

Visual Victories

AN INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL
SUPPORTS



Harmony With Bethany, LLC



WELCOME



Hi there! My name is Bethany, founder of Harmony with Bethany. I am a former special education teacher of nine years. Shortly after taking a break so I could be home with my son, I felt a void that teaching and empowering children with disabilities filled. So I decided to start this business to help children and their families by providing visual products and music, and how to implement them in their homes.

This packet will give you a sneak peek of what visual products supports and tools are, and how they are used to assist your loved one, student, or friend best at home, in the classroom, or even on the go!



What are visual supports?

Studies tell us how important visual supports are for children with neurodiversity. They aid in bringing structure, routine, and familiarity into their everyday lives. Often, exceptional learners rely on visual cues in order to comprehend and process information.



Think about how visuals help YOU navigate on a daily basis. Road signs, menus, and even the universal toilet symbol. Not to mention, if you're anything like me, without my phone calendar and my GPS, I would be lost 99% of the time!



Now think how you would feel if all our familiar visuals were stripped away, how would we react? With frustration, confusion, and agitation to name a few. In other words, we NEED visual cues, pictures, and words to help us feel safe and comfortable.



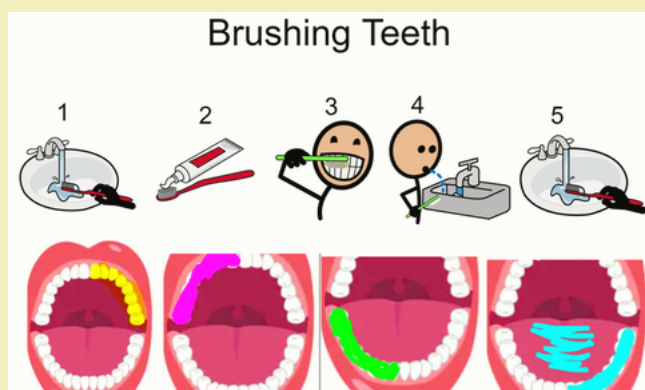
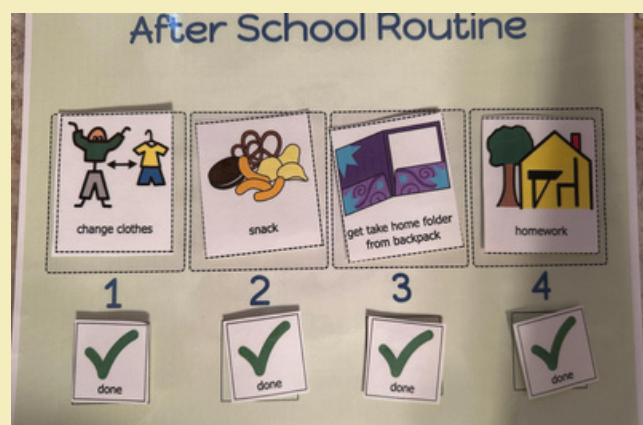
VISUAL SUPPORTS



The following pages touch briefly on how the different types of visual supports are utilized in classrooms, therapy centers, and homes and are backed by evidence-based practices. I will also explain what each type of visual tool is used for and how it is beneficial, especially for individuals with disabilities.

VISUAL SCHEDULES

Visual schedules use pictures, photographs, or written words to communicate a series of activities. Visual schedules are very helpful in providing predictability and consistency to our learners. The layout of the events or activities enables those who use them to know what all needs to be accomplished and in the correct order. You and I rely on our personal calendars to anticipate what is coming up or what activities or events are approaching. This is a simple and effective tool for breaking up activities into daily segments. Whether navigating the school day or learning a morning routine, visual schedules are a fantastic tool for reducing anxiety.



TASK ANALYSIS

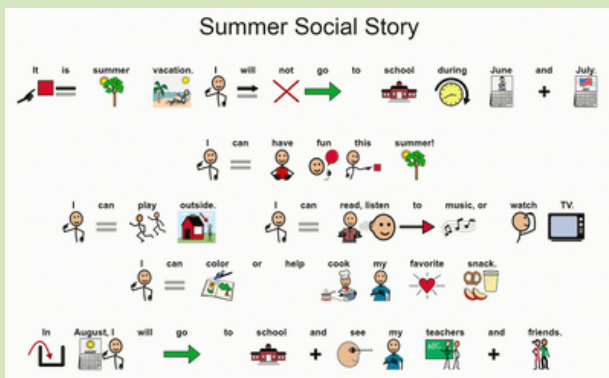
A task analysis is a way to teach a big task but broken into step-by-step segments. These are excellent at teaching self-care skills, such as brushing teeth or getting dressed. They can also be used to teach social skills, such as initiating and exchanging a conversation, or more complex academic skills like solving multi-step math problems. A task analysis can also be utilized for daily living skills, such as going grocery shopping or doing laundry. The visual representations of tasks to complete, with checkboxes for tracking progress aid in keeping the learner from becoming too overwhelmed with big, multi-step tasks.





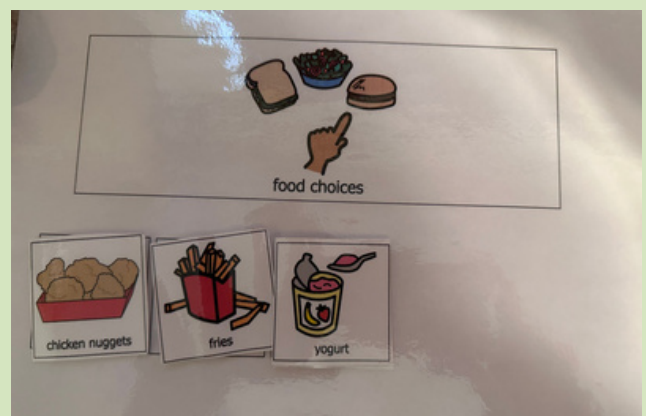
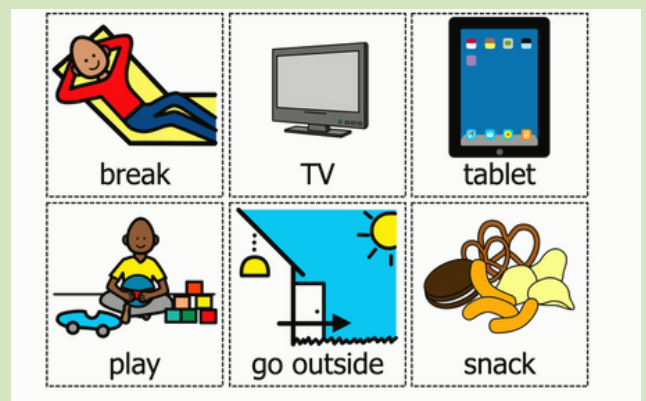
SOCIAL STORIES

Social stories or social narratives use pictures and text to explain situations, oftentimes social skills, or how to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner for social scenarios. They can also be used to explain something new or out of the normal schedule, such as a dentist appointment or an upcoming field trip, or even for trying new foods. Social stories are typically composed in the first-person perspective, ensuring that when individuals engage with these narratives, whether through self-reading or guided reading, they can initiate practice and preparation for upcoming events.



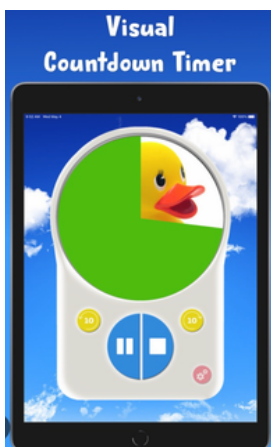
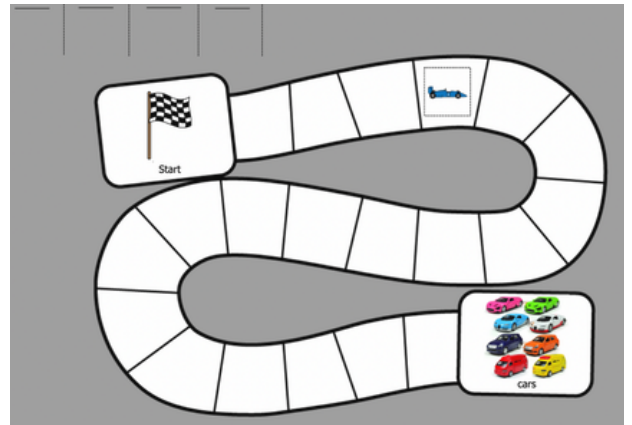
CHOICE BOARDS

Choice boards are visual aids that offer individuals the opportunity to exercise autonomy by making decisions. Often, individuals facing unique challenges can feel overwhelmed when confronted with excessive stimuli, so they benefit from a visual representation of available choices. If you observe instances where your learner becomes frustrated or uncertain about how to utilize their free time effectively, the use of choice boards can reduce auditory processing demands while offering concrete visuals for effortless selection. Choice boards are particularly valuable for presenting choices among motivating items or activities during play or break periods. They are equally effective when used for selecting specific food items, just as we all rely on menus when at a restaurant! Ultimately, choice boards empower your learner to exert a degree of control over their decisions, all within a structured and reasonable framework.



TOKEN SYSTEMS

Token systems, token reward systems, or token economy use tokens or symbols to reinforce positive behavior, with the accumulation of tokens leading to rewards. These tools are widely used within a classroom setting as well as in therapy settings to motivate the learner to complete mostly undesired tasks. Token Systems can also be utilized in the home such as the learner earning tokens by cleaning their room, taking out the trash, or other chores. The way a token system is set up corresponds with the learner (there are more tips and techniques for token systems in my Implementation Guide). The key is having a reward or reinforcer established before so the learner knows what exactly he/she is working toward.



Click on the pictures for a link to order the timer you like!

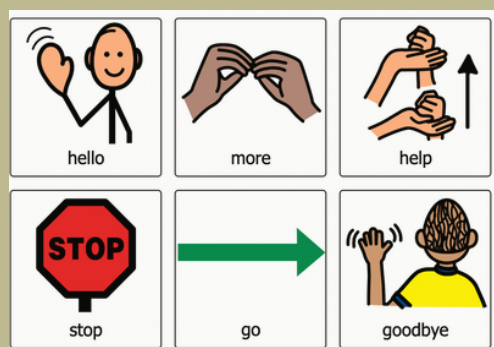
VISUAL TIMERS

Visual timers are tools that foster a deeper understanding of the concept of time and facilitate smoother transitions. This is especially beneficial for children with unique needs, as hearing an abstract amount of time often lacks the same clarity as a visual representation. Visual timers come in various forms, including digital options, sand timers, and a multitude of accessible websites and apps that can be carried with you wherever you go! Here's a helpful tip: You can effectively communicate to your child or student that a particular transition will occur within a defined number of minutes, using the visual timer as a reference, that way the expectation has been set. Timers can be instrumental in demonstrating the duration of an undesired task, like schoolwork, and provide a break when the timer ends. Additionally, they can assist in transitioning away from a favored activity, such as gently signaling that it's time to leave the park and return home when the timer reaches its set time.

PECS

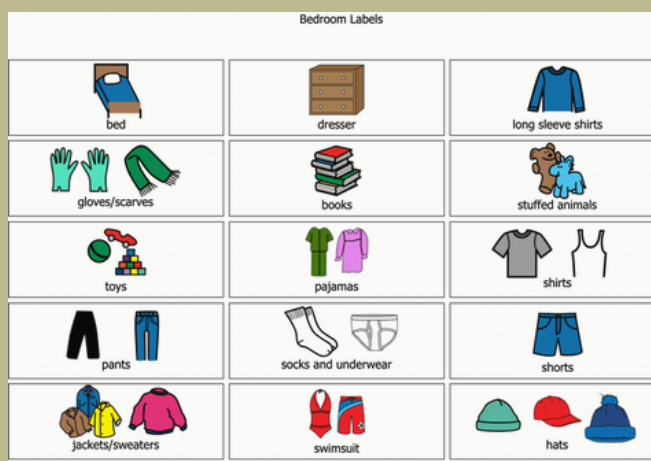


PECS, an acronym for the Picture Exchange Communication System, represents a valuable communication method designed to support individuals with limited or non-verbal communication abilities. PECS boards encompass a range of pictures and can vary in complexity, accommodating a variety of communication needs. For instance, an 'I want' PECS board empowers individuals to express what he/she wants (tangible items, food, a break, etc.) using pictures, either by pointing to, attaching, or handing over the chosen image to their communication partner. Oftentimes, individuals have PECS books to store and grab needed visuals. There are also options to make PECS systems more feasible, such as putting the pictures on a key ring for easy access and storage!



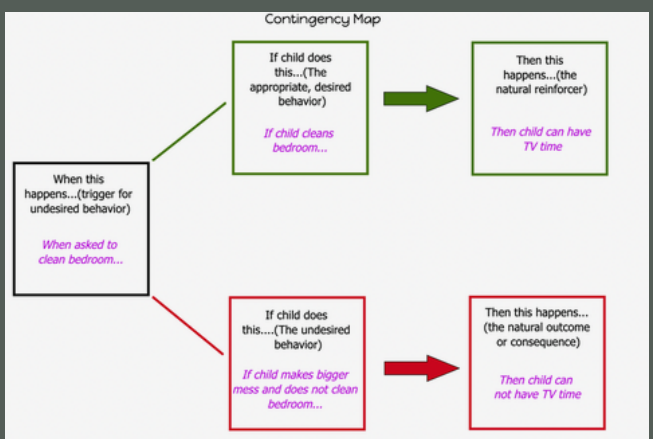
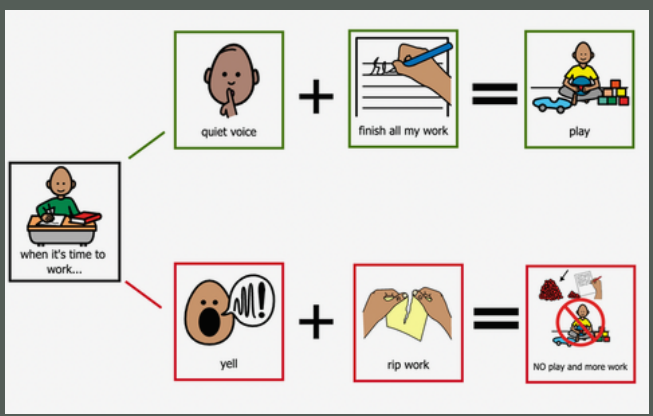
VISUAL LABELS

Visual Labels are written labels accompanied by images or symbols affixed to objects or drawers. Their purpose is twofold: first, to empower learners by fostering independence and cultivating organization skills, and second, to enhance communication abilities. Teaching a child to label correctly can expand their view of the world around them. This is achieved through the association of the object's written label with a corresponding visual representation, facilitating the acquisition of object names. Visual Labels play a pivotal role in practicing generalization skills across a spectrum of objects. For instance, if a chair has a label and the symbol 'chair,' learners begin to grasp the concept that 'chairs' can have diverse appearances, yet they are all still considered to be 'chairs'. Visuals can be actual photographs of the objects represented, or symbols.



CONTINGENCY MAPS

Contingency maps are a cognitive-behavioral strategy designed to show the cause-and-effect relationship between behavior and its consequences. They are visual representations of desired and undesired behaviors and the outcomes or consequences associated with each behavior choice. Contingency maps come in handy when trying to teach students or children how to make appropriate choices and how their behavior can alter their consequences or outcomes. When explaining a contingency map to your child/student, define the behavior you are trying to improve, identify the first outcome that stems from the undesired behavior, and then identify the second outcome with a desired outcome from a desired behavior. This approach not only aids in behavior modification but also cultivates a deeper understanding of the relationship between actions and consequences.



SELF-REGULATION CHARTS

Oftentimes, learners with unique needs struggle more than their peers to identify and regulate their emotions. Self-regulation charts put emotions into visuals for the learner to look at and identify how he/she is feeling using a concrete visual product. Self-regulation charts often supply ways to appropriately manage the emotions they are currently experiencing. Self-regulation charts pair photographs or images to the written emotion to help learners begin to associate what strong emotions they feel with how they manifest in appearance. Instead of only hearing, "Are you feeling mad?" the learner can refer to the picture of someone who is mad and will be able to recognize the feeling of being mad because they feel how the picture perceives.



What's Next?



Thank you for taking the time to learn about visual supports! Now that you have an idea of the variety of visual tools Harmony With Bethany offers, I invite you to click below to view my website, where you can:

- *Browse the many visual tools*
- *Get connected with Harmony With Bethany socials*
- *Inquire about a child-specific visual aide(s)*

Take the next step in helping your loved one/student to the path of success by allowing Harmony With Bethany to be your guide!



LET'S GO!

Bethany