

# KEY CONCEPTS OF MEANINGFUL ROUTINES

## Repetition

A routine is something we do on a regular basis. This allows for repetition on a frequent, perhaps daily basis, for maximal learning. As your student's skills improve we find ways to continue to encourage them to use those skills within their routines as well as increase the demands to work on new skills. Practice is the key!

## Meaning/Motivation

Routines must be meaningful for your student. There must be a pay-off that has value to the student and not just one that **we** feel is appropriate. 'Real life' situations with peers are usually meaningful to the student.

## Start/Middle/End

All activities have an element of start or set-up, middle where you are doing the activity, and end or clean-up. Often the end of one routine is the beginning of the next. This applies to all of the routines we carry out on a regular basis during our day.

Mealtimes, for example, include preparation (beginning), eating (middle) and clean-up (end). The concepts of start, middle and end also apply to the students we work with. Often the richest time for repeated practice of gross and fine motor and communication skills comes in the start and at the end of a functional activity - the set-up and clean-up (going and getting, reaching, grasping etc.)

## Active Participation

Routines become meaningful when students have an ACTIVE role or job that is of value to the completion of the routine. When a student is expected to participate, the student becomes an active learner instead of a passive, dependent learner. He/she will learn the routine and will learn skills within the routine much quicker.

## Building Skills

To promote learning in an activity, it is important to include as skills a student is working on. For example, the student may be working on learning to request more; this skill can be easily worked into a variety of daily routines, especially snack/meal time routines.

To measure progress, we need to be aware of the level of prompts we provide:

- **Verbal Prompt:** tell the student what you would like him/her to do
- **Gesture Prompt:** point or gesture to provide a visual cue for the student
- **Model Prompt:** demonstrate the action you would like the student to perform, then allow them to do it themselves
- **Partial Physical Prompt:** provide minimal physical support, such as an elbow prompt, gently guiding an arm, or tapping the student's hand to draw his/her attention to it
- **Full Physical Prompt:** give hand-over-hand, or preferable, hand-under-hand guidance

As the student learns new skills, fade prompts, so you are using a less intrusive prompt to support your student.