Using Visuals to support your child.

A child who has difficulty processing information, can find the flow of the daily routine very busy and chaotic. They may be unable to rapidly process multiple pieces of information simultaneously. This is where the use of visuals are so important to create clarity of information for the child on the spectrum.

The uses for visual support are:

- Teaching

- Prompting

- Communicating

- Organising schedules

- Giving information

It is very common when visuals are first introduced, that they are met with some resistance due to the newness and the unknown, so…..

It is key to establish association and meaning.

- Start by pairing the photo and object together and place around the house. IE fridge/food, bed/bedroom, toilet/bathroom, TV remote/TV/living room, puzzle/toy box.

- Each time the child wants something, or leads you to his want, reinforce by showing the photo with the object.

Next use picture exchange.

- Once a connection has formed – give the photo to your child to hand back and exchange for the object.

- Start basic and with favourite items.

- Always reinforce with language.

- Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.

Use portable picture/photo cards.

- Use a second set of photos on either a "Now and Next" board or a "I Want" board and begin matching with the pictures in your house.

- Start with a maximum of 4 pictures at a time.

Using a "Now and Next" board.

- Ideal to use when you have an unwanted task first and show the favourite object/treat/reward as Next.

- If your child still shows resistance, start with two preferred objects or tasks.

Chaining a routine strip.

- Ensure your child is very comfortable and familiar with the above tasks first.

- Build a routine strip, for example Breakfast/eat, get dressed, clean teeth, Lego, school.

- Always show a positive within the pictures, so the child can see what is coming.

Giving choices.

- This will give your child some control if you offer 2 choices on the "Now and Next" board.

In conclusion, these routines will reduce confusion, frustration and anxieties, which would normally result in a meltdown. By adding structure and predictability, the visuals will provide clear, consistent expectations and create understanding and clarity.