**HOW I GOT MY CHILD WITH AUTISM TO TRY SOMETHING NEW**

J likes sameness and a particular routine, like most kids with autism. However, I have learned to use [**his hyperlexia and his hypernumeracy**](http://www.andnextcomesl.com/2015/01/what-is-hyperlexia-hypernumeracy.html) to our advantage. He loves checklists. He loves a list of things to do. He loves games. He loves to win games. He loves numbers. And his reading skills are well beyond his age. So how can I use that to encourage him to try something new?

Well, on a whim one night, I decided to try something simple. And it worked on the first try like magic. No fights. No tears. Just a plain old parenting win.

For years, J has sat in the same chair in the exact same spot at the kitchen table. He never sits anywhere else. Even this past summer at summer camp, he got upset when one of the kids sat in the blue chair that he had been using the day before. One quick social story from the speech pathologist and problem was solved. However, we hadn’t been able to translate that into success at home.

Until now…dun-dun-dun!

I came up with a game. A ridiculously simple game.

First, I labeled all the chairs at our kitchen table with numbers. I just used a small square of paper and some tape. Perfect, tapping into his love of numbers. Check.

Next, I moved the placemats around so that the one with his name on it was in a new spot.

Then I wrote a simple letter inviting him to play a game.

*Let’s play a game!*

*We are going to sit in a new chair.*

*J, you will sit in chair #1.*

*K will sit in chair #2.*

*Mommy will sit in chair #3.*

*Daddy will sit in chair #4.*

*We will eat in our new chairs because it is fun to try new things.*

Okay so all prepped and ready to go. I called the boys up for supper and specifically told J that we were going to play the game, but that first, he needed to read the letter out loud. Tapping into his **[hyperlexia](http://www.andnextcomesl.com/2015/01/what-is-hyperlexia-hypernumeracy.html" \t "_blank)**. Check.

Then he had to go on a quick little scavenger hunt to see where these numbers were. Again, tapping into his love of numbers and his enjoyment for games. Check.

He was so excited to find the first chair and sit in it. Because he was in chair #1, he was happy to be first. Remember he loves to win games and he got first place. Another interest of his can be crossed off the list.

Then he directed everyone else into their chairs as he went down the numbered chair checklist.  Used his love for checklists. Check.

Then J went on to eat his supper. Just like that. There were no complaints about being in a new chair or in a new spot. Just a super excited kid with a ridiculous grin on his face because he was sitting in the “first chair.” And three weeks later, he is still sitting in a new chair and in a new spot. It’s a modern day miracle. At least it is for us.

So how do you adapt this success story for your child with autism? Try these strategies:

* **Make it fun!** J loves games and it was an exciting game for him.
* **Tap into your child’s interests.** Checklists, games, and numbers are all interests of J’s and I included all of that in this simple strategy.
* **Use the skills they excel at to their advantage.** For J, that's his ability to read (thank you, **[hyperlexia](http://www.andnextcomesl.com/2015/01/what-is-hyperlexia-hypernumeracy.html" \t "_blank)**!).
* **Get others to try something new alongside him.** Since J always sat in the same spot, the rest of the family did too. So we all switched chairs and spots and continue to rotate around the table every few days. Basically, we’re modeling social skills for him by being willing to try new things too.

It sounds so simple and obvious, but it worked. And it worked well! So, if you’re looking for me, you can find me sitting in chair #3, celebrating this small victory in my head.

<http://www.andnextcomesl.com/2015/01/how-i-got-my-child-with-autism-to-try.html>