trash at MacDonald’s”

A Case for Teaching Functional Skills (continued)

“he can label all of the letters of the alphabet, but can not discriminate the men’s washroom from the women’s”

“he can string beads and match patterns to a DLM card, but he can not lace his shoes”

“he can play Duck Duck Goose at school, but none of the other teenagers in the neighborhood want to play that”

Developing a Plan – Task Analysis

- Develop task analysis
 - Break task down into teachable “chunks”
 - Ensure all parties agree on the sequence
 - Often helpful to role play steps to ensure the sequence is accurate
 - Takes advantage of child’s inflexibility/desire to follow established routines

Developing a Plan – Visual Supports

- Develop visuals consistent with cognitive level (e.g., objects, photos, pictures, words)
 - can be used to facilitate learning and independence
 - visuals allow the child/youth to prompt themselves
 - may not be necessary to fade the visual (e.g., recipe card)

Hand Washing

turn on water



get soap



rub hands



rinse



turn off water

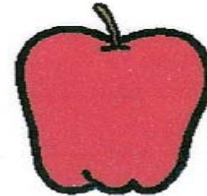


Grocery List

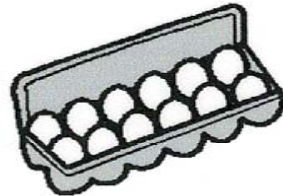
milk



apple



eggs



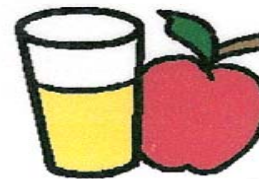
banana



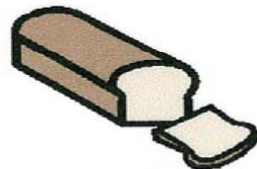
cheddar cheese



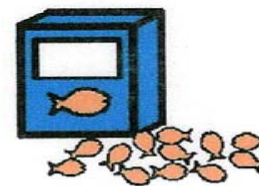
apple juice



bread



fish crackers



Developing a Plan – Prompt Hierarchy

- Develop and use a consistent prompt hierarchy
- Remember prompting sequence should be individualized:
 - Not all prompts apply to all skills
 - can't physically prompt a verbal response
 - The size of the hierarchy will vary for different clients/skills
 - Different children become dependent on different prompts
 - Waiting times depend on the child
- Consider “who” should be prompting (e.g., second person to prompt “come here”)

Prompt Hierarchy

- Independence (I)
- Verbal Prompt (VP)
- Visual Support Prompt (VSP)
- Gesture Prompt (GP)
- Model Prompt (MP)
- Partial Physical Prompt (PP)
- Full Physical Prompt (PTM)

Developing a Plan – Teaching Method

- Determine which teaching method(s) you will use
 - Teaching in natural environment facilitates generalization
 - Skills may be acquired faster if taught in less distracting environment may
 - Practicing tooth brushing strokes at table
 - Consider whether making errors will help or hinder learning
 - Learning to play golf vs discriminating between pictures

Developing a Plan – Teaching Method (continued)

- Consider how often skills should be worked on
 - Repetition is critical
- Determine if a chaining procedure is appropriate
 - Forward chaining
 - Backward chaining

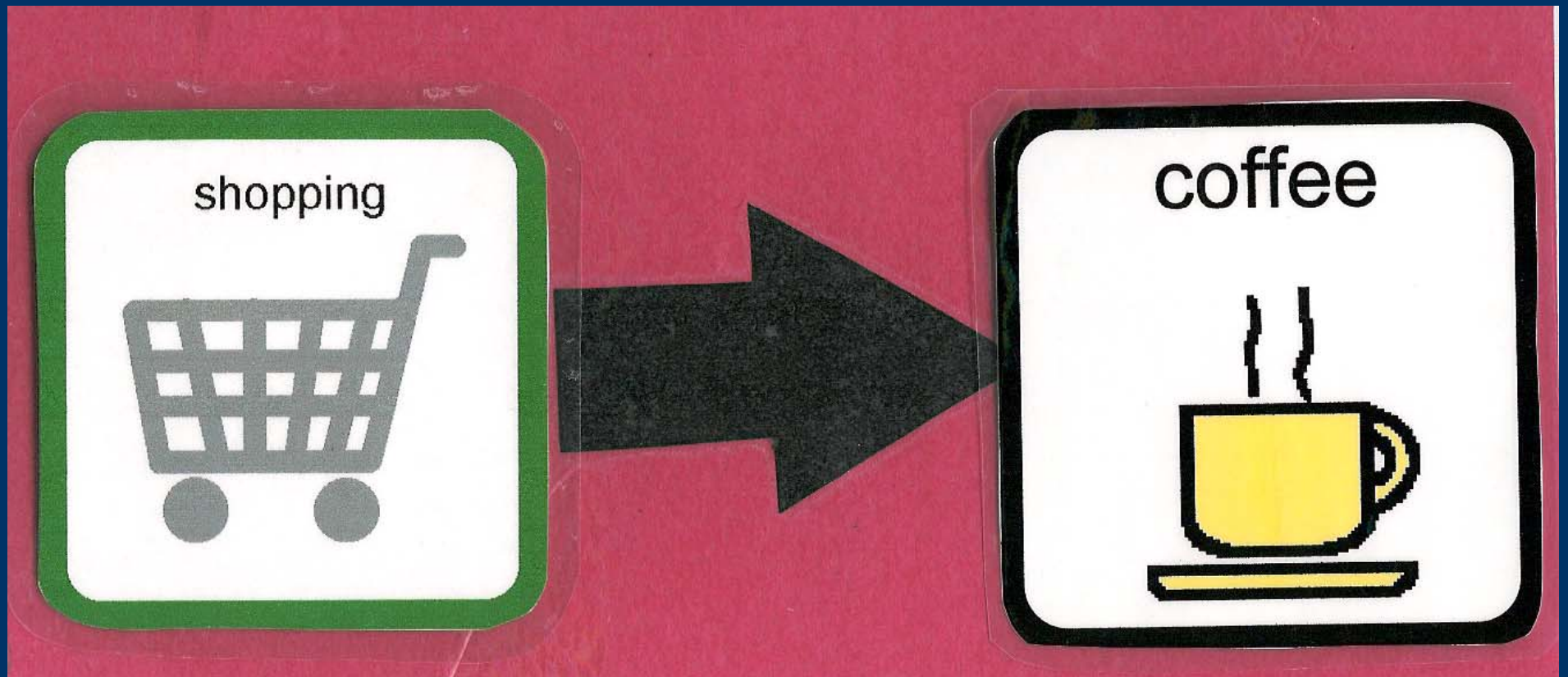
Common Prompting Errors

- Over-prompting
 - Failing to provide processing time (prompting too quickly)
 - Not fading when child is ready
 - Using prompts that are more/less intrusive than necessary
- Failing to prompt (allowing errors to occur)
- Talking too much (over verbal prompting)
 - Each time the instruction is repeated, new information should be added

Developing a Plan – Motivation

- Intensity of reinforcement should “match” the response
 - More independent response than displayed before = big party
- May need to delay reinforcement if it disrupts the “chain”

First-Then



Developing a Plan – Monitoring Progress

- Data collection can facilitate communication between different caregivers
- Helps to ensure prompts are faded when they should be (avoiding prompt reliance)
- Progress may be slow – data can motivate you to persevere

Independent Activity – Work Box/Busy Box

- Helpful for children that tend to be dependent on adult attention
 - When parent/aide busy
 - To develop “homework routine”
 - To develop independent work skills
- Identify tasks that the child has previously mastered during “teaching phase”
- Make sure child understands first-then concept

Independent Activity – Work Box/Busy Box (continued)

- Cue child about task expectations
 - Materials presented in certain box
 - Tasks presented in certain location
 - “Play/Work on my own” picture symbol
- Use visuals/prompting to teach sequence
 - Child will likely require prompting to move from task to task and put completed tasks in “finished box”

Independent Activity – Work Box/Busy Box (continued)

- Gradually increase expectations over time
 - increase the number of tasks the child is expected to complete
 - For some children you may start by expecting them to complete single task
 - initially lay out tasks for child (versus having them take them out of the box)
 - introduce tasks that are challenging for the child (not previously mastered)
 - gradually expect child to collect required materials (only item in box is picture schedule)

Toilet Training

- Phase One:
 - Teaching child to remain seated on toilet/potty
 - Tracking when accidents tend to occur
 - Increasing awareness of accidents
 - Identifying effective reinforcement
- Phase Two:
 - Waiting for “success”
- Phase Three:
 - Refining skills

Remaining Seated

- Encourage child to imitate sitting
- Provide toy when child seated/remove when they stand
- Use timer or song to gradually increase length of time
- Provide foot rest (to increase security)
- If necessary:
 - Allow child to keep pants up
 - Have child sit on toilet with lid down
- Avoid power struggles (avoid bathroom becoming negative)

Tracking Accidents

- Collect data regarding “when” accidents tend to occur (time and situation)
- Try to keep mealtimes and fluid intake relatively consistent

Increasing Awareness

- Encourage child to wear underwear or training pants during portions of the day
- Cue child to touch pants and look when they have an accident
- Tight fitting clothing tends to provide more feedback when wet
- Use underwear alarm or “cool ones”

Identifying Effective Incentive

- Ideally child should only have access to item/activity when they void or have BM in the toilet
- May want to have item present in bathroom
- Make contingency as concrete as possible with visuals
 - If-then strip
 - Social story

First-Then

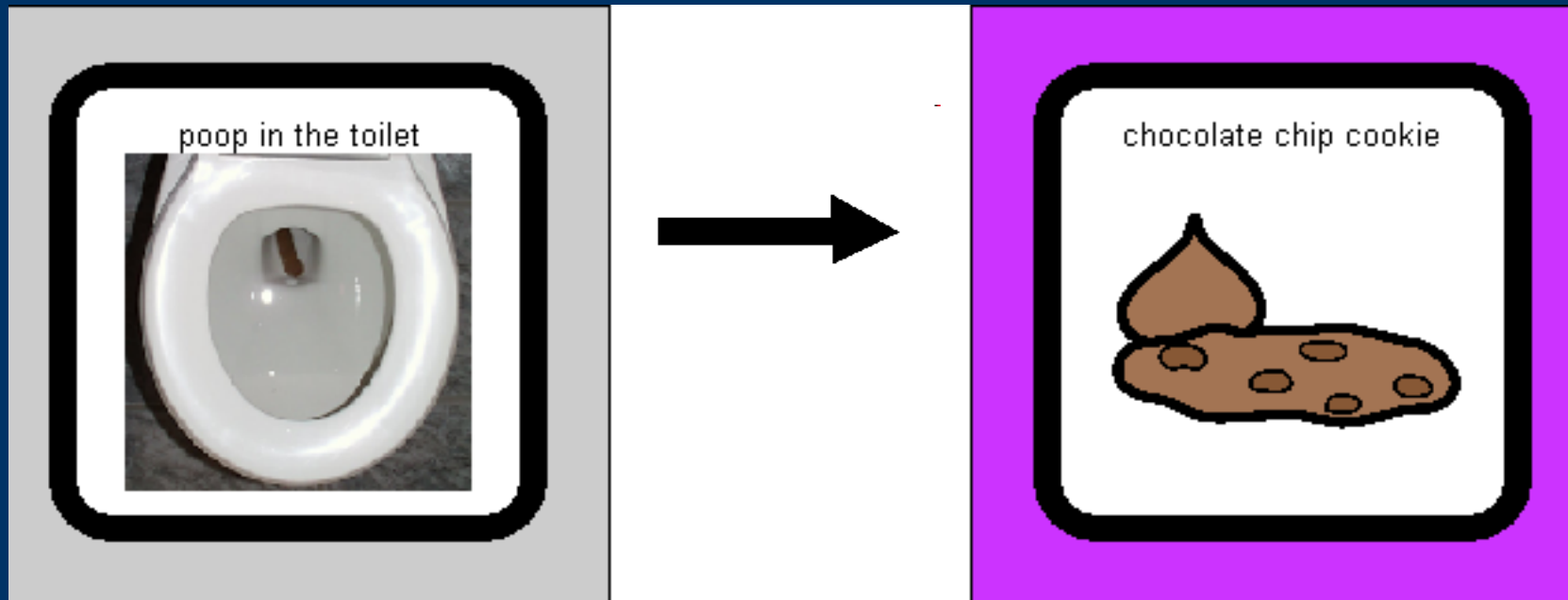
pee in toilet



candy



First -Then



The Waiting Game

- Encourage child to sit at identified accident times (time training)
- Consider sensory issues
 - Smell
 - Water splashing on bum/legs
 - Echo in bathroom
 - Stability/security on toilet
- Use dolls/family members or video to model
 - Demonstrate reinforcement contingency
- Encourage child to play in water and/or run the water while he/she is sitting on the toilet

The Waiting Game (continued)

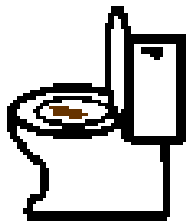
- Following accidents, demonstrate dumping diaper into toilet (where “poo” should go)
- Remain as neutral as possible during clean up
 - Negative attention can be motivating for some
- Avoid inadvertently reinforcing accidents
 - Avoid warm baths
- Depending on age, expect child to take responsibility for accidents (e.g., putting clothes in laundry, wiping area)
- Introduce a “target”
- Tickle it out of them 😊

Refining Skills

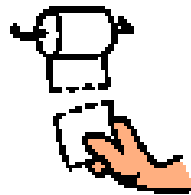
- Avoid increasing expectations too quickly
- Gradually fade “toilet times” (to encourage child to initiate) but continue to provide reinforcement
- Teach child a way to indicate when they need to use the washroom (word, sign, picture symbol)
- Other skills to target:
 - Pulling up/down pants
 - Washing hands
 - Wiping techniques
 - Standing to void
 - Identifying appropriate bathroom in community
 - Fine art of using a urinal

Wiping Bum

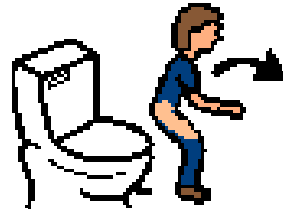
poop in toilet



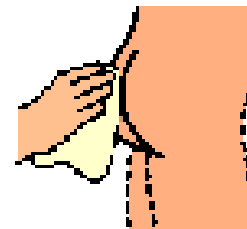
get toilet paper



stand up



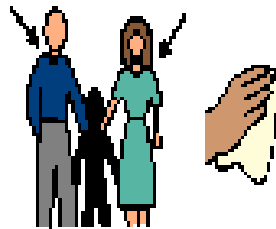
wipe bum



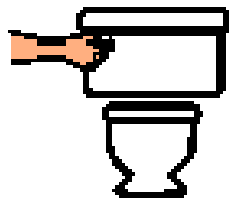
put tissue in toilet



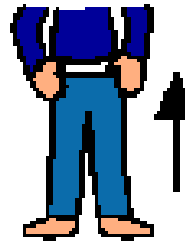
parent's turn



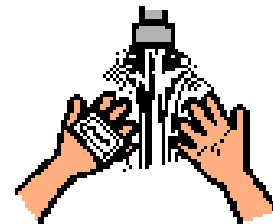
flush



pull pants up



wash hands




Modesty

When I go to
the bathroom



I need to




close the door



I need to have
clothes on



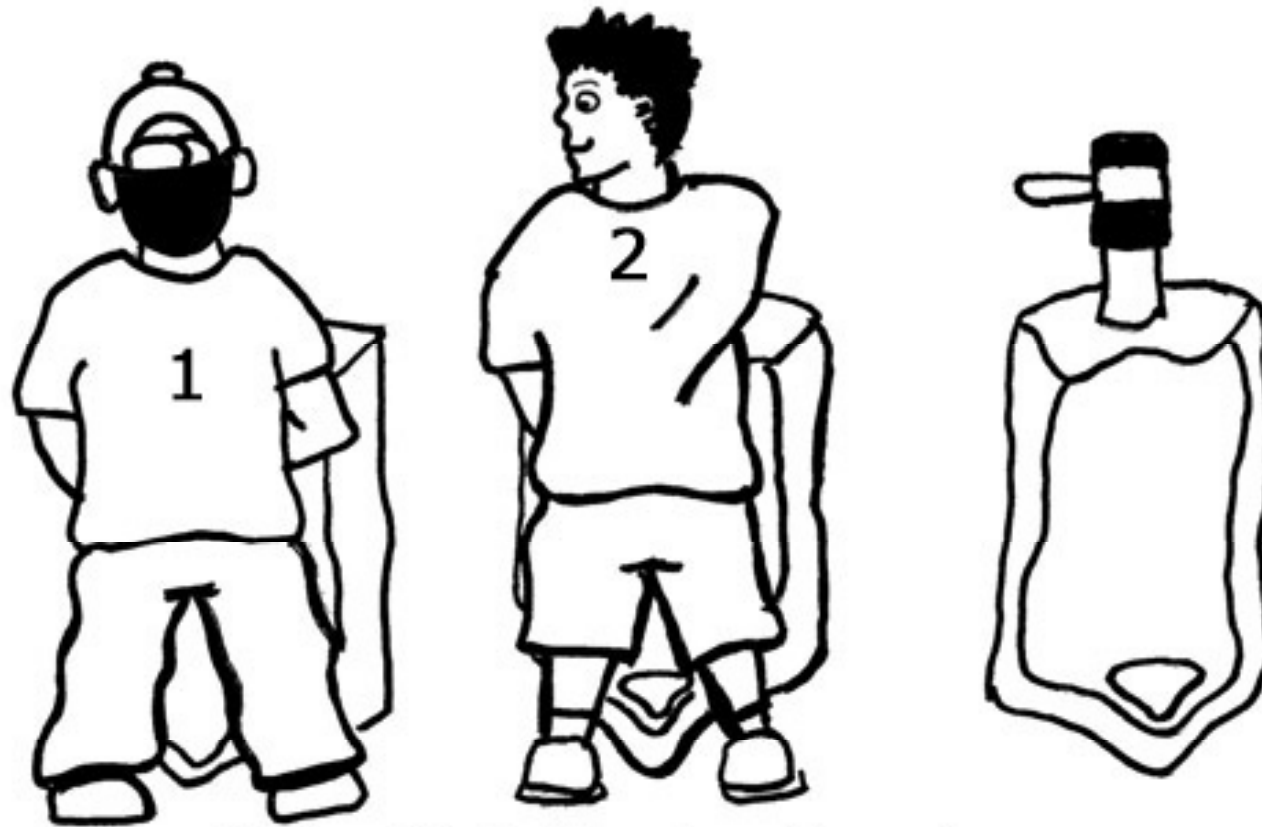
when I leave



the bathroom



Breaking the Unspoken Rule



Urinal user #2 entered the restroom after user #1.
He is breaking two rules here. Do you know what they are?

Tips and Tricks

- Sprinkle the “circles” from a hole puncher to make the task of vacuuming or wiping the table more concrete
 - Wipe/vacuum until there are no more dots
- Use a stamp as a visual reminder of “where” to staple
- Use colored paper with large numbers to teach collating skills
- Arrange with store security to “lose” child to work on safety skills
- Money skills
 - use flyers that interest the child (have child identify what bills/coins would be required to purchase each item)
 - develop a scrap book of the cost of desired items
- Use a board (just like at the Gap!) to teach folding skills

Tips and Tricks (continued)

- Practice filling orders using a visual list and items around the house/classroom
- Use a laminated checklist to cue child to wash body parts during bath
- Typing skills
 - Take advantage of interests and encourage child to type out lists (e.g., movies, schools with scoreboards)
 - Practice filling out forms that require personal
- Develop a form for the child to “take inventory” and count specific household/classroom items
- Utilize visual recipes to work on cooking skills

Tips and Tricks (continued)

- Use a template placemat to teach children to set the table
- Use coloured foam soap to teach children to wash face/body (wash until the soap is gone)
- Use videotape of peers to promote skill development
- Put “dots” or letter on shoes to teach children to put shoes on correct feet

Have you ever thought of teaching....??

- Preparing favorite snack (e.g., Kraft dinner, grilled cheese)
- Making lunch for school/work
- Ordering a meal in a restaurant
- Finding a washroom in the community
- Taking medication
- Clipping nails & toenails
- Shaving