

TRANSCRIPT: ISC - Reducing anxiety

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A lot of general anxiety can be reduced for our young people by ensuring that everything's as predictable as possible for them. I always look at it as akin to being in a foreign country - if you don't speak the language and you don't understand the culture, it can be very disorientating. So providing, sort of, some pointers and some structure as to what happens, reduces that anxiety and makes them feel as though they know what's going to happen and what to do in order to meet their needs and have their wants addressed.

Everything in our department is set up to help people be as independent as possible. So we have a lot of routine and things are structured. For instance, in our cloakroom we've got demarcated units where the student can see that there's their picture, that's their hook and each of the chairs have their own picture on it to show where they sit.

We use a lot of visual information. For instance, we have visual timetables where they can see what they're doing and when. If they're not at a picture level of understanding, they'll have an 'objects of reference' timetable so we can use that to tell them what they're going to be doing now or what they're going to be doing next.

We have a work schedule that we've taught them how to use so, whilst there is some aspect of that for teaching new skills, we want to promote an independent work routine as well. So they have a series of drawers that are arranged top to bottom and that corresponds to a series of symbols on a work schedule and they can match up the symbol to the drawer and work their way through it bit by bit.