

PBS Helpline Resources

Planning the day and the week

Having a structure is important. We all like to know what's happening in our day. It helps us to pace ourselves, to know what's coming up, to prepare for transitions and to get ready. This is the same for people we support. If people know what's going to happen, it helps them to feel settled, secure, and to make choices.

Planning the day

When we're planning our days, we might use a diary or a phone calendar. If written words are too hard for someone, we might have to use other methods, like pictures or symbols. We have to start by working out what's right for the person, and which they can understand best.

Here is an example of some methods going from the easiest to the hardest.

1. Object of reference': For example using a real mug to communicate cup of tea'



2. Photo:



3. Drawing:



4. Social symbol:



5. Written word.

So for example, if we're talking about swimming, we might write the word 'swimming'. If someone finds words hard, we might use a photo of the swimming pool. If photos are too hard, we might use their swimming bag to let them know what's happening.

Next, we need somewhere to put these. For some people, this might be a diary to carry in their bag. It could also be an A4 folder with the plan for the day on the front (and space for the person's pictures inside). Or it could be a whiteboard in their house.

Using these methods, we can plan the day together. We can start by putting in the things that have to happen (e.g. optician appointment). Then we can use the communication tools to help the person make choices about what other things they would like to do in their day. (If there's something difficult in the day it can be good to have something the person enjoys after it).

As we go through the day, we can cross off or remove the things that have happened so the person knows what's happening. All of this helps the person to know what's happening, to make choices, to pace and prepare themselves and to manage transitions.

Planning the week

This is about helping to plan and have structure in a week. It's important because it helps us to know what we're doing, mentally prepare ourselves, manage transitions and cope with things that we might not like so much.

We might have a calendar, or a diary. These are not always accessible for people we support for various reasons, so we might need to think about other ways to structure the week.

Visuals examples....



Objects:

Now & next:





Symbol timetable:

Calendar – by month:



Bear in mind that for some people, the concept of time over a whole week is too difficult to manage. In that case, it might be better just to plan a day at a time. If the person can understand the days of the week over seven days, then it's useful to have a plan.

This might include using objects, a now / next board, a symbol timetable or a calendar. It could be a printed calendar, or we could use a whiteboard.

A plan can also help if there is a significant event coming up that the person is excited or maybe anxious about, as it can help them, and ourselves, manage their anxiety and questions. They can see how many days are left, and we can cross each day off as we go through the week.

We can use photographs, simple line drawings, pictures the person chooses from the Internet, whatever works best for them.

Doing this reminds the person we support, and ourselves, about what's happening and enables us to prepare and help manage their anxiety.