



Transition = Change



- ▶ Transition
 - Movement, passage, or change from one way of being to another
- ▶ Transition may be:
 - Internal – Change in perception or opinion; maturation, wisdom that comes with experience
 - External – Physical appearance, things around us
 - Desirable – A joyful marriage, a new baby
 - Undesirable – Loss of job, beloved pet dies
 - Under our control – We decide to take a new job
 - Out of our control – We are fired from our job



Change



Benefits
Growth
Practicing new skills
Develop self-efficacy
Develop self-confidence
Complicating Emotions
Anxiety
Insecurity
Fear
Disappointment



Change for the Person with ID or Autism

- ▶ Change, in general, is destabilizing for individuals.
 - We form "brain maps" called "schemas" (or "schemata")
 - New information challenges schemas
 - Schemas are rearranged to accommodate the new information
- ▶ We resist the accommodation
- ▶ Successful accommodation requires cognitive ability
- ▶ Individuals with ID and Autism have less flexible accommodation ability than neurotypical peers



Life Changes

- ▶ Changes in the House
- ▶ Changes at School
- ▶ Changes in Other People
- ▶ Changes in the Family



Changes in the House

Physical changes can be difficult for individuals with ID and Autism

- ▶ Painting the inside of the house
- ▶ Changing bedrooms
- ▶ Cutting down a tree
- ▶ Moving to a new home
- ▶ Considerations about physical changes:
 - People with ID and Autism can tend to think concretely and be visual learners, which can help to adapt to the new structure



Changes at School

For people with ID or Autism, consistency is important in school, but change is inevitable and can be hard for this student and the parent.

- ▶ Substitutes
- ▶ Holidays and teacher work days
- ▶ Change of teachers
- ▶ Change of schools
- ▶ Elementary to Middle School
- ▶ Middle School to High School
- ▶ Considerations about Changes at School:
 - Schools tend to be structured so that change is not wholesale.
 - School changes are good for teaching generalization and flexibility



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Changes in Other People

Friends, relatives and even strangers can grow and change, producing change for the student with ID or Autism

- ▶ Dating
- ▶ Dances
- ▶ Driving
- ▶ Sexual development
- ▶ Graduation
- ▶ Post-graduation plans
- ▶ Benefit of Changes
- ▶ Considerations about Changes in Others
 - Reminds us of inevitable growth and change in the person with ID/Autism
 - May be more difficult for the parent than for the individual with ID/Autism



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Changes in the Family

In general, people with autism do not understand the complexity of human relationships... Who really does?

- ▶ Weddings
- ▶ Loss/change of jobs
- ▶ Parent remarriage or multiple relationships
- ▶ Aging parents
- ▶ Considerations about family changes
 - These changes may be the most challenging for parents.
 - Often, these changes involve emotions that are difficult for everyone to understand and manage; even more so to the individual who does not understand the emotions.
 - Balancing the individual's needs and the needs of family members, such as brothers and sisters



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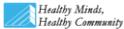
Recommendations to Consider

- ▶ Facilitate transition by preparing the individual
 - Verbal
 - Pictorial
- ▶ Include the individual in the transition
 - Assign responsibility
 - When possible, pace the change (or parts of the change) to individual's ability
 - Avoid surprise changes
- ▶ Use transitional objects



A Focus on Parents

- ▶ Being a parent is difficult, and being a parent of a person with special needs is especially challenging
- ▶ Parents: explore own feelings about transitions
- ▶ Get support from other parents
- ▶ Take time to celebrate successes



Thank you