

AutismPro™

# 10 Sample Strategies for Supporting the Child



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**Use these today! Share with your colleagues!**

Strategies give you practical guidance to support children with a very specific problem behavior. Strategies allow you to quickly find the right help, at the right time.

AutismPro Resource Manager and AutismPro Professional contain over 300 Strategies.

Take a look at these sample Strategies to see how to manage problem behaviors that interfere with everyday learning.

## Contact Us

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# Sample Strategy 1: Transition Objects

**Specific Problem:** Child seems sensitive to many sounds

**Method:** Developmental




**Curriculum Level:** Basic

**Problem:** Jeff is sensitive to excessive noise. He has difficulty transitioning between classes at school because the noise level and crowds in the hallways bother him. Jeff often appears agitated and walks with his fingers in his ears.

**Solution:** Jeff's teacher gives him a pair of headphones to wear. The headphones dull the noise and give Jeff the feeling of having his ears covered. The headphones are not plugged into anything, so Jeff is still able to hear his teacher and parents. Jeff keeps his headphones in his backpack. A spare set is kept at school. Upon his arrival at school, Jeff's parents help him put on his headphones before they walk him to class. If Jeff attempts to put his fingers in his ears, they silently prompt him to hold his backpack and/or their hand during the transition. They praise Jeff for using his headphones to walk to class. Jeff returns the headphones to his backpack until he needs them again.

**Transition objects help the child:**

1. Understand where to go
2. Feel more comfortable in the setting

Transition Object	Provides Understanding	Provides Comfort
Headphones	Time to go through the hallway	Dull loud noises
		

**Results:** In time, Jeff appears less agitated and travels through the school without plugging his ears. Over the following months, his parents gradually switch Jeff from the headphones to a baseball hat with the headphone band attached. Eventually, they fade out the headphones altogether and Jeff wears just a hat to transition, which is more socially appropriate.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Transition Objects to tailor this concept to a specific child

# Sample Strategy 2: Unison Group Activities

**Specific Problem:** Child has limited play interests

**Method:** Developmental, Social

**Curriculum Level:** Basic

**Problem:** Neil enjoys art activities (e.g., drawing, painting). He will engage in these activities in most group settings, but typically uses the materials to work by himself. Neil rarely plays cooperatively and resists using the materials in new ways.

**Solution:** To help Neil learn how to play with his peers, his parents adapt his favorite solitary activities to be fun unison activities. They begin by turning a drawing activity into a group mural activity. They line a wall with paper, and begin making designs on it with paint that is readily available for everyone to use. They encourage the group to join them. Once the group is painting together, Neil's parents introduce new painting ideas, such as putting different paints together to make new colors. They also imitate Neil and his peers' actions, encouraging the group to playfully imitate each other. Neil's parents gradually introduce group versions of other preferred art activities, such as spraying colored water onto winter snow and making pretend cookies from play dough.

## Example Checklist for Planning

Unison Group Activities

Child's favorite activity	Dancing	Running	Bubbles
<b>Unison group activity</b>	Dance fast/slow to changing music	Run around the room and "freeze" in place when the lights dim	Catch and pop bubbles from a bubble machine
<b>Everyone has own toys/materials</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Few toys and materials required</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>No sharing or turn-taking required</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Repeated actions</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>No spoken interaction required</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Planning reminders</b>	Make tape of changing music for group to dance to	Use lights to signal run/stop rather than spoken signals; run in a circle rather than back and forth	Place machine in center of play area; provide enough room for children to run freely

**Results:** Having fun with his peers increases Neil's ability to focus on and learn from them.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Unison Group Activities to tailor this concept to a specific child

# Sample Strategy 3: AAC Picture Exchange

## Specific Problem: Child is non-speaking

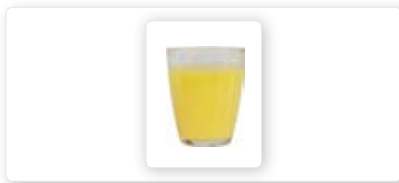
**Method:** Behavioral, Developmental

**Curriculum Level:** Basic

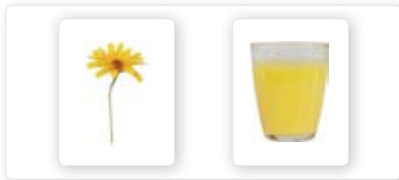
**Problem:** Larry is a non-speaking child. He tries to open the cabinet by himself when he wants a snack. He often becomes frustrated when his attempts are unsuccessful.

**Solution:** Larry's parents decide to use a picture exchange system to help Larry request food. Since juice is Larry's favorite item, a picture of juice is placed on a board attached to the cabinet. Each time Larry attempts to get juice himself, his parents point to the picture and teach him to pass the photo to them. In exchange for the picture, they give Larry some juice. Once Larry understands how to exchange a picture for an item, they add a second picture of a non-preferred item to the board. This teaches Larry to scan pictures to select the one he wants. Larry's parents use the same steps to help him request other preferred food and drink items. Over time, they create a picture board of six or more items for Larry to choose from.

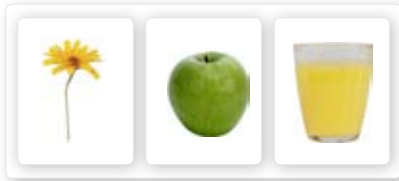
1. Child gives picture to adult



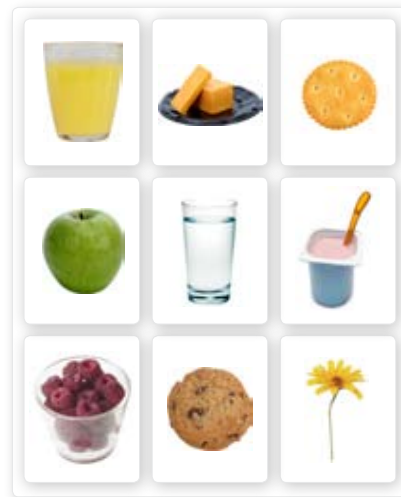
2. Child selects correct picture from two options (one non-preferred)



3. Child selects correct picture from three or more options



4. Child is able to select correct picture from an array of six or more



**Results:** Gradually, Larry learns to use the picture exchange system to make requests. More picture exchange boards are set up in other areas where Larry needs to make requests for preferred items and/or activities (e.g., in the play room to request toys, near the front door to request outdoor activities).

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure AAC Picture Exchange to tailor this concept to a specific child

## Sample Strategy 4: Activity Organizers

**Specific Problem:** Child does not follow directions

**Method:** Behavioral, Developmental

**Curriculum Level:** Basic

**Problem:** Juan finds it difficult to follow directions during independent work station time at school. He is easily distracted by the movement of his peers and does not readily process verbal directions.

**Solution:** Juan's teacher decides to use an activity organizer to help him learn how to listen to group directions, retrieve the materials he needs, and do the assigned activities. She arranges the various station activities in bins that are clearly labeled and placed in a divided shelving unit. After Juan's teacher tells him which activity he will be doing, she gives him an empty bin. She places a picture in the bin of the activity. If Juan gets distracted, she repeats her direction and gestures to the bin. Juan brings the bin to the shelf and fills it with materials he will need to complete the task assigned to him.



**Results:** Juan is better able to follow his teacher's directions as a result of using the activity organizer. Visually organizing the materials increases Juan's ability to process his teacher's verbal directions.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Activity Organizers to tailor this concept to a specific child

## Sample Strategy 5: Preferred Sensory Activity

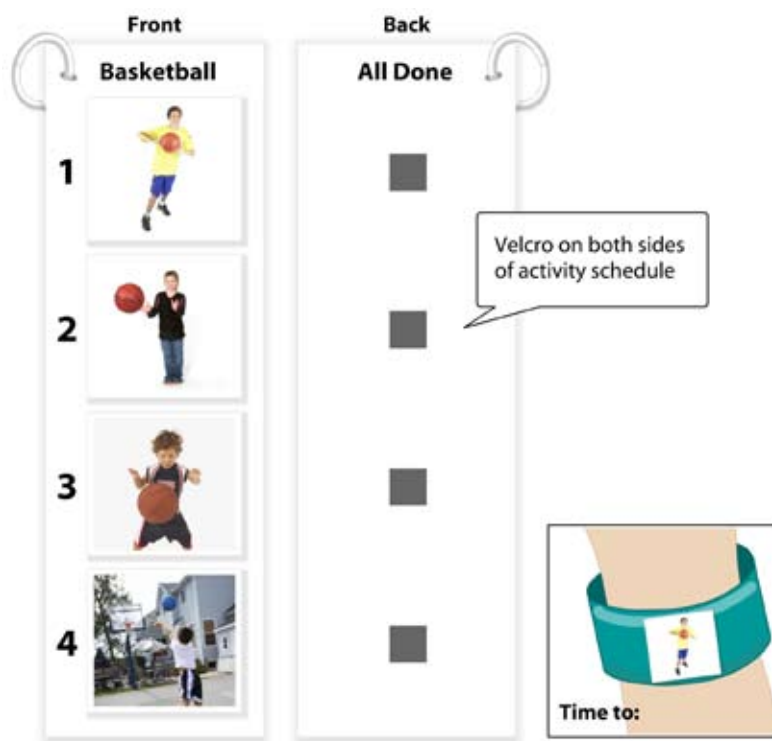
**Specific Problem:** Child loses focus frequently during an activity

**Method:** Behavioral

**Curriculum Level:** Basic

**Problem:** Nick is easily distracted by noise and movement. He frequently loses focus during lessons when there is a high level of activity going on around him. Gym class is particularly difficult for Nick.

**Solution:** Nick's teacher introduces an activity schedule to help him tune out irrelevant motion and focus on the lesson. The class is learning how to play basketball, so the activity schedule depicts the four actions used in the game. Nick's teacher attaches the schedule to his belt loop. She reviews the schedule with him at the beginning of class. She prompts Nick to remove the picture of the first activity and place it on his 'Time to' wristband. If Nick becomes distracted during the activity, she reminds him to look at the picture on his wrist. Once that activity is over, his teacher prompts him to remove the photo from the wristband and place it on the back of his activity schedule. He then removes the next picture from the schedule and places it on the 'Time to' wristband. Nick's teacher frequently reinforces him for staying on task and ignoring distractions.



**Results:** The schedule helps define the parameters of the activity and limits Nick's focus to one action at a time. Over time, Nick's ability to remain focused even in highly distracting settings improves.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Activity Schedules to tailor this concept to a specific child

## Sample Strategy 6: Name the Hidden Card

**Specific Problem:** Child says the same thing repeatedly

**Method:** Behavioral, Developmental, Social

**Curriculum Level:** Intermediate

**Problem:** Fred enjoys talking about sports statistics. The day after a game, he will tell everyone he sees about the statistics of every player and team repeatedly. He doesn't recognize that the person already heard the information and is not interested in hearing it again.

**Solution:** To reduce Frank's repetitive talk, his teacher implements a transition routine. She gives Fred a stack of five "talk cards." Each time he tells someone about the highlights of the game, he must hand that person one of the talk cards. If he tries to tell that person about the game again, the person shows him the talk card and says, "You already told me," or "I heard you." Fred is then encouraged to talk about something else. When Fred runs out of talk cards, he is all done talking about sports stats for the remainder of the school day. At first, Fred needs a high level of support to use the transition routine, but he gradually adapts to it.

### Transition Routine for Fred:

- Child is given five "talk cards"
- Child must give up a talk card every time he/she talks about a certain topic (e.g., sports)
- If the child tries to repeat him/herself, the listener shows him/her the card and says, "You already told me about that"
- When the child is out of cards, he/she is encouraged to transition to a new topic



**Results:** Fred's teacher notices a significant reduction in his repetitive talk as a result of using the transition routine.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Transition Routines to tailor this concept to a specific child

## Sample Strategy 7: Choice Boards

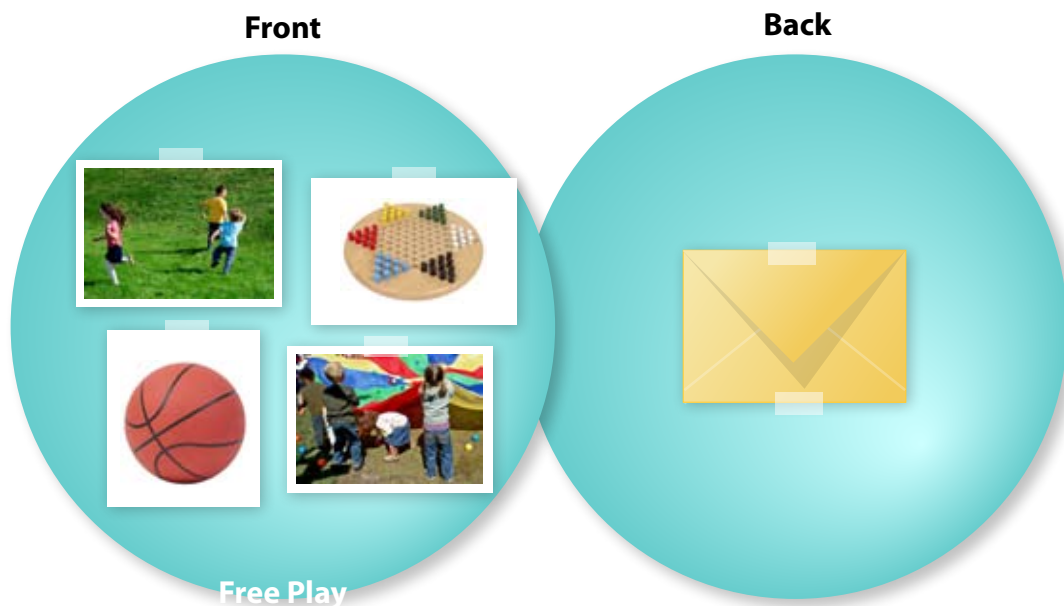
**Specific Problem:** Child does not know how to play with other children

**Method:** Behavioral, Developmental

**Curriculum Level:** Intermediate

**Problem:** Oliver shows a desire to interact with his peers, but he does not know how to play with them. During free play, he often runs through their games or takes their toys in an attempt to involve himself their play.

**Solution:** Oliver's teacher decides to use a choice board to help Oliver play better with his peers. The teacher identifies four activities Oliver consistently disrupts and displays them on the board. At the beginning of free play period, Oliver's teacher sits with him and watches the other kids playing. He shows Oliver the choice board and names the activities his peers are participating in. He asks Oliver which activity he would like to play with the other children. When Oliver makes a choice, his teacher helps him ask the other children if he can play and provides the guidance necessary to engage in the activity.



**Results:** The choice board helps Oliver select a single activity, reducing his random running between activities. This provides Oliver with the focus necessary to learn how to play with his classmates.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Choice Boards to tailor this concept to a specific child

## Sample Strategy 8: Unstructured Group Play

**Specific Problem:** Child only uses words to ask for something; she does not talk to me for any other reason

**Method:** Developmental

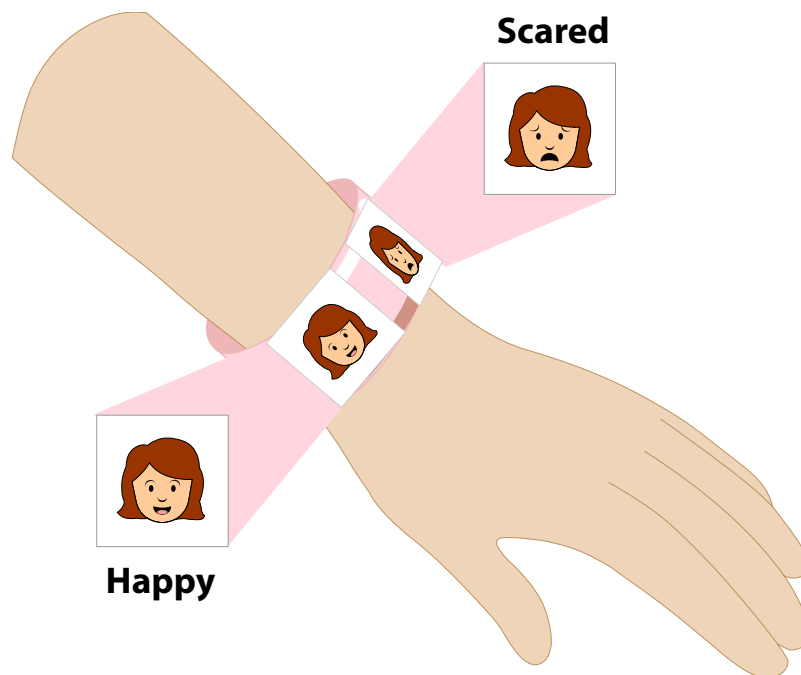
**Curriculum Level:** Advanced

**Problem:** Mia often becomes very anxious. She frequently responds to stressful situations by running away or trying to hide behind familiar people who she feels comfortable with, such as her mother or teacher. Mia uses her vocabulary to make requests, but not for any other types of communication.

**Solution:** Mia's teacher and mother decide to introduce AAC cue cards to help Mia talk about her feelings. They hope verbalizing her feelings will help reduce Mia's flight responses. They give Mia a wristband and use Velcro to attach two cue cards to it: one for "scared" and another for "happy." When Mia enters a stressful situation, she is asked how she is feeling and the adult gestures to the cue cards on her wrist. When Mia points to one of the cards or says the feeling, the adult gently acknowledges Mia's feelings. If Mia says she is scared, the adult gives her the comfort she needs to deal with her anxiety.

### Mia's AAC Cue Cards

The child is given a wristband with two attached cue cards (e.g., with Velcro) to help him/her communicate: one for "scared" and another for "happy."



**Results:** Gradually, Mia learns to talk to her mother and her teacher about how she feels.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure AAC Cue Cards to tailor this concept to a specific child

## Sample Strategy 9: Cue Cards

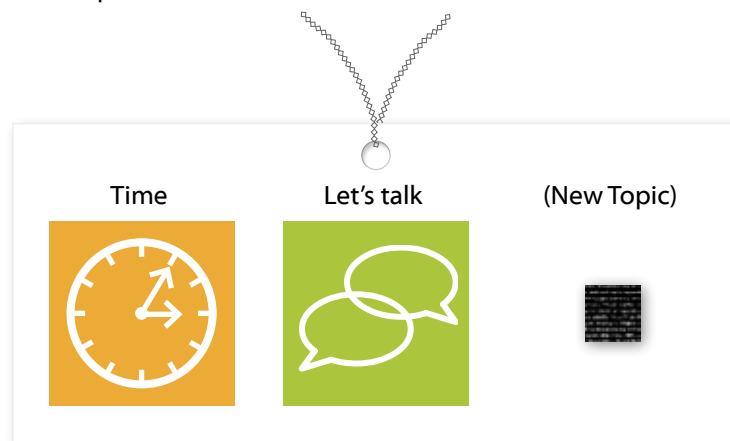
**Specific Problem:** Child wants to talk about the same thing all of the time

**Method:** Behavioral, Developmental

**Curriculum Level:** Advanced

**Problem:** Oliver enjoys talking to his teacher and peers. He frequently seeks out people to talk to during class. Unfortunately, Oliver only wants to talk about trains and has difficulty talking about other topics. He becomes agitated and panicked when someone tries to change the subject or tell him they are not interested in talking about trains. Sometimes Oliver seems so focused on trains that he can't even hear topic suggestions made by others.

**Solution:** Oliver's teacher decides to use a cue card to prompt Oliver when it is time to talk about something other than trains. She acknowledges Oliver's initiation, then tells him it's time to talk about something else. She shows Oliver a picture of the topic she wants to talk about and attaches it to the cue card (e.g., with Velcro). Each time Oliver starts talking about trains during their conversation, she points to the cue card to remind him that it is time to talk about the new topic.



1. Review the cue card with the child. Tell the child it is common for people to get stuck talking about certain topics, but that sometimes it can be nice to talk about other things. Remind the child that changes are okay.
2. Place the card in a visible location. Wear it around your neck as a constant reminder for the child.
3. If the child starts talking about an old subject again, silently direct his/her attention to the cue card by pointing to it.
4. Reinforce the information on the cue card during the activity. Verbally praise the child any time he/she engages in conversations about new or non-preferred topics.

**Results:** By providing a clear visual reminder of the current discussion topic, the cue card helps Oliver reduce his train talk and talk more about other subjects. He is also better able to respond to the conversational interests of his teacher and peers.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Cue Cards to tailor this concept to a specific child

# Sample Strategy 10: Activity Organizers

**Specific Problem:** Child works slowly and insists on doing everything perfectly

**Method:** Behavioral, Developmental

**Curriculum Level:** Advanced

**Problem:** James is learning to write the numbers 1-3 using a tracing sheet, but he becomes obsessed with small details in his work. He constantly erases his work and starts over. This significantly slows his pace and limits the amount of work he is able to complete in a session.

**Solution:** To help James complete his work faster, his teacher adds an activity organizer to his work time. She sets up his assignment at a table. Once she explains the directions, she sets a timer for five minutes. At the end of each minute, James is reminded how much time he has left. If he begins to get stressed or stuck, his teacher reinforces him for the work he has done and tells him that he can do the rest in the given time. When the timer rings, James's work is removed and he is allowed to rest in the beanbag chair with his favorite toy. If he failed to complete the work, his teacher tells him to move on and he can try again tomorrow to finish it on time.

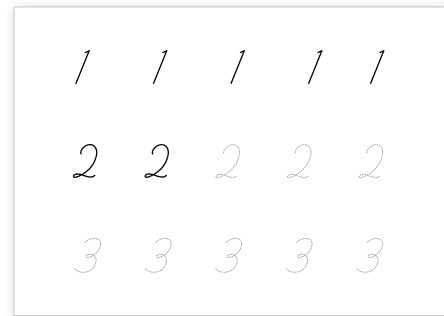
**Activity Organizer:** Writing Numbers



**Timer**



**Rest when finished**



**Sheet for tracing numbers**

**Results:** Once James understands the time constraints, he begins to increase the pace of his work and finish with the rest of his class.

\* Refer to the AutismPro support procedure Activity Organizers to tailor this concept to a specific child