

Transitioning with My Daughter Makayla



Matrix is grateful to April Hewes for contributing as a guest writer and sharing her heartfelt story on transitioning.

Coping with change is hard for many of us. For those on the autism spectrum, any change, even a well-transitioned change, can create a turbulent situation. I know this first hand, being the mother of Makayla, my 16 year-old daughter on the autism spectrum.

Change has always been her nemesis! A simple change, such as changing her shampoo, could throw her into a panic and behavioral crisis. And yet, she is now at the age that she herself has begun to think about monumental change, as she begins her transition into adulthood.

As a mother, it has been a complicated process trying to balance my daughter's disabilities with her desire to move at the same developmental pace as her friends. Realistically, sometimes, Makayla needs to move slower than her friends when it comes to the realities of self-sufficiency and full independence.

My child is on the autistic spectrum, and will always need help and support with many daily living skills, such as budgets, finances, and working. Yet she is capable of so much more than I would have ever assumed!

Makayla may not be ready for self-sufficiency yet, however, she is progressing towards full autonomy and independence. As a mother, I have found that there are a lot of choices in Makayla's life that she can and does make on her

own. Makayla knows what she likes and dislikes. She has preferences and knowledge that she is capable of expressing. She knows herself better than I do, which at first was hard for me to accept.

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Makayla came to me a year ago and shared with me that she was struggling with gender dysphoria (the sex and gender assigned at birth do not match the person's gender identity). She told me that the male gender she was assigned at birth did not match her true gender—that she believed that she was/is, female. When Makayla told me she identified as transgender and wanted to transition with hormones into womanhood, I was caught off-guard, but not shocked.

Makayla had been saying since she could speak that she was a girl. For a time, she even wore dresses and skirts to school. I wasn't shocked by her desire to be completely female, but I was floored by the amount of knowledge and research Makayla had put in to her decision.

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Change can be difficult. Sometimes, moving at a slower pace and planning intermediate transitions can help. It is also important to allow all those who are directly affected by change to have a part in that planning. There will always be those moments when change just happens and catches us off-guard. In those moments, we can only do our best, just like everyone else!



RESOURCES

(only in English at this time)

Helping kids cope with change, *written by Fiona Baker for Kidspot*
<http://www.kidspot.com.au/parenting/parenthood/parenting-style/helping-kids-cope-with-change/news-story/0e2c2887df9e1c4a8af1140444fafe5c>

Helping Children Deal with Change and Stress, *Bright Horizons Family Solutions website*
<https://www.brighthouse.com/family-resources/e-family-news/helping-children-deal-with-change-and-stress>

How to Deal with Change, on *wikiHow website*
<http://www.wikihow.com/Deal-with-Change>

How to Get Better at Dealing with Change, *written by Nick Tasler, Harvard Business Review*
<https://hbr.org/2016/09/how-to-get-better-at-dealing-with-change>

7 Things You Need to Know to Deal With Major Life Changes, *written by Lisabeth Saunders Medlock, Ph.D., Huffington Post (Huffpost)*
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisabeth-saunders-medlock-phd/seven-things-you-need-to-b_4129918.html