



Time, Travel & Transition: Using Visual Strategies for Student Success

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Guest Speaker: Linda Hodgdon, M.Ed., CCC-SLP

Hello everyone and welcome to *Moms Fighting Autism*. I'm your moderator Nancy Bernotaitis and I'm delighted to bring you tonight this wonderful webinar called Time, Travel and Transition using visual strategies for Student Success with Linda Hodgdon. Linda is a-- has a Masters in Education. She's a speech language pathologist, who is internationally known as a pioneer in developing the use of visual strategies to support communication for students with autism spectrum disorders and related learning challenges. Her training programs are packed with best practices and effective ideas for using a range of low tech to high tech visual tools

including video and tablets like Ipads and apps to meet the communication, behavior, and social skills needs of the students. A powerful and entertaining presenter Linda shares practical information that inspires program participants to accomplish new goals with students immediately. Linda is the author of Visual Strategies for Improving Communication and Solving Behaviors in Autism. Considered essential resources for professionals and parents, these are two of the most recommended books in the field. She provides support for speech language pathologists, educators and parents of students with special learning needs with her blog and her video training materials. She is the director of Cornerstone Communication Center, an organization that provides consultation, training and professional development with the goal of improving communication. Welcome Linda.

Linda Hodgdon: Hi Nancy. I'm glad to be here.

Nancy: We're so glad to have you.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay, so I can get going?

Nancy: Yeah! So...

Linda Hodgdon: Alright, great! Well, welcome to everybody who is listening and who will be listening to this program. I am delighted to be able to share some information that is really close to my heart and some strategies that I know really, really make a difference for those individuals with autism spectrum disorders and lots of other students with learning challenges and communication challenges. So as I have worked with these students for a lot, a lot of years, I have found that there are three key areas where we can do some simple things that can make a huge difference in how students can follow with the flow of life. And those three key areas are related to time, travel and transition and so that's what we're going to be talking about today, okay? Ready to go?

Nancy: Yeah.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay, here we go. Now I just got a wonderful introduction. I've been a consultant for students with autism and related communication challenges for geez, so many years, I can hardly think about it now. But I think what's really important to understand is that 30 years ago we didn't know very much about autism and now in the current times we know a lot more about students that are on the autism spectrum. We know a lot more about what their learning needs are. We know a lot more about what their

communication challenges are. And especially in this topic that we're talking about today, we know that using visual strategies is hugely important for this population. And the idea of using visual strategies has really reached the level of being best practices for those individuals. And so, that's one of the main reasons that I'm really excited to be talking about this topic. So in our program today, we're going to be talking about first the most common misunderstanding about communication in autism. We're going to be talking about the most important thing to understand about the communication strengths and challenges of those students. Three common times when there can be behavior challenges. We're going to cover some simple strategies that you can use to solve behavior problems that occur during time, travel and transition. Plus I know we're going to talk about a lot more, so...

Nancy: Linda? Linda, I'm sorry to interrupt but I just want to tell you how pertinent this information is. Just for me personally, I have a fourteen year old son with autism and in the last months he has shattered three windshields.

Linda Hodgdon: Oh my.

Nancy: Uh-hmm, so fixed that (laughs).

Linda Hodgdon: Okay. And I guess we'll have to track a little bit more after the, after, because you know one of the questions I always ask when we're dealing with behavior issues is why is that behavior occurring, why is that happening. And as we talked in our program today, you'll get a, you'll see a sense of discovering why some of the problems occur. So we'll be covering that in a little bit, okay?

Nancy: Um-hm.

Linda Hodgdon: Alright, good. Okay.

Nancy: I'm so excited.

Linda Hodgdon: We're going to cover a lot more things and I'm sure that we won't answer everybody's questions but we'll try to answer a whole lot of them. You know the most important thing to understand about the communication strengths and the communication challenges of children with autism spectrum disorders is that most people misunderstand autism in communication. And when I'm talking about children today, please

understand I'm talking about individuals from any pre-school age all the way up through adults. But it's really easy to use the word children. And, the problem is that most people focus on a child's ability to speak. And one of the most common questions that people ask is does this child have verbal language? Does he talk? If he talks, does he talk in one word, utterances or does he talk in longer elaborate language? And if he doesn't talk, how does he communicate? Does he have some kind of an augmentative communication device or does he use pictures or sign language or how does he communicate with people? And that, that ability of that student to communicate to other people is a very important thing. But there's another part of communication that's extremely important that most people don't understand enough about and that is their ability to understand. And understanding then, is one of the most significant challenges that these students have. It's greatly under- understood. And, that's why I really like to focus on that topic a lot, so let's see why. When we talk about autism spectrum disorders a very primary part of ASD is that those individuals have challenges in social skills and communication skills. That's part of the definition, it's part of the diagnosis of autism. And when people are talking about students who have communication challenges the part that they pay attention to is their ability to express themselves. And yet, the population of students that we're talking about tonight have significant challenges in their ability to understand. They have difficulty understanding communication. They can have difficulty understanding speech and language. They can have difficulty understanding social interaction. They can have difficulty understanding the clues and the cues in the environment. And people presume they understand but maybe they really don't. And you see once people understand this aspect of their child or their student, then they're going to be able to make some little changes that can make a really big difference for those students. What we need to do is we have to remember that communication is not just speech. You know my professional title is I'm a speech and language pathologist then and when in schools sometimes they call me the speech teacher but when somebody takes a child to the speech teacher, they expect the speech teacher to teach them how to talk. I mean, that's a very common expectation. And for that reason, I really like to call myself a communication specialist because communication is a much broader umbrella than just speech. And it more accurately describes the kind of support that these students need. See, when we talked about communication, communication involves a whole lot of different skills. It

involves the ability to establish attention or shift attention. It involves the ability to follow rapidly changing stimuli. Just think about how much is rapidly moving in our lives in terms of social interaction and social environments. And then what we do is we take in information and then we process it up there in our brain and we store information and we retrieve past information. And somehow we send out an answer or a response to a particular situation. Well when people are asking is this child verbal or non verbal, how does he communicate? What they're really doing is they're looking at that very last thing on the list. They're looking at how does he send information. But the students that we're talking about today have difficulty, not just sending information but this whole system can need help and support. The whole system can have some difficulties in the middle of all of that. And so it's not just the sending information but the whole system can benefit from what we're going to be talking about using visual strategies.

Now one of the most common misunderstandings about communication for this population and I bet many of you have heard somebody say this, they're describing a student and they say well, he understands everything I say. You know, he knows exactly what I want him to do but then they describe why he's having problems. And they'll say, he's having problems because he's not paying attention or he thinks he's the boss and he doesn't want to do what I'm-- He's trying to control the situation and they come up with all these reasons why a student isn't doing what I want him to do. But they say, oh but he understands everything I say. And I bet many of you can identify students or situations when you've heard that dad. And yet, maybe they don't really understand everything we say and there can be a lot of reasons for that. You see sometimes students are looking like they're doing what we want them to do but they might not really be paying attention to the words that are coming out of their mouths. You know maybe for example if I hold up a bottle of water and I say Johnny go get me the water. He's really looking at the bottle that's in my hand. Not really listening to the words that are coming out of my mouth. And so there could be a variety of cues that those students are paying attention to but it's not really all of the words that are coming out of our mouths. And in fact one of the, one of the challenges that I'd like to issue to people is this. Why don't you try spending a day with your child or your students and just don't talk. Pretend like you have laryngitis for the day. And see how you get along with your students and you know

I've had some people do that and they tell me that "oh my goodness!" You know what they start to do then is they start to use pointing and gestures and pictures and all those kinds of things and they find out that their students are really participating very effectively. And they're really surprised how well the students do when the teacher can't talk for the day or the parent can't talk for the day. So, we'd like to think that ours, the words that come out of our mouths are really important but maybe not as important as we think for these particular students. So to summarize very quickly the most important thing to understand about the students that we're talking about today is that the majority of them are visual learners. They understand what they see better than they understand what they hear. And when I'm doing longer workshops, I spend a lot of time on this point and I site a bunch of research because there's more research that's out now that, that gives us more information about the learning style of these students. But what's important to understand is that the majority of them are visual learners. And if you turned off this webinar right now and just remember that one point that can and very easily should transform how you interact with the students because if you really remembering that they are visual learners and they understand what they see better than what they hear, it will naturally change how you interact with them. It will actually change how you communicate with them.

So let's look at a little bit more about communication. You know as a speech pathologist, I always talk about forms of communication. And there a lot of different forms of communication and this is just a very short list. Speech is one form of communication but there are other forms of communication. For example, pointing is a form of communication or gestures or body language. Pictures can be used as a form of communication. Objects can be, written language can be. And you know what? A lot of behaviors can be used as forms of communication too. So when we're talking about forms of communication, we're talking about how I'm communicating to that student or what forms does that student use to communicate to me. There it goes both ways. But you know one thing to remember that a lot of the problem behaviors that the student exhibit can really be forms of communication too. I wrote a whole book, it's called Solving Behavior Problems in Autism and in that book I share about how behavior problems can be used as forms of communication and how they're very frequently related to communication breakdowns. And either the student is not able to express himself well or he doesn't

understand. And very often, it's that lack of understanding that we as the communication partners don't realize that that's what's going on. And so I write about that a lot in my newsletters too. I write a newsletter that I'll be telling you about but in my newsletters I write a lot of articles about dealing with behavior problems because that's one of the areas that I get so many questions from people about. But for right now, let's just move on a little bit.

So what are visual strategies? Well, visual strategies are the things that you see. Lots of things that you see -- pictures, writing, you know written language. You know it's really interesting, even when children are not real readers, we can oftentimes use some written language to communicate with them and it makes sense to them. Objects are visual, can be used as visual strategies, signs, logos, labels and then think about your own body, body language. You know gestures and facial expressions, and folding your arms and stomping your feet, and things like that can all be visual ways that you communicate to another person. So actually anything that you can see can be used as a visual strategy to communicate information or to support communication. And one other thing that I think is really important to keep on mind now is that there's a wide range from low tech to high tech. You know thirty some years ago, when I got started using visual strategies, all we had was paper and pictures on paper and few objects and things like that. And we didn't have all of the high tech options that are available now. And what's really exciting is that we do have some of those high tech options. So tradition, I'd like to think about it now as traditional visual tools and then our newer high tech visual tools. And each of them can play an important part as a part of a student's communication system.

So let's move on and here's an example from my own life. You know I love my iPhone. I absolutely love it. And when I got my first iPhone, what part of that whole little phone made the most difference in my life was the ability to have my calendar in my phone. Because before then if I went to the doctor and I had to make an appointment I'd say "Wow I have to go home and look at my calendar and call you back" and stuff and. Now I can just, wherever I went I can look at that calendar and I can make dates and I can know what's coming up in my life and just having that calendar with me in my pocket has given me such a sense of freedom, I just can't believe that. But the other thing is that I've been learning about

other functions for that phone, you know scheduling and making choices. And I can, I can look up a restaurant on my phone and decide what I want to order before I call them. And I can get instructions like step-by-step instructions how to do something. And, you know I take a lot of photos. I have 5 grandchildren and I have lots of grandchildren photos in my phone and you know those are wonderful conversation starters, when I'm talking to a friend or a meeting somebody new, it's really easy just to pull that out. And when I begin to see all of those things that I can do with my own phone I begin to think wow, what are the other possibilities? And there are so many apps that are available now you know, between the iPhones and the other kinds of phones and the apps there's hundreds and hundreds of thousands of apps now that are available. And one thing that they're really good for is keeping grandchildren busy like when you're riding in the car or something like that but there are lots of other functions and we'll be talking about that too. I write articles about apps and there are two websites. One of them is usevisualstrategies.com and the other one is autismfamilyonline.com. And especially on [autismfamilyonline](http://autismfamilyonline.com) we have a lot of apps articles and evaluations of different apps and a list of the fifty most, most desired apps. I did some research to a lot of people who would put children with autism so there's lots of resources there about all those apps. But what's really important to remember about all of this technology stuff is that the younger generation is even freer about thinking of what all the possibilities are. I, in using those the phones and iPads and things like that, I took my 10-year old granddaughter to the store to buy her a dress and we were trying to decide which one she should buy and so. All of the sudden she said "Oh Nana, give me your phone!" And she took a picture and she emailed at her mom at home. I wouldn't have thought of doing that but she did. And so I see that the younger generation really embraces this technology even more than us, more vintage people do. But it's easy to adapt to the new technology and determined by your age and the more tech-savvy they can all become that can really help us as another option as we're working with our students. But here's a really important thing to understand about iPads and apps and also video. These are what I recall the new technology and they're really, really hot topics. Now, video has become very popular, we'll talk about that little more, a little bit later. But there's some research now showing that students with autism really respond well when they watch something on video and they will learn behavior as they watched on video and that's the real exciting thing. Ipads and apps have

gotten so much attention in the press and you wouldn't believe all of the emails I get from people that say "Oh my goodness! My child needs an Ipad, where can I get a free one?" and then "Linda can you send me an Ipad for my child please?" and things like that. And what's happened I think is that there had been a lot of stories on television and magazines and things like that and they're all are framed to kind of like this child with autism didn't communicate with anybody in the world and now that he has an ipad suddenly he's communicating and it's made a significant difference for their child or adult. And I don't doubt that there had been a lot of people on the autism spectrum whose lives have really been impacted in a positive way, when they're using Ipads and Iphones and these different tech pieces like that. But I think we also need to be aware that it's not just magic. I, it's interesting I wrote an article called 25 ways to use visual strategies and what the good part is that all those different ways that you can use visual strategies you can basically accomplish with your phones and your Ipad so that's a good thing. And video is visual and you can do that with your Ipads and your Iphones too and so that's a really good thing. And so these are excellent tools. But I think sometimes people are getting a little bit confused like "Oh, if I only have that tool and give it to the child then everything else will be okay and it's not quite like that. I get people that will contact me and they'll say "gee Linda, I have an Ipad for my child what Apps should I get?" And I said thing to myself, well it's on just like going into a bookstore and saying to the clerk "What book should I buy?" You know you have to know what you want to accomplish and then you can find an app that will match what you want to accomplish. So we'll talk about that a little bit more in just a minute but you know there's so much information about Apps and about video. One of the things that I did on the website autismfamilyonline.com is I did a whole 12-part webinar series on using video and some of the webinars I interviewed people who are working very intently in that field and some of the webinars I did myself and you know, there's a lot to learn about using video in a very positive way for our students. And I've also been doing a lot of writing about using Ipads and Apps, because there's just so much to learn. It's like getting new toys and when we can play with these new toys, and so that's fun. And its fun to play with but it's also important to look at what do we want to accomplish with them to make sure that we're using them in really positive ways for our students. But there's something really important that we need to understand about all the technology in relationship to visual strategies. And that is that the tech is not magic.

And so what's really important is to be a little bit conscious about the tech explosion, because what we really need to make sure that what we're doing is identifying the purpose that we want to accomplish. And that's going back to that idea about my article of 25 ways to use visual strategies. Well I can use my tech to give information, I can use my tech to create a schedule, I can use my tech to help a student know how to accomplish a task or whatever. But being sure to identify the purpose will help us be really, really successful. It's a tool, this tech stuff is their tool, that have a great amount of potential and that's the good part. What we just, we have to make sure that we're not expecting magic without putting a frame around it to make sure we know what we want to accomplish.

So let's move on a little bit. What we discover about using visual strategies, just in general, is that visual tools, they work across ages. They work for preschoolers; they work for adults and everybody in between. Visual strategies work for individuals of any different skill level. They work through for students that have severe intellectual disabilities and they work for those students who are functioning in the gifted range and everybody in between. The visual strategies worked for students with many different diagnoses. We're talking a lot about autism today but what we've learned that works for students with autism we've taken those same strategies and we apply them to working with other students with other diagnoses and other learning needs. And we find that all strategies worked really well for those students too. Visual strategies work across environments. They work at school, they work at home, they work in different kinds of living situations out in the community. What happens is the concept of using visual strategies is going to be consistent. The implementation will be different depending on the student's age, depending on our student's skill level, depending on the particular needs that that student has and the implementation being different means that we might use a very small thing for one student and a very large one for another or we might use photos for one and written language for somebody else. And so, we can change the, the particular strategies that we're using but the concept that we're using visual strategies as well we're really going to be paying attention to and making sure that we do. So now taking all of that as our background, there are some common times when our students can have behavior challenges. And if I had a chance to talk with each one of you whose on the line personally, I bet

each one of you could tell me some really interesting or some really intense stories about when you've had behavior issues and challenges with the students that you are thinking about as you're listening to this webinar. And as I looked at all the kinds of behavior challenges that students can have, I've pulled out 3-key areas where it's very common for behavior challenges to exist. One of them is related to time, one is related to travel and one is related to transitions. So what we're going to do is we're going to look at those 3 areas in students' lives. And then, what we're going to do is blend together some of the issues related to communication, behavior and social skills.

So let's look at each one of these individually in a little bit. The first one is time. And you know what, there are lots of issues that can be related to time. They can really be major sources of behavior challenges for our students. For example things that I call time issues are starting activities, stopping activities, figuring out when something is happening, when something is going to stop, following a schedule, anticipating that something is going to change. Our students can really be confused about when can I do something or when will it be my turn. They can have difficulties with a lot of things related to personal organization and time, showing up at the right time, leaving at the right time. Getting things done on time, all that kind of thing. And time issues affect our target population from very young children to independent adults. I remember hearing a story about a gentleman with Asperger's who was a college professor. And he was encountering some difficulties. It was brilliant, really brilliant in the subject matter that he was teaching at the university. But the issue that he had is that he never got to class on time. And then as somebody was talking to him and counseling him about that, what they realized is that nobody really told him that he needed to be at class at a certain time and start class on time. And it was just, you know, he was not understanding the importance of time for the job that he had. You know and that's a college professor. So there are all different kinds of ways that time can become an issue and managing time is a key element in all of our social, and our family and our educational lives. So let's look at some examples of how to manage it. Now one of the all-time classics that has become so state of the art is using schedules and I think every classroom should have a schedule. I think every home can benefit from having a schedule. And the schedules that we use at school might not be quite the same as those we use at home but when you think the purpose

of the schedule is to give a student information about what is going to be happening in his life, what's not going to be happening, what is changing, what's going to be different that kind of thing. And the schedule gives the information that that student needs so that he can flow through the day very easily.

One of my most common visual tools is a schedule. And when I think about this, you know many years ago when I talk about visual strategies and I would be speaking at a conference and maybe 5 percent or 2 percent of the people would say that they used a schedule with their students and now, I have the largest percentage of people in any workshop that I do who say that they, that their students have schedules in their lives, which is great. And that's a wonderful thing, because they really benefit from, the students really benefit from having those schedules. And you know, there are lots of different forms and formats and kinds, you know, for younger children I might use nice colorful photographs like this. For students who are a little bit older, you can use different forms and different formats. You know, some students just need to look at the schedule, some students need to interact with the schedule more, there are a lot of different ways to use it. But you know what? Now we have even more options because there is an app for that. So it's not so important exactly what form and format the schedule is. What's important is to create a schedule that the student can look at, can understand, and can follow. And that's a really good example of something that may look one way and function one way for a 4-year-old, and it may look very different and function very differently for a teenager, using a form and format that's appropriate for each age and skill level, and need, and location, and then those kinds of things. But, you know, when we're, when we're going back to that concept about what app should I get? Well, if I need a schedule, then this is a really good example of something that can benefit a student. Calendars are another tool that I think every student can benefit from. You know, I would be lost without my own personal calendar to remind me of what was going to be happening on different days. And I would be lost if I couldn't write things down, because then I would be trained to remember them in my brain, and my brain can only hold so much information. And you know, it's much easier for me. I can stay much more organized if I can write things down. So, those calendars just give us information about routine events, they give us information about things that are new or different. And a calendar's

another good tool to tell a student what's changing. You know, if he goes and gets ice cream after his physical therapy on Thursdays, but all of a sudden we're not to be able to go to the ice cream store, or we're not going to have physical therapy on Thursday, because the therapist isn't going to be there. Well, if I can put that information on the calendar, it'll help the student handle that change in life much better. Here's an example of a calendar. I like to work with pictures to have them do something like this for their classrooms where they're just putting those really key important things that the student finds really, really interesting and important on a calendar somehow, so that that helps the student understand a little bit more about what's happening in his week. And if bowling is a really exciting activity for him, putting that on the calendar gives him something to look forward to and helps him organize his time, so that he's not asking you every single day 'Are we going bowling today? Are we going bowling today?' that kind of thing. Now here's another calendar that was developed to solve a problem. Benjie had a situation in his life because his mom went back to work part time. So some days, Benjie went home and his mom was there. Some days, Benjie went home and a babysitter was there. Some days, grandpa came and picked Benjie up from school. This child was a nervous wreck because there were all these new changes in his life. And he would just be so nervous and he would persevere, mama go to work today, mama go to work today, you know. And the teacher was really concerned. So, teacher and mom worked together, they created a little schedule to let him, a calendar to let him know what was happening on each day. The teacher put it by his desk, and then when he would start to persevere and start to get all nervous. The teacher would just point to the schedule. Well, what she noticed after a very short amount of time is that he kept looking at that schedule, or I'm sorry, that calendar over and over again. And as he did that, his anxiety level went down. And you see, when he needed to do it, he need to look at that over and over and over again, to give him reassurance. It's not maybe that he didn't understand that mom was going to be there or not there. But he needed the reassurance that that calendar gave him. And that made a huge difference in how he was able to manage his behavior in relationship to all of that. Well, here's another example of how calendars can be meaningful. I talk a lot with parents about the kinds of problems they encounter with their children and one of the things that comes up a lot is how children are able to handle holidays, and how holidays really provide a lot of anxiety for the kids because it's

something that's different, and something that's, has a lot of excitement, a lot of activity and so forth, and sometimes I've had parents tell me that they're, they don't tell their children about the holidays because they don't want their children to get, you know, too excited about them, and things like that, and so, you know, when that, when I've talked with them, and I think it's really hard if you try not to tell a child about something. Maybe, what they really need to do is give the child more information about it. And giving them more information will actually help alleviate some of their anxiety. So one of the things I've talked with families about doing is, and I'll use Christmas as an example. You know, we on the calendar, we can put Christmas on December 25th. But there are a lot of things that happen in the child's life related to Christmas. And maybe those things need to go on the calendar too. So, for example on a certain day, we're going to bake Christmas cookies, or on a certain day, we're going to go shopping for presents, or on another day we're going to get the Christmas tree or on a what day we're going to decorate the tree. Or maybe the most important thing to put on the calendar is what day we're going to take the Christmas tree down. And so you begin to think about what's important to, in the student's eyes, and what's important from the student's point of view. And it might not be exactly the same things that you or I would think would be important. But giving them information in a visual form on a calendar can go on a huge way, a huge distance in terms of alleviating a lot of the anxiety and nervousness and excitement that students can feel related to special events like that. So calendars can require some other skills to learn too. And here's an example of that. This is a, a little sheet called putting dates on my calendar. And this was developed for some older students like teenagers or adults. It's from a program called the planner guide. And what this is doing is helping the student remember, or the individual remember, what they need to do. I can put dates on my calendar by writing or using a stickers. Sometimes I might put an appointment when I get home, I should put the date on my calendar. It's when someone tells me a date, I should put it on my calendar. So this is a little social sequence that will help a student remember what to do, and remember how to use that calendar, to be effective in his life. Here's another example of another kind of skill that might need to be learned by an individual related to time, again. And that is that events can change. And this is a kind of a variation of the social story. But I have plans for an event to happen, and it could be an, you know we have some choices of events and sometimes events are

cancelled or changed for various reasons. And then, this goes on to explain how to handle that. Some students really have a hard time with something changing. And so, creating a little story like this, a little sequence in a visual form, so that they can look at it, and they can look at it over and over again, they can read it, or you can read it with them, to help them remember how to react appropriately to a situation that's kind of unpleasant for them. Well, here's one more example about time. I'm thinking of a boy named Alex. And Alex was doing his Math in the classroom, and the teacher said it's time for a recess. And Alex said 'Oh no recess, no recess!' And when that happened, it ended up snowballing to a whole bunch of inappropriate behaviors and a whole bunch of behavior problems. And ended him up in the, in the principal's office. And when I heard, originally heard the story about Alex, and how he had such a hard time leaving his Math and going to recess, one of the things that came to my mind right away is he probably wouldn't have had a problem at all if he were using a, if he were using a timer to help him prepare for the change of stopping his Math and going out to the, going out for recess. Timers are visual, and they certainly give some information to help children manage time and understand that something is going to change. Now the one in the middle is an old fashioned time timer. The time timers now looks a little bit different there, different color. But the idea for those of you who are not familiar with this, if you set that timer for 20 minutes, then what will happen is that red dial will gradually disappear. Now if Alex is doing his Math, and the teacher says in 20 minutes it's going to be time for recess, do you think he's going to be working and working and then it dial gets up to the 10, and when it gets up to the 5, do you think he's going to work really fast so he can get his work done before it's time to go out to recess? And I think he probably would. So what this is doing is it's taking a concept that's kind of abstract which is time and making it very visual to help that student handle that. And the timers are available on the website that www.usevisualstrategies.com. And you know what? Guess what? There's an app for that timing thing too. There're in fact, there're a number of different kinds of timers that are, that they have apps for. And they're great. And you think about how you can use that. You know, if you're sitting in a doctor's office, and you have to wait a little bit. Well putting that, you know, putting a timer on your phone so that the child can watch that little bit and be aware of how the time is passing can be enough to keep him interested and occupied, so that you don't have a behavior problem while you're waiting for example.

So let's move on, and see what else. Okay. The next category is travel. And travel is another one of those key areas where problems can occur. So let's see what there is. When I use the word travel, what I'm talking about is changing locations. Now, travel can be moving from one side of the classroom to another. It can be moving from one room to another. From one house, from my house to someone else's house, where travel can mean things like getting in the car and going shopping, or riding in the car to go to grandma's house. Or something else, could be like going on vacation, or taking a trip on an airplane. Or anything that involves changing locations which results in dealing with change. And travel does involve change. That's one of the reasons that it can cause problems. And it also involves giving information. So, if we figure out how to give information, then that can help us solve some of the behaviors, behavior problems related to that. So, let's explore. I'd love to think of using visual tools to give information. I think of all the different categories of visual tools that's probably my most favorite category because if we can give our students information, that can be a really, really important thing.

Information like what's going to happen, when is something going to happen, what are the choices, what's changing, who's coming, all that kind of thing. And there are a lot of ways that we can give information in relationship to travel. Here's an example. Look at the picture on the right. The picture of the office. Now Justin loved to go to gym. And that was his very favorite place to go in. When the class would line up and go to gym, he would walk down the hallway with the class and he would be really, really happy. But sometimes the teacher would leave the classroom, and I think many teachers do this. They have to go run an errand like maybe go to the office, and she would tell Justin, Justin why don't you come with me? We're going to go to the office. Well in his brain, Justin hasn't figured out that when I leave the classroom, I'm going to gym. So he's not even really listening - we're going to go to the office. He's just realizing I'm leaving the classroom that means I get to go to gym. So we have a little disconnect there. And then they walk down the hallway and the teacher turns around the corner to go to the office, and he lies down on the floor, and melts down and has temper tantrums 'cause he wants to turn the opposite way to go to the gym. Kind of a problem that many kids can have. Well what we did then is we took a picture of the office. And the next time the teacher did this, what she did is she showed him the picture she said 'Look, we're going to go to the office'. Maybe she would even have him hold it and carry that picture on their way. Well you know what?

Then when he had that picture in his hand, then when they got to the point where they had to turn the corner, he turned the corner and went the right way because he knew exactly where they were going. And there was no problem at all. See so giving him that picture and letting him look at it helped to clarify for him where they were really going. And that made all the difference, you know. Now he knew the office, and he knew the gym, but somehow when the teacher was telling him where they were going, it didn't sink in the same way it sunk in when she was using a picture. Well once the teacher recognized how valuable that was, she began to take a lot of pictures of other places that they went when they went, were going around the school. Like now, we're going to the bus, we're going to the lunchroom, or the playground, and you see, what the teacher would do then is to use those pictures to help her tell the students where they were going to go, or what they were going to do. And that made a huge difference on his ability to participate appropriately.

Now here's another example. And this was done for a mom at home 'cause on Saturdays she had to go run some errands. And the first thing she needed to do was get some gas. Ooh, a dollar 29. I guess that's kind of a little picture isn't it? And, and then she had to go to the dry cleaners, because the dry cleaners was going to close at noon. And then they were going to go to Taco Bell for lunch. Well, can you guess what her son heard? Of course she heard Taco Bell. So he had miserable behavior when they went to the gas station instead. And he had miserable behavior when they went to the dry cleaners instead. She took one of those little books that you get at the dollar store. And she put some pictures in there that would show him these are the places that we're going to go. It's like a little mini-schedule. And that little mini-schedule was enough. Because when he saw that Taco Bell was in the schedule, then he was okay. He knew it was actually going to get there. So, you know, going out into the community can be very challenging for a lot of our students because there's a concept that's called community use and integration. And you know, when our, when we take our students out into the community, there are a lot of activities and a lot of actions that are required from them. For example, planning to go out into the community, if you're going to go to lunch are you taking your money with you? Or do you need a communication card to go with you? Or routines to prepare for and complete community activities. So when you go out into the community, what are you going to accomplish, and do you know all the routines to

follow for that? Communicating with having the academic skills to actually follow what you need to do when you're out there. So, do you have enough academic skills to read the labels, or to use the money or to fill out the forms and things like that. And just handling the change of routine so the unexpected events that can occur in the community, there's so many different things. So, you know, when I look at, this is just a very short list of the kinds of transactions and the kinds of actions that might be necessary for a student, and then I begin to look at how could we use some visual supports, to help them accomplish these different tasks. And I think we can think of a lot of different ways that we could use visual skills. You know there are lots of places in these routines where problems can occur. Let's look at an example here. This is my little girl Lise. I met her parents at a conference and they were telling me how they were having a really hard time. They wanted to take her to the grocery store like you know, so she could accompany them and be part of family activities. And so, they would take her to the grocery store, and she would be laying on the floor and having temper tantrums and just having miserably terrible behavior. And they would have to pick her up and carry her out of the grocery store. Well, they were really disappointed that they were having so much problems, and so they went and talked to her teacher. And then the teacher just been to one of my workshops, and said I think I have an idea that will help you. And so, the teacher suggested that they get one of those little books at, at Walmart, and there, the Dollar Store, and put some pictures in like this. Woops, woops, I did the wrong thing. Here we go. Put some pictures in. Now some of them can be cut off of advertising flyers or right off of the, the boxes themselves and things, but and then they said well, the teacher said when you go to the store, why don't you show her where the items are on the, in the store, and maybe she can even take it off of the shelf and put it in the shopping cart. Well, mom and dad got the cart ready and or the book ready and were taking the cart and they gave the book to Lise and showed her where an item was and she just took that book and she started marching around the store putting everything in the cart mom and dad were kind of chasing her with the cart. And because she had something active to do, it totally changed her behavior in the store. Because they gave her something very purposeful to do. You know, lots of times, we relegate our students to waiting while we're trying to do things. And she didn't do a very good job while waiting. But when they gave her something very important to do to participate in the activity, that made a huge difference for her. So there are a lot of

different ways to use visual tools to help students become productive and have positive behavior. And you know what? Now with technology, there's an app for that. So you don't even have to create your own shopping list. You know you can, you find an app to use for that tool. So when we think about the other skills that you may need to teach for success in the community, there can be a lot of them.

Here's another skill that could be necessary. Finding a safe person. And this is a little list about what you need to do to find a safe person. Like if a, if an individual is going into the community and they were somewhat independent there, and yet you need some problem-solving skills if something doesn't go the way you expect it, and you need to get help from somebody? Well, who would you get help with? You can look for somebody in a uniform who works at the place that you're at. And you can look for somebody wearing a name tag. Look for somebody working at a cash register, and it goes on to some ideas about where you can look to find a safe person. So it's a way of teaching a skill and giving some information. Here's another example. Medical appointment. All the appointments should be on my calendar. Set up transportsations so I can be on time after I ride, and I have some steps to follow when I go to the doctor's office, at, you know, in so forth. So, this, this is something that's visual. It's teaching some steps to follow to help a student handle a task with more independence. And yet this is all related to travel. Now let's just see, you know there are some naturally occurring visual tools in the community to let's see. Like this. You know, and sometimes, people will say, oh, don't tell students no. But, you know what? There are lots of ways that they need to be aware of the signs and the naturally occurring tools in the community so that they can follow them, for their own safety, and so that they can participate appropriately. Here's another one. You know all the stuff that's naturally in the community is good stuff for them to learn.

So, let's move on to one more area. And that is, transitions, and utilizing you know, dealing with transitions in a positive way so that students can have appropriate behavior for transitions. You know transitions are such an important part of life, but they can be very difficult for a student. And one of the reasons that they can be difficult is because something is changing. So transitions, they, it kind of blends the issues of time and the issue of travel together. And transitions can be challenging because

there's, they involve stopping something, or starting something. They involve changing environments, and they involve a lot of understanding about what are we going to do, or why are we going to do it or when is something going to happen? Now here's what's important to understand about transitions. Managing transitions is really tough for our kids. And they're especially tough if they're an unexpected surprises involved there. And so, a way to handle that is to give them information, so it's not an unexpected surprise. Transitions can be really tough if there's an unknown destination or an unknown activity. But then, we handle that by giving them information so it's not unknown. You know, transitions can be really tough if a student is moving to something that they dislike. Now, I know you hate this activity but we're going to do it anyway. And you know, one way to handle that, you may have seen some of these. We take a card and on one side you write first and then you write then or first and next, you know, that kind of thing. And so, you show them first, we're going to do this thing you don't like and then we're going to do something that you really, really love to do. So I know you don't like working on this activity, but we're only going to do it for 2 minutes and then you get to do the activity that you like really well. Managing transitions can be really tough if a student is leaving something favorable. For example, the student really, really loves some activities on the computer. And when we want to make him stop the computer, in his brain, he might be thinking, oh, you're making me stop computer, and I can never have it again in my whole life. I mean that's what it kind of feels like to him. So one way to handle that is showing them on a schedule or on a calendar when they will have an opportunity to do that activity again. So I know that you know, that you love the computer, we have to stop it now, but today, at 2 o'clock, after gym, then you get a chance to work on the computer again. And you know what? Some students just have a pattern of resisting transition, so it's just a part of their DNA kind of it, and so we really have to work with them to give them more information to help them to deal with that. Well here's a quick story. This is a communication that I got from a mom who'd been to one of my workshops. And she said Dear Linda, it's been quite a challenging month for me since we relocated to a new home. Well, you'll hear why. What about that? He has handled the transition quite well, and by the time we're at the end, I think you'll know why. This is what she goes on to say. She said but the problem, he's in the first grade this year with a new teacher, and he's having a bit of a difficulty transitioning at the end of the day to go home. The teacher didn't understand why he didn't

want to go home. Matthew has difficulty with expressive language and he did not express right. He began expressing with his body language whining a bit and eventually became very upset all the way home. But that doesn't sound like any of the students you've ever worked with. But then she said this. She said I knew the reason why the behavior was occurring. He wanted to stay and play the computer in the classroom. You know, the better we know a student, the better we're going to be able to kind of figure some of these challenges out. But they can be sometimes kind of hard to figure out exactly what's going on. But mom had a 6th sense. And she said I knew the reason why he wanted to stay and play the computer in the classroom. So then, she said, the teacher asked me to give her some solutions to resolve the problem and I took the opportunity to reference visual strategies. And I told her it would be helpful to write out a card that identified the sequence of steps to take place, to prepare him to go home. And I gave her some ideas. That's great team work. And then she said, and this is really key. I also talked to Matthew to validate that I understood what he was trying to communicate to me. You know, sometimes when our kids are trying to communicate something and they just don't really know if we really get it or not, you know, either they think we understand, and we don't or they don't think we understand and we do. But she validated yes, I know why you want to stay at school. She said you know what, I understand you want to stay at school so you can play the computer. But also, why would they have to go home. But you know what? She told them, she said when we go home, then everybody else is going to go home too. And then the custodian's going to lock up the school. And nobody will be there, until tomorrow. And then when we go back to school and everybody else will be there. And you know what? This makes me think about is sometimes there's so much assumed information that everybody else understands, but our kids with autism or asperger's don't understand the same way. And all the other kids understand that when everybody goes home, there's nobody at school. But he might not really understand that. But then she goes on to say that the teacher did make a transition list, and when she picked him up today, the transition to go home was much better. And he didn't get so upset. So, that transition list was a part of solving the problem. And validating this part of solving the problem, and that's what she says. She said it was important for me to validate that I understood what he was trying to communicate. He needed help in sequencing through the transition. And he needed to understand the reason why we had to go

home. And as she handled this I think she probably handled some of it verbally, but she handled some of it with visual strategies. And in a situation like this, you can use as many visual supports as you need. You can write a little story. You can write something down to help a student understand that answers are challenges to figure out what information they need, and then we need to present that information to them in a form and format that they're going to understand quickly and easily. And so this mom had some great success figuring out what information her son needed to be successful.

Well, here's another transition story. I get lots of emails from people. In fact, if any of you go on to, if you go to the websites in there, and there are email addresses and you can send me your little stories and things. I love to hear from people and what they're doing because it just gives me such a respect for how people take the concept of using visual strategies and how they implement in so many different ways, and people come up with such great creative ways of doing that. But this is a kind of a typical letter that I might receive. And the person wrote, Cathy wrote, I have been using visual strategies for several years. I'm happy to say that through the use of these strategies, I've helped my students with autism transition from the elementary school to middle school. So this is another example of following that word transition.

Because not all visual strategies have to be written on paper, I have made DVDs of the middle school for each of these students. And we entered the door, they will enter with a little dialogue explaining each item and place of interest. It's been a huge help and a lot of fun for me to teach in this manner. Kids on the spectrum love videos and what better way to transition and engage their attention. It's fabulous, something that wasn't really hard for her to do but it really gave her students the information that they needed to have a successful transition from one school building to another. And that's why I have created this whole webinar series called using video to teach skills for individuals with Autism Spectrum disorders that's hosted on autismfamilyonline , because I think there is so much that we can learn about using video and the research tells us that video really works for our kids. And so it's a really, really important tool. You know, when I got started using video, one of the reasons I started to really pay attention to it is I realized how many video cameras I had, because I had gone to the store and purchased a video camera but then I

realized, "Oh my goodness, I have one on my phone", and I have this other little digital camera that does video and I ended up counting, I had about 5 or 6 video cameras that I didn't realize. And so, video is much easier, we don't need a lot of special equipment like we used to like to have and it's very, very effective for the students, so that's important to remember.

So, how are we doing here? Oh, we're doing well. When we are talking all about the challenges related to time and travel and transition, what I think that's really important is to look at those situations and look at those challenges as opportunities to teach. Every time a student has some difficulty with an event or a difficulty with a situation, or difficulty handling an activity that's related to time or travel or transition, see what we can do is just imagine that they're waving this little red flag at us and saying "mom, teacher, I am showing you a situation that I need some help with and that I need to learn to handle differently". And then what we do is we say, "Okay, I have this tool box of visual tools", and my tool box says "Pieces of paper" and it has pictures, and it has pencils and paper and crayons, and it has iPads and iPhones and video cameras, and lots of different things in it. And then what I have to do is to look at that situation and say "Well, which tool in the tool box is going to help that student learn what they need to learn most effectively and most efficiently?" And as I pull tools out of my toolbox, then I can use some on that student, and in my own personal experience, the using the visual strategies, using those visual tools with these students produces some wonderful results. I hear so many wonderful, wonderful stories about how they really make a difference for these students to participate in their life opportunities with greater success, and that's really what we're looking for.

So, you know, we've been talking today for quite a while, and I just want to tell you about 2 resources that I have. There's two books that I've written and one is called "Visual Strategies for Improving Communication", and that book is a real good introduction to using visual strategies, and it has a lot of samples and examples in there about different ways to use visual strategies, and for scheduling and calendars, some little things that we've talked about, and lots of others ways. It is a great "how to" book, to get you going and to help you think of more ways to use visual strategies. And then, the other book that is so important is called "Solving Behavior Problems In Autism", and that book has a wonderful assessment

guide in there which is a series of questions, so that like a teacher and therapist or a classroom staff can sit down and go through and answer a variety of questions to help you figure out what are the causes and some of the behavioral challenges that you might be dealing with with an individual student, and that kind of leads you to figuring out what kinds of visual tools and strategies you could possibly use for solving those behavior problems, and helping that student become more successful in that environment. So those are two books, they're both available in a variety of places but the website, the usevisualstrategies.com. And, one more thing, I didn't mention this but I will, and that is, after we're done with this webinar today, I just want you to run over to the website, usevisualstrategies.com, and on the homepage, there is a place to sign up for my newsletter. And I send out a newsletter every month, and I send out some other information about articles on my blogs and some different things find out about, but I just really encourage you to sign up for that, but you will be getting a continual input of a lot more information, the kind of things we have been talking about tonight, and a lots of other. You know, this is just a very small introduction to some of the thoughts, and ideas and the things that I share with people. And when you sign up for that news letter, you will also get, a free special report, and there's a webinar about dealing with behavioral problems. So, the website address again is usevisualstrategies.com.

And so, when we're talking about visual strategies, our goal is to discover how using visual strategies to support communication is going to make a difference in each student's life. And you know what, it going to be different for each student, because one of the things that we talk about and Stephen Shore has said this, he said, gentleman with Asperger's, he is a teacher, and he is a speaker, and he says, if you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism. And what he means by that is each student is going to respond differently to situations, they are going to have different kinds of communication needs, they are going to need different kinds of support, and there are a lot of things that work across the board for students but part of the job that we have is to put on our detective caps, to kind of figure out what is really going on, what does that student really need to help him become more successful with a certain situation. And then, figuring out how can I go in to my visual strategies toolbox, and find a tool that will help accomplish exactly that. And so here are the websites that I have talked about throughout the

presentation today, usevisualstrategies.com, and that's where you are going to go to sign up for the newsletter; lindahodgdon.com is another site that has a lot of information for you; and then, autismfamilyonline.com , lots of information there but also the webinar series about using video.

And so, that's what we have to talk about tonight. Now Nancy, are you still there?

Nancy: Yes, yes. I am taking notes feverishly.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay. Did we say anything in this program that helps you understand with the broken windows?

Nancy: Yes, I kind of had, on my own, decided to take some video of him being successful in these situations, and then, letting him watch those at a time that is not stressful to see that "I did it before, I can do it again" kind of thing, because he is very inconsistent. One day, he will go in to school, just fine, no problem, you know, whistling and looking at the birds, and the next day, he's completely out of control and has to be carried in. No rhyme or reason to it.

Linda Hodgdon: And it doesn't feel like that, does it? Sometimes it's really challenging to figure out what's causing all of that. You know, there can be very complex reasons, and yet sometimes by giving the student something visual to help them look forward and follow a routine. So that, when you are getting out of the car, and what's your next thing to do, what is your next thing to do, and what is the next thing you are going to do, so that they will focus very much on that routine and that will be a help.

Nancy: Um-hm. And you focus more on the positives or what you would like to see as opposed to what you don't want to see?

Linda Hodgdon: Yes, exactly.

Nancy: We've had a number of questions coming through the website and I know I read this one but it's my own question as well, so I am going to ask in my words, if your are taking a video of modeling type of thing, is it better to do it from the person's point of view or have someone stand in for the child? Or, what do you think?

Linda Hodgdon:

That's a really good question. Just to explain, in case, some of the people don't understand, we talked about video modeling and we talked about video self modeling. So video modeling is when I am videotaping somebody doing an activity or completing an action or following a sequence or something like that. Video self-modeling is when you are videotaping that student that you are targeting and that you are videotaping him or her doing that activity. Now, my understanding is that the research says that either strategy will work; that the research says that if a student is watching himself, that's a little bit better, but the issue is trying to get what I would call "clean" video. Because if you begin to get video that doesn't have exactly what you want in it then the student will be watching some of that negative behavior, that inappropriate action, that extra stuff that's in there. And so that's why editing is really important. Now let me give you an example. I did an interview, a gentleman, Dr. Tom Buggy, and he has done a lot of work with, in fact I interviewed him for autismfamilyonline, for the video series, and what they were doing is they were working with a little girl who would go to the lunch room and during a whole lunch period she may only eat 1 or 2 bites of food. She wouldn't eat like all the other children, and so they set up a video camera over like a week's period of time, they got pictures of her eating, and then what they did is that they went back and edited those all together, so that, what the video would look like is her seating there and eating in that same way that the other children were taking like another mouthful, and another mouthful, and another mouthful kind of thing. And that was in, and after she watched that video then she began to eat more appropriately. And he has some nice examples like that. But the problem with that is if you can't get really good video of that student doing exactly what you want them to do. See, the research says, that you can show a student a video of himself doing something and then he will increase doing that, and that's a good thing, but you just have to be careful that your video is edited well so that that's what's you are showing. And if you can't get that student doing really appropriately for the video, then it's better to videotape somebody else doing it, the totally appropriate way. Does that begin to answer your question?

Nancy:

Yes, it absolutely does.

Linda Hodgdon:

Okay.

Nancy: The other point of view where would be like through your eyes? Would that be a confusing way of saying things?

Linda Hodgdon: You know, this is an interesting question. I am going to answer it first, when I am talking about things and papers, you know, about pictures and visual tools and paper. And I get that question a lot, do you take a picture of the student sweeping or do you take a picture of the broom that he is going to sweep with? My experience is the kids seem to do better taking the picture of the broom, because when you are taking a picture of them, you got so much else in the picture. I saw a teacher once, and she was taking some pictures of a student playing games. So she took this picture of the student playing checkers and a picture of that student playing monopoly. What happened in that photograph, there was so much information in that photograph that the checkers and the monopoly were so tiny, you can hardly see them. Okay? And so those didn't work as well, as you if you just took a close-up picture of checkers or a close-up picture of monopoly. But, on the other hand, it goes back to what is the student seeing, if you're really wanting to show the student's actions, he doesn't see himself acting, and so you really need to show him what, I am not quite sure, you know, when you are asking about doing a video of what the student sees, it depends. If you're like going, like the teacher who said, "okay we're going in to the middle school now, we're going to take a video", well, okay. So I'm walking down the hall and I am taking video of what you are going to see when you are walking down the hall. That makes sense to me because what you are doing is you know, you're kind of panning exactly what that student's going to see when they go there by themselves. It is kind of a travelogue, and that makes sense. So I guess, it might depend on exactly what you're trying to do, what you trying to accomplish. And you know what, sometimes, we are not sure, and if we do it one way and it doesn't work, guess what, you can do it the other way. You know, I think that's one of the important things. Sometimes we, you know sometimes, I have a wonderful picture, I have a picture that I use in my live workshops and it's a picture of a boy, or I mean of a person, and you know how you hold your hand up to lips to go "shh.." you know like telling somebody to be quiet and I have this wonderful story where a teacher was using that picture for one of her students and he wouldn't be quiet so she finally said, "what does this picture say?", and he said "pick your nose". Because he was looking at the finger, right up there underneath the nose and so he was totally misinterpreting it. I think that

really represents what can happen for any of the students that we're working with. You know, sometimes if we're not careful, we may use some pictures or videos or something that don't really mean the same thing to the student as they mean to us. And so, we really need to kind of test it out, and that's a good thing.

Nancy: Um-hm. I tend to assume because my son is fourteen and he has been going to school every day, the same way. I assumed that, there is nothing to be explained to him. He knows where we're going and he knows what to expect when we get there, but maybe he doesn't? You know?

Linda Hodgdon: Well, it might not be that he doesn't know, I mean, you know, one of the things, sometimes students don't understand, I mean, they know what certain things are but sometimes using the visual cues provides a level of comfort for them. You know, these students like routines, they really, really do. And so as we establish routines in their life that can be a really good thing but just because they follow a routine all the time, it doesn't mean that they might not benefit from something visual, to reinforce the routine.

Nancy: Um-hm. Okay. I wanted to let our callers who are using their telephones to know that if you'd like to ask a question to Linda yourself, you just press "*" "2" on your phone and it alerts me to have your hand raised. I will go to some of the questions that have come in through the website while we're waiting for that.

Linda Hodgdon : Okay.

Nancy: Let see, a lot of people are asking about specific apps and you said that they can go to your website?

Linda Hodgdon: I have written a number of different things, on the website usevisualstrategies.com. There is a special report that I did. I did a survey, I think I have probably, if I remember it right, I have about 3500 people who responded to the survey, parents and educators of children with autism. I asked them a whole lot of questions about iPads, particularly, and "are you using them?", and "how are you using them?", and "what apps do you like?", and so what I gleaned out of all of that was what some of the very favorites were, and so in that special report are some of the favorite apps. I've also written a number of articles that are on the autismfamilyonline.com about using iPads and using video and apps that

are available, there are a lot of apps reviews, on that website also. So there are different resources. I just am finding that there are a lot to talk about with that topic because a lot of people have questions.

Nancy: Yes, and there's new apps coming out every day.

Linda Hodgdon: Oh, hundreds and thousands of them, yes.

Nancy: Hard to keep on top of it.

Linda Hodgdon: Well, you know, it's very hard. And I think that's one of the reasons that I ask the question to these people, "which of the apps that you are finding most useful?", and I think it's really helpful to get recommendations from other people, because if they've tried some things and they know, you know, there are so many and some of them are free, some of them cost money, some of them cost a lot of money. So a free one, I have no problem downloading it, you know, and trying it out and see if it does what I want it to do or if it is useful for me. You know, something that costs \$0.99 or \$1.99, I have not much problem downloading those either. But ones that cost \$149.00 or something like that, I would ask some people and get some recommendations from people first to make sure that that was going to be something that is going to be very useful for the particular student, or find somebody who has that app and try it out a little bit before purchasing it. I think there is some teamwork that we need to do with all of this because it's overwhelming right now. It's like going into a Barnes and Noble bookstore and trying to find which book is good and the exact thing I need to accomplish a certain task, you know, if you ask the clerk, he can lead you to the right department at least.

Nancy: Um-hm. Exactly, I have one those military grade cases on my son's iPod or iPad, because he is a thrower, but I still would probably use pictures and paper at first in the car when we are transitioning because even though the iPad is protected, what it hits might not be, including myself.

Linda Hodgdon: You know, iPads are wonderful but that doesn't mean that they are always the best choice. I have a little card sitting on my desk that I was just cleaning out of a drawer and this was the card I made for a student to use quite a few years ago, it is just like a half of a 3 X 5 card, you know, half of that size, and he was going to take it McDonalds and it had a picture of a happy meal and what beverage she wanted and a couple of things like that. And he could just stick that to his pocket or in his wallet

and when he got to McDonalds he could just flip that out and show that person, and everybody knew exactly what he wanted and everybody was happy. Well, now, if he has to stand there and turn on his iPad and flip through a bunch of pages and to get to the same thing, you know, technology is great but maybe that's too much for what he needs in that particular location. It goes back to having a lot of different tools in the toolbox, and figuring out which one is the best for each location, and each function, or for each purpose. So I think you are a wise mom.

Nancy: Well, I heard people say, "Well, I can't create visual schedules" or "I can't do this or that because I don't have an iPad"

Linda Hodgdon: Well, you know what; I have been doing them for decades without having an iPad.

Nancy: Yeah.

Linda Hodgdon: Paper works just fine. And just as you are explaining, there is a lot of stuff that the paper works better for, so that's ok.

Nancy: At my son's school, a lot of times for transition, they would just write the next thing to a sticky note and stick it wherever he was.

Linda Hodgdon: Oh, I love yellow sticky notes. They come in mini colors now but I love those. I think every teacher and every parent should have a package of those and then keep them in their pockets or in purse or in something like that. I have lots of wonderful stories actually, about people using that kind of thing, and just like "right now", "right here", "that", "there you go". It works. The point is giving them information in a form that they understand more comfortably than some other things.

Nancy: Yes, Mary from Louisiana asks, I have a step son who is 18 years old diagnosed Autism Spectrum, who is non-verbal, very limited capabilities. He has received very minimal behavioral training, I wonder if there is an age limit for learning new behaviors and perhaps even how to communicate?

Linda Hodgdon: I don't think there is ever an age limit. One of the things to keep in mind when you are talking about behavioral challenges, when individuals are older, they have a set of behaviors that they have been using for a pretty long time and so making changes on those might take a little bit more time or might be a little bit more difficult than something that has just

been going for a certain period amount of time. So you just have to keep that in mind. But I think that I've worked with students with all skill levels and ability levels and found that we could teach them how to use some visual supports in some ways in their lives, either giving them information or for communication purposes and different ways. And so I think it's important to work with a therapist who really understands her son's skill level and needs and then kind of take it step by step. Visual tools work, it's just a matter of coming up with a form and a format that he is going to understand, and then working from there.

Nancy: Okay. Barbara from New York asks, what age do you think the child can start to benefit from social stories, etcetera? And what is the minimum age or developmental age?

Linda Hodgdon: Hard question. Because it has social stories for those people who might not know are little stories that you write, that are written in a certain format to give a child some social information to help them understand how to understand and handle social situations. A lot of it depends on the student's ability to understand language, but social stories can be also written with pictures, and so, sometimes what I think you can do is write some story and embellish it with some pictures and I think children that are very young can understand some things. Sometimes children who are older don't understand as much, so it's very individual. I would start out with something very simple and work from there.

Nancy: Stan from Lynchburg asks I have several students who want to carry several items with them while they transition from place to place and especially on the bus. It is not always safe for a student to have an object with them on the bus. Do you have suggestions for small fidgets that the child can carry without causing safety concerns?

Linda Hodgdon: Oriental trader is a company online, and I don't have the web address for it now, but you can Google "oriental trader". And they have zillions of fidget type stuff that would work. They sell them in packages of dozens or 2 dozens and things like that. They have tons and tons of stuff that would be very safe. So that would be a good place. Either that or sometimes you can go to a dollar store kind of place, and find-- It's amazing; you know some of those bracelets that are made of little spiral cord, kind of like a phone cord. And just something like that on a student's wrist sometimes

can be enough. It doesn't always have to be overly fancy. So, does that help?

Nancy: Yeah. I've heard of a book, I haven't read it yet, it is called "Just give him the whale".

Linda Hodgdon: Yeah.

Nancy: It's along the same lines of "you'll stop the behaviors if you just give him the whale", you know the toy whale that he wants to carry, what's the problem, use his fixations to his benefit.

Linda Hodgdon: Right. Sometimes you got to do what you got to do, so that you can have some good balanced behavior, and then what you began to do is gradually make some changes, and that works too sometimes.

Nancy: Okay.

Linda Hodgdon: What else?

Nancy Bernotaitis: Let's see, I got some questions with helping with transitions. Diane from Albuquerque asks what different types of support can I give to a student who has high levels of anxiety as she transitions to high school as well as moves across the country?

Linda Hodgdon: Oh, wow. That's huge.

Nancy: Um-hm.

Linda Hodgdon: You know I think one of the things to keep in mind that, and then this is a real good example of this, that you're not going to come up with one tool that's going to answer all of your questions, or solve the whole problem. Very often when I talk about solving behavior problems I, what I make a point in my workshop is that very often there's multiple little pieces that all work together to create a solution for a student. So, okay. So she's now, help me with this. So she's, she's going to be moving?

Nancy: Yeah, I understand that she's entering high school and moving across the country.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay. So you know, I mean there are multiple different things. And if she's in high school, I'm going to assume that she has some reading and writing capabilities. And you know, one of the things I like to do, is I like

to get like a journal or a notebook, or a 3-ring-binder or something like that. And as I have stuff that I need to help that student with, I like to put it in that. Permanent, that permanent book, whatever it is. Because when you put it in a permanent thing, what happens, and as a student can go and look at it over and over and over again. They can read it over and over and over again. So what I might undertake with that student is to write a whole-- You can't write one story that covers all the different issues. I would write a whole bunch of little teeny stories that talk about all the different issues. So one set of issues has to do with moving to a new house. One set of issues has to do with how do you get from here to the new place. You know one set of issues has to do with well what's my bedroom like here and what is my bedroom going to be like well in the new house. And you know, an example of information that you might be able to give her I'm thinking of when my own granddaughter was little and their family was moving from one house to another, and all of a sudden one day when she was in tears. And her mother asked her why. And she said what's going to happen to the dog? You know. Well, the dog was moving with them. But she didn't understand that at her young age you know. And so he began to think of pieces of information like that, that you can give this girl, to give her assurance. And to get, you know, to answer all those unanswered questions, that, and they're unanswered because they're not asked. And another child would think to ask them but she won't necessarily. And so, you know, you begin to tackle each topic area in a few little different stories and things like that. Or when she asks about something, or talks about something, then you set us an opportunity to write a little bit more. But put it all in that book, so that you can go back over it, and over it, and over it, and over it again. Did that help?

Nancy: I think that's the piece that we're missing as a family, is the repetition.

Linda Hodgdon: Yeah.

Nancy: I mean I think that I write it a couple of times and he's got it. But--

Linda Hodgdon: Yup.

Nancy: That might not be the case.

Linda Hodgdon: Right. And you know that saving it and repeating it. One of the things that really surprised me in the beginning, but I understand it better now, when

many years ago, I developed a strategy with the teachers called today at school. And what they would do is toward the end of the day at school, they would create something on a piece of paper that talked about what happened at school today. And there's a variety of different ways you can do it, you know. You can build it off of your schedule, or if kids can write, they can write it down. And a lot of examples of that in my book, visual strategies for improving communication. But what they would do is somehow they would put on a piece of paper something that was - you and I might call it a journal or a diary or something about something that happened today at school. And then the teachers would have 2 copies. One copy they would send home, and the other copy they would keep at school and put in a 3-ring-binder. Well, then, when I began to discover is these kids would sit down and read that 3-ring binder as if they were reading a book. And for them, it was so valuable and important because this is all stuff that was meaningful to them, because it was their own life.

Nancy: Hmm.

Linda Hodgdon: You know, and they were reading about their own life, and they were remembering what happened. And you know one of the things that happens in reading instruction in general, is you're reading about other people, and other things, in far away places. And this was giving them information about their own personal existence. And that really made a lot of difference for them.

Nancy: A lot, huh?

Linda Hodgdon: Yeah, huge. So right there is a good take-homer for you. Taker homer?

Nancy: Taking homer.

[laughter]

Linda Hodgdon: Right.

Nancy: Barbara from Kansas says that the web address for the sites, she's talking about for the fidgets, is www.orientaltrading.com.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay. That's it. Um-hm.

Nancy: orientaltrading.com

- Linda Hodgdon: Trading with an -ing at the end. Thank you Barbara. You can get under mailing list, and then they send you emails all the time too. And they have lots of sales. [laughter]
- Nancy: Lovely. I love sales. Kelly from New Zealand says we have 2 boys with ASD that are doing school from home, and we use visuals everyday and all day.
- Linda Hodgdon: Okay.
- Nancy: We have visual house rules, and social stories. But we cannot stop our 10-year-old son from hitting the cat. Help please.
- Linda Hodgdon: Oh. Okay. [sigh] And so, I'm assuming she has a rule that says don't hit the cat.
- Nancy: I would assume.
- Linda Hodgdon: You know, sometimes, we approach things by telling students what not to do. And sometimes, that works, and sometimes it doesn't. And sometimes what we need to do is teach them appropriate behavior. And you know it's a funny thing because his way of interacting with the cat is to hit. Now maybe what he really needs to learn is some ways to positively interact with the cat. And I would do this visually too. It's like teaching him either with pictures or photos or maybe a video camera, how to play with the cat.
- Nancy: Hmm.
- Linda Hodgdon: And so, this is the way to play with a cat. You have a little ball on a string and then you'll hold it and let the cat play with it. Or this is how you be nice to the cat. You know, and so we're going to pet the cat. Or we're going to brush the cat. Or we're going to feed the cat. We're going to pat the cat on the head, or whatever. And I'd try maybe taking some little videos of appropriate ways to play with the cat, or treat the cat, or whatever.
- Nancy: Yes. Uh-huh.
- Linda Hodgdon: You could also write some stories about the cat so that-- what cats like, or what cats don't like.
- Nancy: Hmm.

- Linda Hodgdon: You know, cats like to lay on a pillow and cats like to play with toys. Cats don't like to be hit. Cats don't, you know, cats like to chase, I don't know, you know, it's just like what-- And you know, it might not just be cats. You could, you could expand a little bit like maybe cats and dogs or pets, or something like that.
- Nancy: Or little brothers, or little sisters.
- Linda Hodgdon: Yeah.
- [laughter]
- Linda Hodgdon: Yeah because sometimes those behaviors cross over domains. And you know, you might focus on one, but really it's a little bit broader than that.
- Nancy: Yeah.
- Linda Hodgdon: Okay?
- Nancy: This is a question I'm not familiar with this. So, maybe you can enlighten me. Trisha from Clairmont says how do you feel about the use of visual scene displays? Is there a new research on their use?
- Linda Hodgdon: Visual scene displays. Not too familiar with research on that. So I'm not really going to... So maybe she can write to you and then give a little more back up on that.
- Nancy: Yeah.
- Linda Hodgdon: Um- hm.
- Nancy: Yeah. I never heard of that before.
- Linda Hodgdon: Um-hm. And then there are a variety of people that develop little strategies and things, so, somebody's probably done that. But I'm just not familiar with it.
- Nancy: Yeah. I'm not either. And I'm curious. I'm going to have to google it.
- [laughter]
- Nancy: Just google it. Jill from Flowery Branch asks I love using visual strategies with my son, but we have so many, and not a good way to store them are how to travel with them easily. We use little photo books, and keychains

with pictures, but do you have any other novel ideas? She says thanks and a great webinar.

Linda Hodgdon: And it, oh great. Did she say how old he was?

Nancy: With my son. No.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay. It's not an unusual problem, that the whole concept of storage becomes an issue. If somebody is really embracing using visual strategies such as sounds like she is. I guess there's a couple things that I think about. One is that she probably has certain things that she only uses in certain occasions. And so if there's something that you only use in the bathroom, then you just keep it in the bathroom, because that's the only place you use it. Or if there are certain things that you use when you're away from home, then you might want to put those in a little book, or a little containers so that you can have those with you when you're, carry them in your purse, so that you have them when you're there. So that, that's one way to begin to sort out that's there. Now there may be some things that you use all over the place. You know what, I, however many she has, there probably, you know, three or four, five or 10 things that she basically uses all the time. And those I would put in some kind of a form or format that she can have those with her all the time. You know, on a keychain, or in a fanny pack, or maybe those are the ones she wants to have on her phone. So because she, if she already, always has her own phone with her, then she'd always have those things there. So, part of the challenge I think is starting to sort out when you use certain things, or where you use certain things. And then, besides that, I've seen people do a variety of things. Velcro is fabulous. I've seen people take a whole, like a whole door and put a velcro fabric on the door and then just put all the different things on that. Or I've seen people use file folders. I've seen people use 3-ring-binders. And just put you know like velcro pages and put different things in there. So, if, there's not a perfect answer, unfortunately. But sorting things out so that you have your most used and your sometimes used and your seldom used things separately would be a good help too.

Nancy: Um-hm. We finally have come up with a system that sort of works for us.

Linda Hodgdon: Ah-huh.

Nancy: We got from the Craft department like one of those knick-knack sorters.

- Linda Hodgdon: Oh, okay.
- Nancy: So we got all of our pictures in there, according to category.
- Linda Hodgdon: Ah-huh.
- Nancy: And then we got a clipboard that opens, so you can put pictures inside it, for storage.
- Linda Hodgdon: Ah-huh.
- Nancy: And then just had the schedule on the top part of the clipboard.
- Linda Hodgdon: Ah-huh.
- Nancy: So that seems to be working for us at this point.
- Linda Hodgdon: Yeah. You know there are, there-- A good trip to the office supplies store may or may not come up with some, you know, something that's useful and helpful. I like the, I guess you call them pencil carriers, that they like fit in a 3-ring-binder, but then they have a like a zipper on them, so that--
- Nancy: Ah-huh.
- Linda Hodgdon: Like what you would put pens and pencils and stuff like that. Sometimes, something like that can be worth-- I like ziplock bags, baggies to put things in. You know, so somehow, grouping and categorizing things for certain functions and purposes can be a help.
- Nancy: Um-hm.
- Linda Hodgdon: And I'm glad she's using so many.
- Nancy: It can really become overwhelming if you--
- Linda Hodgdon: Yeah it can be.
- Nancy: Don't have, if you can't find your way.
- Linda Hodgdon: Yeah, but out of that, figuring out which ones are the most important. And you know, I, one of the things, and this is just because I happen to be thinking about it, one of the things that I'll talk to people in my workshops about is having something with you all the time that can help you manage behaviors situation. And you know, what I find very useful for so many students is to think about what kind of a behavior would be

kind of a de-escalating behavior. You know, what is something that you would have them do that would help them calm down? So for example, some students might be sitting it, sitting and putting their head down. Or another student that might be folding her hands. Or another student might be taking 10 deep breaths or another student might be holding a fidget toy or you know something like that. So, it's like whatever that kind of behavior is that could be one that really kind of helps that student de-escalate, then if you either have that fidget toy with you, or a picture of whatever that behavior is that you want them to have, just kind of have that with you all the time. Because then, things are starting to not go well. Then, you can use that at a point in time. You don't have to go find it somewhere, you know. You know, you just have it within reach or if you're away from home, then you, you don't have it, with you kind of thing, so that you can intervene before kids get too far along in having an issue. And that helps too.

Nancy: If someone doesn't have access to board maker for instance, how else can they have access to somebody's pictures that they could use?

Linda Hodgdon: You know what? One of my great, one of the best resources we have now is the Internet.

Nancy: Um-hm.

Linda Hodgdon: You can do a Google image search and you can find pictures of almost anything. You know board maker is wonderful. Board maker has been around a long time. But I was doing visual strategies before board maker existed. You know, photographs are fabulous. If I had what I would call my one favorite kind of visual, it would be photographs. Because you can take pictures of so much, and kid you know, students of all ages can understand what those are.

Nancy: Okay.

Linda Hodgdon: So, yeah.

Nancy: Trisha from Clairmont is clarifying what visual scene displays are.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay.

Nancy: For me. She says visual scene displays are the use of a picture background of a picture symbols. For example, taking a picture of a

refrigerator, and then putting pictures of food in the display of the scene of the fridge.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay. Now I know what she's talking about. There are different things that people have used and had some interesting success with them. I never say never, and I never say always. I think that you know, sometimes, you can try something with a student and see if it works. My own experience is that too much stuff gets to be confusing for students. So what I would want to do is ask why am I using that. Or why am I doing that. And you know why am I using that visual display, or that visual scene. And is it teaching a child that those foods go in the refrigerator it's kind of an activity or is that picture of the refrigerator kind of distracting from the items that you're really talking about. And that part I don't know.

Nancy: Um-hm.

Linda Hodgdon: It depends on students and how you're using it, and what you're trying to accomplish with it. I guess my question will be what is the goal of, what is the purpose, and then does it accomplish the purpose.

Nancy: Okay. Michelle from Webster asks about some behavioral challenges that she sees. Her son is 4 years old, and has limited words. We're not sure where to start with using visual tools to help him. She says that some of the challenging behaviors she's seeing recently are pinching or hitting, or scratching his baby brother when he cries.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay.

Nancy: So, I can certainly relate.

Linda Hodgdon: Um-hm.

Nancy: You don't necessarily want to focus maybe on the negative behavior, but--

Linda Hodgdon: Right.

Nancy: But you want to see?

Linda Hodgdon: And you know what? Safety of the other sibling is an important thing. But there're a couple of things that come to mind as you're talking. One thing is okay, why are those behaviors occurring? Okay. Are they occurring in protest? Are they occurring as a means of getting attention? Are they

occurring as an attempt to interact with the other person? 'Cause you see you have to kind of begin to ask that question. What's happening? You know, during that. You know, what is that child communicating with that behavior. And that would be one thing that I would want to ask. Sometimes, things like hitting and digging and pinching and all that kind of things are really related to some of the sensory needs that kids have. So one of the things that I would recommend would be to get an assessment by an OT. Many of our children on the autism spectrum have sensory issues, meaning that they're either more sensitive or less sensitive to sensory input than other children are. And lots of times, behaviors that you will see them exhibit really have a root in some of those sensory issues or those sensory needs. So for example, if the baby is crying, and he's pinching the baby, to try and get the baby to stop, maybe it has more to do with the crying is kind of like sensory overload for him, you know. And so, I need to have a lot more information but I do talk about a lot of that kind of thing, you know, but how to look at some of those behaviors in the book solving behavior problems in autism. The other thing, and that remind me of the question, because there were something else I was going to tell.

Nancy: She was...

Linda Hodgdon: Can you tell me the question again?

Nancy: Yeah. I kind of put 2 questions together here.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay.

Nancy: But she's talking about the recent challenging behaviors of pinching or hitting, and scratching the baby when he cries.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay.

Nancy: He's 4 years old, limited words to communicate.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay.

Nancy: And she's wanting to know where to begin.

Linda Hodgdon: Okay. Where to begin. Okay. For a parent, there's a couple different places that I would recommend beginning. One thing is giving children choices. And you can do this with objects, or you can do this with pictures. But for example, it's snack time, do you want a cookie, or do you want an

apple? You know, you get to choose what the choices are. But do you want juice or do you want milk? You know. And you use the objects or pictures of the objects. And if he's 4 right? You'd probably start out with objects until that kind of had him you know making some choices. Do you want a banana or an apple? You know. That kind of thing. Give him 2 choices and let him choose. That is a really nice way to begin using visuals with a child because the objects are things he's going to recognize and know. And it's giving him the sense of some power and control over his own life. And so that's a really good thing to do. The other thing that I would do is I would take some photographs that are of the probably 2 or 3 or 4 places that you most frequently go when you're leaving home. So maybe a picture of the car. And then where do you go when you leave home? Maybe it's grandma's house, or maybe it's the grocery store, or maybe it's the gas station or something like that. And so I would take some photos of those most common places then when I'm going to be leaving home to go there, I would show the child that picture, give the child that picture, and say look, we're going to go to grandma's house now. Or look, we're going to go to the grocery store now. And that is a nice beginning for them to look at that picture, recognize it, and then understand that something is going to happen. So those are 2 really good places to begin. And that fits right in with the transition thing too.

Nancy: Um-hm.

Linda Hodgdon: The other thing is I would ask her if they're working with a speech therapist. And she can talk to the speech therapist about some of the things that we've been talking about today and working with the therapist can be a real helpful thing too.

Nancy: Wonderful, wonderful suggestions. Now, we're running low on time here. So I want to be sure and get your websites and the titles of your books and just one more time for our listeners.

Linda Hodgdon: Alright. One book is Visual Strategies for Improving Communication. The second book is called Solving Behavior Problems in Autism. Okay. The websites. One of them is usevisualstrategies.com. That's got some information about visual strategies and those, that's where the books are available. There is a website called lindahodgdon.com which has got more information about me and in my speaking and things like that. And then the other website is called autismfamilyonline.com. And that one is the

membership site I think, for a dollar, you can get in kind of thing. And, but it has-- there's a lot of complimentary information on that website too in there. There's a lot of webinars on there. There's a whole video series on there. There's lots of articles and information about ipads and apps and lots of different things like that. And of course, at usevisualstrategies.com be sure and sign up for the newsletter.

Nancy: I already did. [laughter]

Linda Hodgdon: Okay good. Good. Because then you'll have connection to-- 'cause I do a lot of writing and questioning answering, all types of things, and so, I write in my blog and stuff, so you know, you'll get a nice connection to all the information that I put out. So that'll be good.

Nancy: So if folks didn't get their questions answered tonight, they can look you up on your usevisualstrategies.com website?

Linda Hodgdon: Um-hm, yup. And there's a, the contact information on that website, and then they can send questions in there. And I'll do my best to answer them. A lot of times when people ask questions, they are then what I'm able to do is use those as a foundation for some of my newsletter articles too.

Nancy: Okay.

Linda Hodgdon: So-- rather than just give a real simple answer, I just write a whole article about that topic, and that usually helps a lot of people too.

Nancy: Um-hm.

Linda Hodgdon: 'Cause if one person has a question, there are lots more that have the same question.

Nancy: Yeah. It seems we're all going through the same stuff at the same time here.

Linda Hodgdon: I think so.

Nancy: Okay. Well, thank you so much Linda. It's been wonderful. I hope to have you back sometime, so we can do this again. I'm sure that--

Linda Hodgdon: I--

Nancy: We didn't, we've just barely touched on the subject.

Linda Hodgdon: We have just barely touched the surface. There's lots more for sure. Well it's been my pleasure. I just thank all of you who are listening but, that you've stuck with us and that you're listening, and I wish you some really exciting adventure as you start, as you use visual strategies, if it's a new concept for you, just get started. And if it's something you're familiar with, I hope you got a few more ideas. Go to the websites and you'll get some more ideas and some more support materials also. It's been my pleasure for talking with you too this evening.

Nancy: Thank you so much. I want to let our listeners know that if you want a transcript of this event, you can join our spectrum gold club for just a dollar. And you will receive a copy of this webinar audio and transcript, plus you'll have access to all of our previous webinars. That's over 40 topics, including autism 101, the basics, sensory integration therapy, effective IP strategies, and much more. Also tell us what you think. Call us at 877-211-0212, extension 1, and leave a short comment or a testimonial. Again that number is 877-211-0212. And I want to bid you all a nice night, or morning, depending on where you are in the world. And blessings, and I'll see you next month.

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