

1. Parent to Parent

My Learning Journey with WeCAN EIP

My daughter, Shannon, joined ARC (WeCAN EIP) in March 2008. At that point in time, she had poor attention span, no eye contact, could hardly sit on chair for more than 3mins, could not wait, did not know the meaning/concept of turn taking, could only speak her own language which we could not understand, had poor vocabulary, difficulty interacting with peers, was temperamental and rigid.

After attending the WECAN EIP and many hours of home teaching and generalisation over the weekends, Shannon has improved tremendously – many thanks to WECAN EIP team.

Our Learning Journey

Though both my husband and I are working parents, I personally bring Shannon to ARC for all her intervention sessions. I enjoy sending her for the sessions as I get the opportunity to be very hands on in her learning and in generalizing the skills with Shannon. **We both learn together.**

Home teaching reinforces what Shannon has learnt in class. Children with Autism need to work on the key foundations areas of self regulation, work habits and functional communication and instrumental social skills before they can be able to learn academics. We must respect the way our child learns and love them as they are.

I learned and applied many successful approaches and techniques with Teacher Jelita's guidance. It really works especially concepts like 1) Work system 2) Schedule 3) Communication strips 4) PECS 5) Waiting Toys 6) Visual supports and 7) Waiting Toys/motivator 8) Structured teaching with motivator at the end of the task etc.

A few approaches I personally find that it is very useful to Shannon as it helps her a lot and please allow me to share with you.

1) Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Using PECS really helps Shannon, by using it, Shannon established speech, initiates communication and increased in her vocabulary without frustration and thus has reduced anxiety.

Before attending Intervention, she was non verbal, spoke her own language which we hardly can understand and she will tend to pull our hands here and there to comply to her demand/request. She will throw tantrums, cry/scream

loudly if we do not understand her. It will end up a lot of scolding and we ourselves will also frustrated and tired and she will also find it stressful after all.

After using PECS for about 8 months, she established speech. She knew how to initiate communication and her needs. Currently she is at stage 4, moving up to stage 5. I am really impressed and personally find that it really helps Shannon understand the meaning of doing things/request and to be able to manage her expectations and reduced her stress and anxiety.

2) VISUAL SUPPORTS

Visual supports works well for Shannon. In the past, I always had a hard time conveying messages / instructions to Shannon e.g., wait, sit on chair, hold hands, walks nicely etc. With these supports, she is able to cope with her anxiety when going to crowded place like big shopping centres, airport and toy shops. Otherwise, she will sing loudly and run about.

I carry a set of visual support with me everywhere I go with Shannon, even to NTUC which has become her favourite place now. When I started using it in public, people gave me a funny look but I did not bother. I tell myself that it is fine as long as it benefits Shannon.

Therefore, I encourage parents to use visual support to support communication if your child needs it. For Shannon it works well.

Greatest Achievements

The greatest achievements which I can see from Shannon after only 8mths of Early Intervention is that she picked up speech through the use of PECS. She is more aware of the surroundings. She will tap to initiate communication with pointing e.g. she will say, 'mommy, aeroplane' with eye contact following the direction of the plane.

Teacher Jelita will always remind me of my homework, feedback on Shannon's weakness, strengths, progress and taught me techniques to help Shannon. Jelita always has confidence in Shannon and this is very important as encouragement and praises will motivate Shannon and she will perform well. Thanks to Teacher Jelita for teaching me and always helping me by giving me useful resources, guiding me and advising me on how to use the resources.

By Shannon mummy, Serene Lim