



AuSM's highly trained, certified therapists have committed their careers to helping individuals with autism understand their diagnosis and address both the challenges and gifts that it can bring. The AuSM Counseling and Consulting Services team sends out a monthly e-mail to answer questions submitted by the autism community. This is one of the past issues of the column. Visit www.ausm.org to sign up to receive the e-mails.

Dear Therapist:

Spring is coming up very soon. While I am happy winter's finally coming to an end, change is tough. How can I transition from winter to spring as easily as possible?

– Change is Hard, Even Transitioning to Spring

Dear Changer:

You're right, change is tough. It can be challenging to imagine future situations. Some (but not all) autistic people have difficulty with creating a mental picture of forthcoming things. For example, people usually have routines depending on the season.

We've been used to winter for a while, so we may already have winter clothing available. Since this has been a habit for months, it can seem strange to start thinking about warmer weather. In order to make this transition easier, I would recommend first writing a social narrative to give yourself a better idea of what you may need to do. The "Resources" section of AuSM's website has templates to help you create your own social narrative for any situation.

Your narrative may be a full story or it may be a bullet point list of tasks you need to accomplish; whatever makes sense to you and your brain. It can be your plan on what to do from now until the first few weeks of spring. You may want to start putting away winter clothing and taking out spring clothing.

Visuals can help with transitioning as it gives you a better idea for what is coming. Even if you don't start wearing spring clothing right away, it gives you a visual and a reminder of what is coming.



You may also want to think about things which you associate with spring and use those as reminders. For example, some may begin decorating using pastel colors or preparing for spring holidays. Again, whatever makes the most sense to you. It can be difficult to remember something if you don't see it every day. The old saying "out of sight, out of mind" can be true for some autistic or neurodivergent people. If things are put away, then you may be less likely to think about them.

Since change can be rough emotionally, I would recommend giving yourself compassion. This time of year can be challenging for some people and that is okay. You're making accommodations for yourself in order to have easier transition times.

You may want to engage in more self-care tasks during this time; these can be sensory integration or deprivation, having alone time, not taking on more obligations or work (if you can), or taking time to do fun/relaxing activities. It may be hard to remember, but you've done these transitions before and you can do them again.

Please take care.

– Sara Lahti, MA. LPCC – Therapist, Autism Society of Minnesota

If you would like to submit a question for the AuSM Counseling and Consulting Services team, please e-mail autismcounseling@ausm.org or contact us at 651.647.1083.