



Change

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There are always times when unexpected changes occur during the day:

- An activity is postponed or cancelled.
- Parts of an activity change (e.g., it is raining, so playtime is in the gym, rather than outside).
- A favorite staff member is home sick, so someone else will be swimming with the student that day.

Unexpected changes can be very stressful for students with deaf-blindness. Some of the emotional stress occurs because a student does not know why something is happening or is unaware that the change is just temporary.

The kinds of things that students can be unsure about might surprise you. When he doesn't go outside for playtime he may wonder if he will ever play outside again. If the staff member is out, will he still get to swim? Will the staff member ever come back?

You can use the student's calendar to help him understand the concept of change and gain the skills he needs to handle unexpected changes. Here are some suggestions.

Give it a name. Use the sign, word, or symbol for change. For an illustration, visit [Life Print ASL Dictionary](http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/c/change.htm).

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Be proactive. Introduce the word "change," and the concept, in the student's calendar and throughout the day. Begin with small, neutral changes, rather than wait until something big and upsetting is changed.

Make time to communicate. Be sure to take the time to communicate about unexpected changes and provide the student with information as a way to help him calm down and cope. Handling change is a critical skill that will be useful the student's whole life. Unexpected change is a teaching opportunity, not a problem.

Example:

Steven's much-loved computer time is cancelled because the computer is broken and no one can repair it for a couple of days. Settle in at the calendar with him and try some of these strategies:

- Tell his that computer time is "changed."
- Explain that he will need to "wait" for computer time.

- Place the symbol for “computer” back with his other symbols in the storage container for symbols.
- Replace it with something he also enjoys or let him use a choice board to select an activity himself.
- Show him that the rest of his activities are still in the calendar, unchanged.
- Draw an experience story about the computer being broken and someone coming to fix it.
- Be prepared to have this conversation several times, if needed. It is well worth the time. It may be the most important thing for him to learn that day.