

A CHANCE TO RIDE

Lesson 6

Expect the Unexpected: Dealing with the “What Ifs”

Introduction

Expect the Unexpected: Dealing with the “What Ifs”

This lesson is only presented at Level III as this is advanced learning for those who will be ready to travel train independently. At this level, a student will need to problem-solve, make judgments and generalize information. Generalization requires the ability to make associations where concrete links are not provided. Throughout the lesson a variety of learning situations and environments are posed with the goal that the student will transfer information across settings. It also introduces potential changes in a student’s familiarity and routine and promotes flexible skills that can be utilized in a variety of challenging situations.



In the real world, as in the natural environment of traveling, problems are bound to occur. Problems may stem from the student’s mistake (i.e., arriving late at a bus stop or boarding the wrong bus or train) or external factors (re-routing or a vehicle breakdown). Whatever the source of the problem, the student needs to know how to deal with it. Problems happening during this lesson present a good opportunity to observe how the student will handle situations. These experiences can be used positively as learning tools. In other situations, it may be advantageous to actually create a problem, sometimes referred to as “purposeful sabotage”. This will provide a semi-controlled situation where the teacher or trainer can see how the student problem-solves. Depending on the outcome, it can be repeated for the same or different scenarios.

Problem-solving is an important skill to develop for all children and adults regardless of an ASD diagnosis. Temple Grandin has stated that problem-solving is something that parents and educators need to expose children with ASD to early. Sensory issues need to be taken into consideration, but parents may need to push their child a little for learning to occur.

Problem-solving involves training the brain to be organized, break down tasks into step-by-step sequences, relate parts to the whole, stay on task, and experience a sense of personal accomplishment once the problem is solved. Individuals with ASD often learn best with concrete, visible examples.

One thing that can be helpful in encouraging problem-solving is the use of social task analysis for positive and less than positive events.

Grandin, Temple. “Autism: The Way I See It, The Importance of Practical Problem-Solving Skills.” *Autism Asperger’s Digest*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons. <http://autismdigest.com>. Web. Feb 27, 2014.

This process can help individuals with ASD see the “big picture” when it comes to social situations that may occur while traveling in the community. This provides the opportunity for the individual with ASD to practice seeing all pieces of a specific incident (“the big picture”) rather than getting stuck on the smaller parts. To be truly effective, the person must be in a mental state that allows for flexibility in processing of the event.

The social task analysis should include the following steps:

- A. Identify the context - includes the place and time of the situation and also identifies the social and behavioral expectations for that situation.
- B. List names of the individuals involved, if known.
- C. Identify the “tipping point” in the situation. This might be a social roadblock, problem or glitch faced or it can be a positive turn of events. It merely signals that something has happened to affect the thoughts, feelings and actions of people in a given space.
- D. Identify the thoughts, verbal expressions and feelings of those involved.
- E. Draw out a “plan” for the situation. Identify the roadblock a person needs to overcome. There may not always be one clear solution. Teaching how to create a plan or a sequence of steps to attempt is more important than a “right” or “wrong” outcome. It is a good idea to have Plan A, B and C as a way to teach flexible thinking.
- F. End by teaching reflection. Teaching individuals how to reflect back on a given situation is critical to developing positive memories. This reflection time should be a learning opportunity pulling from the past, present and future that will help the student the next time he or she faces a similar situation.

When possible, include “behavioral rehearsal” of the possible scenarios discussed. This can help with working memory of a situation as well as the motor planning aspects of all social sequences.

Abilgaard, Chris. “Processing the ‘Whole’ with Clients on the Autism Spectrum”.
Counseling Today. <http://ct.counseling.org>. Web. Mar 18, 2014,



Some of the situations that might occur include:

Missing the bus or train happens when the student arrives at the transit stop later than the scheduled arrival/departure time or stands where the vehicle does not stop or doesn't pay attention. If a trainee misses the bus or train, he or she will need to understand that panicking won't help. The student will need to know when the next scheduled bus or train will arrive and if it will take them to their destination. (This information should be found out before the trip to help avoid this dilemma.) Some routes run every few minutes and others only once an hour. Next, students would have to decide whether to wait for the next bus or train or whether to find another form of transportation such as a taxi, parents, friends, or staff member. Depending on the decision, the student must learn how to call or notify the right people and describe the problem and the proposed resolution.

Missing the bus or train stop is another problem that students need to know how to solve. When they realize that they rode past their stop, they must decide what to do. They should be instructed to ask for assistance and look to the bus driver or train conductor as a primary resource person. Many systems will give emergency transfers to people who miss stops.

Steps to follow when missing the stop are:

- A. If it's only a few blocks or less to the next stop and the student knows where he or she is, get off the bus and walk back
- B. If the transit vehicle has gone several stops before the student realizes the stop was missed, he/she should tell the driver the destination and very specifically ask him or her how to get back.
- C. If the student gets off the bus or train and is worried or confused, he or she should call an emergency number (not "911") in their support network for assistance. The student may also wish to seek out a community worker.

Boarding the wrong bus or train may present a serious problem. If the student realizes that the wrong transit vehicle has been boarded early in the route, he or she should use the same procedure described for missing a transit stop. In order to lessen the chances of this happening, the teacher or trainer should have the student identify the proper bus or train at each stop on each day of practice transit riding in the community.

Expect the Unexpected: Dealing with the “What Ifs”

Lesson 6 Level III

GOAL

Learn about different types of situations that may be encountered traveling in the community and learn strategies for problem-solving.

PREREQUISITE

Satisfactory completion of all Level III Lessons and activities and have taken at least one trip on public transit.

MATERIALS PROVIDED

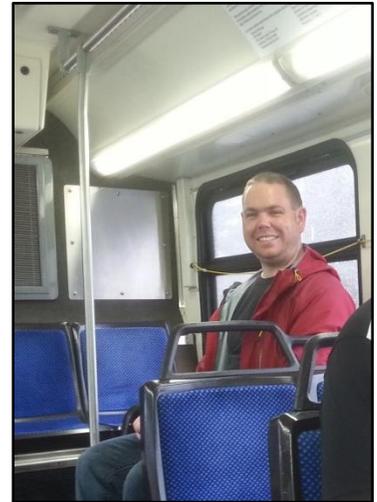
- 1) Activity Sheet: [Lesson 6 Level III Steps for Dealing with the “What Ifs”](#)
- 2) Practice Exercise: [Lesson 6 Level III What to Do-Dealing with the “What Ifs”](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Demonstrate sequential problem-solving steps to solve a transit-related challenge.
- ❖ Have students share personal experiences and make connections between past community experiences and their ability to deal with the unexpected.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Explain that things do not always go according to plan; therefore it is a good idea to know what to do or whom to ask for help. Some problems can be solved independently, but many times it will be necessary to get help from others. Have students generate a list of challenges they may encounter on a public transit trip. Have them identify which they could handle independently and which would require assistance from someone else.
- 2) Review the salient points from handout [Lesson 1 Level III Effectively Asking for Help](#).
- 3) As a group, review the sample on Activity Sheet [Lesson 6 Level III Steps for Dealing with the “What Ifs”](#). Choose one situation and as a class discuss each step in the problem-solving process. To increase flexibility, be sure to come up with multiple solutions (plans A, B, and C). Then have students fill in the Activity Sheet [Lesson 6 Level III Steps for Dealing with the “What Ifs”](#).
- 4) Have students break into groups and have them select another transit challenge and generate possible solutions. After the groups come up with their own solutions, review the possible solutions as a class. Do their ideas work? Did they include all the steps necessary to solve the problem successfully?
- 5) Have students share personal stories of situations they have encountered in the community and their solutions.



Expect the Unexpected: Dealing with the “What Ifs”

Lesson 6 Level III (continued)

STUDENT REVIEW

- ❖ Use the situations presented on practice exercise Lesson 6 Level III What to Do- Dealing with the “What Ifs” worksheet to have the students discuss and role-play the challenges they may encounter in the community and possible solutions. There may be several options for each solution.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXTENDED LEARNING

- ❖ If possible, take your students out and in a semi-controlled situation where they feel safe, have them experience a problem. For example: when riding on the transit vehicle, tell them today we are not going to get off at our normal stop. What do you think we can do to get back? Have students generate plans A, B, and C to get to their destination.
- ❖ If a student has difficulty remembering how to solve specific problems, help the student makes notes that can be kept on a smart-phone or in a wallet listing what to do to solve problems.



**Expect the Unexpected:
Dealing with the “What Ifs”
Lesson 6 Materials**

- 1. Level III Steps for Dealing with the “What Ifs” Activity Sheet**
- 2. Level III What to do-Dealing with the “What Ifs” Practice Exercise**

Steps for Dealing with the “What Ifs”

Activity Sheet

Lesson 6 Level III

Name: _____

Date: _____

<p>Chris was on the bus. He is going to the grocery store. Chris needs to transfer buses but forgot the route number of the second bus and where to get on it.</p>		
Step 1	State the problem.	Chris needs the route number of the second bus he will ride to reach the grocery store.
Step 2	Possible next step: Can I solve this independently or do I need help?	<p>Plan A: Chris is carrying a route guide. He could look at the timetables and system map to figure out the second bus to take.</p> <p>Plan B: Chris has his smart-phone. He could look at the bus company’s website to figure out what bus to take.</p> <p>Plan C: Chris could ask the bus driver or a nearby passenger which bus he needs to transfer to.</p>
Step 3	Decide which plan of action to follow first, and decide on next steps.	<p>Plan A: Chris figures out the system map independently. Problem solved.</p> <p>Plan B: Chris uses his smart-phone to identify the correct bus from the website. Problem solved.</p> <p>Plan C: Chris asks the bus driver what bus to transfer to and the driver gives him the correct answer. Problem solved.</p>
Step 4	Conclusion and reflection: is the problem solved? What would I do differently next time if a similar problem occurs?	Chris will carry the trip plan listing all the specifics of the trip.

**Steps for Dealing with the “What Ifs”
Activity Sheet
Lesson 6 Level III**

Mike was riding the train and fell asleep. He was supposed to get off in Stratford. He does not know where he is.

Step 1	Figure out problem.	
Step 2	Figure out whom to ask: someone who works in a public building or public vehicle. If you go into a store ask for a manager or someone in charge. If it is an emergency and you see an emergency worker, approach him/her.	
Step 3	Before you speak to the helpful stranger think: What do I want from this person so I can get the help I need?	
Step 4	Thank person and repeat back information to make sure you understood what you need to do. If you do not understand what person said, ask for him/her to repeat the information.	

**What to do—Dealing with the “What Ifs”
Practice Exercise
Lesson 6 Level III**

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Solutions</u>		
	PLAN A	PLAN B	PLAN C
Missed my transit vehicle.			
Missed my stop on transit vehicle by one stop and I know where I am.			
Missed my transit stop and the next stop is not walking distance away.			
Fell asleep on transit vehicle and I don't know where I am.			
Walking in the wrong direction and got lost.			
Someone is bothering me on the transit vehicle. I do not feel safe.			
Someone is breaking a rule on public transit but it does not affect my safety or anyone else's safety.			
There are no seats available on transit vehicle.			

What to do—Dealing with the “What Ifs”
Practice Exercise
Lesson 6 Level III

<i>Problem</i>	<i>Possible Solutions</i>
Missed my transit vehicle.	<p>Plan A: I can wait for the next transit vehicle. If anyone is expecting me, I need to call him/her to say I may be late.</p> <p>Plan B: I can ask a transit worker if another vehicle goes to my stop.</p> <p>Plan C: I can call someone I know and ask him/her for a ride.</p>
Missed my stop on transit vehicle by one stop and I know where I am.	<p>Plan A: I can get off the transit vehicle and walk back to where I was supposed to get off.</p> <p>Plan B: I can check that there is another transit vehicle that stops here and can take me where I need to go.</p> <p>Plan C: I can call someone I know and ask him/her for a ride.</p>
Missed my transit stop and the next stop is not walking distance away.	<p>Plan A: I can ask conductor or driver what to do. Be specific that I meant to get off at _____ and need to get back there.</p> <p>Plan B: I can check the schedule to see if another transit vehicle stops here and can take me where I need to go. I can also confirm with the driver or conductor when I get on the other transit vehicle.</p> <p>Plan C: I can call someone I know and ask him/her for a ride.</p>
Fell asleep on transit vehicle and I don't know where I am.	<p>Plan A: I can ask conductor or driver if I have passed my stop yet (tell him/her where my stop was). If I did pass it, I will ask the conductor or driver, what I should do?</p> <p>Plan B: If I can figure out where I am based on landmarks, I can decide whether this transit vehicle or another vehicle can get me back to where I need to be.</p> <p>Plan C: I can get off of the transit vehicle to call someone I know and ask him/her for a ride.</p>

**What to do—Dealing with the “What Ifs”
Practice Exercise
Lesson 6 Level III**

<i>Problem</i>	<i>Possible Solutions</i>
Walking in the wrong direction and got lost.	<p>Plan A: I can try to figure out where I am based on street signs, the closest street intersection and other landmarks.</p> <p>Plan B: I can go into a public store and ask directions.</p> <p>Plan C: I can look for the nearest intersection and call someone to give me a ride. I can tell him/her the street names at the intersection and what buildings are nearby.</p>
Someone is bothering me on the transit vehicle. I do not feel safe.	<p>Plan A: If person doesn't stop bothering me, I can ask the person politely to stop.</p> <p>Plan B: I can move my seat.</p> <p>Plan C: I can tell a transit worker.</p>
Someone is breaking a rule on public transit but it does not affect my safety or anyone else's safety.	<p>Plan A: Do not do anything. Do not tell on the person, this can make people angry with me.</p> <p>Plan B: I can move my seat and do not talk to him/her.</p> <p>Plan C: I can put in my earphones to listen to music and ignore the person.</p>
There are no seats available on transit vehicle.	<p>Plan A: I can hold on and stand. Try not to bump into people. If I do bump into someone, apologize. If more people get on vehicle, move further back so other people can board.</p> <p>Plan B: When a seat becomes available, I can take it if I feel like it.</p> <p>Plan C: I can get off and wait for another less crowded transit vehicle.</p>