



**OKLAHOMA AUTISM NETWORK**

*The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center*

ON A ROAD TO... SOMEWHERE? ANYWHERE?  
AND HOW ON EARTH DO WE GET THERE??  
**CREATING A ROAD OF POSSIBILITIES IN  
THE MIDDLE CHILDHOOD YEARS**

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ADAPTIVE SKILLS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE  
FOCUS ON PERSONAL CARE  
WEBINAR WORKSHEET

**About this Webinar:**

Adaptive skills, the skills we need to meet the demands of our day, are an essential part of the journey to adulthood and greater independence. The earlier these skills can be introduced, the more time can be given to practicing and mastering these important skills. This session will take a closer look at the skills related to personal self-care during the middle childhood years (ages 6-12 years old). Strategies for teaching personal care skills such as getting dressed, bathing/showering, and puberty-related hygiene skills will be discussed.

**Purpose of this Worksheet:**

This worksheet is a tool you can use during the webinar to take notes about how you can apply the information you learn. There is also a resource guide for parents and professionals to refer to when creating an intentional plan to practice personal care skills.

*The content included is general information and is not specific medical or behavioral advice. The information provided may not work for every child with autism or their family. We recommend working closely with your child's doctor(s), therapist(s), and/or educator to discuss how the ideas shared may be individualized to meet your child's needs. If you have an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.*

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# Middle Childhood Focus on Personal Care

## WEBINAR HIGHLIGHTS

Personal care skills are the everyday activities you do to take care of your body. In this webinar, we focus on the following personal care skill areas:

- Getting Dressed
- Menstrual Care
- Bathing/Showering/Deodorant
- Preparing for Shaving

Learning personal care skills does not happen overnight! Here are some of the reasons that my child with ASD might struggle with learning personal care skills. (Please think about your child and write down specific examples/concerns).

<b>Communication</b>	<b>Social Interaction</b>	<b>Sensory Processing</b>
<b>Motor Skills</b> (Fine, Gross, Oral-Motor)	<b>Executive Function</b> (thinking and processing skills needed for everyday activities)	

--- from *Autism Across the Lifespan: A Comprehensive Occupational Therapy Approach, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (2018)*

The good news is that being intentional and using supports will help us teach these important everyday skills. Examples of different ways we can support our loved ones with ASD while learning personal care skills include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow time to explore sensory preferences, especially when first teaching the skill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you practice, try to keep things the same - time of day, order of tasks, supplies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break skill down into steps, focus on one task at a time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach by modeling – Live (in-person) or video modeling</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use visual activity schedule or written checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use prompts (and plan to fade)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide choices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember to keep it light, positive, and fun!</li> </ul>

### Picking Strategies and Tips that Fit

This webinar includes tips and strategies from both professionals and parents. These are the tips I think would be the most helpful for my child.

- 1) Getting Dressed ---
- 2) Bathing/Showering ---
- 3) Menstrual Care ---
- 4) Preparing for Shaving ---



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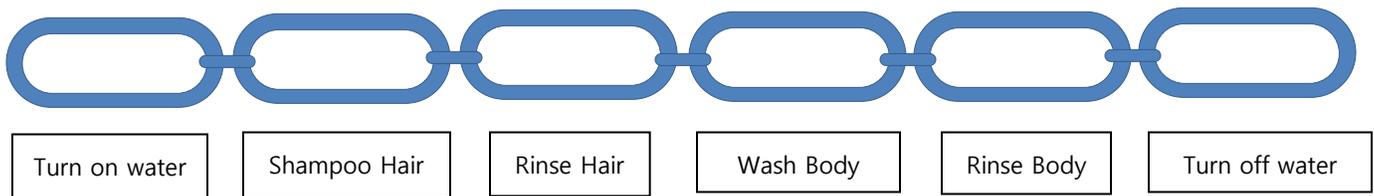
## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

### Steps to Teaching Personal Care Skills in Daily Routines and Activities

1. Identify the skill you want your child to learn. Take some time to think about your child's "Why?" when picking a skill to focus on.
  - Is there a skill your child is showing a natural interest in right now?
  - Which skill would make the most positive impact on your child's or your family's day?
  - Which skill could help your child become more independent?
2. Think about natural, everyday opportunities to teach personal care skills. This will make it easier for you to build in times to practice during your day.
  - Is this a skill that will be used frequently?
  - Is there a natural time in your daily routines when you and your child can consistently practice?
3. Break down the skill into an order of small, manageable steps. Think about which step you are going to start teaching first. Small successes can lead to big wins. (See the diagram below for an example.)
  - Which step is the most likely to be a positive experience?
  - Is there a step that matches your child's personal preferences?
  - Is there a step I know my child can already do?
4. Think about how you will provide support as your child learns the skills and builds confidence.
  - Will you use visual supports? Visual activity schedule? Video model?
  - Would it help to have a written checklist?
  - Will you model all of the steps of the task at once or will you model each step individually?
  - Would your child prefer that you begin as partners and you slowly fade yourself out, or would your child prefer to do as much by him/herself as the child can?
5. Remember to provide positive feedback when your child tries to use the new skill.
  - How will you recognize your child's work and/or completion of the task?
  - Is there a natural reinforcer that is produced by doing the task?
6. Take time to reflect.
  - What went well?
  - What was hard? What could you do differently to better support your child's learning?

### Simplified Shower Example -- Breaking a Skill into Smaller, More Manageable Steps

*\*please note this is a simplified version and does not include all of the single steps necessary to shower*



# Middle Childhood Focus on Personal Care

## Practice Plan Example – Learning to Shower

<p><b>Picking a Skill to Teach</b></p> <p><i>What is my child's "Why?" How will this skill help my child? Can I build on this skill as my child grows? Does this skill match my child's interests? Is this a skill that could open opportunities in other places (school, community activities, future employment?) How do I teach my child "why" this is important to learn?</i></p>	<p>My child is 10 years old, sweats when pacing/running around outside, and is starting to have greasy, smelly hair - Hello Puberty! Griffin likes to sit beside his classmates during read-aloud after recess, and he will often come in for a sidearm hug from Dad and I. Showering regularly will help my child manage his hair and body odor. I will need to talk to Griffin about how his body is changing. I can use a book or visuals to help. Griffin seems like he might be ready to learn how to shower because he will try to put his hand in the water when we turn the shower on for his older siblings.</p>
<p><b>Routine/Activity</b></p> <p><i>When could we practice this skill? Is this a skill we can practice every day so that my child can get enough repetition?</i></p>	<p>Griffin is hard to wake up in the morning, and he can be a bit grumpy. Evening may be best. We can practice this skill after dinner in the evening. We can do this in the bathroom next to his bedroom. We will need to pick specific days or shower every day of the week to help it become predictable.</p>
<p><b>Breaking the Skill Down Into Steps</b></p> <p><i>What are the individual steps for this skill? Are there step(s) my child can already do? Are there steps that match my child's interests or preferences?</i></p>	<p>Simplified steps include turning on the water, getting undressed, stepping into the water, washing hair, rinsing hair, washing body, rinsing body, turning water off, stepping out, drying and getting dressed. Griffin may like turning the water on, we can start with that step.</p>
<p><b>Supports for Learning</b></p> <p><i>What kind of visuals could help my child learn to do this skill? Am I going to model the entire skill or each step by itself? Would my child be more likely to start learning the skill if we started as work partners?</i></p>	<p>Griffin seems to learn better through pictures than spoken words. I can show him a video model to teach him the whole sequence, or my husband can model it himself. When I have Griffin's attention, he can imitate me. When he practices, I can prompt him if needed with a picture and/or few spoken words, one step at a time. I can fade the prompt slowly when he's ready.</p>
<p><b>Positive Reinforcement</b></p> <p><i>How will I show/tell my child I see how hard my child is working to learn this new skill? Is there a natural reinforcer that is gained by doing the skill?</i></p>	<p>I am not sure Griffin sees "being clean" as a natural reinforcer 😊 However, he does love his green, plush robe and we can make sure he puts the robe on when he is done with the shower. Griffin also likes high-fives and smiles, and we can make sure we include those actions as he practices. We can also make sure we plan enough time for a preferred evening activity between the shower and bedtime.</p>
<p><b>Reflect and Adjust</b></p> <p><i>What went well? Is there something I can change to help my child be more successful?</i></p>	<p>This got off to a rough start! He liked turning the water on but did not like stepping into running water. I started turning the shower head toward the wall and letting him move the shower head back over to him when he was ready. That really helped! We will keep focusing on this part of shower time to help him feel comfortable. I can help with the other parts for now. Patience will be the key!</p>



# Middle Childhood Focus on Personal Care

## Practice Plan Example – Preparing for First Period, Changing a Pad

<p><b>Skill to Teach</b></p> <p><i>How will this skill help my child? Can I build on this skill as my child grows? Does this skill match my child's interests? Is this a skill that could open opportunities in other places (school, community activities, future employment?) How will I teach my child his/her "why" this is important to learn?</i></p>	<p>My daughter is 9 years old and I am noticing that Elsie's breasts are starting to bud – Hello Puberty! I think this is her body's way of giving me a heads up that her first period is probably 2 – 2 ½ years away. I know my daughter does best when things are predictable and she knows exactly what to do. Periods aren't always predictable. I want Elsie to know how to change her pad during her period. This will help give her a small amount of control over what is happening. If we start now, it will give her the best chance to work at her pace toward learning how to change a pad before her first period.</p>
<p><b>Routine/Activity</b></p> <p><i>When could we practice this skill? If this is a daily skill, is there a time to practice every day so my child can get the practice he/she will need to learn the task?</i></p>	<p>We can start by learning together about the changes happening to her body. I will use a book with pictures and visuals to help her better understand. We can take some time on weekend afternoons to read together and practice changing a pad. School days are so busy and she is usually tired and tapped out on week days.</p>
<p><b>Breaking the Skill Down into Steps</b></p> <p><i>What are the individual steps for this skill? Are there step(s) my child can already do? Are there steps that match my child's interests or preferences?</i></p>	<p>There are several steps involved in changing a pad. I will write down the steps, one by one, so that I can teach the steps of this skill in the same order every time. I am pretty sure Elsie can open the pad wrapping so we will start with that step. In addition to working on changing a pad, I can support Elsie in getting used to wearing a pad. She can start with a thin panty liner for 5-10 minutes at a time and work her way up to longer times. When she is ready, we can also work on building her tolerance for wearing thicker pads.</p>
<p><b>Supports for Learning</b></p> <p><i>What kind of visuals could help my child learn to do this skill? Am I going to model the entire skill or each step by itself? Would my child be more likely to start learning the skill if we started as work partners?</i></p>	<p>My daughter learns best through more visuals, less talking. I can make an activity schedule of the steps to change a pad. I can post this on the wall in the bathroom in our home. I can also personally model this skill for her, step by step, while I sit in a chair in the bathroom with her (this way she can sit on the toilet to practice). If this doesn't work for us, I can show her a video model before she practices.</p>
<p><b>Positive Reinforcement</b></p> <p><i>How will I show/tell my child I see how hard my child is working to learn this new skill?</i></p>	<p>Elsie seems to enjoy verbal praise and hugs. She also looks forward to spending time with a parent at the park or going for a drive. We can verbally praise her efforts when she is practicing this skill. We can also schedule activities she enjoys after she practices this skill.</p>
<p><b>Reflect and Adjust</b></p> <p><i>What went well? Is there something I can change to help my child be more successful?</i></p>	<p>Elsie has been really cooperative about spending time looking at the puberty book. She seems to like the pictures. Elsie has not been as cooperative about practicing with the pads. She comes to the bathroom to practice but she does not want to touch them. I am not sure she likes the texture. We will explore different options so she can get more comfortable and choose something she prefers.</p>



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## Practice Plan

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Skill to Teach</b></p> <p><i>How will this skill help my child? Can I build on this skill as my child grows? Does this skill match my child's interests? Is this a skill that could open opportunities in other places (school, community activities, future employment?) How will I teach my child his/her "why" this is important to learn?</i></p>	
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Breaking the Skill Down into Steps</b></p> <p><i>What are the individual steps for this skill? Are there step(s) my child can already do? Are there steps that match my child's interests or preferences?</i></p>	
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reflect and Adjust</b></p> <p><i>What went well? Is there something I can change to help my child be more successful?</i></p>	



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## RESOURCES

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### ***Healthy Bodies Toolkit by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center*** <https://vkc.vumc.org/HealthyBodies/>

Provides information for boys and girls with disabilities as they approach puberty and adolescence. There is a Boys Toolkit and a Girls Toolkit. Each toolkit has an appendix that contains storyboards and visuals you can use when teaching about puberty and personal care skills. Available in English and Spanish. Free.

### ***The Boys Guide to Growing Up: Choices and Changes During Puberty***

Terri Couwenhoven, MS, CSE <http://terrificouwenhoven.com/>

This guide for boys with developmental and intellectual disabilities presents the facts boys will need as they navigate puberty. It is written at a third-grade reading level for pre-teens or teens to read by themselves or with a parent. It contains simplified text, realistic illustrations, and learning activities to help boys better understand the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty. Recommended ages 9 – 16. Available on Amazon or Woodbine House.

### ***The Girls Guide to Growing Up: Choices and Changes During the Tween Years***

Terri Couwenhoven, MS, CSE <http://terrificouwenhoven.com/>

This guide for girls with developmental and intellectual disabilities gives an introduction to the physical and emotional changes they'll encounter during puberty. Written at a third-grade reading level for preteens or young teenaged girls to read by themselves or with a parent, it's filled with age-appropriate facts, realistic illustrations and photos, icons, and a Q&A. Recommended ages 8-14. Available on Amazon or Woodbine House.

### ***Activity Schedules for Children with Autism, Second Edition: Teaching Independent Behavior***

By Lynn McClannahan and Patricia Krantz

This book was written for parents and service providers to help them learn how to use activity schedules to help children and adults become more independent. The book contains information on how to start by making a simple activity schedule, as well as how to progress and make more sophisticated schedules. The books also covers how activity schedules can be used to help a wide variety of learners increase engagement, complete tasks, make choices, and engage in meaningful activities. Available on Amazon and Woodbine House.

### ***Penquis Autism Community Services Video Modeling Tools for ADL Development***

Available on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB2o08nCiDOC8OtSq\\_Z\\_rw/featured](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB2o08nCiDOC8OtSq_Z_rw/featured)

This collection of videos includes activities such as brushing teeth, washing face and hands, hair care, changing a menstrual pad, shaving with either an electric shaver or razor, and skills related to getting dressed – buttoning, zipping, tying a shoe. You can view these videos for free on the Penquis Autism Community Services YouTube Channel.

\*\*The Oklahoma Autism Network strongly encourages families and providers to review these materials for goodness of fit before sharing them with the individuals they support.\*\*