

The Importance of Choice

Without realizing it, we all make several choices throughout our day. Choice making is a skill that is taught to us from a young age and that we continue to develop as we grow into adulthood. Some people, especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and intellectual disabilities may not have the skill to make choices. The ability to make choices is critical to:

- ✦ Encourage autonomy and well-being
- ✦ Increase participation and independence
- ✦ Enhance communication opportunities
- ✦ Reduce some challenging behaviour

In order to empower people to make choices, we must present them with choice wherever possible. For people who may have difficulty with choice, it can be presented verbally or visually using a **choice board**.

A choice board is a visual tool used to communicate what activity, item or task someone would like by offering choices of activities available. Choice boards may be created using photos, text, line drawings, pictures or objects. They typically include a minimum of 2 choices.

Consider using choice boards to decide:

- ✦ Who to play with and where
- ✦ What unpreferred task to complete first
- ✦ Which game or activity to do
- ✦ What to eat for snack or meal
- ✦ To participate or not participate in an activity

How to use a choice board:

- ✦ Fill choice squares with pictures, symbols or text of the choices offered
- ✦ Ensure that choices are available and are of interest to the person
- ✦ Use prompts when teaching to support making a choice and be sure to fade prompts with success
- ✦ Regularly review choices with the person and offer alternate options
- ✦ Once choice is selected, immediately reinforce and provide chosen item/activity

Considerations:

- ✦ What is the person's visual recognition level? (objects, photos, pictures, symbols)
- ✦ Can the person choose between a preferred and non-preferred item/activity?
- ✦ Consider how many choices to display, especially during the teaching phase
- ✦ Open ended choice questions like, "what do you want?" can be too complex for some individuals. Instead, consider closed ended questions with options such as, "do you want pizza or hamburgers?"
- ✦ How will the person indicate the choice? (e.g., verbally, pointing, picking up picture/object)

