Top Tips for Transitions

- First of all, it's important to acknowledge that transitions can be scary and confusing for everyone. Think about the last time something changed in your life, like you started a new job, got a divorce or moved house, how did you feel?

- Be ready to support the person emotionally through transitions. It is at this time that people can feel the most unsafe, what can you do to make them feel safe again?

- Record or write down a typical day and identify transition points/triggers, this will be useful as it may be something so small you had not even thought about it. Remember to you it may be small, to the person it may consume their whole day.

- Break the transition down into smaller steps so you can identify where the problem or potential problem could be. For example: ending iPad time to start getting dressed for school could be broken down into: *Playing iPad, iPad time finished, turn off iPad, move to getting dressed, start to get dressed.*

- Teach / explain that transitions are ok; demonstrate by using two preferred activities. Go through the transition process for these step by step, to help recognise and explain what a transition is, when it occurs and what feelings may occur during it.

- Plan ahead and prepare- use a visual planner to show what is going to happen and in what order. Remember that not all autistic people are visual learners so information may be presented in a different way. Could you use voice memos or tactile items.

- Teach and reinforce the concept of ‘finish’ at the end of every activity. Do this by using visuals, audio sign language, or verbal language.

- Involve some element of surprise (only if you believe the person can manage this). This could help build coping mechanisms for unplanned changes, but in a controlled, safe way.

- Use countdowns to indicate how long is left at an activity. Examples include sand timers, clocks, songs or phone timers. Ensure the countdown time you are using is suitable for that person e.g., a five-minute countdown could be too long for some, however, for others they may need this length of time to prepare for the transition

- Prepare the environment. For example, if you want the person you're assisting to move from the bathroom to the kitchen for lunch, make sure their chair and lunch is set up ready. If you are about to get them ready to leave the house, ensure you have everything already prepared to leave the house, before telling them about the outing. Also, have the door open ready so an exit is clear.

- Teach and reinforce transition words like *first, then, now, later* and *next*. You can play simple turn taking games to reinforce these words- 'first my turn and then your turn.'

- Provide a comfort / safe object; this is something that will go with them from one activity or place, to the next. This offers familiarity and can help to create feelings of safety. Examples of this include teddies, blankets, sensory toys or something like a familiar garment.

- When planning your day allows lots of extra time. If you know you need to be at school by 8.30am you should allow yourself extra time to support the person's processing needs.

- Plan in short movement breaks throughout the day to support sensory needs