

AUTISM PARTNERSHIP

LIFE ISN'T FAIR: HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM COPE WITH AN IMPERFECT WORLD

[HTTPS://AUTISMPARTNERSHIP.COM/CONFERENCES](https://autismpartnership.com/conferences)

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CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

- Make Life Easy
- Adjust your expectations
- Protect them from stress
- Make Accommodations

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ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM


- Consistent Routines
- Reduced Demands
- Silencing The Bells
- Eat what you want

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TO ACCOMMODATE OR NOT TO ACCOMMODATE?


- Is it possible that accommodation can actually become the handicap?






TO ACCOMMODATE OR NOT TO ACCOMMODATE?

- It Is **NOT** Helpful To Strive To Eliminate Distress For Children With Autism
 - Discomfort is a natural part of life
- Protecting Children from discomfort results in being ill-prepared for life in the real world




TO ACCOMMODATE OR NOT TO ACCOMMODATE?

- Life is full of disappointment
 - swimming pool is closed for repairs?
 - It's raining and we can't go outside to play
 - The internet isn't working and I can't watch my favorite Youtube clips
- Being Able to Tolerate Adversity is an essential life lesson
- Tolerance is a skill you get better at with practice



DEVELOPING TOLERANCE

- Tolerance is developed by exposure in the absence of traumatic event
 - We are "deconditioning" a learned emotional response (respondent extinction)
- Start with minimally stressful dose
 - Brief duration
 - Mild intensity
- Simultaneously teaching "coping" response (operant skill)
 - Reinforcer is child gets to have it their way
 - Initially contingent only on the passage of time
 - This prevents despair
- We can gradually shape alternative behavior ("putting on the brakes")



TOLERATING HAIRCUT

- Sitting still in barbers chair
- Wear apron
- Head and face being touched
- Water mist
- Combing
- Sounds Snipping, Buzzing, Blow dryer
- Vibration

TOLERATING HAIRCUT




A photograph showing a woman in a blue shirt cutting a child's hair. The child is sitting in a chair, and the woman is leaning over them. The room has a yellow wall and a pink rug.

TOLERANCE CHALLENGES ARE EVERYWHERE

- Vacuum cleaner
- Blender
- Coffee grinder
- Wearing a helmet or hat
- Shop is closed
- Giving up preferred item

TOLERANCE: GIVING UP PREFERRED ITEM

- Attachments and preoccupations can interfere with availability for learning
- Child believes they need item in order to achieve comfort and security
- In fact they can learn to soothe themselves and find comfort and enjoyment in a wide variety of things




An illustration of a blue pacifier with a light blue shield and a white nipple, set against a pink background.

NEED vs. PREFERENCE

- How Do We Distinguish?
- Detrimental Not To Have It = **NEED**
- Really Like It = **PREFERENCE**
- General Need Vs. Specific Preference
 - Need food to stay alive
 - Prefer to eat chocolate cake

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TOLERANCE FOR GIVING UP PACIFIER



VIDEO: Julie (5) matching w Mom

PICKY EATING

A -----> B <----- C
 Antecedent(s) Behavior Consequence(s)
 (positive and negative)

Non-preferred food is offered Rejection of item Something better is offered

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PICKY EATING

- Desensitize (expose at distance in non-threatening manner)
- Shape approximations (touch, smell, etc.)
- Use Nonverbal imitation
- Modeling may help (e.g., peers at school)

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PICKY EATING

- Consider Targeting related behaviors first
 - using utensils
 - remaining at table
- Determine hierarchy on 1-10 scale
 - (most preferred = '10')
- Start with 8's and 9's to get a '10'
- May be helpful to tackle flexibility
 - Alterations in highly preferred items

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PICKY EATING



VIDEO: Frank


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WAITING PATIENTLY

- Start in situation where there is an obvious reason why you are waiting
- Let movement toward the desired item be the reinforcer for staying calm
- Use shaping: behavior doesn't have to be perfect in the beginning stages
- Use a "WAIT" card to represent that the thing you want is coming
- WAIT card becomes conditioned reinforcer

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WAITING PATIENTLY



- This app is called "Childrens countdown timer" (free download in app store)
- Recommend turning off ticking sound in settings.
- Can start with duration as short as 10 sec.

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WAITING PATIENTLY

- 1) Child makes request
- 2) We ask him to wait "a minute" and hand him card that says wait
- 3) Optional: start timer and allow child to see movement of timer dial. When timer ends, prompt child to hand over wait card.
- 4) Otherwise child sees you traveling short distance to get item that was requested.
- 5) Nonstop praise for "waiting nicely"
- 6) Gradually increase duration.

 **WAITING PATIENTLY**
Trial 1: 20 secs. (cookie)



The image shows a woman with long dark hair, wearing a denim jacket, sitting at a light-colored wooden table. A young child with brown hair, wearing a plaid shirt, is sitting opposite her. The woman is holding a small, round object (a cookie) in her hands and looking at the child. On the table, there are various items including a blue water bottle, a green container, and some papers. The background is a plain wall.

 **WAITING PATIENTLY**
Trial 6: 70 secs. (coloring)



The image shows the same woman and child from the previous trial, sitting at the same table. The woman is now holding a coloring book and a marker, and the child is looking at the book. The table is cluttered with coloring supplies, including markers and a water bottle. The background is the same plain wall.