

Supporting Younger Children

Language

Often when children show high levels of control it is often a result of high levels of anxiety. Therefore, the adults around the child in school need to help the child understand that school can be more predictable and that the adults can help them by taking back some of the control from the child. This will require a high level of persistence and consistency in order to establish the approach outlined below.

When a child is anxious (which may look more like refusal than nail biting!) he/she may not be able to access the language and vocabulary that you may know they have. Therefore, it is helpful to treat them like a child whose language is less developed.

(For ease of writing scripts our child shall be called Henry!)

Wherever possible back up verbal commands with 'visual prompts'.

- All directions/ requests/ instructions need to be SIMPLE, CLEAR and CONCISE and used consistently by ALL staff.
 - *'Henry, tidy first, then outside'*
 - **REPEAT BUT DO NOT RE-PHRASE**
- When the child is hurting somebody use the phrase
- *'STOP, hands down'* (feet down/chair down etc.)
- When the child looks to be getting distressed ..ask him in a positive friendly manner.... *'Henry, what do you want?'* . Acknowledge the child's want in an enthusiastic way' *'Wow great, you want to play with the play doh, you can have that but remember carpet time first then play doh'*
- **Language of turn taking.**
- The child may need specific activities, with an adult to start with, to teach him turn taking. Use language such as , *Henry's turn, Becky's turn'*. Play games such as rolling a ball to each other.
- **Choices and FIRST and THEN Board**
- Introduce a choices board using the visual prompts. To do this
- Henry chooses 5 activities that are available to him for that session. Henry then picks his first 2. These will then go on the FIRST and THEN board.
- Once Henry is familiar with this start to introduce more routine activities such as carpet time/focus activity/tidy up which will in effect create a visual time table for his day.
- Firstly, what ever you ask Henry to do, you need to be able to carry through with it. So, pick your battles. Choose a priority. Often the transition from free choice to a directed activity is difficult for children. Start very small and praise when completed. This could look like...
- Showing Henry FIRST and THEN board with his activity and then tidy up visual.

- 'Put 2 cars in the box'
- MODEL this by counting out loud as you put two cars in the box *'one car, two cars, all done'*
- Praise when done the child then completes the task. This could be a visual thumbs up or... *'Well done Henry, you have put two cars in the box'* or both.
- If the child does not cooperate, refer back to the first and then board. *'Look Henry, first tidy up, then....'*

Facilitate success at following instructions by making it as easy as possible for Henry. Eg. goal is to complete jigsaw. 6 piece jigsaw...the adult puts four pieces in and asks Henry to finish it.

Allow Henry to bring a transition toy from his previous activity. This can be particularly useful when he has a focussed activity to do. He will begin by holding the toy but eventually the toy being placed on the table or to the side as he becomes more confident he can return to what he was doing. When he comes to the focussed activity, the task can start off being very small. EG. 'Colour in 3 robots' – make the instructions precise so it is clear to him how he achieves success.

AVOID

Would you like to do your writing now? Answer: NO

Shall we..... Answer : NO

Does Henry want to ? Answer : NO

Giving too many choices. ; Use limited choices 'this or that'

Too many direct commands .Instead ;

Use indirect commands to disguise demands and make them fun – Try challenges e.g. *"I bet I can get my coat on before you!"* or *"Can you show me....."*

Try to make them feel useful which also helps to maintain emotional well-being – e.g. *"It would be really helpful if you could just....."*

Pretend you don't know / get it wrong and ask them to teach you – e.g. Mis-read words in books, or ask them to show you how to do a certain task that you want them to do.