Here are some examples of responses to this week’s scenarios using the ‘test it out’ skill and discussion about ‘transitions’

Early this term at kindergarten, a child on the autism spectrum would eat her lunch at snack time and not have enough food for lunch time.

The educator and I looked at her situation through the techniques in this MOOC.

Person first:

She had one lunch box with all her food for the 6 hour session. Snack time is for fruit and vegetables, and yogurt and cheese items. Lunch time is set for sandwiches, rice, pasta, rolls, sushi, salada biscuits and similar foods. She is anxious and confused when she is told to eat a mandarin instead of tuna and she slumps to the floor. She may not understand the different food types are to be eaten in a certain order, and/or at certain eating times. Only verbal instructions have been provided for each eating time. She may be fixated on her tuna and cannot eat other items until the tuna is finished. She may have been able to eat what she chooses in her lunch box at other places.

Define:

She loves tuna and has been able to choose her food from her lunch box. She is confused why she can’t have tuna first. She needs some guidance, with pictures, reminders, peers.

Plan A: Take photos of her snack foods and her lunch foods. Show her and remind her when to eat snack foods vs lunch foods. Have a mature friend show her what to eat also.

Trial: She responded well to eating her fruit first, however she then wanted to eat her tuna at snack time. She would become upset and slump to the floor. Educator and I discussed further and made a new plan.

Plan B: On arrival at kindergarten one of the educators is to remove the tuna from her lunch box so at snack time it will not be in the box. Then place back in after snack.

Trial: She responded well, ate her fruit and biscuits at snack time.

As you can see the first plan was not totally successful. But with trial and error and support from the team we managed to create an outcome that fit with the policy of the school and well being of the child.

This MOOC has helped me learn so much more about ASD. I am working with 4 great school kids aged 16-17, who are undertaking a school-based apprenticeship in a warehouse, working on a community program distributing food to charities. One day a week they come to the warehouse, work in the food program, and I train them in a food processing qualification. Two of them are non-verbal. The training can be very difficult at times. Ultimately, the four of them love the day at the warehouse, are eager to learn, have really learned some stuff they would
never have learned at their school, and all the other workers at the warehouse agree that they are the best workers. I am exhausted and happy at the end of the day as I see their faces and we all do high-fives as they take off their hi-vis vests and go home. I only comment on this, because my background is training adults. I have learned so much from the kids, and am continuing to learn about Autism and communication with them.

I found Christian's ideas in this week's personal reflections very useful. I thought about a child that I know as I read them and that really helped. I found all the video clips by Chris Varney very useful and informative and intend to find out more. Although I only have limited knowledge of children on the Autism Spectrum from those I teach the course and especially the posts have been a great learning experience for me. Hopefully the post will remain accessible as they are a great learning tool.

Dr Karen Guldberg's videos on Technology Enhanced learning were interesting and I'd like to know more .....  

I'd like to follow this up as I have a non verbal Autistic Godson and feel that knowledge of these technological learning aids may be of benefit ... particularly to my understanding of his world and the available possibilities.

Jeanette's video was really good and I'm so pleased that she has found a position where she can flourish and be of benefit to others on the Spectrum.

I will watch these videos again as there was too much to take in in one viewing.

I've found all the videos in the course of interest particularly those relating to workplace situations and the transitions to be made across the life span as even at my late stage in life I have occasions to deal with aspects related to these areas.. albeit in a non conventional sense. Dealing with Art Galleries as an artist and also communicating with universities regarding Autism Advocacy... fortunately I've found understanding and patience when I've had difficulties in navigating the contemporary methods of participation and communication.

A big thank you to all who have produced and participated in this MOOC it has been a wonderful vehicle through which I've been able to learn about the non autistic mind and share through my lived experienced of Autism.

I found the information on transitions both helpful and relevant to my work at the moment. One of the participants I work with has Asperger's and transition is an important part of her ongoing supports. Any changes to her routine require clear discussion with her about the changes, the reasons for them, what to expect and how it may affect her, and involve a gradual transition period to allow her to feel safe, supported and comfortable with any change or new environment. We recently linked her with a parent run support network offering support for families living with an ASD and she visits their headquarters for 10 minutes once a week as part of her transition to joining their group for Young Adults with an ASD in preparation for joining
them for social/community activities. Having supported her to one of their activities highlighted to me the fact that meeting one person with an ASD means you have met one person with an ASD and the variance in degrees of functioning even between a small group of half a dozen people. Many of the others in the group are higher functioning than she is, with interests that are not similar to her own, but I was struck by how they welcomed her and attempted to help her feel part of their group. Unlike many neurotypical people they were less concerned about labels or abilities and more concerned about her as a person who also happens to have an ASD. We can learn a lot from people with an ASD about acceptance and understanding if we just take the time to sit with them, listen to them and understand their views and needs.

I love listening to Chris Varney talk - what a great advocate for people on the spectrum. It is empowering to hear from a person on the spectrum the way they view the world and how they deal with situations. Transition is a big step for anyone but for a person on the spectrum it is even greater. I feel that the more people that are aware of Autism and the more freely that it is talked about - the more understanding and accepting the rest of us will become. I know many people on all different levels of the spectrum and each one is a unique individual with their very distinct wants and needs and the more I understand about Autism the more I respect these people.

I found Christians personal reflections fascinating and a wonderful tool to be able to use in the future - thanks for sharing Christian.

This MOOC has given me a greater insight into people on the spectrum and some valuable tools that I will take with me.

Thank you to everyone involved.