

# Thematic PhotoBooks system



## *Theory and Practice*

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## **INTRODUCTION. SOURCE OF INSPIRATION**

Dear readers!

I am glad to present to your attention the TPB system, which I have been developing for 20 years working with children and adults with special needs. in various adaptation programs in New York - in residences (houses, where children or adults live under staff supervision), day and adaptation programs, as well as in numerous situations where children live at home with their parents. I often had to work with children of very low level of intellectual development with concomitant diseases; many kids were non-verbal; some could not move freely. However, regardless of the state of the child, I have always been struck by their willingness to act in cooperation with others, as well as the desire for development and experience the joy of achievement and success.

This desire of children to participate in the implementation of my ideas, directed to help them develop, inspired and supported me all these years in most difficult situations. The children themselves were the source of inspiration and my best partners to create the system TPB

Since my system of work is noticeably different from the accepted official approach, I did not go for a degree. I did not want to perceive a child through diagnosis or the knowledge from the text -books, did not want to describe a child in professional terms. That would prevent me from hearing and feeling a child and interfere with developing approaches that are only suitable for a unique child with whom we were working at a certain time. There are other advantages to those who spend a lot of time with the child taking care of his immediate needs. These circumstances allow you to create a special contact with a child. Such a contact is difficult to form for a person who is limited by acquired knowledge, limited by time or strict conditions of a certain program and paperwork. I was free to follow the natural path of a child.

When I published articles and a more or less coherent system began to take shape from my disparate developments, I managed to find a theoretical base that supports the TPB system and is based on the ideas of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky and Activity Theory

We invite you, dear parents and those who are involved in the life of a special child, to try out the TPB system, help children develop, and you yourself develop creativity and enjoy working with your child!

The book gives a theoretical justification and the examples, which are presented in an artistic form (stories), it is shown how this can work in reality.

Professionals use this System, but I believe that for a child with any problems, parents are the most important people in life and I tried to create classes from the position of parents

I hope the book will inspire you.

Additional information you can find on our website:

<http://autismtpb.tilda.ws/>

# **PART I A LITTLE ABOUT THE SYSTEM OF THEMATIC PHOTOBOOKS**

## **History of this book**

Good afternoon. My name is Olga. I am an ordinary young city woman. In the last few years of my relatively short life, by the will of circumstances, I ended up in a small Russian village, remote from civilization.

My new friend here was the grandmother of the only child with autism in the settlement. When her daughter shifted the care and responsibility of her son to her and left for the city to work, a mature, accomplished and experienced woman faced an unfamiliar task - taking care of a special grandson of primary school age. It was felt that she and the school teachers lacked the existing educational experience that they had acquired thanks to their own and other, ordinary children. Therefore, despite the fact that the boy had a very mild form of autism, he often had difficulties and problems when communicating in a children's team. There was a lack of understanding of two worlds - the ordinary and the world of this special child.

She talked about her grandson a lot and with love, and at a certain point I could no longer remain passive. I really wanted to help her.

Understanding this new topic for me on the Internet, I followed the path that many parents follow - I started by reading the opinions of other parents on the forums, raised my old contacts regarding child psychology, and asked everyone for one thing: advise good primary sources of really working techniques, especially unusual strategies and approaches.

Knowing that I read in English, friends sent me materials, including in this language. One of the links I received led me to the author's website dedicated to working with special children

This was the first source where I met what I felt intuitively for a long time: the confidence that such children differ from us primarily in perception, and that if others around them can help them become interested in the world, understand themselves and the people around them with the means available to them, everyone's life of the participants in this process will change quickly and for the better. And most

importantly, it's relatively easy. All that is needed is intuition, love, respect and understanding of the uniqueness of such children.

Having learned that Dana, who lives in America, emigrated from the Soviet Union at a mature age, I decided to write to her: I suggested that the Russian-thinking author might have draft materials in Russian that I could show the grandmother I know. This is where our correspondence began.

Dana was very responsive to my emails and questions. More and more immersed in the peculiarities of her author's methodology, as I mentally called it, I also learned the features of the American system, the purpose of which was to take care of special children and adults at the expense of the budget. Dana's short story about her I will convey here in my own words, but on her behalf. I ask you to attribute possible inaccuracies of understanding to me - I will try to state only the essence:

*"When I started working in this system in specialised residences where special children and adults live, I was very surprised that, by and large, the residents do nothing. With rare exceptions, the "customers" of the system only sleep, eat and play: watch TV, videos, or experience effortlessly in some other way. In particular, they are accustomed to expensive entertainment events, long trips. At the same time, these children are very well cared for: a lot of staff, they do not need anything, but they do not have any development. At first, I thought that this situation was only in places where they spend the night, live.*

*Little by little, my experience accumulated by itself from impressions about the life of special children. After some time, I also worked in the "daytime programs" - it turned out that there, too, the activities of clients were minimal, mostly entertainment. I worked in families - nothing was expected from such children, since there I had to do everything for them in order to free their parents for other things.*

*I attended schools where such children went. There - wow! - They developed certain skills and gave knowledge. But since often these skills and knowledge were not applied anywhere else, they did not become part of the child's life.*

*I am by nature an active, consistent person and I try to find logic in everything. At first, I asked teachers and my colleagues from the childcare staff a lot of questions: "What is the purpose of doing this?", "What's next, what's the next step?" But it turned out that only people who create papers that prescribe his life for a special child know the answers. And although on*



*paper everything looked logical and consistent, in real life there was no complete picture of the child - it did not exist anywhere.*

*Many trained people are busy with the life and development of the child in different institutions and premises, but everyone does something of his own, not knowing the general plan. The result of the work of the swan, cancer and pike is well known to us, and it turned out to be impossible for me to come to terms with it. I began to gradually change the strategy of communication with my wards. I was helped by intuition, the personal characteristics of my own perception and, of course, the experience of working with children as a photographer.*

*When, with the approval of my superiors, I began to develop my learning TPB system, I was expected to do it as a project - report back, and everyone will forget about it. And that next time I will do some other project. All my attempts to do something consistently, in increasing complexity, sooner or later met with misunderstanding and even disapproval: this was not prescribed in the papers and simply for this reason, theoretically, it could bring someone some kind of trouble.*

*At the same time, the process of creating each photo book had a significant impact on the child involved in it, creating motivation to live and create, increasing interest in oneself, people and the world around - so it seemed to me that this was exactly the path to follow. Not finding understanding at work, I began to write about it on my website. »*

In other words, it became obvious to me that in the US system, “seven nannies had a child without an eye.” But in Russia, such children do not receive hyper-custody of the educational and social system!

My timid assumption that most of these systemic problems are alien to Russian parents, so her method will have more like-minded people in our former homeland, planted a certain seed in Dana's creative soul, which eventually sprouted in the form of this book edition.

*Dana wrote:*

*“Dear Olga, it was a good idea to switch to Russian, because in this language environment I found the missing scientific and methodological part for my photobook system. It turned out to be the ideas of L. S. Vygotsky, the theory of activity, which proves the methodological basis for the real effectiveness of my system of photobooks. Russian pedagogy confirms: the child must develop in conscious activity!*

*... The ability to see in a special person a Personality, one's own reflection, the desire to be loved and, most importantly, understood and accepted - that's what moved me. The thoughts of Lyubov Arkus went in a similar direction when she was creating her film. "Anton's Right Here,". The effective author's methodology of the Borozdin Center leads to the same goal ... "*

I am proud that Dana's first book will be published in Russian, and I am very glad that my humble question - of course, combined with Dana's endless kindness, inquisitiveness and creativity, her many years of work in the systematic development of dozens of special people - was embodied in the form of this book. I am convinced that these ideas will help tens, hundreds, thousands of families with special children to become happier.

Watching the transformation of the grandson of my friend, I understand that the happiness and personal growth of even one child is already worth all the work we have done to create and prepare this book for publication. At the same time, I understand that it will inspire you even more.

Its main part consists of real examples of the application of the system in different initial situations and social roles of adults close to the child and even friends-children. Try to adopt the very atmosphere, the train of thought of the characters, their intuition: believe in the child and be consistent!

My main advice is to follow the interests of your child, listen to yourself, look closely and be sure to try, try!

Sincerely, the first reader of this book,  
***Lagoda Olga, Russia***

### **Professional opinions**

The book is devoted to the description of the author's system for creating Thematic PhotoBooks (TPB system) and its capabilities in the education and development of special children, which occurs in the process of joint creative activity of a child and an adult in the production of thematic photobooks.

The relevance of this work is undeniable. In the context of the growing need of society for the psychological support of special children, aimed primarily at their harmonious development, the use of the system for creating Thematic Photobooks will allow creating a learning

environment for a special child at the earliest stages of development and thereby contribute to the favorable development of the intellect and personality and prevent negative consequences. alienation from society. The undoubted value of the TPB system is that it helps an adult (parent, educator, mentor, etc.) to establish productive contact with the child, to get to know and understand him, to identify his abilities and talents, to involve the child in communication with other people.

The author rightly notes that the creation of thematic photobooks is both a process and a goal. As a result, a number of important tasks are solved, such as establishing contact, diagnostics, motivation, and development.

Based on the provisions of the activity approach described in the studies of the leading Soviet psychologists L. S. Vygotsky, S. L. Rubinstein and A. N. Leontief, and his own many years of practical experience, gives a theoretical and methodological scientific substantiation of the TPB system, competently and logically correlates the basic principles underlying the theory of activity with the features of its practical implementation.

The author offers a holistic approach to solving problems related to the education and development of special children. Demonstrating knowledge of the psychological characteristics of children with disabilities and accompanying his story with cases from his own practice, the author leads us step by step to understanding how, based on the basic principles, to use the TPB system in the process of joint creative activity with a child. These principles are the disclosure of the internal patterns and logic of the development of a special child; attention to internal processes that originate in direct social contacts between a child and an adult, and then are fixed in his mind; zone of proximal development; unity of consciousness and activity; the possibility of developing and compensating for a mental defect through the development and improvement of mental functions, etc., are reflected at each stage.

The author has carried out serious work on the analysis, generalisation and systematisation of theoretical and empirical material, which allowed her to describe the features of the application of this system, to reveal the specifics of the interaction between an adult and a child.

The basis of the TPB system proposed by the author is the idea of cooperation between an adult and a child, the establishment and

development of partnership and trust relationships, the gradual inclusion of the child in the creative process, which is reflected in the subsequent development of trusting relationships - the stage of acquaintance, independence, creativity.

The advantages of the TPB system include its financial and technical accessibility, versatility and ease of use, which allows it to be applied in practice by both specialists and parents who do not have special education.

The book is written in an easy, lively and understandable language for a wide range of readers. The author, using concrete examples, shows how this system can be used in working with special children, which undoubtedly increases its practical value.

In our opinion, the TPB system proposed by the author can be used both in working with special children and with children who do not have disabilities, because it allows you to realise the creative potential of the child, to establish interaction between an adult and a child within the framework of joint activities which contributes to the harmonious development and socialisation.

The book can be useful not only for practitioners, but also for parents interested in finding contacts with the child, in his harmonious and creative development.



“As someone with more than 20 years of experience with resource-driven approaches, I see great potential in using the TPB system in working with special needs children. The author is working on an approach, drawing information from the most reliable sources - the children themselves. They themselves express what needs to be done and how to help them, and the system follows this. Photobooks are a good help during the period of acquaintance with special children, but the main thing is the stage of creating photobooks, in which the leading role is gradually transferred back to the child, developing his creativity and strengths and creating conditions for comprehensive promotion. In the author's approach, the child is perceived as a person with unique powers, capabilities, resources, and skills. The development of the photobook approach in working with special children has a convincing theoretical basis, but most importantly, it increases interest and

motivation for development, helps to establish cooperation between an adult and a child.”

***A. V. Mikhalsky, Ph.D. ped. Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Moscow State Pedagogical University (Russia)***

“The research and effort put into developing this brand new and innovative system for special children is phenomenal. The TPB system takes something as simple as a camera and turns it into a learning tool while engaging children in the process. What makes the system different from conventional teaching methods is how easily it manages to get over the child's learning problems. The process engages adults and children in something that is not just productive and educational, but does so naturally, inspiring participants to learn on their own and get more out of the process of their own free will.”

***Saif Afradi, writer (Pakistan)***

“I highly recommend using the system for creating Thematic Photobooks. In my early childhood education practice, I use numerous techniques to meet the needs of special learners. The creation of Thematic Photobooks allows you to extremely successfully solve many cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional tasks and develops fine motor skills. Using a digital camera is very encouraging for young children and helps them to learn skills at a much faster pace than other standard approaches.”

***Devora Elishevich, Master of Education (New York, USA)***

“With some kids, especially those ages 7 to 11, this approach of making Thematic Photobooks will be like a blast, boosting their self-esteem, helping them figure out their behavior through finding their own answers rather than through shame or anything else. You have already shown how effectively it can work wonders with children who might otherwise be "lost" to themselves, their families and society at large. I hope you still help children with your camera...”

***Larry L. Hill, family psychologist (USA)***

“By applying the ability-based model of autism, the author focuses on what a person is capable of doing. The system of Thematic Photobooks involves the strength of people with autism - visual perception - in conscious activity, being a natural consequence of Vygotsky's theories. And if applied, it will bring many benefits both to people on the autism spectrum and, in turn, to society as a whole.”

***Stephen M. Shore, professor,  
world-renowned educator, consultant,  
author and speaker on issues related to  
autism (Boston, Massachusetts, USA)***

“Creating thematic photobooks is a creative yet easy-to-apply technique that can be used with a wide range of people with different problems. With all the sophistication of modern technology, there remains a strong need for connectivity and reciprocal communication methods vital to human interaction. This important and personal aspect of this work cannot be underestimated. Thematic Photobooks provide an opportunity to actively interact with the personality of the child from various initial positions. An adult, professional or parent using a camera can selectively focus on certain topics or content and develop a child's understanding through the use of photographs accompanied by words for better understanding. Involving the child in the work on the content of the thematic photobook about his life and the subsequent discussion allows him or her to see himself and his life from the outside, which gives the child self-awareness of himself and his own life, thereby placing him on a higher level of existence. Putting a camera in the hands of a child opens up a huge variety of possibilities. The technique of Thematic Photobooks can be used in work, individually or with small groups, to create a coherent learning process consisting of visual stages, which together allow them to cope with the initial task on their own in the future. By giving the child the opportunity to use the camera to explore their environment, we also have the added benefit of allowing other adults to become familiar with the characteristics of the child's point of view and perception, allowing the child to express himself. One of the biggest challenges facing professionals and/or parents is to understand how a child perceives when their verbal and/or communication skills are impaired or absent. Thematic Photobooks can be used in a limitless

variety of ways to actively engage children, benefiting both the children and those who work with them.

Time and attention are needed to further explore and document the use of the Thematic Photobooks system.

***Jeannie Angus, PhD, Associate Professor,  
Director of the Special Education  
Graduate Program (Brooklyn College  
Institute of Education, New York, USA)***

## **About Co-authorship**

As you know, a person is social, and therefore many tasks simply cannot be solved alone. Where you cannot cope on your own, you need a partner's hand to help you walk a path together that is inaccessible to you alone. Often this is a friend or mentor. This does not mean that a friend or mentor will do all the work for you, not at all. This means that, working together, you will do some common things, go through some difficult paths. Collaboration affects both participants, and co-authorship has an even greater impact. It makes subtle changes at the beginning that become more pronounced as the work nears completion.

Many people underestimate the role of co-authorship, as I underestimated it until I started working on stories about thematic photobooks. Most adults are able to independently master any skills and solve everyday problems, they do not need help and guidance for this. And that is why it is so easy for them to lose sight of the role of creative interaction that underlies co-authorship.

And in vain, because co-authorship is that unique type of activity that allows you to combine the efforts of several people and get a result that far exceeds what can be achieved alone. If we talk about our joint activities, then Dana was a generator of ideas and a source of practical material, but my task was to structure the information and make art stories out of it. Thus, each of the participants contributed to one big cause. This principle also applies when working with special children - the mentor is not a tug, he is one of the participants in the process. At the same time, the child is a full-fledged participant - he not only blindly follows the adult, but also makes his own proposals, implements them, that is, takes an active part in the process of creating a photo book. It is

important to understand that the impact of such work is directed not only to the child, it also benefits the adult who participates in it. In the process of co-authorship, the child and his mentor share their ideas, thoughts, and points of view with each other. This not only enriches each of the participants, but also allows you to create a unique contact between them in the process of working together.

*Svetlana Dubinina (Russia)*

## **Pioneer Invites Followers**

For a long time, I existed as if in a complete vacuum. I am sure that what I do is good and useful for children. I was regularly convinced of this, but no one could understand the essence of my approach, and I could not explain. Then I published an article in a magazine dedicated to the education of special children, but this did not help at all. After reading, friends and colleagues asked: "Well, what's the point, tell me?"

I work for an organisation that helps children with special needs. We are constantly training on various topics. During one of them, our psychologist mentioned the name of L. S. Vygotsky. I remembered the last name, because in my work I just applied what our psychologist told us about, mentioning in this connection the name of L. S. Vygotsky, and after almost twenty years I heard it again.

Recently, I "returned" to Russia with the help of the Internet and began to study with interest the experience of Russian specialists. I learned about the Novosibirsk centre of Borozdin, got to know him better and realised that kindred spirits work here. Russian psychologists advised me to turn to the theory of activity - this is how I discovered L. S. Vygotsky and realised that I had come "home".

I delved into the study of the works of the Soviet psychologist and found that his views are a systematic, scientific basis for my practice. Finally, I have something to rely on! Although Vygotsky's ideas are studied in educational institutions, only a few of them are applied in practice. Literature describing in detail the work of L. S. Vygotsky is classified as "experimental education" in the United States. The paradox is that in the West access to the ideas of Vygotsky appeared only after the collapse of the Soviet Union and, although the work is already more than 80 years old, his teaching is called the approach of the future - it will replace reflexology and behavioral therapy.



An interesting situation turns out: while in America, I look to the future, based on ideas that arose far in the past, in the Soviet Union. In the United States, no one has yet seriously delved into the study of activity theory in relation to special children, so whoever decides to put my system into practice can consider himself a pioneer.

It is important that in the practice of using my system for creating Thematic Photobooks, the main law in working with children and adults is not violated - **do no harm**.

## **PART II THEORETICAL RATIONALE AND ITS ILLUSTRATION IN STORIES**

### **Chapter 1. Theoretical basis of the system for creating thematic photobooks**

#### **System for creating Thematic Photobooks**

The system for creating thematic photobooks is one which promotes the development of a special needs child, which occurs in the process of joint creative activity, with an adult mentor, in the production of photobooks on certain themes.

Thematic photobooks touch upon several aspects of a child's life, to help master applied skills, acquire new knowledge, may be for entertainment purposes or to improve character traits and develop abilities.

The system is designed in a way so any person without special training can use it. The child is a basic source of information

What is the purpose of this system?

It is necessary to create conditions so children will develop and reveal themselves as personalities, learn various life skills and acquire knowledge. The TPB system is also designed to help parents to establish productive contact with their child, understanding and identifying their abilities and talents.

Creating thematic photobooks is both a process and a goal, where several tasks are solved: diagnostics, development, establishing contact, motivation.

As the TPB system appeared due to many years of practice and theoretical basis by ideas of L. S. Vygotsky and the theory of activity, it would be helpful to discuss this in more detail.

#### **Development of higher mental functions**

Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky is known as the "Mozart of psychology", however, psychology was not his initial interest. He graduated from the Faculty of Law at Moscow University, Faculty of History and Philosophy of Shanyavsky University. This may have enabled him to examine psychological science issues with "fresh eyes". His innovative approach may have occurred because he was not influenced by traditions of

academia. Vygotsky had an independent view on the development and education of children. He mostly attended to the issues of special needs children and was the founder of "defectology".

Vygotsky placed great importance to the originality of the integral personality of a special needs child. He emphasised that it is necessary to pay attention to the child himself, not the disease and symptoms. Particularly the disclosure of the child's internal logic, development, and uniqueness. These processes proceed quite differently than by most of their peers.

Vygotsky argued that it is necessary to monitor aspects of a child's personality and conscious development. Also it is important to observe specific aspects of their personality.

The idea of consistent mental development (a more serious issue than the simple acquisition of knowledge and skills in the learning process) played a decisive role in the formation of special pedagogy as a science. One of the most important theses of Vygotsky states that learning and development are not identical. They may be closely related; however, they are different concepts, with different roles.

Vygotsky became famous for his Cultural-Historical Concept of the Development of Higher Mental Functions. The essence of this concept is the synthesis of the doctrines of nature and culture. According to Vygotsky, all natural mental functions are gradually transformed into functions of a higher mental order ("cultural"). For example, mechanical memory becomes logical, chains of associations turn into purposeful thinking or creative imagination, impulsive action is replaced by arbitrary, etc. All these internal processes are born in the direct interaction of a child with an adult and are gradually fixed in his mind. The same goes for the spiritual development of the child. It is argued that the formation of a child's personality and full development is likely to be equally influenced by hereditary inclinations and social factors.

Vygotsky attached particular importance to the development of higher intellectual processes in special needs children, as well as their relationship with those without special needs. Studies have shown that it is possible to develop and compensate for an intellectual deficit in special needs children by working with higher mental functions in the first place. Simple training of natural functions may assist less here.

The work "Development of higher mental functions" presents a scheme for the formation of the human psyche using signs, which work as a means of regulating mental activity. First, a person meets others,

then interacts with them, learns the rules, then internalises the process. The person can then control their behaviour.

In subsequent works, Vygotsky focused on the study of the sign and its meaning, on its predominantly intellectual content. Thanks to this new approach, he was able, together with his students, to develop a theory of the mental development of the child, substantiate it experimentally and capture it in the fundamental work "Thinking and Speech."

It must be said that Vygotsky interprets the word as an action and therefore sees in it a special socio-cultural function - in fact, it is an intermediary between persons and the world that surrounds them. The scientist attached special importance to the symbolic nature of the word. The importance of its influence is unconditional, given the intellectual life of a person changes qualitatively and their mental functions (perception, memory, attention, thinking) increase from elementary ones.

The process of creating photobooks is directly aimed at the development of higher intellectual functions. The key tool here is a thematic photobook, consisting of the child's real life images and words that complement them. Images have a semantic content, endowed with a meaning, understandable to the child. The task of an adult is to convey this to the child and make it understandable. This is an interesting, exciting, creative activity and its fruits are truly invaluable.

The story "**How Yanick Became a Partner**" illustrates this process.

### **How Yanick Became a Partner (story)**

*The real author of this story is my friend Yahil, whom we have known for over 8 years. Although I have not worked with him for a long time, I visit him from time to time. He has become very big, taller than everyone in the family, he has a beard, but when he smiles, rejoices that I visit him and bring him his favorite treats, I see the face of that boy with whom we spent long hours together. What separates Yahil from his siblings is his amazing character. He is a wonderful person who is loved by all. He is truly a model of a Christian who accepts everything with angelic patience. His little brother is a stern and very demanding creature, from whom everyone gets it, including Yahil, but it seems that Yahil treats him with some understanding condescension ... as, indeed, to everyone else. Some kind of*

*higher wisdom is felt in him, which, of course, can only be felt, but it is impossible to show or prove.*



### ***VOLUNTEER VERA***

– You know, my neighbour has been helping special children for many years in retirement. She says it helps her feel needed and not go crazy with loneliness.

Vera listened attentively to her friend. A couple of minutes ago, she shared that she couldn't stay at home anymore. Only a week has passed since her retirement, and she has already managed to get tired of being in her four walls.

She worked in a library for many years. A calm woman in love with books connected her life with literature a long time ago and never regretted it. When the time came to retire, she was seen off with great regret, because she was exactly the person to whom everyone went for help and who could help in any situation. She could patiently pick up books at the request of a person, regardless of how long the work took. Her willingness to help and endless patience were well known to visitors of the city library. Adults and especially children lined up for her, knowing that she would certainly find what they needed. So after so many years of working together, colleagues were very upset about her retirement.

Vera was a typical introvert. She inherited her boundless love for books from her parents. Thick tomes replaced her company of peers, to whom she never had much attraction; they had too different characters and interests. The only exceptions were a couple of friends and a husband whom they met in the reading room. He was a scientist and, like her, spent a lot of time reading books. They never had children, so after the death of her parents and husband, Vera was left all alone.

## ***NEW LIFE***

The long-awaited retirement nevertheless came as a surprise to her. At first she was happy to rest, but after a week she firmly decided that staying at home was not for her. She needed to be needed, and besides, she really lacked communication - the team, which over the years of work became important to her, including readers whom she assisted. She remembered her friend's words about helping special needs children in retirement.

In the square in front of her library, at lunchtime, she sometimes saw these children with their parents or teachers trying to read children's books to them. These children seemed to be aliens to her, because they seemed to see the world through a different prism, being in their own world as a baby is. In the age of digital technology and waning interest in reading, they were immersed in her beloved world of rustling pages. Vera suddenly felt a strong desire to convey to these children her undivided love for books.

So she registered as a volunteer in the program for helping children with special needs and began to wait for her first student.

## ***OFFER***

-Hello, Vera. Please tell me, would you like to work with a child? But the situation is different there. There is a boy who has severe autism. He does not speak and practically does not perform any actions; - the employee of the volunteer organisation was silent for a while, leafing through the pages of documents. - If you are interested, I can send you more detailed information.

- Yes, Inna, send it, please. I'll look and think it over, - Vera answered.

She hung up the phone and thought. Almost six months have passed since she joined the volunteer organisation that helps special children. During this time, she managed to successfully work with several children. Vera tried using photography and was surprised how successful this experience turned out to be. She also became more interested.

"But here it's a completely different matter ... The child cannot speak, he is not capable of any actions. What will I do with him? - Vera thought, reading the information about the eight-year-old boy Yanick. "I won't know for sure until I try," she finally decided and accepted the offer

...

## ***BOSS's CHAIR***

On the day they met, Vera was worried. She thought for a long time about whether she could help the boy, who was unable to speak or do anything.

-Hello, my name is Vera. The volunteer organisation sent me to help Jan," she said smiling when she first came to the place

-We call him Yanick, - the boy's mother smiled. - Please, come in, he is in his room.

Entering the room, Vera saw an office chair on wheels, where the boy was sitting near the window. He did not turn his head, did not look away, and did not react in any way to the fact that adults entered his room. He just sat and stared at one point, as if immersed in his own world, and was not at all interested in what was happening around

"Like an important boss in an office," Vera thought.

From time to time the boy made some movements with his hands and sometimes turned in his chair.

Vera went to the library that evening and borrowed some books on autism. Kanner, Asperger, Appé - all these authors have written a lot on the definition and diagnosis of autism. Vera learned that the disease had been known for a long time, but unexplored much during that time. As for the lack of speech regarding Yanick, this was common in children with an autism spectrum disorder.

"But this does not mean at all that the children do not understand what they are being told," thought Vera and decided on occasions to check this out.

The next day she had a long talk with Yanick's mother, who was expecting her fifth child. She made no secret of how much she and her husband loved their children.

- You see, they are everything to us. My husband and I have always dreamed of a big loud family, with many children who could play together ... We would very much like Yanick to make some progress, but ... Our ABA specialist said that we should not expect miracles, -mother smiled sadly

- How long has your ABA specialist been working with Yanick?- Vera asked.

-She had just started. A very diligent girl and loves her job and children. You will get to know her soon.

- I'll be glad to meet her, - Vera replied

### ***FIRST CONTACT with YANICK***

Vera spent the first few days just talking to the boy. Seeing that he remained indifferent to this, she began to look for a way to get through to him. She remembered her successful experience with photography and came up with an idea. On one of her visits, Vera brought a camera. She took a couple of pictures of Yanick, snapping her camera close to him. She loudly discussed the objects she photographed. And a couple of times Vera noticed that the boy furtively glanced in her direction at what she was doing. This made her unspeakably glad, even a fleeting glance of this child meant a lot.

- Stella, can I take some of your family photos? I would like to try to work with Yanick with their help.

- Yes, of course, Vera, - Stella was a little surprised, but with pleasure she brought Vera a plump family album.

In the evening, Vera started making a photobook. She named it "Yanick and his family." She took white sheets of paper and attached with tape photographs of the boy's mother and father, his siblings and Yanick himself. She wrote a simple, uncomplicated story about the boy Yanick, who lives with his family in a cosy apartment. She told a little about mom, dad and siblings, and, of course, most of all about Yanick himself - what he liked to do and to eat. She decorated the book with stickers and placed each sheet in a transparent cover to protect them. The book turned out to be nice and convenient; its pages could be easily turned over, remaining clean and not being torn

- Look, Yanick, this is your mother feeding you your favourite chicken soup. And here is your little sister playing with her bears and dolls. And here you are again, looking out the window. What did you see there? Maybe birds? Or a kitten? - Vera reasoned the next day, sitting next to her student

She suddenly realised that something had changed. She looked up and froze - the boy was looking directly at her with interest. Then he glanced at the photobook.

- Can you see well, Yanick? Let me put the photobook closer, - Vera spoke carefully, afraid to destroy that fragile bond that had just appeared between her and the boy.

"Ba," Yanick said.

Vera knew that "ba" and "pa" were the only sounds the boy could make. From books, Vera knew that autistic children often used inner speech, but in reality, alas, it is transformed into inarticulate sounds. The



woman was sincerely sure that her constant stated monologues to Yanick would help him replenish his own vocabulary and, perhaps, learn to build words and sentences on his own.

### ***HAPPY BIRTHDAY!***

Soon the day of Yanick's birthday happened. The house was filled with joyful children and smiling adults, friends of the family. There was also an ABA specialist who worked with Yanick. Vera, of course, was also among those invited. She brought her camera with her and took pictures of the boy, his guests, gifts, and other attributes of a good celebration.

-Vera, can I have a minute? - Stella waved her hand from the other side of the room. – This is our ABA specialist, Laura. She devotes a lot of time and effort to us.

- Well, Stella. This is my job.”, -the serious young woman smiled.

“I am pleased to meet you,” Vera said.

From the words of Yanick's parents, she already knew that Laura always defends only the traditional methods described in textbooks. The women started talking about how Vera uses photobooks.

-Vera, please, understand me correctly. I don't trust this... hmm... unprofessional method a bit, you understand? There are methods and textbooks. Many prominent experts developed them with scientific research”, -explained Laura her point.

Vera did not argue, however, she did not intend to convince Laura. She returned to photograph Yanick's birthday. At some point, she suddenly noticed that Yanick was looking straight into the camera and smiling slightly.

“Yes, he's posing,” - Vera thought dumbfounded. Her hope of one day getting Yanick out of his chair was immediately strengthened.

The photos from Yanick's birthday made an excellent photobook. Vera decided to include Yanick in the work, and he helped with decoration, sticking the stickers. Everyone in the family loved the book. Laura also liked it and even was using it to work with Yanick.

### ***TRIP to BOTANICAL GARDEN***

One day they went to the Botanical Garden, and Laura went with them. Vera, as always, took her camera. It was spring, and everywhere they were greeted by the scents of lilacs and other flowers. The world

around was full of bright colors, which after winter were pleasing to the eye. Vera turned to Yanick:

- What beautiful flowers! Yanick, touch them, and I'll take a picture of you, - she exclaimed.

The boy immediately reached out and touched the flower. Laura sighed softly. Yanick willingly did what Vera asked him to do. During ABA classes, Laura always used some kind of food or his chewing tube to get him to complete tasks.

- Well done, Yanick, now smell the flowers. They have a wonderful smell.

Yanick bent down to the flower, and Vera quickly took a picture.

- Vera! This is a real miracle! – whispered Laura.

Vera nodded, smiling. She sincerely believed that the boy's situation was not at all hopeless.

The next day, she showed the pictures to the parents of her client. Father could not let go of the photo for a long time. He was impressed.

- “Vera, you have no idea how much this means to me,” he said quietly, “Stella, she...” he sighed, collecting his thoughts, “she accepts Yanick the way he is. She resigned herself to the fact that he was forever chained to his chair and closed in his world. But I can't just give up! It always seems to me that I should somehow help my son, show him the real world, tell him how good it is, and help Yanick find his place in it. Do you understand?”

- Yes, sure, I understand you very well. Believe me, I will do my best to help with this.

### ***WORK with PHOTOBOKS***

Work on photobooks was getting more and more active every day. Vera began to make a book about Yanick's daily life: eating, walking, and communicating with relatives. Yanick was no longer as indifferent as before. He posed for photos and even looked with interest, when Vera showed him the camera screen with a good shot. He took an active part in the creation photobooks themselves and, with the help of Vera, pasted stickers on the pages, passing her the tools she needed for work.

Vera asked Laura to teach Yanick cutting paper, and she agreed so now there is hope that soon he will be able to take a more active part in creating photobooks. And while reading, Yanick always turned the pages.

## ***COMMUNICATION***

During one of the times in the yard, Vera accompanied Yanick. She was pushing a little old bicycle on which the boy was sitting with his legs up, and they were having fun. Then Vera's phone rang, and she answered the call by stopping pushing the bike.

- Ba, ba!,- she heard Yanick's demanding voice.

-What is it, Yanick? Do you want me to ride you some more?

--Ba,- the boy said affirmatively.

-Wow, we can really communicate! - Vera wondered.

That same evening, she excitedly spoke to Laura:

"Can we teach him how to nod his head for "yes" and swing negatively for "no" This will be a step towards establishing communication with him!

Laura thought.

- You know, Vera, it seems to me that this is quite possible. But only with a positive response. On the downside, I'm not sure it's a good idea.

"Thank you, Laura," Vera thanked her from the bottom of her heart.

After some time, Yanick was already able to answer questions, nodding his head. If he did not nod, Vera understood that it was "no."

Also they started to use "pa" for park, so it came out that they had a simple dialogue

## ***ABA vs REAL LIFE***

Sometimes Vera watched how Laura and Yanick's classes were going. One day she suggested using more photos in that work.

- You know, Vera ... - Laura drawled doubtfully, - I'm not at all sure that this can be useful. I already did ABA tests and they confirmed that Yanick doesn't recognize pictures; it's too hard for him. But, of course, you can take more photos, and I will try to teach him to recognize them.

Vera continued to operate in her own way. If Laura, followed the methodology, usually acted only with gestures, then Vera constantly talked with the boy. Day after day, she told him stories, showed him photographs, and tried to get his elusive attention. One day, Vera came to Yanick from the store, having bought, among other products, his favourite chocolate milk. Putting food in the refrigerator, she pinned photos of the food she bought to the cabinet door.

"Look what I bought," Vera said cheerfully, leading him to the cabinet photos.

The boy stared blankly at the pictures. Suddenly, he took a photo of his favorite chocolate milk and hurried to the refrigerator. Vera just smiled happily.

-Don't worry, Yanick, we'll show them that you can recognize the photos, - she thought. "You and I will act according to our own methodology."

Milk was poured for the boy:

- Yanick, well done! You found a photograph, and got the milk.

A satisfied expression appeared on the boy's face. Vera thought with satisfaction that Yanick enjoyed spending time with her. His mother once told Vera that when she was gone, the boy carried her slippers everywhere with him. Vera was very moved then, and she tried her best to make the boy's life more interesting and pleasant.

### ***HARMFUL CARE***

An unexpected problem for Vera was that Yanick's mother surrounded him with an iron ring of care. She loved her son so much that she did not give him any space for independence. A child who could well perform some simple actions was most often spoon-fed, dressed and undressed and Vera was incredibly upset. She tried carefully talking to Stella, but ran into a wall of misunderstanding. Then she turned to Laura.

- After all, Yanick can be much more independent, - she said hotly.

"Vera," the girl sighed, "I understand. But this is his mother, and it is up to her to decide what care to surround her son with, even if it's detrimental for him. Of course, we can try to convince her, but I'm afraid that in this case we may simply lose our job. I'm not ready for this.

Vera decided to make another attempt and turned to the volunteer organisation, but even there she did not meet with understanding. She was told that the main thing is that the parents were satisfied with the help that Vera provided.

"Well, I'll do what I can," Vera decided and continued to do her job.

### ***PUZZLES and OTHER ENTERTAINMENTS***

Despite Laura's sceptical attitude, Vera believed that it would be useful for Yanick if she and Laura taught him the same things, albeit in different ways. Vera saw that Laura often used puzzles in her work, and decided to follow a similar path. Only Vera's puzzles were homemade. She would take a photograph of something and cut it into pieces. Then

they, together with Yanick, assembled this photo in a special photo frame, which served as the basis. Assembling the picture from the pieces, Yanick memorised what the things were there and how they looked. First, Vera cut the photo into two parts, then, when Yanick memorised their locations, she made four pieces, then six, and so on. The subjects of the photographs were taken from Yanick's everyday life.

One day, Vera noticed a rotating stand for spices or utensils in the kitchen and asked Stella to borrow it. Together with Yanick and his sister, they made a real "Wheel of Fortune" by attaching photos of various goodies to the wheel. The three of them played it for a long time and ate delicious prizes with pleasure.

### ***FOOD***

One of Vera's ideas was to create a photo book dedicated to food.

"You know, Vera, it's a little strange," Stella once told her, "but Yanick chooses very healthy food for himself. Since childhood, he ate only what he liked. And it's funny that he liked healthy food. Fruits, vegetables, white meat, and various lean foods. Here we are very lucky to have him.

"But..." Vera began to speak and fell silent.

An unpleasant thought occurred to her.

"After all, Laura uses junk food to encourage him. There are chips and sweets. A boy could easily become addicted to them," -she thought frustrated.

But she did not begin to touch an uncomfortable topic with Stella, knowing that she idolised Laura and her methods. ABA methodology is used all over the world, how could Vera convince the mother?

Instead, Vera decided to spur his interest in healthy food. Together with Yanick, they prepared his favourite fruit salad. Vera photographed every step of preparation. Laura helped Yanick with some actions. Then Vera came up with short rhymes for each step. They helped the boy better remember their order.

Yanick always listened to the book about banana-apple salad with pleasure. He also willingly helped in the preparation of the salad - bringing fruits, peeling and cutting bananas, washing apples.

When Vera found out that he knew how to put beads on a thread, she immediately used this skill. They made a lot of bracelets and beads for Yanick's mother, sister, aunt and even for Laura. A separate page was devoted to each step of producing a piece of jewellery in the photobook

"Jewellery Workshop "Yanick and Co"". "Co" - because Vera was also fond of this occupation, and sometimes Yanick's sister also joined them.

### ***TAKE a PICTURE of ME***



Over time, Yanick became very attached to Vera, and she became a regular participant in their family trips. One weekend, the whole family went to the Zoo. Vera, as always, took her camera along and kept clicking it, taking pictures of animals, the boy's parents, sister and Yanick himself. Suddenly she saw that the boy was trying to climb a rather high fence. Finally, he succeeded.

"Well done," Vera praised him.

But the boy looked at her strangely and expectantly. It was clear that he wanted something. And suddenly he pointed his hand at his chest. Finally, it dawned on Vera.

- Yanick! Do you want me to take a picture of you? - she exclaimed.

A satisfied smile spread across the boy's face. Vera laughed and snapped her camera. When she finished, she looked up at Yanick's parents. They were amazed and excited.

"It's just incredible," Stella whispered happily.

"Looks like Yanick is turning from an assistant into my partner," Vera thought happily. She could not put into words how important this moment was for her, when she saw with her own eyes the transformation of a child from a passive observer into a real participant in their common cause.

### ***Comment***

*At the heart of this story is the idea of how you can get through even to that child who initially seemed completely uninitiated and impregnable. Despite Yanick's deep immersion in his world, it turned out to be quite possible to help him show interest in real life. All that was required for this was a camera and Vera's great patience, who, day after day, tried to find an approach to the boy, to find the key to him, figuratively speaking.*

## **Chapter 2. Creativity as a source of development**

### **Importance of Creativity**

Creativity can support the progress of any child, not only those who have certain problems. Creating something new is essentially the desire for knowledge.

It must be remembered a special needs child should be assessed by their personality not as the sum of their disabilities. Vygotsky emphasised the need to study both the symptoms of a particular disability and the essence of changes.

In the TPB system, this can be easily traced. The teacher (or parent) can choose different topics of the photobook, for the child's needs - a wide choice of circumstances, participants, objects of study. Certainly, achievable goals and feasible tasks are set for children, which create a favourable environment for their development. It's much easier to address changes, or track the appearance of new traits in a child's behaviour.

It should be noted that social and cognitive development work hand in hand. According to Vygotsky, the environment acts both as a condition and source of development. A child from birth interacts with the world and is influenced by the surrounding society, and it determines the vector of its movement, as it were, leads it along. Social influence, of course, is involved in the formation of higher mental processes, and this is true for a person who is in a normal state, and in the case of a pathological state. Collective activity, cooperation and interaction are of great importance for the formation of personality. The system for creating photobooks helps to establish productive interaction with the environment. Photobooks are made in collaboration with a mentor and are used to interact with other children or adults. Vygotsky made the discovery that in a group of children with the same level of development, some can learn with little help, while others cannot! Therefore, the work must be individual, and here the idea of using photobooks fully meets all requirements.

Vygotsky mentions personality qualitative changes can make it possible to compensate for any existing defect.

The TPB system is a process during which the mentor first encourages the child to create photobooks, with minimum capable participation. In the process of making and using photobooks, the child develops through active and conscious activity, and acquires new

knowledge and skills. The goal of the process is to transform the child from a passive observer into an active participant, and ideally, they should take a leading role in the production of photobooks.

### **Revealing the child's identity**

In the process of creating photobooks, children develop as a personalities, with new features formed in them, with a sense of responsibility, pride and satisfaction from the work done. The initiative and inspiration from creating a photobook for someone else (the child is emotionally receptive to the joy of the person who received such a gift). Finally, it is an opportunity to learn to act in alliance with another person (mentor). These feelings, emotions, and acquired skills certainly help shape a child's personality.

Vygotsky argued that thanks to labour, “doubling of experience” occurs and a person acquires the ability to “build twice: first in thoughts, then in deeds.”

The process of creating photobooks can provide a double and even triple experience. First, the project is discussed in detail, then work on the creation takes place, and after that the photobook serves as an instruction for action.

Vygotsky said that mental development is inseparably linked with motivational development. Development, of course, requires the right motivation, and must be voluntary, but how else to achieve voluntariness, how not to arouse interest? Creating the correct motivation is an important element of the TPB system.

Vygotsky attached great importance to creativity and its influence on the individual, and photography, which gives you the opportunity to create projects for yourself and others.

The story "**School Named Me**" illustrates these ideas

### **School Named Me (story)**

*This story is dedicated to Chesky, my first photobook partner. We spent several wonderful months in the attic of their house, and only his little sister was aware of our activities and was an active participant in them. Chesky, a perky playful, turned out to be capable of such transformations that I did not expect from him, and thus inspired me to create and develop my system. With my great regret, the family moved to another state, and I continued to develop the idea with other partners. But Chesky will always*



*remain first and foremost. And I have a hope that maybe, where he is now, photography is still a part of his life.*



### ***NAUGHTY BOY***

- Well, who would doubt that this is exactly what will happen! Murphy's Law works! - Jane, annoyed by the news she had just heard from her friend about the postponement of the exam, put the phone aside and began to feverishly look through the printout with tickets: so, she knows the answer to this question, this one will also not cause difficulties, but this one will have to learn urgently. A vague uneasiness made her raise her head from her notes. Something was wrong... Silence! That's what worried Jane.

- Chesky, where are you? - Jane called softly, but her six-year-old nephew did not answer. Just spinning around and suddenly disappeared and suspiciously calmed down. Jane, forgetting about the notes, rushed in search of Chesky. The loss was discovered in the kitchen: the boy was sitting on the floor and enthusiastically arranged cups, mugs and glasses of different sizes in even rows. Jane gasped: well, that's it, now she will get Alina for nuts! The older sister, about to leave on business for a couple of hours, strictly ordered Jane to keep her eyes on Chesky, but, apparently, the younger sister failed the task. But she so wanted to show Alina that she was already quite mature and responsible.

Usually Chesky was looked after by the mother of Jane and Alina, but she had to leave for a short time, and Jane began to help her sister, especially since she was still living in her sister's house. The preparation for exams prevented the young aunt from fully showing off her

pedagogical talent, she graduated from school and was accustomed to taking her studies seriously.

Having surveyed the scene, Jane came to the conclusion that no catastrophe had happened, and Chesky, crawling on the floor and breathing intently with zeal, looked so funny! Now she will quickly clean everything up and make a suggestion to her nephew: dishes are not toys at all. Although the neat rows of cups and glasses looked quite attractive. Jane furrowed her brows sternly.

- Chesky, why did you put the cups on the floor? Dishes are not intended for games at all, especially on a dirty floor. And then, you could accidentally break something and hurt yourself.

The nephew raised his narrow face, beaming with a smile, towards Jane:

- Beautiful, isn't it? - the aunt was silent, and the boy repeated more insistently: - I'm doing well, right?

- Yes, just a good fellow! - Jane muttered under her breath and reached for one of the cups on the floor.

- No! Do not touch! Beautiful! - Chesky rushed to defend his creation.

Jane shrugged her shoulders: Chesky is a special child, and if he is carried away by any idea, making him quit what he started is absolutely hopeless. And if you try to switch his attention to something else? Only for what? Cars! Well, of course, the nephew does not part for a minute with his box of little treasures. Surprisingly, now he forgot about them.

- Chesky, where is your box with cars? Let's go look, - surprisingly, the boy resignedly left his occupation and went in search. The loss was found in the toilet.

-What were you doing with your toys in a place like this? Did you play there

- I had a great idea, didn't I? - Chesky was not at all embarrassed, and Jane perceived surprise as admiration for his ingenuity.

Having seated her nephew at the kitchen table, Jane set about cleaning up and washing dishes. From time to time she glanced at Chesky, never ceasing to be surprised at his purposefulness: the boy lined up his favorite little cars in perfectly even rows. Having completed the column to the edge of the table, Chesky turned it around and continued in the opposite direction.

- It's beautiful, isn't it? Beautiful? - now and then he demanded praise for his efforts.

- Of course, beautiful, Chesky! - Jane sighed furtively: that's the whole Chesky. A sweet and kind boy, but, unfortunately, completely unable to absorb any more or less complex information. He seemed to live in his own world, not wanting to let anything from the outside world into it. Any information passed through him without delay, and he continued to go about his business, not paying any attention to it. Their common amusements with Jane usually boiled down to tag and running around with the ball, and the young aunt wanted to teach her nephew some more difficult game, but Jane did not succeed.

From her mother, the girl heard that her nephew had serious problems, but she didn't really think about it, she had enough of her own worries with her studies. She just loved Chesky the way he was.

### ***AUTISM***

For the first time the word "autism" was heard in the house of Alina and her husband several years ago. Young parents could not understand why their boy cries so often for no apparent reason, and opposed being picked up. The joy of waiting for the firstborn was replaced by anxiety for him and approaching despair. The diagnosis made by doctors was a heavy blow for the family, but at least there was some certainty. Alina learned to put up with her son's condition; she stopped perceiving him as a universal tragedy. Moreover, soon there was no time to indulge in despair: Nina was born, and Alina, willy-nilly, was distracted from sad thoughts, absorbed in worries about the baby. Now Nina is already four years old, she is quite healthy and even sometimes helps her mother raise her brother, in her own way, of course. A retired grandmother also contributes all possible assistance in raising her grandson, but at the same time pampers him, like all grandmothers in the world. Alina tried to correct the consequences of her grandmother's adoration, but all her attempts to explain to her son which of his actions upset the loved ones, and which, on the contrary, please, ended in complete failure: the information seemed to pass through Chesky without delay. The boy had a habit of speaking in a thin high voice, and when he, without listening to what was said to him, interrupted his interlocutor, this made a very depressing impression. Sometimes, after particularly daring pranks, mother put Chesky in a corner. This did not upset the boy at all, he even found a lot of interesting things to do in the corner: he scratched the wall or funny imitated his mother's angry intonations.

### ***RESTLESS MORNING***

Jane opened her eyes and smiled: the exam is over, today you can relax and lie in bed longer. It wasn't there! Alina, ready to leave, looked into the room:

- Jane, dear, be kind, look after Chesky, Nina and I are going to the clinic.

- And good morning to you too ... Well, of course, I'll look after him, go.

Chesky squeezed past Alina into the room, loaded with a huge box of Lego. Without wasting time, the boy immediately began to build a grandiose building. Jane tried to doze a little more, but the trick failed: Chesky resolutely pushed almost half of the details of the designer towards her: "You, too, build!" His nephew continually accompanied his work with some remarks:

- It will be a house. It's beautiful, right? And there will be a path, long, flat, right? Beautiful?

He struggled to draw his young aunt into a dialogue, and the half-asleep Jane was forced to answer: "Yes, of course, it's beautiful, well done!" The same thing ten, fifteen, twenty times! Jane slowly began to boil. She remembered her friend, constantly showing off her new blouse, her handbag, and her branded cosmetics. Well, a person just constantly wants to be in the centre of everyone's attention! Apparently, Chesky also really needs this. But Jane was terribly tired of answering the same questions all the time. Something needs to be done about this. And what if you try to fight the unpleasant habit of your nephew with his own methods?

- Nice track? Yes? - Chesky again insistently demanded the approval of his work.

- Nice, Chesky? - Jane decided to put her idea into practice and forwarded the question to Chesky himself. The surprise written on the child's face in large letters slightly amused the young aunt.

- Yes, beautiful ... - Chesky said, a little bewildered. Jane hid a satisfied smile: it worked! She got out of bed and perched on the floor next to her nephew.

"Where are those bricks that you left for me?" I will also build a house; I have not done this for a long time.

Once upon a time, Jane was very fond of constructing buildings from Lego and now she has again taken up construction with pleasure. Chesky's face beamed with a smile: together with Jane, they will build not just a house, but a real castle! Sticking out the tip of his tongue from

zeal, the boy enthusiastically helped Jane, periodically asking: "Beautiful, right? I'm good, right?"

But Jane used the previously tested method and forwarded the question to Chesky. After a while, she noted with satisfaction that her nephew no longer asked questions. "Looks like it worked!" The girl thought and smiled. It seems that she coped with one unpleasant habit of her nephew, there was one more. Chesky never listened to the end of anyone, he certainly had to interrupt the interlocutor. How to fix this, Jane did not yet know, but she promised herself to do everything possible.

### ***FIRST PHOTOS***

The castle turned out to be a feast for the eyes: tall, beautiful, with thin turrets and openwork bridges. After admiring the joint creation, Jane went to the castle to put away the details of the designer in the box. Alina was about to return home, and the girl wanted to put the toys back in place for the arrival of her older sister.

- No! It is forbidden! Beautiful! - Chesky's reaction to Jane's attempt to restore order was, in general, predictable.

The boy never agreed to destroy his creations with his own hands and did not allow others to do so. Usually Alina put the columns and paths built by Chesky back in place when the boy was already asleep. Recently, the responsibility to clean up after her brother was entrusted to little Nina.

- Yes, it turned out very beautifully ... - Jane herself felt sorry for destroying the beautiful castle. And then it dawned on her: - Chesky, I know what we will do!

Recently, a girl was presented with a great photo camera for her birthday. Jane decided to capture their common creation with her nephew. Taking out the camera, she took a couple of pictures of the beautiful castle and showed the result to Chesky. The boy was delighted

- Beautiful! Our castle! Great!

- Chesky, come on, pose for me next to the castle. People should know by sight the author of such a wonderful structure.

There was no need to persuade his nephew: Chesky, smiling proudly, sat down next to his creation, and Jane quickly took a few shots. Considering the photo session over, Chesky rushed to throw the details of the Lego around the room, accompanying this rampage with loud cries:

"Hurrah!" Jane captured this on camera. Mentally sympathising with her sister, she began to calm her outraged nephew:

- All right, Chesky, enough frolic, let's put things in order.

They put the first Lego pieces together in a box, and little by little Chesky got involved and finished the cleaning himself. Touched by the sight of her nephew fascinated by her work, Jane took a few more pictures. She even had a name for these shots when she was looking through the pictures: "Diligent Chesky puts things in order." Fleetinglly, Jane was surprised at how different Chesky can be. Voices were heard in the hallway: Alina and Nina returned home. For today, the babysitting job for Jane was over.

- Pity! - she thought

### ***WHAT is GOOD and WHAT is BAD***



Where did the cute and calm child go? From the moment Alina returned home, Chesky seemed to have been possessed by a demon: he did not let his mother say a word, constantly interrupting her, looked into the bag without asking, pushed Nina away, and then completely began to jump on the sofa, screaming loudly. Alina, tired of making comments to the guy, sent him to a corner so that he would

reflect at his leisure on his behavior. Chesky, however, also arranged entertainment for himself out of punishment: he selflessly scratched the wall with his finger and muttered something unintelligible under his breath.

Jane, slightly shocked by such a sharp change in her nephew's behavior, kept clicking the camera. She decided not to say anything to Alina yet, postponing the conversation for later.

In the evening, the girl went to her friend's to prepare for the next exam together, and at the same time printed out photos of Chesky. Returning home, Jane found her nephew very excited. Alina even complained to her sister that she couldn't calm Chesky down.

- Chesky, come here, I'll tell you ... - Jane did not have time to finish the sentence. The nephew swooped down on her like a whirlwind:

- And I, and I have ... - the words poured out of him like peas from a leaky bag, but it was completely impossible to catch any meaning.

However, Jane tried to listen carefully to Chesky. After a few seconds, the flow of indistinct interjections dried up, and the girl finally managed to insert a word:

- Did you say everything, Chesky? Can I talk now? - the boy nodded, and Jane finally said what she wanted: - I brought photographs in which you are in the lead role. Well, let's see them?

The girl took out a pack of photographs from her bag and laid them out on the table. Chesky began looking at the photographs with interest. The one on which he put away the details of the Lego, he especially liked:

- I did that!

- Of course, well done, look how you try to put things in order! - Jane noted that the nephew did not forget to praise himself. - We will hang this picture on the door of your locker so that everyone can admire such a diligent mother's assistant.

- This is a bad photo, - Chesky was holding a picture in his hands, capturing him at the moment of throwing toys around the room.

- Yeah, no one likes such ugly behavior. We will hide this photo from prying eyes inside your locker, and only you and I will know about it.

In the following days, Jane constantly photographed her nephew in one activity or another. As a result, quite a lot of pictures accumulated, there was no longer enough space on the locker doors for them, and a new idea came to the girl's head. Once again returning from her friend, Jane gathered Chesky and Nina at the table, laid out two large folders in front of them - a white one and black one - and a whole bunch of felt-tip pens, markers, colored paper and other stationery joys. And the girl borrowed a special paper cutter from her friend.

"Let's clean up our photo archive. Chesky, here are two boxes, in one of them you will put the pictures that you like, and in the other - those that you can't be proud of. Let's take a look at this photo. What are you doing on it?"

- I'm putting the constructor back in place.

-Is this a good deed or a bad one?

- Good! I'm done!

-What box will we put this picture in?

"The one with the pictures of good behavior."

- Great, we'll do that. What are you doing in this picture?

- Throwing toys.

-What is your behavior at this moment? Good or bad?

- I'm bad here!

- No, Chesky, you are not bad, your behavior is bad. In which box should this photo be placed?

- Here in this, where behavior is bad.

- That's right, so we'll do it.

Auntie and nephew discussed all the photos in this way, and Jane was convinced that Chesky correctly assessed his actions. The sorted pictures needed to be nicely arranged and appropriate inscriptions were made under each, which Jane did. She discussed each signature with her nephew, telling him why it is good to do it this way, and bad in another way. Chesky willingly came up with names for the pictures: "Chesky is building a castle, he's done well" or "Chesky is jumping around the room and screaming, he's behaving badly." Jane then instructed her nephew to carefully trim the edges of the pictures so that they were all the same size. Working with scissors was not easy for Chesky, and a paper cutter was very useful here. The boy wielded it quite deftly, and the edges of the pictures turned out to be even. For the future, Jane planned for herself to teach her nephew to work with scissors.

After that, it was time for decorating. Chesky did not differ in special patience and perseverance, and Nina, a great lover of drawing and coloring pictures, came to the aid of her brother. She drew frames around the pictures. Chesky, with apparent pleasure, commented on the most expressive photos for Nina:

"Look, Nina, I'm behaving badly here, I'm kicking the bear," but there was no remorse on the boy's smiling face.

- The bear is in pain, but you rejoice! It's not funny, - Nina did not share her brother's fun at all.

- Not funny? - Chesky was very surprised by Nina's reaction, but he did not think about this topic for a long time and moved on to discussing another picture.

Jane was depressed by this behavior of his nephew: the boy reacted in much the same way to his good and bad deeds captured by the camera - he admired himself and had fun. The girl wanted to teach Chesky to distinguish between good and evil, but Jane had a very vague idea of how to do this. Postponing the solution of the problem for later, the young aunt turned to her nephew:

- Wow, how interesting you are talking about each picture! Just a real teacher, we can send you right now to teach children at our school.



- I'm smart, right? - Chesky immediately remembered his habit of constantly asking questions, and Jane almost fell into a trap, but caught herself in time, returning the question:

-Are you smart, Chesky?

-Yes, I'm smart! – the boy answered his own question with visible pleasure.

- That's what we call this folder.

Chesky liked the idea.

- What do we call the other one? - Nina asked.

"I'm bad," Chesky said.

Jane immediately responded:

- You're not bad, you have bad behavior, of course. Let's call the second folder "Bad Behavior".

Restless Chesky kept trying to quit work and go to play. It took a lot of work for Jane to keep her nephew in place, asking him again and again about what was shown in the pictures, good or bad and why. Nina enthusiastically painted the sheets, Jane and Chesky distributed the pictures into different folders, supplying them with signatures. The white folder was decorated with the inscription: "Chesky is a smart boy. Good Behavior" and the line "Bad Behavior" appeared on the black one.

### ***SCHOOL NAMED ME***

Before going to sleep, lying in bed, Jane recalled how vividly Chesky discussed the photos. The girl came up with an interesting idea. In the morning, she shared the idea with her nephew:

- Chesky, I think we need to organise a special school in which you will be the main teacher. You will teach the other guys the rules of good behavior. What do you think? - Jane mentally applauded herself for a great idea, seeing how the boy's face shone with joy.

- Hooray! Great! - Chesky jumped like a frisky kid from the emotions that overwhelmed him.

-I'm glad you like my idea. It will be a school named after ... - Jane hesitated, looking for the right word.

- Me! - Chesky shouted. - School named after Me! I will be a teacher!

"Well, of course, your name, how could it be otherwise," Jane muttered and added more confidently: - "And don't doubt it!" Let's get the class and students ready.

It was not possible to immediately put the plan into action: Chesky's next building was located on the most suitable place for equipment of the class. As usual, he didn't let anyone take it away.

- Photo! Make a photo! - the boy was very determined, and Jane took advantage of the situation:

"Good idea, but isn't it time for you to learn how to take pictures yourself?" You are such a smart guy; you will certainly succeed. Come on, take the camera like this, look here, now press this button...

A few seconds - and the first photo is ready! Chesky had one more reason to be proud of himself. Together, the aunt and nephew dismantled the building, put the parts of the designer into a box, and proceeded to equip the classroom. In the centre of the room, Chesky and Jane put a table for the "teacher". The sofa became a place for students. All Chesky's soft toys were invited to these roles, and Jane joined them as a teacher's assistant. The "teacher" himself put on his hat and dad's tie. It was assumed that these details of the toilet would give the boy solidity, but in fact Chesky looked very funny. The main teaching aids were two folders with photographs - white and black.

- Let's start the lesson. Silence in the classroom! - Chesky tapped the table with a pointer, calling the class to attention. He tried to be serious.

And so the educational process began. Using the example of photographs from white and black folders, the teacher clearly explained to the students what is "good" and what is "bad": "Throwing toys and jumping on the sofa is bad, look, children, at this picture. This one is very ugly, and mom will be upset. And look here - I collect toys in a box and put them in their place.

Jane prompted a little: "Now the room is in order. Mom will be happy."

- And these photos are good, here the boy built a beautiful castle and helps his mother with the housework.

The students did not behave in the best way: they made noise, interrupted the teacher, and the teacher scolded them and put them in a corner, and Chesky really liked this part.

Each picture showing bad behavior was balanced by a photo in which Chesky behaved perfectly. He even began to invent bad behavior himself, so that later he could photograph the good and explain it to the students.

The boy showed photographs, describing in detail what is depicted in each of them. It seems that Chesky finally got what he always aspired

to - everyone's attention. He noticeably calmed down: now he is the most important, he is a teacher, and he has something to tell his students about.

### ***HOMEMADE ABC***

One day, when Nina came from kindergarten, Jane came up with one important and interesting thing for the children. The school needed new educational materials, and the girl suggested that brother and sister make a manual for learning the alphabet with their own hands. The work began to boil: Jane called the letter of the alphabet, the children found an object whose name began with this letter, and then Chesky took a picture. Illustrations appeared one after another: A - an apple, B - a banana, C - a circle. Chesky, filled with a sense of responsibility, tried very hard and even put on airs a little. Nina came up with a wonderful idea: she offered to make a manual for mathematics lessons. The girl and Jane assembled compositions from several identical objects, and Chesky took pictures: one pencil, two balls, three Lego blocks. Time at work flew by unnoticed, and the company was even a little upset when Alina called everyone to dinner and the pleasant activity had to be interrupted.

When the children fell asleep, Jane and Alina retired to the kitchen to drink tea and discuss the past day. The younger sister painted the classes at the "School named after Me" for the older one, showing the photos taken during the day.

- Oh, Jane, honey, why are you making all this up? What Chesky was already born, he will be like that. Listen, I'm so tired today, there are those queues ...

- And why, by the way, are you so sure ... I've heard such stories when such people changed - even, by the way, learned at least to do something.

- You never know what they write on the fence, Jane. Theory is one thing, but life is another.

Alina just shrugged it off. Jane knew: at first, her sister also tried to do something, but then she got tired. And if someone were interested in her opinion on this issue, she would say - her sister got tired too quickly.

- Alina, you know that I use my friend's printer to print photos. There are more and more pictures, and it's not very convenient for me to strain Eva with a new job. Maybe we should think about getting our own apparatus?

- You know, Jane, this is quite a sound idea. In the end, Chesky really became much calmer thanks to your ideas. I will consult with my husband, and I think he will not be against buying a printer either.

Chesky was happy to get used to the role of a teacher, diligently preparing for new lessons. The boy no longer had time for pranks, and it's not respectable for a teacher to engage in various nonsense and thereby drop his authority. At each lesson, Jane developed a vigorous activity: she asked questions and even periodically taunted other students:

- Teacher, and that student over there is not listening to the lesson and chatting with a neighbour! Please explain to him that it is wrong to do so!

New lesson topics required new learning materials. Jane and Chesky collected them during walks. Photographing trees, houses, cats, dogs and children playing in the park, the aunt and nephew prepared textbooks about flowers and trees, pets, and from the pictures that captured the buildings and park closest to the house, something like a guide turned out. Now it was the turn of the book about the seasons, and along the way, Chesky and Jane compiled a manual for physical education, taking a series of photographs of Chesky performing various exercises.

### ***READING LESSONS***

Alina often complained to her younger sister that reading books to children was a very difficult task. Chesky had enough patience for a couple of minutes, and then he began to interrupt, shout out something of his own, jump up and rush around the room. Nina was sometimes upset to tears: she so wanted to listen to a fairy tale, but her restless brother did not allow her to do so.

Once Jane decided to read to the children herself. The choice fell on the fairy tale "Three Little Pigs". As soon as Jane opened the book and started reading, Chesky shouted:

- I know! I can read the word wolf!

- Well, then, today you will be responsible for the word "wolf": every time we see it in a book, you will read it yourself. Nina and I already know what a responsible person you are, - Jane decided not to ignore her nephew's desire to show off a new skill.

This was the first time that Chesky listened attentively to a fairy tale from beginning to end, because in the right places he had to read a familiar word himself, and the boy could not afford to miss the right

moment because of a prank. Such reading lessons became regular, and gradually Chesky became involved in the process and listened carefully, from time to time reading familiar words from the text.

### ***WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER***

One of the relatives of Alina and Jane was about to get married, and the whole family, including children, was invited to the celebration. Alina was delighted with the invitation, she really wanted to go to the wedding, see her relatives and have fun.

"I can't imagine who to leave Chesky with on the wedding day," Alina did not even think that she could take her son with her, because, in her opinion, the boy did not know how to behave in public at all.

- Do not worry, I promise that you will not have to blush for Chesky's behavior. - Jane did not want to deprive her nephew of such an event, and his behavior lately did not cause her any fears. "I take care of everything for him."

- Oh, who is this important and elegant? - the exclamations of the guests were heard at the wedding. Chesky, dressed in a festive suit and armed with a camera, really looked great. Accompanied by Jane, he now and then approached one of the guests and politely asked:

- Will you allow me to take a picture of you? Thank you very much.

The young photographer had no end to those who wanted to take pictures. Even the newlyweds took part in a small photo shoot. Every now and then one of the guests told Alina about what a wonderful son she had. She thanked them for the compliment and beamed with pride. Jane, as promised to her sister, spent the whole evening with Chesky, wondering and rejoicing at how the boy managed to present himself to others. When the family returned home from the celebration, Jane whispered softly to her nephew:

- Well, teacher, you have a topic for a new lesson: "How to take wedding photos."

### ***LIVING PHOTOBOOKS***

A few months later, the work at the school named after Chesky continued with unchanged success, Jane and her nephews made new textbooks and improved the old ones. The boy's parents also joined the process.

The father of the family, by the nature of his work, was forced to spend a lot of time travelling away from home, in full force the family gathered only on weekends. The traditional Sunday lunch was now very interesting: Chesky told his father what new subjects had appeared in his school, and how the students behaved. The boy no longer choked with indistinct interjections, his speech was coherent, he sensibly stated the news and demonstrated his educational material. Dad said that these family gatherings at the set table are the most precious memory of the house, comforting him on long trips and warming his soul. In gratitude for this, the father would certainly bring his son from his travels some gifts useful for the school or new materials. But Chesky received the biggest gift for his birthday: his parents gave him a real camera. Jane returned to live with her mother, and Chesky needed his own tool.

Those who knew the boy for more than a year were surprised at the changes in his character and behavior. Now Chesky did not much resemble his former self, now he was a very responsible boy, perfectly distinguishing what is "good" and what is "bad". He no longer stooped to pranks, because now he bore the proud title of "Teacher" and had to serve as an example for his students.

Sometimes Nina brought her friends to a lesson at the school named after Chesky, the circle of students expanded more and more.

Restless by nature, Chesky directed his indefatigable energy to inventing new school subjects, compiling new photobooks and reworking old ones: pictures were added and removed in accordance with Chesky's ideas.

-Our photobooks are alive! They either get fat or lose weight, - the boy commented on the changes taking place with the books.

He was especially pleased that the white folder "Good deeds" was getting thicker, and the black one was losing weight day by day. Jane had a hand in this: visiting her sister, she certainly photographed her nephew.

And for Jane herself, the days spent with Chesky did not pass without a trace: having successfully passed the final school exams, the girl went to study as a child psychologist. She was sure that it was Chesky who helped her finally make the choice of profession.

### ***A comment***

*For Chesky, the rules, clothed in letters and photographs, have ceased to be just a set of incomprehensible words, they have become visual actions with a certain ethical coloring. Seeing himself in the photographs, the boy*

*became more aware of why some of his actions are regarded as good, and others as bad. In addition, his work as a "teacher" became an important point. Explaining the rules to others, he simultaneously memorised them himself. Thus, teaching others turned out to be the best way to learn yourself. Realising the rules of communication with other people, the boy became much more sociable and friendly. The very process of working on photobooks and playing "school" gave him skills such as teamwork, responsibility to his "students" and the development of creative abilities. Switching attention to a productive direction was the best way out, and this approach turned the little troublemaker into a pleasant and friendly child, quite capable of communicating with other people. Subsequently, Chesky went to school - it turns out that the experience of working with photobooks played a very important role, preparing the boy for life in society and outlining the rules of communication that previously remained beyond his understanding.*

## **Chapter 3. Ideas of L. Vygotsky Zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding**

### **Learning process and mental development**

The influence of the TPB system on a special child is undeniable, but, of course, he himself will not take up the matter, and he will not cope with it. He must be directed by an adult, and the mentor and the ward must take the first steps on this difficult path together. Before waiting for the result, you should be patient. Moreover, if an adult is too lenient towards a child, there may not be a result. To succeed, for the sake of it, you will have to strain, and both of you. And here one should pay attention to such ideas as ZPD and the concept of scaffolding.

Vygotsky's research is closely related to the impact of the learning process on mental development. One of the most significant ideas he put forward is the notion of a "zone of proximal development." The essence of the idea is that learning is effective only if it "runs ahead of development", as if pulling it along. Here the child's ability, with the participation of the teacher, is manifested to solve those problems with which he cannot cope on his own. That is, the "zone of proximal development" is the difference between the actual level of development (and it determines the ability to act independently) and potential development (we are talking about the area where the child copes with problems under the guidance of an adult or in cooperation with more developed peers).

This thesis underlies the practice called scaffolding.

Translated from English, it means "scaffolding". The bottom line is that practice gives the child, with the help and support of an adult, the opportunity to achieve goals that are within the zone of its proximal development. And here the adult plays the role of those very "scaffolding".

Scaffolding is based on the fact that development and learning are not internal processes, both depend too much on external conditions. Scaffolding is an action in which an adult identifies and helps a child learn skills that lie in his zone of proximal development, and they are too difficult to master independently. At the first stage, the adult provides support in performing difficult tasks, and then gradually reduces his intervention, because his ward is already beginning to learn new skills and is able to cope on his own. As a result, the child reaches a level at



which he can complete the task without the help of a mentor - on his own.

A note on the scaffolding technique: Once a child has mastered a procedure, an adult should never do it for the child. Practice is the basis for mastering a skill.

### **Zone of proximal development and scaffolding in the TPB system**

The zone of proximal development in relation to the TPB system is the ability (an adult will have to assess whether the ward has or can have them) that will allow the child to perform various tasks necessary in the process of creating photobooks. After preparation, the child will be able to do everything on their own or with minimal support from an adult.

Usually, an adult sets a task for a child, which is initially difficult and new for him, but the child feels reliable support at every step, understands that he is not alone, that together they will overcome difficulties - and, moreover, he is sincerely interested. Step by step, from simple to complex, the child masters the necessary skills and acquires new knowledge and skills. A comfortable environment for the interaction of a child with an adult is very important here, then along the way a close creative union arises, co-authorship, where the child and his mentor work together with pleasure and achieve their goals.

This technique is widely used in the STF system. At the beginning of the process, the adult takes over all the necessary functions for making photobooks, except for those that the child is able to perform. Then, guiding his actions, an adult helps him master all the stages of creating a photobook that he can do, and makes him a full-fledged, active participant in the creative process. Of course, here it is important to take into account the specifics of the personality of each child and select the most appropriate and effective methods of influence. Of course, the application of this technique in practice is very well shown in the previous story "The School named Me" and in most of the other stories in this book. This principle is at the heart of the story "**True friend**"

### **True Friend (story)**

*This story is dedicated to the boy Devon, who lives in Arizona. If before Devon was a source of despair and frequent irritation for others, then after he and his mother organised a creative union and Devon discovered the ability to photograph, the life of both changed qualitatively, now it was determined by hope and optimism.*



### ***ELINA USUAL MORNING***

Elina's Sunday morning began as usual. After breakfast, she looked with annoyance at the room, where balls of all kinds and sizes were scattered around.

"Johnny, well, I asked you to clean them up after you finish playing," Elina muttered hopelessly.

John is seven years old and has autism. At the very beginning, when the diagnosis had just been made, Elina really did not want to believe that her son would forever remain different. "Not like everyone else", "special child" - these words caused her real despair. Every year it became more and more obvious that John would have to live with this. Just like her. Elina's life has changed forever.

John's father, who at first tried to support her, quickly retired. Elina did not blame him; she simply allowed him to leave and was left alone with her child. She was grateful to him for financial support, but could not understand how her husband could leave a child who needed much support from loved ones. She firmly decided that she would give John a worthy future and would do everything that was required for this, no matter what it cost her.

She spent hours talking with her son, although at the age of seven he could only say one word - "mom." It hurt Elina to tears: just one word. But the way the child said it revealed a whole range of his emotions.

John was a charming child. However, sometimes his desire to get attention from his mother at any cost created problems. Sometimes John was just unbearable, trying to get Elina's attention. For some reason, this was especially evident in those cases when someone came to their house.

When they were at home together, the child could easily find something to do.

The older he got, the more often he exhibited typical autistic behavior. He could sit for hours in an empty box until Elina got him out of there. Perhaps the small enclosed space gave the child a sense of security. Another of his passions were balls, he could twirl and twist them indefinitely.

Elina did not think this hobby of his was dangerous, but one of the doctors recommended that all John's balls be removed from the house, and not be played with. Elina, on the other hand, had big doubts about such a recommendation, because the balls were one of those few things that soothed and captivated her child. Instead of depriving him of this little joy, she went to the store and bought him a lot of balls, in different colors, sizes and textures. The son looked truly happy when she poured out this treasure in front of him.

"Mom..." John whispered, looking fascinated at his new toys.

During that period, many acquaintances dropped out and stopped visiting after they learned about the problem Elina faced. However, this did not bother her much, she only began to appreciate those who remained nearby, no matter what. For example, her best friend Irene, with whom they have been friends since childhood.

In each of her visits, she flew into Elina's house like a spring wind: excited and cheerful. She immediately brought down a mountain of various news on her: about mutual acquaintances, about her family, about her beloved dog, about her acting courses. Irene was engaged in the manufacture of jewellery from beads and stones and often brought her creations as a gift to her friend. She brought John his favorite balls, never repeating herself and trying to buy exactly what would please him. When she came, Elina woke up her usual lust for life and her inherent enthusiasm.

The only problem was that as soon as Irene appeared on the threshold, John immediately began to persistently seek Elina's attention. He took her by the hand, dragged her into his room, showed her his balls for the hundredth time, and did his best to distract her from Iren. Women proceeded from the fact that these are just manifestations of childish jealousy, they say that the son loved his mother very much. They treated him with understanding, trying to switch his attention to his favorite balls, but John was persistent. Therefore, on such days, the whole trinity slowly followed John through the rooms, until Irene ran out of news.

Then she listened attentively to her friend, if Elina had something to share. Of course, almost all of her news concerned her son. Therefore, Iren knew all the details of John's treatment and development and was very empathetic to her friend. In her support, she drew strength and often called Irene "my true friend."

And yet, John's perseverance did its job - young women had enough for forty minutes, to a maximum of an hour, and then they were forced to say goodbye. Of course, they parted with the hope of meeting soon - in about a week, if possible.

Elina dreamed of somehow explaining to her beloved seven-year-old boy that his mother would like to spend this time differently. Let him understand how important her friend's visits are to her and how she would like to completely immerse herself in communication with her, even for their usual half hour.

Irene had about the same thoughts, but not clearly formed. About once a month, she would make timid attempts to drag her childhood friend out of the house in order to stir her up. Already knowing that Elina would not dare to do this during a personal meeting, Iren once tried to precede her proposal with a call.

### ***FAILED PLAN***

- Elina, what do you say if we go out for a walk on Saturday? Let's go to the movies, gorge ourselves on popcorn and watch some sweet female melodrama, huh? Or vice versa, a raunchy comedy? And then we'll go to a restaurant and try different goodies until we get bored. I understand that you have John, but you can ask your babysitter to sit with him.

Elina thought. Few people could understand how much she wanted to accept Iren's invitation. Put on a beautiful dress, high heel shoes defiled in a restaurant or even just in the lobby of a cinema, attracting the eyes of others. After all, she devoted most of the time to her son, completely forgetting about herself. And she had a nanny in mind: she used her services when she urgently needed to leave for work or other matters.

- You know, Iren... I agree! Let's go! I've wanted this for so long. Tomorrow I will call Mrs Jones and ask her to look after John.

- Elina! You have no idea how happy I am to hear that! To be honest, I didn't have much hope. I'll pick you up at eight tomorrow, okay?

The next day passed for Elina in pleasant anticipation. She seemed to fly, preparing a dress, picking up shoes and doing her hair. She

imagined how she and Iren would walk together, laughing at some funny stories, remembering the times of their fun students or school years...

But at five o'clock in the evening the phone rang:

- Elina, darling, I know, I promised to come, but it just so happened that my grandson fell ill. Sorry, there's no way I can look after John today.

- Mrs Jones obviously was upset.

- Yes of course. It's okay, - Elina answered in a fallen voice.

As she hung up the phone, she nearly burst into tears. Well, why is that?! Why on that one day, when she decided to arrange a little holiday for herself, everything turned out this way? Holding back tears rising to her throat, she began to dial Iren's phone number.

- Elin ... Nothing, just don't get upset. Well, not the last day we live, well, what are you ... You know, I have a great idea. What if I come to you? I'll go to the store for a cake, and we'll sit with you. And John will play in his room. What do you think?

Elina agreed reluctantly. Knowing her child, she knew perfectly well that just sitting and chatting would not work for them.

Of course, the evening did not go at all as her friend had hoped and Irene imagined it. As soon as John saw her in the hallway, he began to pull Elina by the hand, trying to take her to his room. When this did not work out, he came to the kitchen, brought his balls, and began to show them to Irene. She looked thoughtfully at the boy.

### ***IRENE'S IDEA***

"Listen, Elina, have you thought about the fact that he needs some kind of constructive purposeful activity to be involved in? It seems to me that this would do him good, and it would give you a little bit of freedom - you need it so much. I recently read how parents develop the abilities of their children with autism through photography. I will send you a link. In my opinion, you and John could make an excellent photobook on the subject of his balls. After all, it is obvious that they are his greatest passion. - Iren had listened with interest to her stories about John before and offered her friend various ways to diversify his life with benefits.

Irene's words did not leave Elina's head for several days. The idea seemed very interesting to her. She thought about how nice it would be if John had some kind of productive activity, if his blind passion for balls grew into something more, something creative and interesting.

## ***ELINA GETTING STARTED***

First, she took a couple of pictures of her son playing with balls in his room, office, and kitchen. Later, she looked at these photos, and some vague thought was spinning in her head. It seemed to her that John in the photographs looked somehow different.

Suddenly, Elina realised what it was. Her son's expression was unusually calm. Normally agitated, here he looked surprisingly peaceful. In the bustle of weekdays, it is sometimes difficult to notice changes in facial expressions and behaviour. Photography has become an excellent indicator of the real situation.

The idea of studying his son unnoticed, with the help of a photo, was inspiring. Elina began to take photos of her son and his balls more and more often and more and more inspiringly. The son noticed her actions, but was not particularly interested in them. When she had a small collection of such photos, she printed them out, bought a binder, sheets of multi-colored thick paper and transparent protective files, deciding that they would become materials for creating a photobook.

- Look, Johnny. I have pictures of you with balls. Let's try to make a real photobook about them. We need to choose the best photos, attach them to these multi-colored sheets with tape and arrange them in the right order. Let's try! What photos do you like the most?

At first, the child only enthusiastically examined the images of himself in the company of his favorite balls. Then he suddenly took a sheet of yellow cardboard and carefully placed on it a photograph of him embracing a yellow ball. He did the same with the others: very thoughtfully John laid out photos of himself and his balls on sheets of paper, according to their colors. Elina was impressed by the enthusiasm and taste, with which her boy coped with the task.

Their first photobook turned out to be very cute. However, more importantly, John liked this activity, and began to devote a lot of time to it. When the book was ready, Elina realised that he was capable of more and it was time to move on.

- John, do you want to try to take a picture of your balls yourself? What if we make a whole photobook about them?

Hearing his favorite word "balls", the boy looked up at the camera and began to listen carefully to his mother. Elina diligently explained to him the essence of the camera in the simplest words. It turned out to be easier than expected. On the same day, John took the first beautiful photo: mom surrounded by his favorite balls.

### ***JOHN GOT CARRIED AWAY***

An unprecedented occupation unexpectedly captivated John. He enthusiastically took pictures of his toys. Like a real photographer, he meticulously chose angles. Previously, he always did everything in his own way. Now it was surprising that he listened to the advice of his mother, recognized her experience. And she showed how to make photos more vivid, how to choose the right angle and lighting. Now they worked together. Every day John got more great photos.

Over time, he liked to photograph the same ball, against a different background. Elina bought him large sheets of multi-colored paper for this. He could spend hours doing this and clearly liked the combination of different colors.

The days flew by. Elina was incredibly pleased with her son's new occupation. In addition, she felt more freedom than before, as her son began to find his own activities. In addition, this joint work revealed many simple concepts as "closer, far away, in the middle, etc" that John did not know at all, and Elina had a great opportunity to explain them to her son, showing them in practice, as if in passing, and then, on occasion, make sure that he had learned them.

It is often difficult for autistic children to explain to others what they feel or want, and John was no exception. His speech was limited to the word "mom", that is why it was so important to establish contact with him: in order to better understand him and develop his abilities.

### ***CREATIVE UNION OF MOTHER AND SON***

Elina was able to appreciate that photobooks were a great opportunity to establish better contact with her child. First, they made a photobook called "Colors" a photobook about the colors of a rainbow, placing their photographs of balls of various shades, of which John had many. After that, the idea of a size book came up: "Large, medium, small." Elina saw an opportunity to teach John new concepts and the words "more", "less", "equally". A book about the positions of objects: "before", "right", "between". And, of course, they made a photobook about numbers: "one ball", "two balls".

Usually John resisted attempts to give him some new knowledge, but now he received them in passing, as if in between times, "for your photobook." For Elina, this in itself became an exciting game - to choose

the words, categories and concepts that she wanted to teach John, and then come up with and select stories for them for filming. John flourished from this new, high-quality gaming attention, and participated with pleasure in these games with his mother during the filming.

- Johnny, put the orange ball in the middle. Right here. The middle is between two other balls.

And later she saw the result:

"What do you think would be a good ball if you put it in the middle between these huge green ones?" Little red? Great. Put it down soon. I want to photograph them myself.

Elina had fun, rejoicing to herself that he understood about the "middle".

- In order for the balls to be evenly positioned in the photo, you need to move the ball, which we have on the edge, which means at the very end. Yes, everything is fine now. Well done. You can shoot!

In the future, she already planned to expand the field of their activities and walk around the nearby shops that sell balls, and at the same time introduce her son to the concepts of "address" and "route".

Next in line was the idea of a photobook about different shapes: a circle made of balls, a square, a triangle. The idea of sports is tennis ball, soccer ball, basketball. Elina imagined how she would tell her son about different sports and even show short videos about each of them. Fortunately, the necessary balls and the Internet were at hand. She felt that she herself had already fallen in love with these magic balls.

Elina got the idea to talk to John's teacher in special program he attended, so she'd demonstrated photobooks there

### ***ORDER FOR THE MASTER***

When Irene came to visit a small family, Elina asked her son to bring his photobooks. Irene was amazed at the quality of his work and openly admired the boy's talent. An expression of pride and satisfaction gradually appeared on the face of John. Then the friends sat together in the kitchen, and John took pictures of the new balls that Iren bought for him, choosing the best angles and background colors.

- Elina, he is very talented. Just look at the quality pictures he took. These balls seem to have a lifetime. As if they have their own characters and destinies, but only John sees them. And in the photographs, he shows them so clearly, so vividly ... Listen, I have an idea. How about John makes a portfolio of jewellery that I make? It could be the same photobook as



with balls, only there would be pictures of my bracelets, pendants and earrings. I could show it to my clients, and we would put John's name on it. It's like he's a real professional photographer. What do you think?

- In my opinion ... that is a wonderful idea; - Elina struggled to find words that could express her feelings. - I don't know. Let's ask John.

- John, could you make the same photobook for Irene? Only instead of balls there will be her earrings and bracelets. She loves them as much as you love your balls.

The child thought for a moment. Then he went up to Iren and took her hand, touching the shiny bracelet. Then he shifted his cautious gaze to her earrings. He nodded to his mother and went to his room for a camera.

Elina felt involuntary tears rolling down her cheeks. She looked at her friend and whispered:

- What would I do without you, my true friend!

### ***A comment***

*Many people know the story of Temple Grandin, who found her calling despite autism and all the difficulties she faced. Temple was lucky to find her way and her place in life, proving that nothing is impossible. In the life of Elina and John, photobooks played an important role, they helped mother and son to establish better contact, making a real creative union. The friendship of two girlfriends withstood all the tests and turned out to be truly significant. In addition, Elina's life was again filled with meaning and hope - to find and develop the abilities and talents of her unusual child.*

*This story ended so happily both for the mother of the special child and for the child himself, in part because the mother had such a faithful friend who was able to give a valuable idea and develop it. But, of course, also because the boy turned out to have abilities that women managed to develop through joint efforts, having interested him in a new creative activity - photography. The child's talent was not easy to bring to light, but it was the setting of an initially difficult task that gave such a brilliant result.*

## Chapter 4 Fundamentals of activity theory

### Action and Interaction

We have to admit that without action and interaction there can be no progress, no development. Alas, both are not given for nothing and are not taken from nowhere, by magic. Development is work, it requires efforts that both an adult and a child will have to make. Both of them have to achieve one small goal after another for the sake of the most important, most cherished goal - improving the quality and fullness of the life of a special child. And here we have to resort to a theory that has the most practical significance - the theory of activity.

L. S. Vygotsky is not the only Soviet psychologist who developed the theory of activity. Significant contributions were also made by his contemporaries and scientists of a later period.

For example, the theory of L. N. Leontiev and S. L. Rubinstein is based on the idea that **a person can be best understood by his activities, by how he sets goals and achieves them.** Here, the main concept is activity, and it is considered primarily as a purposeful activity (an activity that pursues a specific goal).

Creating photobooks is a purposeful activity, and an adult involves a child in it.

If we analyse **the activity** as such, then we recognize the **action** as the main structural unit - that which is aimed at achieving the goal (conscious striving for the desired result). When a person does something, he constantly keeps the image-goal in front of his mind's eye and consciously strives for it.

At first, the activity in which the child is involved is comprehended only by adults, but in the process of work, the child comes to understand why all this is necessary, and the activity becomes conscious.

Thanks to the theory of activity in psychology, a person began to be considered as an active being, and not a reactive one. Prior to that, the positions of such areas of psychology as reflexology and behaviourism were strong, they considered, first of all, how a person reacts to external influences and acts accordingly. And in the theory of activity, on the contrary, any activity began to be considered as active, that is, coming from within, generated by conscious impulses, the desire to achieve one's goals.

As the child becomes involved in the process of creating photobooks, the initiative gradually passes into his hands. He begins to suggest topics and express ideas: how best to perform this or that operation, that is, he becomes an active creator.

S. L. Rubinstein, within the framework of the theory of activity, for the first time introduced the concept of the “principle of the unity of consciousness and activity”. He said that a person in his actions not only manifests himself, but also, in fact, is created.

Actions define a person, or rather, what he is, and as a result, activity determines and shapes personality. And so, in the process of creating photobooks, the child's abilities are manifested and talents are revealed, inclinations and preferences are revealed, which otherwise might not be detected.

### **Principle of unity of consciousness and activity**

We must designate the principle of the unity of consciousness and activity. Consciousness really makes up an organic whole with activity (although not identical), it becomes both the cause, the prerequisite (motives, goals), and the result (images, states, skills, etc.) of actions. The psyche and consciousness are formed in activity, and they manifest themselves in it. No, actions are not a reflex reaction to external influences, they are regulated by consciousness, which is necessary in order to control all this. And consciousness can only be known through relationships with other people, as well as through the actions of a person in the course of which he develops.

The principle of the unity of consciousness and activity is very important in the context of working with special children. It is necessary to understand that it is in the process of activity that the mentor reveals the potential of the child and identifies ways to solve problems.

Problems can be very diverse, but creative activity that manages to interest a child can become a lifesaver for his parents if their goal is to improve his communication with peers. And the following story is the best way to show this possibility.

## Blank Pages (story)



### ***ANDREW and HIS FAMILY***

Andrew drew something with pencils in his album, and Amanda, his mother, peered intently into a hodgepodge of colored lines. For her, it still looked like just a combination of different colors, but she knew that a few more strokes, and Andrew would turn the chaotic stripes into a harmonious picture. In fact, a couple more minutes, and out of the mess a sultry red-and-yellow desert and a string of camels wandering along it began to emerge.

– What are you drawing, Andrew? Amanda was surprised. – Where did you see such a beautiful desert with camels? Have you seen this on TV?

Andrew said nothing, he was too absorbed in his occupation. Amanda is the mother of a special needs child, Andrew, and a regular girl, Christy. When Andrew was only three, doctors diagnosed him with autism, then still under a question mark. In the small town where Amanda lived, it sounded like a verdict.

She was greatly supported by her beloved husband, who patiently supported her hope for the best and helped with everything he could. His love for his son was truly boundless. He could talk quietly with Andrew for hours, telling him what a beautiful and smart boy he was, that when he grow up, he could become big and strong like his dad. Boy smiled, occasionally, and simply listened attentively to his father.

Every year his traits manifested themselves. He rejected physical and eye contact and did not respond to his name. He was afraid of loud

noises, and a dog barking could drive him into hysterics and tears. He could not stand sudden changes and was terribly upset if someone rearranged his things. Everything had to be in place. When he was upset, the only things which could calm him down was drawing and calm music. When alone, or in the company of his younger sister, he could draw on paper with pencils for a long time. The color fascinated him.

Father gave him a small separate room, where nobody touched any of his things, which greatly improved his situation. It was also patiently explained to him that in other parts of the apartment he needed to live according to what was expected there.

If the children drew in the living room and Christy did something that Andrew did not like, his mother suggested that he go to his room, where he would not have to be upset. He had a choice: to be alone where there was complete order around, or to endure the violation of order to be with his sister. Andrew preferred the latter, and gradually his obsession with order noticeably lost ground.

His speech problems, unfortunately, did not contribute to communication, although the boy clearly wanted contact with other children. He spoke quickly and was very difficult to understand. At the same time, his voice was very quiet, indistinct, with unusual, sometimes even mournful intonations. His six-year-old sister was already chatting with friends but for Andrew it had big issues.

Of course, in the family circle, Andrew was understood by all household members. The problem of communication and misunderstanding by the outside world manifested with him at an early age in kindergarten, where his parents sent their son at the age of three, before they learned about autism.

There were many children in the group, and the teachers did not have the opportunity to pay attention to each of the children separately. In addition, they did not know at all how to work with such a child. He could not interact with other children in the group; he ate only food prepared separately for him, and often threw tantrums.

In those moments when he was upset, surprised, or delighted with something, he began waving his arms in a funny way. Outwardly this looked odd, but only until he started crying. Only then did adults understand that something had happened, and the child needed help. But they could not figure out his problem and he could not explain it to them. His speech abilities at that time were very limited. Over time, the children began to fear, avoid and offend him.

Repeatedly, the parents took their tearful son out of the kinder-garden, although every morning he planned to go there. At first, this desire for them was incomprehensible and seemed very strange. However, gradually the parents got used to the fact that they had to deal with strange things. Their own views about the world began to change noticeably under the influence of Andrew. They loved their sweet, strange son very much.

After several weeks of daily grief, with the kindergarten staff categorically refusing to read books about the characteristics of such children, Andrew's parents sadly realized that the kindergarten was not the best solution for their son. Amanda began to take work home to be with Andrew.

Amanda, who grew up on books, of course, read a lot of literature, talked with other parents who had similar problems. Parents experimented a lot with different approaches and gradually achieved improvements with food, behavior, and the development of simple, but necessary life skills for the child. Andrew had simple household duties, which he diligently performed. Since Andrew sought to communicate with other children, he tried to participate in some games - with Christy and the boy next door, Bob, the same age as Andrew.

### ***FIRST DAY at SCHOOL***

Time passed, Andrew grew up, and the time came when it was no longer possible to postpone entering school. Amanda's mild hope that her child would be able to somehow adapt to school collapsed on the very first day.

Andrew was the oldest in the class, and the only child with autism in the whole school. At first the children did not know how to react to this. They were embarrassed that he was different from them. They were alarmed by his strange low voice, the way he waved his arms, and the fact that he was frightened by loud noises. During the first break, a crowd of first-graders surrounded Andrew. They shouted and pulled him. Andrew was scared. Amanda, who had not yet left school, noticed this and arrived almost on time. However, the first day of school ended in tears and grief. Andrew really wanted to go to school, influenced by his friend, attending there. This was not a feature of autistic children, because they are usually satisfied with their inner world, however he wanted to be with other children. This little heroism was very touching. He was also appreciated by Andrew's first teacher, Mrs Morton. She was fascinated by this

blond-haired boy who knew how to listen to her explanations so carefully and understandingly, but at the same time did all the tasks in his own way.

- You know, Amanda, it seems to me that your son is a very gifted boy. Of course, he has some problems with his peers, however this is because the children simply do not understand him. They find his way of speaking and behaving strange. To be honest, I have no problems working with Andrew, and enjoy teaching him. I spoke to my students so nobody would offend or bother him. However, his main problem could be different. It seems that Andrew is lonely at school. I wish he had friends. Let's think about how to help him with this. At dinner, Amanda told her husband about her conversation with the teacher and he looked worried. He said he would think about what he could do for his son and went to bed early. Amanda did not.

### ***FATHER'S IDEA***

The next day, father returned home cheerful. In the evening, when the females got together in the kitchen to prepare supper, he took out his old camera. He followed Andrew, taking photos of him: how the boy played with fiends, how he helped his sister, how he drew and did his household chores. Andrew paid no attention to his father. The camera never interested him. However, when father showed a picture of his room on the camera screen, where things were laid out in perfect order, he saw surprise and interest in his son's face.

- Do you want to try it yourself? - taking advantage of the moment, suggested the father. Doubts were reflected on Andrew's face, so the father considered it necessary to cheer up his son.

-Come on son, it's easy. Do you want me to show you how it's done? Andrew turned out to be a good student and very quickly mastered the camera. In the evening, father told his wife:

- I think I'll take Andrew, print out the photos, and you take them to school so that the children can see what their classmates can be. After all, at home he is completely different. He's a cool guy, albeit a weird one. But I love him so much that I don't notice anything anymore. I thought maybe seeing him through my eyes would make the kids feel the same way about him. Amanda laid her head on her husband's shoulder.

- You are my most... brilliant person!

- And imagine, Andrew himself became interested in the camera. Well, I taught him. He has a vision of an artist; he grasps such things on the fly. He's already taken good pictures. Tomorrow morning we decided to go outside to take pictures with him. We will take pictures while the lighting is good. We will walk around the city, and the park. Prepare us a couple of sandwiches, please.

Tomorrow was a day off, and the father and son spent it in a very exciting way. Andrew chose an object of interest to him, and then photographed it from different angles. He planned the shot for a long time and in detail before clicking the camera button. Distinguished by high attention to detail, the boy found a lot of interesting things. They had a wonderful day, and the camera became the undivided property of Andrew.

The next day they drove out of town. Sister Christy accompanied the men, who talked about photography in such an adult way and at the same time so cheerfully. In the evening, she enthusiastically told her mother about the walk in detail.

When in a few days, with the words: "Take it, son. Take them apart! - father brought home printed photographs, Andrew's face, usually serious, lit up with a smile, and with a pack of newfound treasures, he hurried to his room. The parents looked at each other cheerfully.

- I think a whole story about Andrew should be made from these photographs, this will make a better impression on children than individual photographs. What do you think? - In general, Amanda was an avid reader, and she also loved to write short stories. She saw a creative perspective for herself and her son.

-Well done, mother. You are the best!!! I'll go and see what Andrew is doing there. He returned very soon

- He is arranging pictures in stacks: people, nature and the city separately. Here's the guy! Have you already discussed your idea about the story with him?

- Haven't done it yet. Maybe he already knows how to read our thoughts from a distance, which is unlikely ... Although, if you think carefully, everything can be expected from our son, - Amanda laughed.

- He loves to put everything on the shelves and is very organised. You and I would do well to learn from him.

The next morning, Amanda went to the store and returned with a large bag of colorful folders, paper and paint. Andrew's favorite pencils,



coloured tape and many other things which could decorate a homemade photobook.

Andrew, I had an idea when I saw how well you sorted all the photos. What if we make a real photo book out of your pictures, a story from photographs? Let's create chapters in it, for example, "Neighbourhood", "Park", "My house", "My room", "My favorite activities and games"... Also "My family", where we will put your photos there and combine them into one story. You can decorate the book with your own drawings and favorite stickers. It will be very beautiful!

### ***ANDREW got CARRIED AWAY***

The boy very quickly understood the essence of the project, and it was then impossible to tear him away from the new activity. He specially drew the capital letter of each chapter beautifully. He designed each page in a special way. Sometimes he was so carried away that he did not notice anything around him. He looked calm and happy. Now he did not even notice the loud noises which had frightened him before.

This is how a large fascinating photo book gradually increased in which the main moments of Andrew's daily life were captured. Thanks to his artistic talent, the project became more and more colorful every day. For family members, this was a special occasion to see and praise Andrew's talents, and he flourished, feeling such support. The book was entirely devoted to the boy's life, so they decided to call it "Andrew's World". All family members took part in its creation. Sister helped decorate the pages, father and son chose and discussed photographs taken by Andrew, and mother helped to come up with names and texts for these photos. She laid out photos and selected text for them so that the result was a fascinating story.

Amanda felt that the work would soon be ready, and already mentally imagined how she would take it to school. She leafed through the almost finished photo book, once again enjoying the results of her extraordinary child's work and thought about a possible spectacular end to the resulting story, which had not yet occurred. Suddenly she noticed blank pages added at the end of the book. At the top, in Andrew's neat handwriting, was written: "My school friends." Below was a drawing of the school building - and nothing else. No photographs, no pictures. Like a gaping spot of emptiness in a bright and warm book.

Amanda thought deeply. It seemed unfair and wrong that her smart and talented boy could not find school friends. She realised that this was the spectacular end of the story book.

The next day, bringing Andrew to school early, she looked into the teachers' room and found her son's teacher there:

- Alina, I would like to show you something ... Here. - Amanda put Andrew's photo book in front of her.

Mrs. Morton leafed through it for a long time. She looked at the pages, not hiding her admiration, then opened the blank sheets and looked up at Amanda. For a few seconds the women looked at each other in silence.

- Amanda, leave me your photobook. I think I know how to help. Can I show your photobook to the class?

- Yes, of course ... Only now I'm worried about how Andrew will react to this.

-I'll take care of it, - the teacher said, -leave it to me.

At recess, Mrs. Morton approached her special student.

- Andrew, today I talked with your mother and found out what a wonderful photo project you have done. I want to thank you for the idea: this is exactly what I need. Now I know the class hour tomorrow will be special. I will talk about the art of photography. So I really need your photo book to show it to the kids. Will you let me do this?

After a moment's hesitation, the boy agreed and was visibly excited.

### ***LESSON ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY***

The next morning, the teacher promised the class that an unusual lesson would be waiting for them at class today.

The teacher did not deceive their expectations. The lesson was devoted to the art of photography. She talked about how delicate and creative work it is. About the importance of angle and light. She showed the creations of professional photographers, true masters of their craft.

"Women particularly love the work of photographers," she joked, "because it depends on the photographer how beautiful you turn out in the photo.

The girls whispered excitedly. Each of them wanted to see themselves as beautiful. Every boy in class dreamed of being a photographer.

-Now guys, I want to show you something. You already have a real photographer among you. He is very modest, as befits a real master, but

his work is very talented. The teacher flicked the switch, and an image from Andrew's photobook appeared on the demonstration screen.

The story showed a picturesque place where a small, but cosy town was located, with a large beautiful park, shops, and a library, etc. And in one very quiet area there was a pretty house where a friendly family lived, where everyone loved and helped each other.

The teacher clicked the remote and the children saw the next photo. Amanda, her husband, and their daughter were depicted there. This warm and homely photograph breathed the comfort of a family hearth. Andrew's parents did not know that they were being filmed, and therefore looked very touching and at ease. They smiled at each other and also spoke. The photo was framed with small applications that emphasised its beauty.

Wow. Did someone from our class do this? - Asked the cool ringleader Aliza.

Mrs. Morton switched the page, and the children saw a room where things were laid out in perfect order, and then a photograph of the owner of this room. She looked at Andrew, who was staring at the screen without looking up. He looked a little frightened, as if he was afraid of being scolded.

- This is our Andrew! - the children murmured.

- You are right. This is Andrew. - the teacher gladly introduced the author of the work.

he eyes of all the children in the class turned to Andrew. The boy, not accustomed to universal admiration, clearly felt uncomfortable. The teacher even thought that now he would get up and run away.

She walked over to his desk.

-Thanks, Andrew. Your photo book made me very happy. I love beautiful things and I think that all the children in this class liked your work too. It was very inspiring. I think that now I will also start taking pictures more often.

Aliza got up, went to Andrew and looked at him with curiosity, pleading: "Can you take a picture of me the way you took a picture of your sister?"

Hesitantly, almost timidly, Andrew looked up at her and nodded uncertainty. And, it seems, even smiled. And then the class was filled with joyful womanish exclamations, everyone hurried to Andrew's desk to tell how much they liked his photos. And of course, asked him to take their photos, everyone wanted to feel like a model. The boys enthusiastically

asked him how the camera works, because few of them knew how to handle it. And, strangely, Andrew was not at all frightened by the noise. He looked at other children and for the first time was not wary and nor saw aggression. He liked it!

### ***END of BLANK PAGES!***

A couple of weeks later, Andrew approached his mother.

"Mrs. Morton said to give this to you," and he handed her a bundle. Amanda was surprised and a little alarmed, but she tried to hide these feelings from her son. She took the package. "Thank you, Andrew, I'll look later," she waited for the boy to come out and unfolded the bundle.

Amanda looked at the contents and felt a lump rising to her throat. There were photographs inside. On some of them, her son ate in the school cafeteria and talked enthusiastically about something with the girl Anna. On others he played at recess with other boys. With trembling hands, Amanda sorted through the photographs. Many of Andrew's classmates were depicted laughing or serious. At the end, a note from the teacher was attached.

"Tatyana Ivanovna, I allowed Andrew to shoot with my camera. Most of these wonderful portraits he made himself."

Mom brushed away happy tears and left the room.

- Andrew, actually this is for you. You can use these photos for your photobook. And I think that you should take your camera to school to shoot there. Dad doesn't mind.

A few days later, Amanda again looked at Andrew's photo book. She smiled as she noticed that her son had to put in a few new pages for the "My School Friends" section. There were so many photographs that all of them simply did not fit on one spread.

Laughing, dancing, reading children looked at her from the pictures. The section itself was decorated with bright pictures depicting a school, notebooks, desks, and happy children.

About a week later, walking past the schoolyard, Amanda suddenly saw Andrew there with his classmates and friend Bob. The son busily handed out balloons to everyone and showed where to stand. In his hands he had a new camera, a gift from his father. It seems that the children started a photo project dedicated to Teacher's Day. They laughed and jokingly threw balloons at each other. Andrew clicked the camera and, like a real photographer, caught good moments.

He gave instructions to friends, and it seems that no one was embarrassed by the peculiarities of his voice. However, every day the boy spoke better and more confidently. Amanda smiled, realising that she was proud of her son and happy like never before.

At that moment, she suddenly realised that a new page had been opened in her family life. The world shone in a new light. Her thoughts were confused, but she was in a wonderful, amazing state, which was difficult to put into words. At home, she took the photographs that were not included in Andrew's book, opened a completely new folder and started her own photobook. Amanda brought out the title on the cover: "The road of our son to the Big World."

### ***A comment***

*The camera served as an excellent intermediary between Andrew, who had problems communicating with others, and his entourage. With a camera in hand, he became much more confident and found an approach to classmates. The photo book, where Andrew is portrayed as the main character, helped the children see him in a different light. She helped the children to get away from the usual and superficial negative ideas about him. They saw the boy from a new, interesting side for them, which allowed the boy to become a full-fledged member of the children's team. And as a result, Andrew made friends.*

*The discussion of photographs significantly enriched his vocabulary and improved his speech. The work on the photo book opened up new opportunities for communication between parents and their unusual son. It turned out to be a real creative union, useful for all its participants.*

## Chapter 5- Expanding a child's world

The task of an adult is to interest, captivate, inspire the child with the surrounding reality and take him out of his own world, where he often feels good and calm, while the world around him is incomprehensible and frightening. Photography is a wonderful and safe way and a bridge through which a special child, with the support of others, can cross this barrier, and behind him a lot of new opportunities will open up for him.

The story " **Three Musketeers**" illustrates these ideas.

### Three Musketeers (story)

*This story is dedicated to my very first client, Mati, a six-year-old boy with autism. I didn't know much about autism back then and just carefully studied Mati while reading books on autism. For all his oddities, Mati was a very smart boy, he quickly solved technical problems and had a strong character, knowing exactly what he wanted. The fact that Mati became so attached to my parrot, which he was very afraid of at first, was the strongest impression for me. This completely disproved the claim that I read in the literature that children with autism supposedly do not need anyone. Mati became friends with the owner of the bird, my daughter, and his affection and concern for the bird looked very touching. Unfortunately, our communication was short-lived - Mati was transferred to another agency.*



### **MIA and MISHA**

- Mom, Misha is gone! - A ten-year-old girl flew into the room like a rocket. "I can't find him anywhere. Including his cage!"

"Honey, I let him fly, look in the living room," Linda smiled at her daughter. Mia was always worried when it came to her beloved parrot. Misha lived with them for a couple of years and during this time became the girl's best friend. It was even named after her. She tirelessly played and took pictures of him. She loved him so much that sometimes the bird began to get tired of her attention. In such cases, Misha

flew somewhere higher and pretended not to hear Mia calling him.

"Maria, give the poor parrot a little rest. Since you got a camera, Misha's quiet life has ended. Have pity on him, he's still not a fashion model.

- Well, yes. Misha is much better," the girl said confidently. "I'll go visit the neighbours then, okay?" I'll play with Matti.

### ***MATTI MEETS MISHA***

The neighbour family lived next door: Parents were almost the same age and their six-year-old son Matti. Families were friends and often ran to each other for small things or just to chat. Mother Olga liked to talk about her son's little successes. Several years ago Matti was diagnosed with autism. The first days Olga could not believe it and constantly tried to find another explanation for her son's oddities. She considered it a mistake by the doctors, a misunderstanding, and anything else. She did not want to believe that her beautiful child would never be like other children. In those days, Linda and her husband spent a lot of time with their friends. They considered it their duty to support the family's situation. Linda studied mountains of literature and learned a lot about autism and ways to socialise children with this diagnosis. Being a schoolteacher, she perfectly understood how important it was to help Matti bring out his abilities in the best possible way.

She was also very pleased that her own daughter did not experience any discomfort when communicating with a special boy. Having worked at the school for many years, Linda knew that children can be very cruel, especially to those who are different from them. Therefore, she always watched closely to see if Mia showed cruelty to her friend. Fortunately, the girl was not at all embarrassed by the fact that Matti rarely spoke, and sometimes simply repeated her words verbatim.

Being a very cheerful and talkative child by nature, Mia constantly chirped about something, and Matti listened to her attentively. Like many autistic children, Matti avoided innovation in the usual course of life, but his friend often forced him to change habits. At first, this was a little scary for the parents, however, later it became clear that both children benefit from it. Mia learned responsibility, and Matti expanded his horizons. Olga only asked them to spend time in their house being afraid that in a new environment Matti might get scared.

This day was different. Inspired by thoughts of her bird, Mia was determined to show it to her friend.

- Can Matti and I play together in our house? I will introduce him to Misha. Matti is my friend and Misha too. I want them to become friends as well.

Olga thought for a moment. She did not like the idea of her son being in an unfamiliar place, and besides, she did not know how he would react to a bird that he had never seen up close before. On the other hand, next to Mia, Matti always looked relaxed and satisfied, and sometimes even talked to her, which was completely atypical for him.

- Matti, do you want to go with Mia and meet her bird?

The child paused, looked at Mia, and then nodded uncertainty. This played a decisive role.

-Okay, just let me go with you. Your mom and I will sit in the kitchen, and you will play with Misha, - Olga was still afraid to leave her child unattended.

As soon as they entered the house, Mia pulled Matti by the hand.

- Let's go quickly. Misha is in his cage, in my room. He has his feeder and bathes there. Also he has a mirror and talks to it very funny, - Mia cheerfully told her friend about her favorite bird.

They entered the room. The parrot got distracted from his activity and carefully looked at the children. Recognizing the hostess and assessing her companion, Misha suddenly spread his wings wide and began to clean them with his beak. Matti froze a couple of metres from the cage, with fear visible in his eyes. He had never seen animals so close before, and it must have frightened him. Matti froze in horror, and his friend immediately felt something was wrong.

- Matti! Matti, what's wrong with you? You should not be afraid, Misha does not bite at all, - she was confused and did not think her little bird could frighten the boy.

Matti flew out of the room with tears. The frightened mother found him next to the front door, which he tried in vain to open. The child was so afraid that he was ready to run wherever his eyes looked. Mia was no less frightened. She did not understand what was happening, and her helplessness oppressed her.

### ***MIA GETS SOME IDEAS***

In the evening, Linda spoke with her daughter for a long time and carefully explained that Matti was not like her, that he was special, but this did not mean that they cannot be friends. On the contrary, he really needed her support. Just that she, Mia, needs to be very careful not to offend or frighten him.



- Okay, mommy. I think I got it. It's like with Misha, you need to touch him very carefully, because he is very fragile and you can hurt him.  
- Yes darling. It's very similar. Only Misha has fragile bones, and Matti has a fragile soul.

-But I still want them to be friends, - Mia said thoughtfully.

From that day on, her parrot became a constant topic of her conversations with Matti. Mia told him about how funny the bird was behaving through the day, how it spilled water from his little bath, how it was asking for seeds, a favorite treat. She brought photographs of Misha and talked about what had happened to him lately. At first, looking at Misha, Matti frowned and looked at Mia with fear and incomprehension. But she was patient, she did not insist on a personal acquaintance, but continued to simply talk about the bird. So day after day passed, and one day the parrot became part of Matti's world.

### ***MIRROR for MISHA***

Once Mia told Matti about what a small mirror Misha had in his cage and how funny he was spinning around it, trying to examine himself. When Linda and her daughter came to visit the neighbours next time, Matti brought them a mirror. It was much larger than the one he saw in the photo in the parrot's cage. He put it on the table and said: "Bird Misha." His mother and Linda did not immediately understand what the boy meant. Unlike Mia, who immediately exclaimed:

-Is this for Misha? Matti, how cool! Misha will be very happy with a new mirror, thank you!

On his next visit, Matti went straight to Mia's room. He cautiously opened the door and peered inside. Both mothers froze. They looked at one another but decided not to interfere just yet.

-Hi Misha! –said Matti with a timid voice. Unlike them, Mia felt much more confident. She went up to her friend and, smiling asked him:

- Do you want to talk to Misha? -She took the boy by the hand.  
-Come with me. Misha will tell you how he likes your mirror.

The children went into the room. Mia's mom looked at her nervous friend and said:

- Calm down. Your son is a big boy. Just let him do what he sees fit. It's time for you to learn to trust him. Everything will be fine.

### ***MATTI and MISHA BECOME FRIENDS***

After a couple of minutes, children's laughter came from the room. The mothers cautiously peered into the room. Matti was sitting very close to the cage. –

-Hello, Misha! Hello bird! - he said, looking at the parrot.

It became clear that their acquaintance with Misha had taken place. Thanks to the patience of his friend, Matti got used to the thought of the bird and realised that there was no threat to him.

Even more amazing was that he began to show real concern for Mia's pet. When they went to the supermarket, his mother suggested going to a department for pickled cucumbers, which Matti loved very much. However, the boy confidently moved to a completely different direction. Olga followed him and was surprised to see how he put a bag of seeds into the basket.

"Misha," he explained, and went busily to the department where cucumbers were sold.

In the evening, Olga enthusiastically told her friend about this situation:

"You see, Linda, this is the first time he has shown concern for another being. After all, he didn't just buy seeds for Misha, he put the bird's interests higher than his own. It seems to me very important; this is a manifestation of consciousness and responsibility!

- Of course, I am glad that now they are all friends together, - Linda smiled, - and it also seems to me that they could work together on some projects. Mia has recently taken a great interest in photography. We gave her a camera, and she photographs everything that comes to her hand. Mostly, of course, Misha. The poor parrot is already tired of her. I think that if you give them an idea, they can make a real photo project. I've read that making photobooks is used to bring out the abilities of autistic children, so Matti can benefit from that too. Maybe Mia can even teach him how to take photos.

### ***CREATING PHOTOBOKS***

Mia, of course, was very inspired by her mother's idea. She approached the matter seriously and arranged a real photo shoot for Misha and Matti. She told Matti in detail what she was going to do and what a beautiful photobook they would make. At first, the boy simply posed for a photo, but when it came to decorating, pasting printed photos and decorating pages, he began to show much more initiative and began to help Mia.

Olga read the book "The Three Musketeers" to her son. Matti really liked the story about brave friends, and he picked up applications and stickers in the spirit of that story. They spent several exciting days decorating their book. Mia's dad, looking at them, called them the three musketeers.

They also called their book The Three Musketeers MMM. Of course, they themselves were those three musketeers: Mia, Matti and Misha. One day, dad brought them a musketeer hat, and they took pictures in it. Mia pasted stickers with musketeer hats on some of the photos. And Misha got a top hat, in which he looked breathtakingly.

It was noticeable that Matti was deeply fascinated by this creative process. He completely forgot that only a few weeks ago he had run away from a small parrot in horror. He was very fond of watching Mia feed Misha with seeds, although he himself could not yet decide on this.

Every time he came to visit, he approached Misha's cage and greeted him. And sometimes even bought small gifts for the parrot. Olga even thought about getting her own parrot for her son. They went to the pet store a couple of times, and Matti really liked looking at the huge cages with different birds of all colors.

Meanwhile, Mia had an idea for a new photobook. Only now she wanted to dedicate it to the pet birds that people keep at home, and Misha in particular. She wanted to describe both the birds themselves and how they should be properly cared for.

Mia and Matti chose different themes for the photos of the parrot. They had Misha's toys, a mirror that Matti gave him, any Misha's food and much more. Matti posed for many photos, but could not do it for a photo called "How to feed Misha with seeds." He was still a little afraid.

Mia realised that this was a great opportunity to teach him how to use the camera. She invited a friend to take a photo "Mia feeds Misha with seeds", and, taking advantage of this, Mia taught him how to use the camera. Matti liked taking pictures, and now Mia posed. They took pictures of some of the birds that were in the local pet store and put the pictures in a photobook.

### ***TEAM WORK***

Mia, Matti and Misha turned out to be a great team. Mia was a generator of ideas, Matti was a thoughtful listener and performer, and

Misha was their inspirer and leader. As the children sat at the table and worked on the project, he looked at them with obvious approval. He observed when Mia's friends came to visit, they were happy to look at photobooks and discuss birds.

Matti's father, an avid fisherman, suggested the children make a book about fishing. The parents rejoiced more than once, seeing daily creations of their children becoming more meaningful and creative. An ordinary camera and a little imagination formed a union, which, despite the young age of the participants, bore fruit. However, more importantly, the friendship between Mia and Matti had become stronger. Communicating with each other and taking care of Misha, taught the children responsibility and they got to know the world better. This gives hope they will maintain their friendship for years to come.

### ***A comment***

*Taking care of the bird changed the boy Matti, made him more open to the world and people. Friendship with a neighbour girl who did not focus on his problems and unusualness, accepted him as a playmate, helped him overcome communication problems. Photography played a positive role in the lives of these children.*

*So, in this story, photobooks again acted as an excellent tool for establishing interaction with the environment of the child. But, of course, in order for the tool to be most effective, it should be created thoughtfully, with an understanding of the essence of the matter and the future structure of the book. Of course, it, like every textbook (and in fact it is to some extent), should have a clear structure that will help the mentor and his ward in their work.*

## Chapter 6. Structural units in the TPB system

Since the TPB system has much in common with the theory of activity, it uses similar principles of construction and description. Activity consists of three structural units: activity, action and operation.

- 1) **Activity** is determined by **motive**.
- 2) The **action** is determined by the **goal**.
- 3) The **operation** is determined by the specific **conditions** of its course.

To understand this scheme, it is worth defining all the concepts, and then we will analyse their application in the practice of working with photobooks.

### **The first structural unit is ACTIVITY**

Activity is a process of conscious interaction of a person with the environment. The motive is the reason why he starts doing anything at all.

In TPB, motivators are motivating factors. Finding them is the job of a mentor, who needs to go deeper into the child's personality in order to find out what motivating factors will help to involve a child in the process of creating photobooks. Since the TPB system does not use material incentives (gifts, sweets, etc.), it is necessary to arouse deep sincere personal interest in the ward.

Only internal motivation is effective. It can be a child's desire to give a gift to his mother, or an appeal to the subject of his pride (to make a photobook about his favorite toy or a collection of stickers), or a special interest, as is often the case with children with autism: the need to learn life skills - how to dress and eat properly. In each case, the motive will be different, and this directly depends on the personality of the child. The only important thing here is that it will make the child want to participate in the TPB process.

For example, in the story "True Friend", John's mother used his passion for balls to involve him in creating photobooks. Each child in each story (and each real special child) has a different motivation to work, but it is sure to be found by the adult.

### **The second structural unit is the ACTION**

Action is purposeful work to achieve the desired result. The action is determined by the goal, which is an image of the future, achieving what is

required to make efforts, to carry out an action, which in turn includes a number of successive operations.

As for the action determined by the goal, the TPB system is very clearly characterised by this (that is, the goal in the TPB system is also clearly defined). The mentor, with the help of the child, selects a theme for the photobook, which should be clear to the child and encourage him into action. By creating a photobook on a topic that interests the child, for example, "How to cook a simple breakfast on your own", the child participates in a purposeful action and performs it.

### **The third structural unit is an OPERATION**

An operation is conditional; it is a part of an action which is performed with the help of skills possessed by a person. A skill is an action brought to automatism because of regular repetitions. The conditions are the existing situation and environment in which the activity is implemented.

Unlike actions, operations are not aimed at conscious goals. These are essentially gestures that are caused by the context condition of the task. The difference between actions and operations lies in the sphere of the concept of purposefulness. If actions are focused on achieving certain goals, then operations are determined by the conditions, circumstances under which this goal can be achieved. Also, the difference is that if the actions are performed consciously, then the operations are mostly automatic.

Structural units of activity are mobile. What was a simple action, can grow into something more., What may be just an operation for one child, such as photographing objects, for another may become an independent creative activity in terms of its inner meaning.

At the very beginning of work on the TPB system, the mentor helps the child to independently cope with the implementation of small sub-operations, until the child learns to perform the whole operation. Then an adult helps him with other operations. Thus, moving from small to large, the child acquires skills that were not possessed previously. He masters the process of making a photobook and skills and knowledge which are the subject of a photobook. It could be cooking breakfast, shopping or choosing clothes, or learning about flowers or a photobook about making friends, or a child's fantasies and dreams. The list is endless.

So, ascending steps that the TPB system offers look like this: sub-operation → operation → action → activity .

It is worth noting that in the process of working with the TPB system, the child does not suspect that we are teaching him - the system itself is teaching. By participating, the child becomes a co-author of a photobook, while he learns naturally, in the process of working on an interesting project.

The story "**Fashion Girl Milani**" illustrates these ideas

### **Fashion girl Milani (story)**

*The following story comes from a Pakistani boy with Down Syndrome named Isaf. He changed his clothes every now and then and waited for obligatory enthusiasm from me about any change (for example, when he put on socks of a different color). I thought about building a catwalk and using his passion for dressing up to learn more useful skills and knowledge. For example, invite him to walk in front of the public - his parents and older sister, who adored him - three times (and so cultivate patience), say the right words, dress in a certain style ... And record all this in photo books, show the result to relatives, all the more that Isaf was a very sociable child. But, of course, this option was not suitable for a boy, and especially for a boy from a Muslim family. So the idea remained at the level of the idea, and then embodied in this story, which is dedicated to the funny, very active and inventive little boy Isaf.*

*In addition, here we will return to the image of a sensitive and inventive mentor Volunteer Vera.*



### ***FIRST MEETING***

After a short time, volunteer Vera again was asked for help. Soon she was at the door, gathered courage and pressed the bell. There was a pleasant trill. Vera heard the tramp of someone's feet, who seemed excited

-Mom, it's her, it's her!

The door opened and Vera saw a pretty girl in red sweatpants, green shoes and a yellow sequined sweater. A large blue bow with white polka dots adorned her head.

Vera was momentarily dumbfounded by such a color abundance. She naturally had good taste, it manifested itself in everything. She carefully selected her wardrobe, the furniture in the apartment, notebooks and wallets, which always had been designed in the same style. Milani's wardrobe stunned her.

However, the girl herself was obviously delighted with her outfit. Things surprisingly did not fit together, but Milani did not seem to notice. She clearly enjoyed the fact that she made an impression on Vera.

- Do you like it? -she asked.

"Of course," Vera responded, "there are so many beautiful colors.

There was a mirror in the hallway, and Milani decided to turn around in front of it again, to evaluate her outfit.

"Let's count how many colors you have and which ones," Vera suggested.

Milani smartly counted 5 colors, but she had a clear problem with the names. She confused blue with green, yellow with red, only white and black she knew for sure.



"At least she's all right with the counting," Vera noted to herself, and said aloud:

- Well, what a fashion person you are! I also love to dress well. You and I can be friends on that.

Milani broke into a smile and pulled Vera by the hand: "Let's go to my room!"

She was a charming child, a very funny and active girl. She loved clothes, to dress, and constantly changed and showed off in front of the mirror. Like most children with Down syndrome, she always insisted on her choice of clothes, which simply drove her mother crazy when they had to leave the house. Milani was completely devoid of any concept of an acceptable combination, and her usual wardrobe was a bizarre mixture of different colors and styles.

Before leaving, her mother told Vera:

- She was waiting for you so much and was worried ... She chose the best of her favorite outfits for a very long time. This is always a big problem for us. Every time you need to go somewhere, Milani chooses the most incongruous things. The saddest thing is that I cannot convince her to change. I tried to teach her how to dress properly and choose things, but Milani, unfortunately, does not remember colors at all, so I gave up on this idea. Now I don't react. People on the street smile at her, so she must think she is beautifully dressed.

On her next visit, Vera brought some of her fashion magazines with her. She and Milani looked at them for a long time and discussed who liked what, and Vera told her the news:

- You know, darling, it is considered the most fashionable now to wear clothes of three colors or less. Can you show me your favorite colors?

Milani took out three things of different colors. Vera did not ask to name them, but one of them, purple, was Vera's favorite too. - Oh, it's purple, like mine, which I love. Do you like my sweatshirt?

That day, they had a wonderful time together, discussing clothes in magazines and noting things which were purple.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY FINDS ITS USE**

The first meetings with Milani went well. Vera sincerely became attached to the girl and no longer felt uncomfortable by the grotesque choice of her clothes. However, she wanted to help Milani and her mother, who was upset because of her daughter's inability to dress

normally. Gradually, Vera came up with a plan, whereby she considered the possibilities of photographic art.

Many years ago, from one of his trips abroad, her father brought Vera a good Praktica camera. Few people had cameras back then. At best, one of the high school students had a simple Soviet one. Parents hoped that this would help Vera establish communication with school friends.

In a short time, she became a star at school. However, her popularity did not last long. She liked to photograph nature, birds and architectural structures much more than people. Vera carried her love for photography, as well as for books, through her whole life. Over time, of course, she bought herself a digital camera.

The next visit she brought her camera.

- Milani, let's make our own fashion magazine with your outfits, since you are such a trendsetter.

-How?

- Very simple, bring out all the green things, just like my skirt.

Milani opened the closet, took out a couple of things, and thought they were different shades of green.

"Yeah, a girl is able to pick up things on a certain basis. This is already something", Vera thought, and said aloud:

- Well, go ahead, get everything that looks like my skirt. They are all green.

Milani immediately perked up and quickly took out all her green things.

-Now for our fashion magazine, we must photograph them all so that readers can see them. Let me show you how to take pictures...

- I can. I already took pictures with my uncle at the zoo. He gave me a camera for my birthday. Do you want me to bring it?

- Oh cool! Of course, bring it here!

Trying to concentrate, Milani stuck out her tongue, which looked very funny. Vera couldn't help smiling as she looked at her and took some pictures of the funny photographer.

The girl tried very hard and reacted to the work responsibly. Soon all the green things were photographed. Milani also dressed herself in green and Vera took a picture of her.

-I think we deserve a walk," Vera suggested, - Let's get some fresh air.

Holding hands and taking cameras with them, they went down the stairs to the courtyard. Stopping at a wild rose bush, Vera exclaimed:

- Oh, what a beautiful green color these leaves have! I have to photograph them. Then she said, "That green one is exactly like your blouse." Stand next to it, I'll take a picture of you.

Milani really enjoyed posing. And she also joined the game: "Let's find a green one for your skirt," she suggested, and they began to search.

When they were little tired, but very pleased and cheerful, they returned home, Milani announced from the threshold:

- Mom, today we had Green Day!

"A wonderful idea, darling," Vera said

They went to Milani's room, where there was a lot of different paper, pencils and colourful markers.

"Darling, can you write?" Vera asked.

- Not yet. I'm studying, and know almost all the letters.

- So that's great. Let's study together. Write the letter G.

With Vera's help, Milani wrote "Green Day" and painted a sheet of paper with images of all the objects that they photographed during the day: tree leaves, Vera's skirt, and many others.

They hung the finished project on the wall.

- That's good, - Vera was delighted. Let's start our next day with red. I have a new red blouse.

## **COLORED DAYS**

At their next meeting, Milani was waiting for Vera on the doorstep. In her hands were multi-coloured tulips.

- On the weekend my grandmother came to us from the countryside, look what she brought! Beautiful, right? And they are all different! Mom and I decided that we want to give you a bouquet. We were waiting for you!

From the kitchen came the cheerful, slightly muffled voice of her mother.

- Vera a, this is really for you.

- Thank you very much! They are very beautiful! But this is the most important tulip, it is red ... Do you remember that today is our Red Day? Red like this tulip. Let me undress and we'll go to your room. Now let's get all your things in the right color.

- Red color. OK.

Looking at the flower, Milani collected many right clothes. Looking around at such a treasure, Vera began to tell the girl that, it turns out, human eyes can distinguish many shades of colors. And she suggested that she choose from all the lying clothes the darkest and lightest red tones. It was not so easy, but Milani worked with passion. She clearly enjoyed learning new things. Of course, Vera helped as much as she could. Putting two things side by side, she asked:

-Which one do you think is darker?

At first, she chose things with the strongest contrast and gradually made the task more difficult. Vera saw that praise was important for Milani, otherwise her face would become sad, so Vera was very careful with her tasks in order to see the girl's joyful and contented smile more often.

Dark-light was studied and photographed. Milani dressed in red clothes, and they happily went outside to continue the Red Day in the fresh air. There, Milani learned to find red things: a red car, a red bench, a red traffic light and its meaning.

"I like green more, because you can go," Milani shared.

- You're clever. You know the safety rules, - Vera encouraged her

Passing by a newsstand, Vera stopped for a minute and bought three red balloons for Milani. They immediately inflated them and, since the weather was windy, they attached them to Milani's wrist. Arriving at the square, Vera arranged a whole photo session for the girl, telling how real photo models behave in front of the camera. Darling tried very hard to be natural and not look at the camera as much as she played with the balloons. The wind helped her play with balloons and beautifully fluttered the girl's long curls. They got some interesting pictures. When Milani looked through all the photographs taken, she was very pleased with herself. She had never seen herself in such an unusual way.

When they returned home, the girl ran up to her mother and enthusiastically began talking about where their walk:

"Mommy, today was a RED day. It was so interesting. Now I'm like a real fashion model. Look at the photos Vera took!

-Yes, we did a great job today. Come on, let's take a break and then do some painting.

And they began to draw Red Day. Vera brought stickers, and Milani made the name of the page out of them: "Second Day - Red."

Before Vera left, they discussed what the next day would be like. The "yellow" option confused the girl. It turned out that Milani does not like

yellow. She clearly preferred bright colors. She had very few yellow clothes. Seeing her preoccupied face, Vera suggested:

"Let's do a Blue and Yellow Day, shall we?"

Milani did not really understand what it was, but it was clearly something new, and Milani met everything new with enthusiasm.

"Agreed," she concluded happily.

The next day, Vera came dressed in a blue dress with a yellow scarf. It was the only combination of yellow and blue that she could find in her wardrobe, because it was necessary to follow the already established rules.

Sweetie was waiting for her. All the yellow and blue things were prepared.

-What a beautiful blue color your dress has, Vera, -Milani's mother met her. - I love blue.

She also got into the game.

-Yes, this is one of my favorite dresses. Very useful for Blue Day, which we will have today.

-Yellow-Blue," Milani corrected her. - Let's go soon. I'll show you something.

Vera went into her room. Milani showed her the camera, where her few yellow things had already been photographed.

- Wow! Well done! you are darling! And I also have a surprise for you, which I'll show you later. We have a lot of work to do today. For business! Get out your blue outfits.

When Milani got the necessary things, Vera asked her to divide them into light and dark ones. She thought for a moment, and then joyfully exclaimed:

"I remember what we did on Red Day!" - and quickly everything was correctly laid out.

"She has a good memory," Vera noted to herself.

The walk and photos that day were also a success. They were lucky to find many beautiful yellow dandelions with long stems. Vera wove a beautiful wreath out of them, which was in perfect harmony with Milina's yellow T-shirt, and Milani again posed for their future fashion magazine. Then together they collected a large bouquet of dandelions for Milina's mother, which smelled so tempting that Milani got a completely yellow nose from pollen.

When they returned home, mother took a group picture of them - Milani in a wreath and Vera with a bouquet of dandelions in her hands.

## ***COLORS PRIMARY and SECONDARY***

Seeing that Milani enthusiastically meets any innovation and even makes surprises herself, Vera decided to take advantage of this wonderful trait of hers and not restrain herself when she wanted to acquaint Milani with completely new concepts.

When they were settled in Milani's room, Vera announced:

- And now my surprise for you, darling!

Vera took out thick colored but transparent pieces of film, which she had specially bought at the stationery store.

"Darling, I want to show you something. We already know many colors with you. Let's repeat. Yellow like...

- Sun!

- Blue like...

- Sky!

Green like...

- Leaves! And grass!

Red like...

- Flower!

- Great. Take these films, find yellow and blue. Well done, now look, I'm putting them together. You need to look through the films in the light, look here, at the window. What color do you see?

"Oh, now it's completely green.

- Yes, sure. You're great at learning colors, honey. Now I will tell you something new about colors. Get out clean paper and markers.

Vera drew three circles and asked Milani to color them. - Color one red, the other yellow, and the third blue ... Great! quickly done. How many flowers did you get?

- Three.

- So, we need to remember these three colors, because they are the most important.

Milani looked at Vera in anticipation.

- Because all other colors are obtained from these three and called composite, because they consist of two, or more colors. Now you took yellow and blue and got green. Now take yellow and red. What did you get?

- Orange!

- Right. It's called orange. We haven't had Orange or other days yet. Now let's take a picture of today and I'll go home. I'll leave the tapes for you. You can play with them.

The picture of the Yellow-Blue Day turned out to be very pretty. The yellow sun was in perfect harmony with the blue sky, and the green leaves and grass refreshed the view and set it in a positive way.

Vera also introduced Milani to beautiful typefaces on stencils, and the hard worker Milani, conscientiously painting over each letter, drew a very beautiful name: "Yellow-Blue Day".

On that day, Vera was not allowed to go home so easily. Milani's mother invited her to the table to drink tea and eat a fragrant apricot pie. Seeing it, Milani and Vera, without saying a word, looked at each other and said: "It is Orange! Orange Day today!" and laughed together - what a coincidence! And Milani ran after the camera.

### ***WRITER is BORN***

When the photographs of the Colored Days were ready, Vera showed Milani how to attach them to the sheets. They decorated the pages of the future photobook, put them in transparent files to save, and then strung them on the pins of the binder folder.

The "Seven Colored Days" were dedicated to different colors, and each of them captured one happy day of a certain color. The green day was devoted to leaves and grass, red to flowers, yellow to the sun, blue to the sky, brown to the earth, white to the paper from which the book was made, and black was dedicated to the neighbour's dog, with whom Milani loved to play.

On its last page it was written "Made by Milani and Vera", their Yellow photo was placed there: Vera with a bouquet of yellow dandelions, Milani with a wreath on her head.

Multi-colored days helped Milani remember the colors, and she almost stopped confusing them. Vera was impatient to show the book to her former employees in the library. Their reaction was very positive

- Vera, you have now begun a new life. It's even more interesting than your old library one! Now you are an author!

- Well, the main author is not me, it is, of course, Milani! - Vera corrected them tactfully.

The staff suggested that Vera make a real book out of this homemade book, which they would put in the library.

- Can you? Vera rejoiced. - But...

"Don't worry," her closest friend reassured her. - I take it upon myself.

Vera ordered two books online, then gave Milani a surprise, by telling her, in the presence of her family, she was now an author and gave her first book to her. She said every completed book should benefit other people and live its own life. The library was the best place for that.

She brought Milani to her library, where the staff thanked the girl for such a wonderful gift. As a keepsake, they gave her the fairy tale "Cinderella" and made her promise to come visit them for new books, and would also be happy with her new books.

So, at ten years old and having six months acquaintance with Vera, Milani suddenly officially became an author.

### **FASHION MAGAZINE: BASIC DRESSING RULES**

The success of their book about flowers gave Vera and Milani an incentive to take on the design of the Fashion Magazine with even greater enthusiasm. They decided to dedicate it to the rules for choosing clothes.

The idea of keeping up with fashion attracted the girl very much, and she continued to adhere to the rule "wear no more than three colors at a time."

This has become the rule of thumb:

**RULE # 1: "No more than three colors at the same time."**

Collecting combinations of three colors became their fun. Vera even made a special base frame, where three photographs were placed, from which Milani made up all sorts of combinations, and they discussed them. Vera could see that over time, Milani began to develop a good taste in clothes. Milani put on the best combinations, and Vera photographed her for Fashion Magazine.

The next rule that Vera taught Milani was also very interesting, which was "You can't wear two different prints together." Under the print meant any pattern on the material, including accessories.

**RULE #2: Don't wear plaid and stripes (and other patterns) together.**



Milani played with this rule, choosing something with a pattern and choosing complementary colors from those that were used in the pattern. Posing for Fashion Magazine was a great pleasure for her.

Vera also suggested dividing clothes and shoes according to their purpose: elegant, casual and home, in order to select sets not only by color, but also by purpose.

RULE #3: "Wear things that belong to only one group for the purpose."

The work was in full swing. They selected the three most successful combinations and put them in a book. Milani felt a taste for design and enjoyed decorating each page. Vera began to wonder if she should try to introduce Milani to the color wheel and theory.

The second photo book promised to be very useful, Milani's mother was very happy.

The height of surprise for everyone was the praise of the always sceptical elderly neighbour, who usually sat on her bench, generously scattering sharp comments about her neighbors. Mrs Scott suddenly said:

- Look who's coming! It's Milani! Do you know, Milani, that yesterday Mia's mother used you as an example for Mia? She said that Milani should now be an example of how to choose clothes beautifully.

Surprised, Milani's mother could not get enough of it and, as a token of encouragement, announced that next week they would go to buy new clothes.

- Hooray, Vera! - jumped happy Milani, -. We will be taking new photos!

### ***A comment***

*The story of Vera and Milani has become another illustration of how, with patience and imagination, you can unlock the potential of a special child. The impact on different channels of perception allowed Milani to better assimilate the studied material, which was not given to her before (colors and their compatibility).*

*Vera did not need any special and expensive equipment for this, everything was done with the help of improvised means and materials from*

*a stationery store. Thus, what at the beginning of the story was a girl's weak point (her inability to choose the right clothes), with the use of photobooks, became exactly what solved the problem of style and at the same time revealed the potential of the girl and her creative abilities.*

## **Chapter 7 Photobook as an Artefact**

### **Photobook like an Artifact**

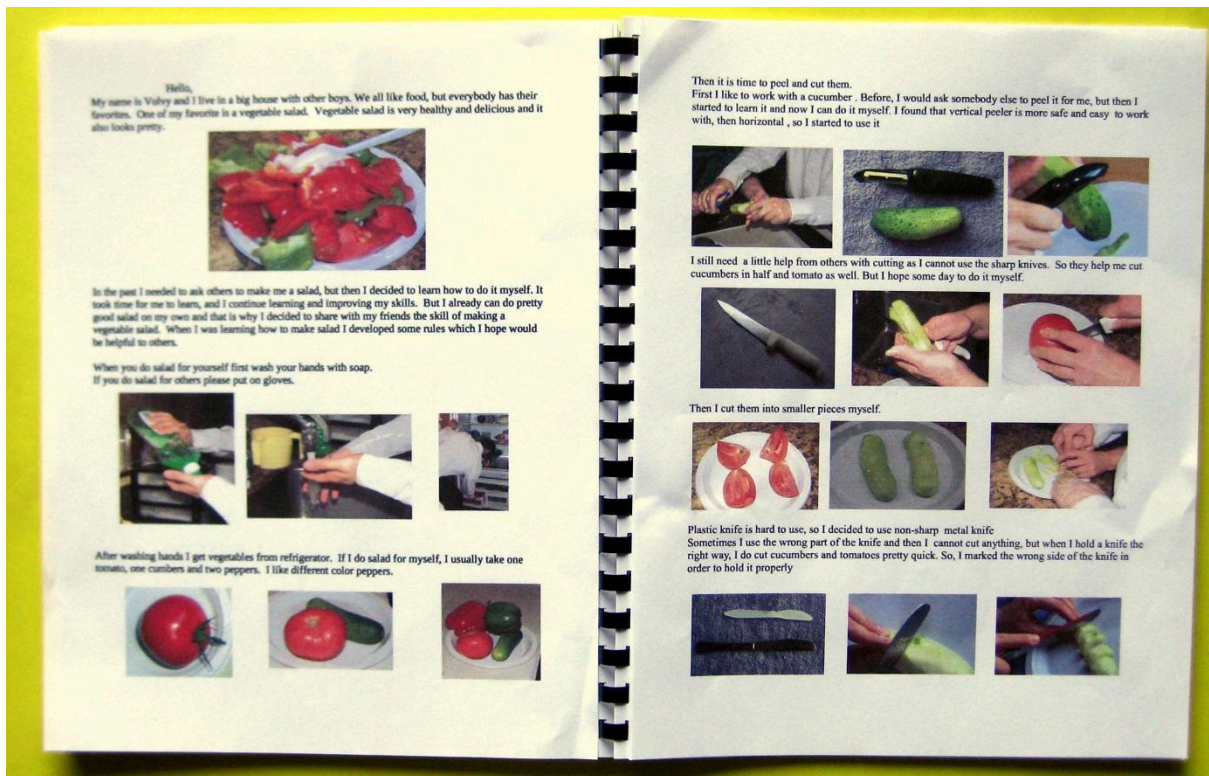
Sooner or later, the significance of the photobook arises. The result of joint creative work, which helps the child in development and improvement, has an unconditional value in their eyes and, oddly enough, a completely objective value, because it fulfils its role and is an important tool that an adult resort to, and then the child himself. And here it is necessary, without a doubt, to evaluate the photobook as a real artifact.

Lev Semenovich Vygotsky once defined the concept of an artifact as, “An artifact is any carrier of social and cultural information created by people. It has unconditional significance, and, among other things, it is a means of communication. One object of culture contains all three of its main aspects: material, spiritual and the culture of human relations”.

The photobook can essentially be considered an artifact.

1. The photobook becomes a tool for the development of the child.
2. She serves as a motivator for engagement in activities.
3. It is a teaching tool for various operations.
4. It serves as an indicator of the actual knowledge and skills of the child.
5. Serves as an indicator of the child's progress in mastering various skills.
6. Demonstrates the level of awareness and understanding of what is happening.

A typical photobook consists of several pages or cards arranged in a binder or bound with rings. A photobook should not be static, it should be editable so that you can easily make changes and add new materials, change photos or text. Photobooks can grow with your child, helping them improve their skills. Therefore, they can be called Living Books, as Chesky did from the story “School named Me”

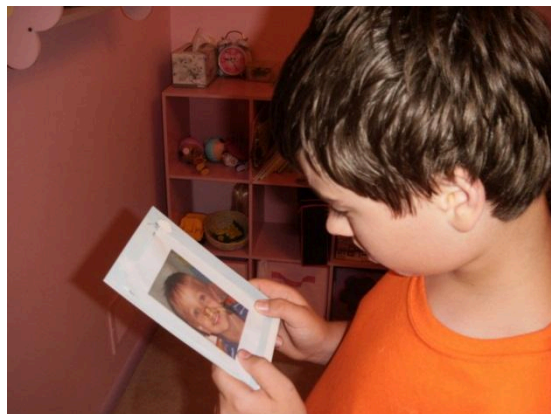


A photobook is not just a photo album of randomly arranged photos. This is a coherent story on a specific topic, it consists of visual images taken from the environment. These images are accompanied by explanations understandable to the child and become elements of a consistent story that is full of educational or cognitive potential. It can reveal new aspects of reality for the child. Such a book is a reflection of its creator's life, and a source of knowledge and impressions, as well as an assistant in mastering new skills.

One of the advantages of the TPB system is that it is financially and technically accessible. Also specialists or any adult without special education can resort to it.

Photobooks will certainly serve as support for children who are striving to learn about themselves and the world, even if in their own, special ways and also for a teacher or a relative assisting him/her. An example being the case of Dani, to whom the story "Do not Leave" is dedicated

### **Don't leave! (story)**



#### ***TOUCHING STORY***

The boy Dani with a short but very difficult biography was completely uncontrollable, and no one could find a common language with him. A kindergarten teacher created a photobook with which she was able to introduce the boy to himself. This changed everything both for Dani and for his teacher. This is a touching story.

#### ***NEW STUDENT***

- Melissa, they brought that boy to you, - the head of the kindergarten looked at me meaningfully, - His grandmother wants to talk to you.

I immediately understood what it was about. Today a new child was to be brought into my group. I work as an educator in a group for children



with special needs. This is an ordinary kindergarten, but it is attended only by those children whom we call "special". These are children with developmental disabilities, trauma and other problems. They differ from all other kids and they require increased individual attention. Speech therapists, psychologists and special education teachers deal with them. My task is to reach out to these children, to win their trust and authority. I can't say it's easy. However, once I have been in their company, it is already difficult for me to return to the usual group. I see something very important in helping these little ones who need my help like no one else. It is very captivating, and besides, despite all the difficulties, I do not know a feeling more vivid than that which causes the gullible look of a special child.

The moment you become part of their unusual world, is difficult to compare with any other. In these children there is something very touching and vulnerable and at the same time courageous, something that is not in others. I don't love special children more than ordinary ones, rather they remind me of different varieties of flowers. And if ordinary children are beautiful garden flowers full of health, then special children are greenhouse plants, ready to wither or hide from any careless movement. Each of them needs to find a special approach, something that will touch the child and let them know that he can trust you.

- Miss Treeny! - my thoughts were interrupted by the manager, who was waiting for an answer.

- Yes, sorry. I will go to her now.

I went out into the corridor, where an elderly woman with a tired face and a little boy, who was looking tensely at his feet, were sitting on a sofa. From time to time he glanced warily in the direction of the playroom, where the children were playing noisily and merrily.

"Good afternoon," I smiled kindly. - You wanted to talk to me?

- Miss Treeny?,- The woman looked at me in surprise. -I didn't think you were so... Hmm. Young.

-Nevertheless, I have been working in groups of children with special needs for ten years, - I smiled again.

I have long been accustomed to the fact that parents react to me in this way. They often think that a good specialist should be older, more experienced and more efficient. But children never experience any problems with my age, rather the opposite. Sometimes they even showed more trust in me than in the caregivers, who looked older. It probably played a role that it was easier for them to identify me with themselves, as if to accept me in the circle of children more than as an authority

-I just wanted to tell you a few words about my grandson, - she paused, - Just to let you know that he... He can be very difficult.

- I understand. I think we need a special key to approach him and we try to find it.

- Yes it is. Miss Treeny! I don't want you to have any illusions. My Danila can be a very difficult child. Frankly, for a long time I doubted whether it was worth sending him to kindergarten. He needs communication with other children, but ... He is aggressive and has gone through a lot in his life, - the woman looked at me carefully, waiting for a reaction.

- I understand. You see, this is not uncommon, and of course we will do everything in our power to smooth it out. In addition, you have the right to choose which of the groups your grandson goes to. In total we have two groups for children with special needs. I work in one of them and my older colleague in the other.

### ***BRAVE DECISION***

I didn't want Danila's grandmother to decide that I was giving up on the boy, but I thought that she should have a choice. I shifted my gaze to him, who was still looking down at his feet.

- I do not know. Maybe. What do you think? Do you think he could be in your group?

I did not expect such a question. At that moment the boy sighed and looked up at me. And at that moment I saw something in his eyes that touched me to the core. It was a mixture of fear and longing, which is unbearable to see in the eyes of a child. Tears welled up in my eyes.

"Of course he could," I said firmly. - I will gladly take Danila to my group.

I knew this boy's past was sad. In addition to a head injury, he had post-traumatic stress disorder. Given that the boy lived with his grandmother, I suspected that his parents treated him cruelly. Danila's grandmother worked, and therefore she brought him to kindergarten.

For the next week, I was tormented by doubts about how correct my choice was. Frankly speaking, Danila behaved like a real imp. At first he was calm, but as soon as he got used to it, problems began. Every day was a test for me. Monday - Danila hit another boy with a toy. Tuesday - Danila threw a chair at the wall. Wednesday - Danila drew with felt-tip pens on other children. A separate problem was that the boy did not speak at all. In a conversation with his grandmother, I learned that he did not speak from birth. It was even thought that he was deaf, but tests showed the opposite. Danila hears, he just doesn't want to talk to anyone.

It was not in vain, when I said I'd had quite a lot of experience working with special children. I understood that before meeting with me, Danila had experienced many painful situations and his aggressive behavior was due to fear and distrust. It also occurred to me that photographs could help Danila to start communicating. After all, until now he was a closed book, who did not allow anyone to enter his world.

I patiently explained to him why it is not necessary to offend other children. He didn't say a word, sometimes he didn't even look at me. Sometimes he sat staring at the floor, sometimes he just got up and went to another part of the hall.

One of the problems with special children is that they often must relearn how to trust adults. In the case of Danila, this was complicated by the fact that, as a very young child, he faced abuse from his parents. It is always harder when you must teach a child to trust adults again. It's harder than starting from scratch. Children who have lost trust in others have to be taught that adults are not always cruel, that communication with other people does not necessarily bring pain and fear. It's not easy, but it's necessary. Trust is the first step to the socialisation of a special child.

### ***A PATH to TRUST***

I thought for a long time about how to win Danila's trust. At that time, I began to actively use photography in my work. Initially, I was rather sceptical and did not think that this could give noticeable results. Of course, I knew that children like to be photographed, but I did not suspect how much photography can help me in my work.

One of my methods was motivation through visibility. I encouraged the children with the help of their own photographs. I took pictures of what they did during the day, how they should behave, the rules of etiquette and communication. On the occasions when there were violations of discipline in my group, I used the pictures as a reminder of the rules of conduct. Surprisingly, seeing themselves in the photos, caused them to learn the rules quicker.

As a teacher in a "special" group, I read a huge amount of educational literature on various methods of working with these children. I recently came across an article on how photography can be used to build rapport and enable a child to communicate. The thought seemed interesting to me, and I decided to use it. I talked to Danila's grandmother and obtained her permission to photograph the boy. She looked a little puzzled, but understood I was trying to find an approach to her grandson, so decided not to interfere.

A couple of days passed, trying to obtain photos I wanted. I photographed many other children, but most of all Danila. I tried when he would not look at me. When he noticed I was taking pictures, he pulled faces and tried everything to spoil the picture. However, the photos I took when he was distracted turned out just fine. The little boy, who looked thoughtfully out the window, seemed like a real angel.

However, in the next photo, he is trying to climb over a small wall into the next class and start a quarrel with children. In another photo, Danila is intently assembling something from a children's Lego. I chose a few



pictures that I liked. He behaved well in them. I decided not to show him the photographs until my work on the photobook was completed.

The photographs showed what Danila does during the day, and presented him in the best light. It seemed right to make motivating and inspiring captions under those pictures. For example, in those photos where he draws or paints, I called him an artist. I also had photos during my music lessons, where I named him a musician. I inserted photos of him taken when reading, break time, nap time, lunch time, and snack time. I used only those photos where Danila was well behaved. I wanted him to see that he could be very good, to motivate him to behave well. When I had enough photos, I collected them together in a small photo book.

I cut out the words printed on the computer and made the book cover, which was called "A Day in the Life of Danila." There was a picture of him on the cover, and on the front page, his grandmother was leading him by the hand into the garden. The book itself reflected how I saw this boy, a kind of mirror in which one could see Danila's daily life. I wanted him to look like that when he was well behaved. There was not a single mention of bad behavior. Only his relationship with his grandmother, his toys, his favorite activities and other pleasant things.

### ***DANILA GETS to KNOW HIMSELF***

The next day I called the boy to me. "Danila, I have a small gift for you," I solemnly handed him a small box in which the photo book was packed. The boy was wide eyed. I did not know if he ever received any gifts in his life, but it seemed that he was as worried as I was. With trembling hands, he tore off the paper, opened the book and saw his face. He looked thoughtfully at the photo. Then he ran to the mirror. As soon as he realised that his face in the reflection and in the photo were identical, he gave me a look of triumph that I had never seen. All day he did not part with his gift. He looked at his photographs and was thoughtful. It seems that this was Danila's first day, which passed very calmly and peacefully.

In the evening, his grandmother came for him, and the first thing he showed her was his photobook. He showed off enthusiastically and proudly and flatly refused to leave it for the night in the kindergarten. The next morning, Danila entered the room, clutching the photobook to his chest, with the other hand he dragged his grandmother behind him. It seemed like he couldn't wait to get into the group. As soon as he noticed me, he escaped from his grandmother's arms and ran up to me. He handed me the book and smiled a real smile. The first time I had seen him smile like that. Then he ran up to my grandmother and pulled her by the hand to where I was standing. He opened the book to the first page, which showed when his grandmother led him to the garden. I looked at grandmother, and she gave

me a restrained smile. I think at that moment we both gained hope to find a way to communicate with Danila.

This was not the end of the matter. In the following days, my special student came to me, showing me his photobook, and making guttural sounds, trying to get attention, and showing me a picture of lunch when we were telling stories, or something else. It was clear that he was asking to do something different than what we were doing. It was rather strange to realise how he was trying to communicate, but I still insisted that he return to what the rest of the guys were doing. It was clear that we were moving by leaps and bounds to establish a real dialogue, which I had not dreamed of.

From that day on, our relationship with Dani acquired a special shade. I saw that he was trying to be calmer and gentler in my group. He began to listen to me more attentively, and sometimes even came up and took my hand. This timid display of his attention was probably my most important achievement in those days.

### ***FIRST WORDS***

There was another day that I remember for a very long time. The day Danila spoke to me for the first time. There was a quiet time, which he never particularly liked. He rarely slept during the day, sometimes he had nightmares. So I sat next to his bed and quietly talked about his photobook. I said that he had a very busy morning, just like in the photo, and that he should rest to restore strength. At some point, I saw that he began to blink sleepily, and decided that it was time to leave him alone. I got up, he then he said, "Don't leave"

Just two words, which had such a concentration of feelings and emotions that it was difficult to describe. There was a timid trust and hope that I would not leave. It was the clearest indication that my methods had yielded results. And more importantly, it showed that Danila was finally learning to trust adults. It was a real miracle, which concluded in just two words, "Don't leave."

That's when I realised he could talk, so we started adding a lot more pictures to his photobook to expand his vocabulary and thus his ability to communicate. Subsequently, the system of working with photobooks was very useful in my practice.

Seeing the amazing results she brought to Danila, I decided to continue working with photobooks. Together with the children, we made a series of photobooks on various topics related to food, their toys and everyday activities. This creative activity quickly captivated the children. Their favorite photobooks were Friends, Playground, Games, and Good Manners.

### ***DANILA a DIRECTOR of PUBLISHING COMPANY***

Those who knew the children like me, probably guessed that other children in my group started also asking for books. So we got to work. Another unexpected and pleasant detail was that Danila began to enjoy unconditional authority among children. He was the only one among the children who had a finished book, so he became an important bird among the other students. We even created a small publishing house, where Danila was the director, which he was very proud of. Even after the work on the photobooks was completed, the children kept this nickname for him. It seemed to me that this was very important for Danila, as well as the fact that he was actively involved in other projects.

He started talking. Now Danila speaks with an average sentence structure. He smiles all the time and has never had a single instance of aggression. Every time a child or adult leaves or enters our office, he greets them. He sings songs. He no longer has nightmares, although it is still difficult to get him to sleep. When he sleeps, he wakes up singing. He shows a lot in sign language and for me his favorite gesture is "I love you". My goal now is to create a photobook about Danila to give to his grandmother. Danila's successes delighted her to tears, and the relief and gratitude that I see in her eyes are beyond comparison. This is the best recognition of my success, apart from my little pupil's face, which is now free from fear and pain and shines with the joy of life.

### ***A comment***

*Working with special children is always a lot of work. There are many different methods, but the task of the parent and educator is to find a way to reveal the abilities and talents of the child. It's not easy, but it's worth it. Danila is the clearest example of this. Thanks to the right approach, the young teacher managed to find an approach to this difficult child. And she witnessed a real miracle, how, in a matter of weeks, a frightened and unhappy boy turned into a self-confident and contented baby. And this amazing transformation happened thanks to photography, which allowed Danila to see himself from the outside and in the most favorable light and gave him the opportunity to fully communicate with other people. The wise and attentive behavior of the adult aroused in the child confidence in him, and in gratitude the teacher heard his first word, and she happened to trace this amazing metamorphosis in the boy. Could anything be more valuable and meaningful? Hardly.*

## **PART III THEMATIC PHOTOBOOK AS A TOOL FOR INTERACTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Chapter 1 Interaction between adult and child**



#### **Three stages**

Paraphrasing an idea from a book about autism, a child's behavior is not governed by norms accepted in society and not even whims that are accessible to understanding, but by motives and mechanisms that are closed and incomprehensible to other people.

However, if you come into contact with the child, earn their trust, be attentive and observant, these motives and mechanisms become clear; the child's behavior begins to make sense. The child will be grateful for you recognizing and sharing his world.

Unfortunately, although special attention is paid to the problems of special children in America, the system is designed so the child is constantly influenced by a variety of people, with conflicting rules and approaches. One can only wonder how these children learn to adapt to the complex environment in which they exist, and how they achieve what they need to.

Adapting to reality, children will learn different types of behavior which are considered unacceptable in society. Often I came across children who did not speak and hardly interacted with the outside world. In many cases, the reason for this lies in the continuous prohibitions. It seems that parents are afraid the child will inadvertently do something "inappropriate".

I once worked with a wonderful 10-year-old boy who was passed from one adult to another or strapped to a chair, afraid he would break something or injure himself. He was kept on a strict diet, and was very fond of bread, and ate mostly dry rice cakes. He loved bread very much. Like many children with autism, he grabbed everything that attracted his attention. In stores, I did not take my eyes off him and stayed away from bread. Once I was not careful and was amazed at how quickly he nibbled off a piece of bread, stuffed it into his mouth, and stared at me, expecting consequences. I only admired him: "Well, you are a dodger, such skills are wasted in vain." When it was possible to achieve relative freedom for him, he began to open up and showed such ingenuity which nobody expected from him. The boy began to take the initiative in games, he did not do what I asked him not to do. I fully agree with those who believe that non-speaking children understand everything, and I have had to be convinced of this more than once.

I believe that if a child can learn the wrong behavior, then they can learn the right one, only if he realizes it is beneficial for him. You need to open this benefit up for him.

I have developed my approach to working with children by drawing information from the most reliable sources - the children themselves. They showed me how to help them, and I wanted to share with you what they taught me.

The most important thing is to win the trust of the child.

A child will trust if an adult is honest with him and will respect him. Not letting down or deceiving them. That unfortunately, happens quite often when adults want to get immediate results from a child. I never do this and believe this is part of the reason for my popularity among kids and opportunity to form strong creative alliances with children.

They made me understand that the "strict mentoring" tone, which is unusual for me, but popular among teachers is completely unacceptable, when I tried to master it and be like everyone else. With me It stimulated not action, but protest so I had to find my own methods that work. I have formulated three consecutive stages to achieve the main goal - trust.

### **Stage one - getting to know a child**

The diagnostic stage, which makes it possible to study the child's behavior, to identify "problem areas" and weaknesses, as well as abilities and strengths. The child also gets his impression of me, which the productivity of our relationship depends on. I carefully observe and study - what the child loves, what he knows and is able to do, offering different options for spending time with me. I photograph unobtrusively. Photos as a

mirror reflect the real situation and serve as a good help during the initial period.

When I start working with children, I give them maximum freedom to let them express themselves in various situations. I try to ignore bad behavior unless it is dangerous. At the first meetings, I am hardly present. I play the role of a leisure partner or "entertainer", I completely give the initiative of the choice to the child and play along with them as much as possible.

I offer children many new, interesting, and enjoyable activities that we can do together, and try to be as kind, sympathetic, generous, and understanding as possible, regardless of the behavior and problems that arise in connection with this. At this stage, I study the level of development and determine the child's abilities, select the types of activities that they are able to perform and study their preferences.

Over time, the child understands how valuable the time spent together is for him, and he seeks to communicate with me. He is waiting for me and rejoices at the meeting. He perceives me as a valuable acquisition, and communication which is a source of pleasure, and, most importantly, someone who has appeared in his life who understands him and agrees to communicate at his level, fulfils his desires and offers entertainment and not boring activities.

Specialists from Massachusetts have developed a program of interaction with special children - Son-Rise. To inspire confidence, an adult, copying the child's behavior, repeats his/her actions: for example, he begins to make movements with his hands or circle in one place, thereby showing that he recognizes " the world of the child ", that he is also "there with child".

I do it differently. Connecting to the actions of the child, I do not repeat them, but try to stimulate agreement to cooperate. If a child constantly shakes the rope (this phenomenon is called stimming), I will not try to repeat his actions, but I will say: "Oh, what a pretty rope you have. What fun to play with it. Can I play with you too?" I try to join the game with the child and observe what his further reaction will be. In case of refusal, I do not insist, in case of indifference, I try to interest him, and in case a child shows interest, I try to take the initiative into my own hands and benefit from it - try to complicate, to expand the game a little.

In our Sunday afternoon program for special children, there was one non-verbal little girl, very sweet, with a charming smile. Once I had the good fortune to work with her. And towards the end of the program, when everyone was watching the video, I suggested that she take a walk in the fresh air (she is not a fan of video films). We go outside, and she pulls me to the bus. Departure is not soon and the bus is standing with closed doors. The child appears confused, fearful and bewildered. She was used to the

certain order-in the end of the program she was taken into the bus. I tried to explain that it's still early. We'll just take a walk for now. All the time we were walking, I looked at her, and it seemed that she was relaxed, but as we passed the bus, her face changed: preoccupied, excited. Finally, the driver came and opened the doors. As soon as the door opened, I immediately sat her down and saw a happy face and smile. So, if to follow a child's needs or desires, talk about them with a child, offer compromising solution, they usually cooperate, feel relaxed and start to build trust, comparing to the way, when they just silently being taken to somewhere

### **Stage two - "struggle for power"**

The second stage serves to determine the personal qualities of the child, to identify suitable methods of influence. It begins after the relationship is consolidated when the child already values my presence. Gradually and very carefully, I change my behavior, by letting the child understand that he is not the "main" person here and that I have my own plans for him. Children usually don't like this because they feel they are losing their role as leader. This rivalry is a very important moment. In defending their position, children demonstrate amazing ingenuity, and here you can learn a lot about the child.

At the same time, I demonstrate my qualities so that the child understands who they are dealing with. I behave very consistently, always keep my word and be sure to explain: what I do. When necessary, I use "the authority of a Higher Power." For example, I say: "I don't mind if you want to walk down the street on your own, but your mother asked me to hold your hand. I'm sorry, but we have to respect your mom."

I introduce the child to a variety of games. I offer him all possible options for activity and understand that the child will resist the loss of his leadership. I then try to demonstrate how much new and interesting activities I can offer him in return.

At this stage of communication-rivalry, the child demonstrates aspects of his personality that would not have manifested in another situation. From my part, this is the time to search for the best impact on the child - I experiment in approaches to him, remember what he responds to best: a request, praise, a call for a sense of responsibility, and select the best way to influence.

- Request: "Please do it!"
- A call for kindness and compassion: "Oh, I'm so tired, do it, please, help me, be kind"
- A praise: "I know how great you can do these things, show me again!"

- Call for ambition: "Let's see if you can do it faster today than yesterday?"

- Sense of responsibility: "Well, be patient, we promised to finish that today. We have to keep our word."

Almost always, after a long (or not so) resistance, the child gives up the struggle for power and is ready to give up the leading position and start to cooperate. It is important that he does this voluntarily, without coercion, realizing that he will gain much more from this than he will lose. Children are so different, and each child often requires their own ways of communicating.

One example of how I take the reins of power into my own hands was working with a boy named Maxim (from the story "School named after me"). The main problem with this boy was that he did not have the patience to listen to other people, demanded constant attention, and tried to be a leader in every situation.

During our joint work, the expected difficulty arose - from the very beginning, Maxim constantly interrupted me:

- "Me! I! I will say. I know what to do!"

Each time, I calmly replied,

- "Okay, I'm listening."

Of course, it was becoming clear soon that he was incapable of expressing himself clearly on any topic and didn't know how to solve problems. After several unsuccessful confrontations, he began to give way. However, as soon as I tried to explain my point of view, he interrupted endlessly - he did not give up easily:

- "No, no, I have something to say."

"Well, I'm listening, we're all listening."

And again, there was nothing of value in Maxim's words. I moved very patiently, insistently sticking to my line, without giving in, but without pressure either. Time passes, but the problem is still not solved. Finally, I ask:

"Well, are you done? Did you say what you wanted? Now can I say what I think?"

This is a very important point, because I try to show the child, by his own example of misbehavior, that he is simply incapable of being the leader and it is much more profitable for him to give me leadership. He voluntarily surrenders because he begins to see the problem, understands that it must be solved, and realizes that I am offering a solution for it. After a while, the problem disappears, because Maxim, like any child, understands what is best for him. He learned not to interrupt other people, because he realized listening is beneficial. I create decision making easy for children because I give them the opportunity to express themselves through the right behavior.



Thus, the child refuses negative behavior, but voluntarily, it is his own choice and free will, without any punishment or pressure. The child chooses the right behavior by seeing the benefit of it, and the wrong one is repressed, naturally dissolved. As a result, there are no negative consequences, in this “battle” the child does not lose but concludes a mutually beneficial peace agreement. Everybody is satisfied

### **Stage three – creating photobooks**

Directly working and learning stages of creating photobooks, where the leading role is gradually transferred back to the child in a different form.

Learning should be organic and consistent. The acquired skills should be included in everyday life (if a child has learned to open the door himself, then he must now always do it on his own; he learned to cut with scissors - now it is his responsibility). I can help if needed, but never ever would do it for him/ Unused skills are quickly forgotten, constant practice is required. The creation of photobooks provides a suitable platform, as it involves the mastery of a variety of skills that are increasingly difficult.

I follow the principles of consistency and repetition, which creates very good results, especially in conjunction with detailed and understandable explanations.

The agreed, learned and accepted rules must be strictly observed in the work. “Punishments” are the natural consequences of breaking the rules, for which the child himself is responsible and understands that no one will share it with him. As for material incentives, they are used only in the form of unexpected surprises and gifts, but not as incentives, which are always individual and depend on the personality of the child: some are inspired by overcoming difficulties, others are inspired by the opportunity to make the loved ones happy.

### **MICHAEL and MERCEDES**

Michael is a boy who would do everything to earn a sticker. This is a program that is used by teachers. For that “salary” -certain amount of earned stickers, he was supposed to have an additional video. Video something that he already spent all his time on and made constant scandals if he did not get what he was supposed to. Of course, he had no desire to waste time on photography.

The solution for the right approach came unexpectedly. A beautiful woman named Mercedes worked in Michael's house as a cleaning lady. . She

loved Michael, and he was attached to her. Once I asked him to take a picture of Mercedes. He refused. I promised a sticker - the refusal was instantly replaced by consent.

When I brought the photos, I asked Michael to cut them (Lots of pictures are on one sheet). He didn't want to, of course. I insisted. He lay down on the floor, started his usual tantrums, protesting. Looked like he was hoping to get another sticker. Mercedes came over.

"Look what beautiful pictures Michael took." -I told her

"Ah-oh! What great photos! I will send them to my homeland so that my relatives can see them.", Mercedes said

"Yes, it would be nice - such wonderful photos, but you won't be able to send them if Michael doesn't cut them first." - I said to Mercedes, being upset for her

Suddenly our Michael gets up, comes over, takes the scissors, and starts to cut photos. Well, I did not expect such a result! Such a surprise! Michael really loved Mercedes and wanted to do good things for her!

Proof again, that during tantrums children are aware pretty good about the environment.

### **About roles and games**

With each child, I initiate a game that is right for him. Roles are distributed depending on his personal characteristics and the situation in which we find ourselves. We can be partners, the child can be my assistant, we can do something together, for example, help his mother. It is important that the child is aware of the distribution of roles, and he is comfortable on his own.

## **Chapter 2 Thematic photo books: books and photography**

Photobook consists of two words: book and photo. Let's talk about them in more detail.

### **The role of books in child development**



It is worth mentioning that the production of photobooks is directly related to the formation of interest in reading - a necessary element in the development of any child.

Some children will not be able to read, but they will help those who read for them: choose books, turn pages - feel ownership of the process. Gradually, children begin to show interest in activities and can take on additional responsibilities.

If a child is non-verbal, then observing their reaction while reading allows you to clarify the level of understanding (like laughing when hearing a passage written with humor).

Reading promotes healthy relationships with adults who read to them. Adults who turn reading into an entertaining process inspire confidence in a child and become good mentors.

Listening to books, children show their preferences, acquiring their favorite characters. Fairy-tale heroes are also a good topic for another photobook, their images can be used: for example, take a photo of Pinocchio or Cinderella (a toy or an image), then a child may be ready for a book story.

## **Introduction to photography**

Long before we start working with photobooks, I try to make books and photography part of our time. It's easier with books, but more difficult with photography. Little by little, implementing small photo projects, creating only positive emotions associated with that. It can be a mistake to assume that any child will be happy with this innovation. There are those who openly resist.

For example,

"Can I take a picture of you?" - "No!"

"Okay, can you take a picture of me, please?" - "No!"

"Where is your favorite toy? Please let me take a picture of that" - "No!"

It is important to monitor the mood of the child. If they are just playing, then you can continue:

"Well, can I take a picture of your pillow?"

But if it annoys them and they start to get angry, then you should not continue. Change the subject quickly, and ask:

"Do you want to go for a walk to the park? The weather is beautiful outside. "Yes, yes".

We go for a walk, my protégé is in a good mood, I take a camera, and from time to time I take pictures, not paying attention to the child. Over time, he becomes interested in what I'm doing. "Nothing, I need to take some pictures for my grandson, whose birthday is next week."

The next time I visit, the first thing I ask is: "Maybe you can help me a little?" - "Yes".

"Remember when you and I went for a walk in the park and I took some pictures for my grandson? I want to make a greeting card for him. But I don't know how to glue it and am bad at it. I saw how good you are at cutting and gluing, can you help me?"

"Yes! Yes!".

"Um, you hold the glue bottle in such an interesting way, I would never have guessed. Can I take a photo so I don't forget how you do it?"

"Yes".

The child voluntarily agreed to be photographed. No negative emotions. Then he will do something else exceptional, the main thing is not to miss the moment. So photography will enter his life as a pleasant, useful, or entertaining activity.

At the initial stage, it does not matter what to photograph. It is important to create positive emotions. That is why any negative emotions should be immediately replaced with something pleasant.

I make a clown of myself if necessary; I search and try, not knowing if the child will join my game, I follow very carefully which role they will prefer in this game.

Once I "replayed" and missed the moment, when working with an autistic boy of ten who spoke little and was clearly capable of taking pictures himself. I couldn't wait to teach him how to use the camera, which he didn't want to. I also tried to have him take a picture of himself in front of a mirror with my help and hoped he would like it. I didn't notice he was rather angry. I caught the camera on the fly. Then he tried long and hard to get revenge on me for such an ugly act but did not succeed.

He wasn't angry, he just threw things on the floor and watched my reaction - there wasn't any. "Oh, you dropped the book! Poor book!" In the end, he took my winter hat and promised to throw it out the window. I no longer allowed this, I had to fight a little, saving the hat.

He taught me a wonderful lesson, and we returned to photography only a few months later. During this time, I revised the tactics, and as a result, he voluntarily joined the process, with pleasure.

### **Experiments and improvisations are part of the system**

Rick, the father of an autistic girl, wanted his daughter Samantha to take up photography, so he was looking for a way to get her involved. They lived in another state and we communicated via the Internet. He often talked about Samantha, and I had some ideas about her. Finally, we decided to give it a try.

I suggested using a pleasant and important event for this - mom's birthday. Samantha loves her mother and wants to please her on the holiday. Rick suggested that she give her mother flowers, which grew in their yard. Samantha could choose flowers for her mom and Rick could take a picture of her. It turned out that Samantha didn't want to go out. So Rick brings flowers home for her.

He gives them to Samantha and invites the girl to choose the flowers she likes. When she collects the whole bouquet, Rick says, "What nice flowers you chose! Let me take a picture of you and these beautiful flowers." Rick knows that Samantha loves to pose for the camera.

Later, Mom arrives and Rick invites Samantha to give her flowers. As she presents the gift, Rick discreetly takes a photo. Mom is happy. She can thank her daughter for the flowers, hug and kiss, pat on the head - Rick captures all the joyful moments on film. For a good photobook about mom's birthday, you need to take a lot of photos: a child in a garden with flowers and bright flower beds.

Mom asks to take a picture of her with Samantha and flowers, which Rick does. Then mom takes the camera and says that we need to take a picture of dad too: "Now it's his turn to take pictures." Mom helps Samantha with a camera: "Today you will succeed, you did such a great job with flowers, you are our hero! ... You see, dad is smiling, let's make dad happy! You see dad in the window! We press the button together. Now let's give dad flowers! Let's take a picture of dad with flowers! He looks great! Please click this button! Let's try!"

Mom carefully helps Samantha press the button, but if there is the slightest resistance, she should just quietly press the button herself. "Hooray! You took the first picture! Please, Rick, print these pictures for us - it's a great birthday present."

This was the suggested scenario. Unfortunately, Rick failed; he didn't dare surrender to the will of improvisation. Even though the parents loved Samantha very much and took care of her, they followed the instructions of the specialists in everything. They had instructions for all occasions: how to act, what to say - they were hostages of strict rules.

I didn't give exact instructions, and Rick was confused - he was used to following rules. Samantha quickly gave the flowers to her mother and left. Rick did not have time to take a picture and was upset. He asked me to give him detailed instructions on what to do and say in various expected situations.

Remember: when creating photobooks, you cannot use manuals, instructions with a list of step-by-step actions. Although in other systems clear instructions can be helpful, there are plenty of opportunities to make contact without their assistance.

Don't be afraid to experiment. If you decide to follow the path of gaining trust and establishing real friendly contact with your child, your efforts will be rewarded a hundredfold. Yes, unpredictability awaits you, but at the same time - pleasant surprises, unexpected events, and miracles.

Expectations built in advance, planning for success can be very detrimental to work with, because disappointments are inevitable, as seen with Rick, and fear of failure.

Excessive focus on the result can also interfere with establishing contact with the child. You will not get an immediate effect, but everything you do for this is good.

Children feel the disappointment of an adult and can take it personally. The main thing is to develop all the achievements that arise during joint activities. An unsuccessful result can always be turned to good.

"Oh, what a pity that this photo did not come out. But now we know how to succeed. This is a good lesson. Let's celebrate with our favorite ice cream!"

## **Photobook "Best Friends"**

Rick, like any parent, wanted his daughter to have friends. I suggested that he offer such a photo project at the school where his daughter studied.

"Mary likes Jane and would like to befriend her, but she doesn't know how. Therefore, we gather a group of children and make a photobook about what friendship is. At the same time, we choose Mary and Jane as the main characters of this photobook. The photos featured in this friendship story show what Mary does to win Jane's friendship, from the way they meet, spend time together, watch videos, play games, help each other, or share a treat. It is difficult to predict, but who knows, maybe after creating such a photobook they will become friends. This is already a super task, the important thing is that in the process of creating it, children have a wonderful time together and learn what friendship is and how to create this.

Thus, a teacher or a child who can take pictures takes pictures of the girls spending time together. If the teacher can get really interested, they may invite them to pose for pictures, including with other children, in the hope that they will enjoy interacting with them. Hoping the children will become friends after the project is over. The photobook will remain with them as a living memory of warm human relationships and clear advice on what to do finding friends.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to implement such projects at school, as teachers must follow a certain educational program. At home, with parents, there is much more freedom for creativity.

## **Chapter 3 Benefits of photography as an activity**

### **Magic of Photography**

It is likely that the question will arise: why not just cut out pictures and make books out of them, why bother with photography? Every parent will agree that a photograph of their child is something special and important. There may be thousands of photographs of much better quality, with good composition, and so many babies that are much cuter than this parent's baby. But nothing compares with a photo taken by a parent of their child. There is so much in this image: your feelings, the moment you were able to capture, is still alive in your memory. Anyone who looks at this photo sees nothing but a child, but for you it contains much more than just an image.

Photography is such a diverse and versatile activity, here an adult will discover something new, interesting, especially a child.

### **Benefits of photography for special children**

Photography gives many advantages to any person, including special children.

Photographs are required to make a photobook. So the child learns to photograph and acquires important new skills along the way.

The process of making photographs in most cases serves as a means of constant communication with the child and the mentor. Working together to achieve a goal gives the mentor the opportunity to explore the child's personality and abilities.

Collaboration also encourages the child to follow the mentor's instructions to take good photographs. In the process of shooting and working with finished photographs, the child learns new concepts, words, and expressions.

Like other artistic media, photographs introduce the child to the aesthetic value of the world around them, drawing their attention to various details and showing the diversity of what surrounds the child.

### **Camera Benefits**

The use of a camera benefits every child, especially children with problems. To take an acceptable photograph, you need to acquire skills that are often in short supply in these children.

First, the photographer must achieve a stable pose. You need to learn how to hold the camera evenly, see the object and press the button - this requires good coordination of movements.



The process of shooting develops attention, the ability to focus on the photographed object and provides an opportunity to develop attention to detail.

### **Benefits of outdoors shooting**



Shooting outdoors has many advantages, as it allows children to explore the world around them with a camera in hand. Compared with a simple walk, such an active pass time can be very beneficial for a child.

The adult can encourage the child to move around looking for the right subject to photograph, such as a flower of a certain color or a bush of a certain shape. To take a photo from the right angle, you sometimes need to bend down, squat, come closer or step back, climb a hill, etc.

The use of zoom gives an incentive to learn new concepts, and forces you to apply the acquired knowledge in practice. Such concepts as near-far, above-below, the whole object and its part, many-one, are constantly used during shooting.

Shooting is accompanied by constant communication between an adult and a child, which helps to build relationships. An adult introduces the child to the surrounding reality and can notice what attracts the child's attention.

While working, vocabulary develops as the child learns new words. Not only do they recognize them, but capture the objects they represent on camera and can later repeat what was learned when discussing finished photographs.

Concepts like light and shadow become much more tangible and significant when taking a photo. Children can see the result of shooting against the sun.

## Indoor Shooting Capabilities



Shooting indoors is a great way to develop other useful skills that need attention. As a rule, when shooting indoors, some personal items are used, the emphasis is on the skills of everyday life, and still life is compiled. While working on this (for example, making a card for mom's birthday), children have many opportunities to learn important concepts such as spatial relationships, size, and color. Objects should be arranged in a thoughtful way so that all of them can be seen in the photo. Thus, when trying to get a good photograph, the child can make sure that small objects are not visible behind large ones. Objects that have the same color as the background can blend into it.

During filming, the adult also uses a lot of word concepts, such as "between", "next to" or "behind". It is easier for children to learn these concepts in the process of work. They also begin to distinguish positions that better show all the objects being photographed. When photographing people, children also learn good manners as they learn to ask for permission and say polite words like "thank you very much" or "please."

## The benefits of working with photographs



The beneficial effects of photography on children are not limited to the use of the camera and the process of taking pictures. Working with ready-made photographs opens new opportunities in the development of the mental capabilities of children with special needs.

When selecting photos for photobooks, children learn to classify and sort them.

With the help of an adult, they learn to describe photographs and explain what is shown in them. These skills are invaluable to a child's mental development. To choose the best photo from several similar ones, you need to use analysis and comparison. Children gradually learn all this in the process of making thematic photobooks.

## **PART IV PRACTICAL APPLICATION of TPB SYSTEM**

### **Chapter 1 Detailed description of the process of creating thematic photo books in practice**

Deviations in the development of children take a variety of forms, and therefore there is no single recipe for creating photobooks.

Let's trace the process of a child's development by a system of creating thematic photobooks using the example of working with two children - Emily, who lives in a family and Walter, who lives in a residence with others. We will draw on activity theory levels to show how the system works.

Activity - Motive

Action - Goal

Operation - Conditions

#### **EMILY AND HER FAMILY**



Let's take a closer look at the process of creating photobooks, using the example of Emily, a non-speaking seven-year-old autistic girl. She lives with her family and goes to a special class at a public school. At home, Emily spends her time watching Sesame Street cartoons, which she really likes. Elmo is her favorite character. She has a favorite chair that she always sits on while watching. She loves to play with beads, twirling them aimlessly in her hands. She only likes certain foods. Emily does not interact with other children, and her communication with her parents is limited to providing for basic needs.

Emily's character is calm, she does not cause trouble to others and is not interested in what is happening there - outside, preferring her own world to reality.

#### **Involving Emily in process**

When involving Emily in the activity of creating photobooks, the main intention or motive of the adult mentor, Mary, was to help Emily begin to

consciously participate in the life around her and, as much as possible, be an organic part of it. To do this, Mary needs to create a motive for Emily to participate voluntarily and consciously in the process of creating photobooks. Mary begins the process by making a photobook that she will later use to motivate Emily.

Mary makes this photobook about Emily's favorite things. Such a theme will help to involve Emily in co-creative activities.

So Mary, with Emily's help, gets to work. The action is determined by the goal, which is to create a photobook.

### **An action is made up of operations**

Creating a photobook consists of three operations:

- shooting
- printing photos
- Combining material into a coherent story

### **Operations are determined by conditions**

The conditions will depend on many factors, including how Emily behaves. These operations are quite complex, and Mary will of course scaffold where possible and break operations down into less complex sub-operations.

#### **Shooting**

Mary chooses Emily's favorite beads as the theme of the first photobook, but if it turns out that Emily holds them tightly and does not want to part with them even for a short time. However, Emily is a lover of delicious food, and her favorite dish is a great topic for a photobook. Emily doesn't mind handing over her beads. Mary takes pictures whilst trying to involve Emily in the process as much as possible. Mary asks if she has any favorite coloured beads and to place one each side of her.

This defines Emily's abilities and knowledge, which allows the mentor knowing Emily's character and ways which can be used to influence her. You can involve Emily in the shooting process, saturating it with events. Any participation by Emily in the shooting of Mary photographs, with no element of coercion. The first interaction with the camera should be only pleasant and positive.

#### **Printing photos**

The next step is to print photos, with plenty opportunities to get Emily involved in the process by asking her to help with simple tasks. It is necessary to draw Emily's attention to the finished photographs: "Look how beautiful it turned out!" – or give her the opportunity to make a choice:

“Which photo do you like best? The task is to make Emily a full participant in the action and stating a lot depends on her.

### **Making a story**

When making a book, a lot will depend on materials - ordinary sheets of paper or multi-colored ones are available. If the available sheets are multi-colored, you can involve Emily in choosing the color of the paper and beads in the photo. If Emily knows colors, offer her a choice. If you have scissors or a paper cutter, she can use them to cut paper with Mary.

A lot depends on Emily's abilities. Can she use markers or colored pencils to decorate the pages of the photobook, or will she have to choose the easiest way – using stickers? Emily's participation in the creation of the photobook should also be recorded in them.

When the book is finished, Emily's photo and her name as the author of the work should be on the cover. Each photo is supplied with explanations, preferably rhymed. It is better to make such a photobook with one photo per page and fasten the pages with rings, then later it can be used as a teaching material.

### **Using TPB**

When friends or relatives come to the house, parents can organise a small game. Put all the beads in the box and ask the guest to find the beads shown in the photo.

Thus, Emily will be involved in communication with others, indirectly through a photobook. Guests will admire her work as an author, compliment her beads, thank her with treats. Another version of the game: Emily can distribute prizes (cookies, sweets) to guests who find beads that match the ones in the photo. This whole process should be photographed.

The next photobook can be dedicated to this event or even combined with the first book. Then there will be a story told about how Emily made a photobook about her beads and how the guests liked this book. The guests played an interesting game, rejoiced and admired Emily's taste, her abilities and treated her with various goodies.

In this case, the photobook is what L.S. Vygotsky in the cultural-historical theory defined by the word "artefact". Such a photobook for Emily is a part of her life, her world, and at the same time it helps to expand this with new relationships and give it a social meaning. The photobook becomes a means of communication and motivation for Emily to participate in photobook activities.

It is not at all necessary that Mary involves Emily in the process as quickly as she would like. Much depends on the character of Emily, and on the participation of parents, their ability to find motivation for their child.



Creating photobooks is not just about hanging out with a mentor. Photobooks should be part of the child's world, and through them this will expand, become understandable, and safe. To do this, you need to study the child and expand their world so that new opportunities for motivation and inspiration appear.

### **Further development of the process**

If it was possible to involve Emily in the process, she began to consciously participate in it: "Well, Emily, the guests will come soon, let's think about what it would be best to make a photobook about; bring everything you want to photograph here! You brought hats. Amazing". The girl took the initiative. The sequential teaching of the child and operation necessary for making a photobook begins. The process becomes conscious, the development of the child begins.

Now the photobook serves as a motivator, and positive emotions for Emily. Looking through it, you can inspire Emily to a new creative act by saying that Aunt Nina, who is giving you candy in this photo, has a birthday soon, and we could make beads of her favorite blue color for her. If Emily is positive about the suggestion, you can help her make her own beads and make a photobook of that new creative process, step by step.

The beads are presented to Aunt Nina (the process is photographed), and the photobook is sent to the school, where the teacher shows it to the class, emphasising that Emily made it for the children, and now they will learn how to make beads from this book. This is a concentrated emotional outburst, a very strong motivator, a source of inspiration for Emily. Like accomplishments, encouraging her to expand the boundaries of her world, to discover new objects, dedicate new photobooks to them and share your discoveries with classmates. Sooner or later, Emily will begin to realise that her work has a purpose.

### **Learning process**

At the beginning of the process, every effort should be made to ensure that the child, with minimal help, independently learns how to make photobooks, because the task of the mentor is to transfer as much responsibility as possible to the child and provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary for this. A child like Emily is hardly capable of being completely independent, including her work. However, nothing can be predicted in advance. Children never cease to amaze and do things that I never expected from them. The task of education is to provide the child with maximum opportunities for development.

Operations required to create photobooks consists of several sub-operations. For example, to shoot, you need to select its object. It must

be properly positioned, given the lighting. For many children, the division to the level of sub-operations may not be enough, so each need to be broken down into smaller operations - the simplest elements, and taught sequentially. For example, operating the simplest camera involves several skills that can be difficult for a special child:

- the ability to focus on the subject and stand still until the picture is taken;
- ability to keep the camera steady;
- the ability to keep the whole subject in focus;
- ability to press the shutter button;
- not cover the lens with fingers.

Many children will have to learn these elementary operations separately. During the study, vocabulary will be replenished, useful skills will be formed. With such a gradual movement from simple to complex, from elementary actions to sub-operations, and ultimately to full-fledged operations, progress in development is clearly manifested. This progress must be recorded and made an event, celebrating with a favorite treat or a special celebration. The child must feel that their achievements and victories are noticed and appreciated.

The child has reached the maximum potential in their ability in making photobooks. What then?

Attention should switch to the search and selection of topics for photobooks that will improve or facilitate the life of the child and their environment. "Your mom is so busy all the time with housework and taking care of the kids. Come on, you'll learn how to make your own lunch for school. You are already a big girl, and you will help your mom!" If the child likes the idea - full speed ahead! If not, you can look for other inspirational arguments or suggest a different theme for the photobook. Finally, ask the child about their preferences - what would s/he choose? Non-speaking children are best given the opportunity to choose from several options.

During the shooting, the correct execution of one or another action is practised: "The cheese must be put evenly on the bread. Let's try again. Much better now. And now the final frame for the book. I'll keep it straight! Well done! It's done"

Diversity in the choice of topics and the search for inspiring ideas for using photobooks are also desirable - this contributes to the multilateral development of the child, expanding and strengthening their ties with the outside world. For example, Milani from the story "Fashion Girl Milani" made photobooks for the local library.

## WALTER, LIVING IN A GROUP HOME



A clear illustration of the system's versatility is the story of Walter, who is the exact opposite of Emily.

14-year-old Walter, with Martin-Bell syndrome, lives in a residence with eleven other persons. He talks incessantly about everything in the world, but mostly about the events taking place in his small world, about the people who

surround him. It seems that he knows a lot, but his speech is incoherent, he likes to repeat the same sentences and drag the interlocutor into a meaningless cycle of words. Furthermore, his actions are not productive. Despite this, he is a great guy who genuinely cares about his friends.

As with Emily, the primary motivation for an adult is using the photobook system to help the mentee improve his or her life, in this case to help streamline Walter's thinking and speech and make his actions more meaningful.

Before moving on to co-create photobooks, Tom, Walter's mentor, needs to develop a project that can interest the mentee. Walter, fortunately, is the one who does not have to look for a motive because his friends and what happens to them is Walter's main concern, so the first photobook will, of course, be dedicated to them.

Thus, activity is determined by motive. Walter is motivated by this work - this is his main interest.

"Let's write down their names first. Now tell us a little about each: what do they like to do, what is their favorite food."

You will receive detailed "dossiers" of friends from him and be surprised that he is able to focus and immerse himself in the topic, which is logical, because he is interested and motivated.

The ability to "dose" your participation is an important element of joint activities. More autonomy, where possible, helps to uncover what might never be found. In this case, Walter works not only as a full partner, but also as the "head" of the enterprise.

He shows initiative, offers new ideas. We do not forget to emphasise this, as if in passing: "What an interesting idea came to your mind!" Together you will plan - how you will photograph everyone when the guys are doing what they love, or they enjoy their favorite food.

The second step is to act



The action is determined by the goal - to make a photobook about friends.

Creating photobooks consists of several operations. Of course, one must consider the fact that operations are determined by the conditions in which the child operates, and he must be consistently helped, taking these conditions into account. We start with shooting.

An important step is the photography process. Walter should be taught how to perform the sequence of actions necessary to handle the camera. He is incapable of sustained attention, a breakdown into sub-operations would be required. Since Walter has taken the initiative and demonstrated interest, his actions become consistent, and discussions with Tom become more coherent, as the attention is focused on achieving the desired goal.

Walter is able, after short instructions, to hold the camera correctly, but it becomes clear that his concentration is clearly not long enough to press the shutter release correctly. The process of pressing a button on a digital camera requires some patience/persistence - for Walter this is a very useful procedure, but he will learn it gradually, as he becomes more involved in the process. Tom uses the scaffolding technique to help Walter to photograph various dishes. It is always better to start with objects than with people. At this stage, it is very important that the work is not boring, that motivation is not lost, because at first it is difficult for the child to keep the goal itself (photobook) in the head. This is an abstract concept for him, so it is advisable to diversify the slightly boring process of shooting food - make it fun, maybe even delicious.

The next step is to print photos. This is where Walter can help with little things. The finished photographs need to be cut, and it becomes possible to motivate Walter to learn cutting paper - a very difficult task for a person, who has low focus and concentration, and therefore Tom additionally inspires him: "learn it yourself - we will teach Steve - he wants to learn cutting paper too." And now Walter already asks: "When are we going to cut?" He is inspired - he wants to teach others. Tom and Walter talk a lot, but the conversation is now on point. They have a lot of things to discuss.

Once Walter has mastered basic camera skills with Tom's help, he starts taking pictures of his friends. At this stage, the sequence of actions is complicated: he learns to ask people permission to photograph them and sit still, etc.

A photobook is created from the finished photographs, and here Tom has an additional opportunity to better study Walter's zone of proximal development - his abilities and inclinations, as well as preferences: to invent a text or, perhaps, decorate a book: in a word, what kind of work he

can do independently or willingly, and where it is necessary to persuade him or help him.

This will help develop Walter's ability to concentrate. Obviously, he can't handle it on his own, and Tom's attentive support in this case and the use of scaffolding when performing the necessary operations will speed things up. Those parts of the operation which are still very difficult for Walter, Tom does himself. In the beginning, the result is very important, and now the first photobook is ready. On the cover is a photo and Walter's name as the author.

Every resident and employee can view it at any time. And most importantly, Walter now has his own responsibility. He must bring each new employee up to date, introduce him to the residents using this book, tell them names, what room they live in, who their friends are, what their favorite pastime and foods are.

It turned out that while enjoying the creation of the first photobook, Walter began to resist, to refuse to take pictures on the street for a photobook about their neighbourhood area. Apparently, the idea was not attractive to him, nor did he understand the purpose of such a photobook. He was not interested in photographing any buildings.

And then Tom came up with a solution. He said that he had received a letter from Walter's favorite tutor, who worked at the residence and had recently moved abroad and got married there.

He wanted to show his wife the place where he worked, stores nearby, the restaurant where they often went, and the library where he took the guys - he missed all this very much. As soon as Walter found out that the educator was "writing letters" asking to send him some photographs, he immediately took the initiative - to work. Therefore, the motivating motive for him was chosen correctly. The photographs are "sent" to the tutor and from the remaining ones a guide to the area is compiled with pics of important places and addresses.

Now Walter is already more confident in performing the operations necessary to create a book and begins to suggest improvements. So another useful book appears in the house. Walter is open to new ideas.

Why not dedicate the next photobook, for example, to cooking Walter's favorite vegetable salad, which he makes with the help of employees?

The next photobook will consolidate and improve the skills already acquired in handling the camera. In addition, the activity to create it will allow him to master important life skills: cleaning and cutting vegetables, cooking salad. Tom's promise of using the photobook to teach other residents how to make salad inspired Walter beyond words, and he enthusiastically set to work.

The whole process of creating photobooks is clearly structured and divided into a strict sequence of actions. Order of operations, interconnection, logic - that's what Walter lacks, and that's what his work on photobooks gives him.

Having completed the process of creating a photobook under the guidance of a mentor and going through a sequential process of performing sub-operations and operations, he receives a photobook, as a result.

That photobook not only serves as a means of supporting and developing Walter's motivation, but also serves as a tool for meaningful communication with others. It can be used for the development of other mentees or for some other purposes - it is an effective means of communication created as a result of joint work, the result of human relations aimed at realising a unifying goal.

In the future Walter has the potential to independently master the entire process of making photobooks, where Tom can only assist him in complicated operations, but it is already clear that Walter has many opportunities for developing initiative and motivation. The environment in which he lives will only supply him various incentives for this.

The production of photobooks for various purposes, will involve Walter in relationships that require the development of skills, which will have a beneficial effect on his personality, enrich his knowledge and skills, and develop his mental abilities.

## Chapter 2 Various Beneficial Photo Projects for Entertainment

In addition to thematic photobooks, you can make many different photo projects from photos - games, puzzles, and so on. Sometimes I insert a photo puzzle right into the photobook so that the child can work putting the photo together from the pieces. The main thing is that in the photo there are things or people from his life, and the child was directly involved in the creation of this photo. Compared to purchased games, homemade ones have a clear advantage.

Throughout the process, children get the opportunity to learn new concepts and words, practising useful skills, by participating in interesting and rewarding activities. As, for example, in the case of the guys who are dedicated to the following stories: “Dr. Seuss the Second”, “Inventive Dasha” and “Common Passion”

### Doctor Seuss the Second (story)



It was a great day. Today Zheka's parents took him to the zoo. Zheka took out his camera from the shelf.

Zheka has autism and cannot speak, but he enjoys doing a lot of things. Since his father bought him a camera, Zheka has been taking photographs with pleasure and likes

taking many photos at a time. So he always makes sure that the batteries are charged, and the memory card is inserted in the device. He always keeps the other one in his pocket in case he needs to take more shots.

Zheka's camera had a zoom lens, and his father recently taught him how to use it to take close-up shots. Zheka was bewitched by the variety of possibilities available to him with the use of magnification.

When they arrived at the zoo, Zheka was shocked at how many kinds of animals there were. Of course, he had been to the zoo before, but that was a long time ago, and it has changed a lot since then. In addition, before he did not have his own camera.

This time he ran excitedly from cage to cage, taking hundreds of photographs. He zoomed in on the animals as close as he could and photographed them. When his mother saw how quickly he takes photos,

she decided to take pictures of the same animals with her own camera to be sure that the child would have good pictures in both situations.

Zheka photographed lazy bears, caged lions and penguins coming out of the water. He captured kangaroos in their wilderness and prairie dogs running in and out of their burrows. He was surprised that so many of the animals, such as prairie dogs, did not live in cages, but in thematic enclosures, where they were completely safe.

When Zheka and his parents sat down on the bench to have a bite to eat, mom said: "Zheka, can I see the photos you took?"

Zheka took out his camera and stood next to his mother. He pressed buttons and showed her the pictures he had taken since morning. All the pictures showed only parts of the animals, but none of them showed the entire animal.

-Is that what you planned to do? she asked. -Shoot just their paws?

Zheka silently nodded, flipped through all his pictures, and he looked at them like they were treasures.

-I know why you made them, Zheka. When you were a little boy, your favorite book was "The Foot book" by Dr. Suess. You made me read it over and over, many times. Now we have our own Doctor Seuss. Great idea, Zheka!", - Mom said, hugging him.

Usually Zheka did not like being hugged or touched, but he allowed his parents to do this sometimes, because he knew that they were happy when they hugged him. And Zheka loved to see his parents happy, smiling, laughing.

When Zheka returned home with his parents, his father printed out his photographs and laid them in a pile on the table - a whole pile of paws. Then he made copies of the pictures taken by mother and scattered them on the table so that Zheka could see them all at the same time. Then he called Zheka and handed him a stack of pictures that he had taken.

-Zheka, you took a lot of very good pictures, - his father said proudly. - Your mom took photos of the same animals. Look, I put them on the table so that you can see everything at once."

Holding a stack of photographs in his hands, Zheka looked at the photographs of the animals on the table. He didn't need instructions to start laying out pictures of animal paws on top of his mother's pictures of whole animals.

While he was laying out photographs of animal paws, his mother came up. When he finished, he checked the work and made sure that everything was laid out correctly. Mom and dad were shocked at how quickly he was able to do that, and mom said: "Zheka, I have an idea! Wait a minute."

She returned with a large box in which they kept craft and art supplies.

- Let's make a game "Find a couple" out of these pictures. Your birthday is coming soon. Many children will come, and they will be able to play it, -she suggested

And they got to work: they took paper of different colors and made cards of each color. A photo of the animal was attached to one, and its paw was attached to the second color.

After all the photos were attached, Zheka signed the cards on the back so that the children could check if they matched them correctly. Zheka could write, but he made mistakes, so his mother helped him write the words.

Then mom took out a cute box, divided it into two halves with a partition: one for the animals, and the other for their paws. On the lid, Zheka wrote "Find My Paws" game, and the mother added "made by Dr. Seuss the Second", and they laughed together.

Mom said, "I think we did a great job. Later, you and your father will laminate the cards, and now we deserve ice cream! Let's go to the kitchen, and everyone will choose their favorite!"

During the holiday, his classmates looked at beautiful cards with pleasure and played with Zheka the game "Find My Paws". The whole evening that game was most popular, and when Zheka's mother said that he himself took pictures of the paws, the children were very impressed with this. Daisy, Zheka's classmate, played that game the most that evening and, as it turned out later, made her own creative plans.

### **Inventive girl Daisy (story)**



Daisy has Down syndrome, which does not prevent her from being a completely charming child. Her parents adore her and they surround her with love and care. They bought Daisy a camera a long time ago, and she loves to take pictures.

This morning she is hiding under the covers with a camera, she wants to surprise her mother and take a picture of her.

- Daisy, where are you? - she hears her mother's voice and laughs, hiding under the covers. - Where are you, dear? Hmm, how strange, my daughter is nowhere to be found, - mom smiles and pretends to be looking for her.

- Aha! - the girl jumps out from under the blanket and clicks the camera. - So you got caught!

"Gotcha," mom agreed with a laugh. - please, let me see it.

"I want to make a game," the girl suddenly said.

- Game? What, for example?

-Like playing Paws. Like Zheka did. Only mine. With my photos. Will it work? What do you think?

- Darling, you will succeed! - Mom said.

She liked this idea and the fact that Daisy herself wanted to do something creative and active.

-Just, please, don't scare people. They may be frightened when you suddenly jump out with a camera.

"Were you scared, mommy?" Daisy was upset.

- Well, I'm used to it, a hardened person, but you need to be careful with others. Do you remember that tomorrow you are going to the circus with your uncle and younger cousin? Can you take pictures and play with your brother there? Then he will have impressions of the circus for a long time. He loves games and will be glad

Daisy threw up her hands, she completely forgot about it. Uncle promised to take her to the circus, but she had never been there. Daria responsibly prepared her camera: she loaded it to meet new experience fully armed. The circus made an indelible impression on the girl. Bright colors, new smells, cotton candy, huge strong men and funny clowns merged into a colorful kaleidoscope of joyful emotions. Daisy kept clicking her camera, trying to capture her every discovery. Her cousin was impressed no less than the girl and every now and then grabbed dad by the hand to draw attention to another marvel.

Daisy remembered that she was going to make her own game, and, like Zheka, she also took pictures in pairs - the whole and the part.

As soon as she returned home, undressed, and washed her hands, she immediately ran to the computer to select the photos.

-Wow, Daisy, what beautiful photos, -the mother was sincerely surprised. -I think these are perfect for your game. Ben will be happy!

Daisy is happy now. For her, the work has become even more interesting, because it is always doubly exciting when your creative work is created for someone as a gift. Holding the printed pictures in her hands, Daisy went over to the time in the circus recalling what exactly delighted her cousin the most of all when they were in there. She took a photo of a car and its wheels, a strong man and his arm, a tightrope

walker, and her shiny skirt... Daisy carefully glued and signed the photos, pasted the same stickers so that you could check the correctness of the answers. Little Ben couldn't read yet.

But Daisy does not like that the cards deteriorate easily, they do not look like real cards at all. Mom found a solution:

-Ask your dad to laminate them.

-Of course, daughter, I'll do it on Friday," dad readily agreed.

-Ah, I wish it was Friday..." - the girl impatiently counted the days of the week.

Finally, the game is ready. Daisy put the cards in a pretty box and was looking forward to the arrival of the guests.

-This is for you, Ben! - she solemnly declared, handing her little brother a box.

Opening it, the boy was surprised to find pictures that captured their joint trip to the circus. He was truly delighted. He and Daisy enjoyed playing a new game. Ben chose the image of the whole, and next to it he carefully placed a photograph of the part.

This led Daisy to a new idea.

-Ben, soon I will create another game," she announced happily. - I've already figured out which one!

She and her mother selected the most successful photographs, printed them out on a printer, and Daisy cut each one into several parts. Now the boy had to collect puzzles from pieces. He was delighted with such a gift. This game quickly became one of his favorite.. Repeatedly he asked Daisy to make him new puzzles. The girl only smiled mysteriously and asked to wait a bit. But then she couldn't help it:

-Bens, do you want me to tell you a secret? Mom, dad and I are going to the botanic gardens, and I will make you a new game, which is a surprise!

### **Common passion (story)**



Sergio and Nick went to the same special school and became friends there.

At school, they sat together and spent time together at recess. Sometimes Nick came to visit Sergio and remained there at night, and they watched cartoons. One weekend, Nick



came to Sergio and brought with him a photo camera that his parents gave him for his birthday. He really liked the camera, and took pictures of everything around. The camera did not make any impression on Sergio.

The next day was a weekend and Sergio's father said:

- Guys, finish your breakfast quickly, and we will go to an interesting place. And you, Nick, be sure to take your camera along.

They got into the car, and Sergio's father took them to a place where they could admire various wild and domestic animals. Sergio really liked animals. The woman next door had a small dog, which Sergio loved to stroke and the man who lived upstairs had a cat, and Sergio sometimes played with it. However, Sergio never had his own pets. As soon as they arrived, Nick took out a camera and started clicking. Sergio became bored alone.

-Let me take a picture of you next to the goat, - Nick suggested. Sergio liked to be photographed.

Little goats were running nearby, and the children fed them from a bottle with a pacifier, like babies.

-I want that too," Sergio took a bottle and began to feed the goat. - Nick, take a picture of me feeding the goat!

-Ok, - Nick said and took a picture. -Now take a picture of me!

Nick and Sergio's father taught Sergio how to take photos, and Sergio and Nick began to take pictures of each other.

They took turns milking the cow. Then they fed the rabbits and stroked them. Sergio's father took several pictures where both boys posed together. They all had a good time and laughed a lot while taking various funny pictures. There was a giraffe with a long neck. Father lifted Sergio up to feed the giraffe, and Nick took some great shots when the giraffe bowed his head and shook it as if to say "Thank you."

At the end of the day, they went to the carousel and then rode on the swings. They returned home tired and soon went to bed.

The next morning, Sergio's father said:

- Guys, finish your breakfast quickly and we are now going to do something interesting.

They all gathered in Sergio's room, and his father laid out the photographs they had taken yesterday. The guys laughed, remembering the tricks of the past. And then Sergio's mother came in with a large box of all kinds of supplies for projects - paper, scissors, glue, colored markers. She also brought a beautiful folder.

“Let's make a photobook now, and you can show it to your classmates at school,” said mom.

The boys liked the idea and set to work. They cut out photographs and glued them to the base. Sergio liked to wield scissors, and he cut out all the photos, and Nick quickly posted everything and got the job done. They wrote funny captions under each photo, and it was a lot of fun. Mom also suggested adding a few words about the products that each animal gives. For example, next to a photo of a cow they wrote “milk”, and next to a chicken - “fried eggs' ", Sergio's favorite dish. Under the photo of a goat, they wrote the word "cheese." Nick said that he would need to take photographs of all these products and add them to the book.

-Brilliant idea, -Sergio's mother praised him.

Sergio chose green colored paper to stick photos on because he liked this color, and Nick took one sheet of paper of each color, because he preferred variety. Nick did the signatures by hand, and Sergio typed the text on the computer, and then Sergio's father, having printed out his work, made stickers. When they were done, they put the finished sheets into protective files and stapled everything together in a folder. It looked like a real book.

Sergio's mother gave the children a very beautiful paper with a pattern along the edges and a stencil with a patterned font, and the children made an elegant cover. On it they wrote: “A fun day with animals and a camera”, put the date on, with the authors being “Sergio Nick and Dad”.

The book turned out great.

Nick asked if he could take the book home with him to show it to his younger sister, because she loves animals so much. Sergio, agreed of course.

And Sergio's dad suggested:

- I have an idea. I can take the book to Kodak and they'll make two identical books that look like the ones we buy from stores or borrow from the library, and you both get a copy.

- Great! - the boys exclaimed in unison.

And Sergio's mother said:

- You did a great job. Let's go to the kitchen and drink tea with cake.

And then Sergio's father asked:

How about going to a vegetable farm next weekend?

- Hooray! - the guys shouted, and Nick asked:

- And then we will do a new book? - He really liked it.

In the evening, when Nick had already gone home, Sergio went up to his father and asked:

– Dad, I'd like to have a camera too. Can you buy it for me?

***A comment***

*Each of these stories shows how the children had a great time. They chatted with friends, took pictures and gained useful skills. The creation of games and photobooks helped them to establish active communication. This did not require any special devices, only a camera and materials that can be easily bought at any stationery store or found at home.*

## Chapter 7 Application of Thematic Photobooks by Parents

Of course, the system for creating Thematic Photobooks has its own rules and principles that are easy to master. At the same time, everyone will create their own photobooks, not similar to others. The following are stories of people who have used this system and have been quite successful.

### Examples of simple photobooks

The following part is written by a woman named Kathleen Birmingham from Arizona, USA. She became interested in the system, studied it and put it into practice. Below she shares her experiences. The Thematic PhotoBook system can also be used to teach regular children useful things or for solving specific problems, as Kathleen describes in detail below, especially her favorite Food Photobooks

### How To Make Photobooks



Creating PhotoBooks is a relatively easy process. What you need to keep in mind is that PhotoBooks are very much like any other book, except that here you and the child are the creators of the book. You both are simultaneously author, photographer, writer, illustrator,

and publisher of a book! Any child finds this a very exciting process!

Usually you are creating the book so that the child can somehow relate to his or her world in a different way. Because of this, it is important to maintain the child's perspective throughout the creation of the book. It must be the child's book, not yours. You want the child to relate to what is in the book by making the book about the child and his or her experiences, or you can make the child the main character of the book.

The main purpose of PhotoBooks is to serve as a learning tool, but you want it to be a fun learning tool. That is why you will be using

pictures of the individual throughout his or her book, and if possible, you want the child to take some of the photographs as well. Once they learn the rudiments of photography, you'll want them to take as many of the pictures as possible. This increases the child's sense of ownership over the project and makes it that much more powerful a tool.



Most PhotoBooks are made up of pages with a hole punch so that you can put book rings through them. In this way it could be turned into a set of flash cards. Or you can use one of the small “brag books” that are available nearly everywhere where only one photograph is inserted in each sleeve. These books will hold anywhere from ten to thirty pictures. These books are usually just designed to be small photo albums, but by making templates of cardstock the same size as a photograph, you can then cut up photographs as necessary, decorate them as you would like, add notes and captions, and then slip the decorated cardstock in the sleeve. The nice thing about this is that the sleeve will protect the child's work and it can be viewed literally hundreds of times without any damage being done to the PhotoBook pages. I've also had good luck just creating PhotoBook pages on colored construction paper or lightweight cardstock, then slipping these into readymade page protectors and inserting these into a three-ring binder. This way the pages are protected, and the three-ring binder allows for the PhotoBook to be expanded as needed. The way you choose to create a PhotoBook needs to be simple enough that you'll just sit down and do it, and yet durable enough that it won't be destroyed the first time the child looks through it. You want this to be relatively durable because you want the child to read this book over and over. It doesn't really matter what materials you choose to use for your project. What does matter is that you are prepared to do the project, that you find it relatively simple to do, and that you and your child have fun with the project. When I first begin to work with a child, I think about that child with all the love and compassion that I possibly can.

A child is a precious gift, and has so very much to offer. Many times their bad behavior is a cry for help in some way. Granted, they can drive you crazy, even though you know through that haze of emotion that you love them. If you have trouble getting to that “place”, try this. Take a picture of your child while he or she is sleeping. All children, regardless of how they behave during the day, look angelic when they sleep. It is

much easier to fill your heart with love for them when you look at that picture. When you're in danger of losing your cool because you're arguing yet again about the same thing, take a moment, and in the privacy of your own room, look again at that picture and remember why you want to help. For some reason, your child is trapped and cannot communicate to you why he persists in the behaviors he uses. Most children don't want you to be angry, they're simply trying to communicate something to you. What if you were to give up when you were only one step away from making that breakthrough? What if Annie Sullivan had quit her job the day before she was finally able to break through Helen Keller's silent and dark world? The world would have lost a phenomenal ambassador for the disabled population of the world. I've read dozens and dozens of instances where children grow up and are finally able to tell the story of their years trapped inside their bodies and their behaviors. Without fail, there was someone, usually a mother or a father, who never lost faith in them. This validation comes years after the actual events themselves. On the days when you feel you're really ready to just give up, just think, "Perhaps today's the day when we'll make that breakthrough!" All too often people stop just one step from success. Don't let that person be you!

### **PhotoBooks about Me**



Sometimes you may wish to create a PhotoBook just to help your child learn a little something about himself. I've learned that many people have trouble expanding their view of their world. They know little to nothing about what they really like to do. I heard a child asking her

mother over and over throughout the grocery store, “Mama, do I like that? Would I like that?” It occurred to me that she was likely autistic because of her repetition of the same question over and over again throughout the grocery store, but it occurred to me that she could benefit from the creation of a PhotoBook that would help her to understand more about herself. If I were to work with that child, what I would do is bring her to a table where I had a huge pile of pictures of various subjects and poses. I’d have animals, toys, people, activities. Then I would try to start a conversation based on one of the photographs. Many people are very ill at ease talking about themselves, but when you help to focus their attention onto something else, they find it easier to talk about it. The goal of this type of behavior would be to get the person to reach deep inside and discover things that they never knew about themselves before. For example, the mother in the grocery store could take pictures of a great many foods. Ideally, she could even have samples of the foods available. One by one, she and her daughter could go through the foods, first choosing the picture of the food to be discussed, then having a tasting of the food.

Once the girl decided whether she liked the food or not, she could separate them into piles. One pile would be titled, “Foods I like.” The other pile would be titled, “Foods I don’t like.” I can already hear parents out there, saying, “My kid doesn’t like anything but macaroni and cheese, so why bother?” The reason you bother is because your child may not realize that she has completely restricted her diet to one type of food. This is no guarantee that you will change your child’s mind. They are individuals and they have very distinct likes and dislikes. Your job isn’t to change their mind. Your job is to help them to discover that they do or don’t like a particular food.

Back to the “Food” book. Once the young girl has her separate piles of foods she likes or does not like, she will likely have a pile of foods that she doesn’t know whether she likes or not. This can be a strong teaching moment. Include these in the PhotoBook. Put them on a page titled “Foods I need to try.” Once your child has the opportunity to try that particular food, they can then classify it accordingly, but that way they’ll know that they haven’t tried it and they can’t possibly know whether they like it or not. Other books that you can create under the “PhotoBooks about Me” category might include titles such as:

- Games I like to Play
- Toys I have

- Things I like to do in my backyard
- Things I like to do in my room
- Things that make me feel good about myself
- Things that make me feel unhappy or upset
- What I want to be when I grow up
- Camping with my dad
- Camping with my family
- Weekend at Grandma's
- Summer vacation
- What I like about school
- What I don't like about school
- Books I like to read
- Books I don't like to read
- My Favorite Activities
- My Favorite People
- My Favorite Animals

Having your child work on PhotoBooks that are about him or her will help your child to begin to see that they have very definite likes and dislikes. Once you know more of the things that your child likes, you can then begin to choose activities that will encourage greater opportunities to learn or interact with others who have similar interests.

Many special needs individuals, especially those with autism, need to really work on finding activities where they share a common interest. Usually when they are in a group of people who share an interest in music, or in bugs, or in mathematics, then their passion and constant chatter about the topic is less noticeable, and less maddening. Helping your child to learn about him or herself is a step in helping them to become independent, rather than as an extension of you.

It takes time to understand a sense of "self". By exploring various likes and dislikes, your child begins to learn about himself as he sees himself, not as others see him. This is a big step toward independence. By encouraging your child to find what it is that interests him, you're encouraging him to figure out what he might want to do with his life.

Try never to limit a child's ideas about what he or she can do, rather encourage them in every way you can, because you never know what passion is going to be the key that unlocks their future for them.



## PhotoBooks about Food



Food PhotoBooks are some of my favorite books to create with kids. Kids love certain kinds of food, they enjoy eating, and often they enjoy the ceremony of preparing to eat. Some parents have said that they have trouble at mealtimes with getting their child to either help get the meal ready and on the table, or they are unwilling to be patient and wait their turn, or they refuse to use good table manners. Most of the time, the bad behavior stems from not knowing exactly how they are supposed to behave. Food PhotoBooks can start simply with how you want the table to be set. One PhotoBook we worked on was just getting the table ready for a meal. It needed a tablecloth put on it, the dishes and silver needed to be placed on the table in a certain order and a centerpiece needed to be set. The parent and child on this project worked together deciding just how they wanted the table to look. The parent did the table herself the first time because she wanted her child to start by photographing the table as it is supposed to look when they were through. This picture they printed in a really big format and made it the first page. They printed really pretty words that the child cut out and placed on the page, simply entitled, "Setting the Table". Then the mother took everything off the table and put it away and they started with a completely bare table. They made a list like the following one to help the child know which pictures she needed to take as they worked through the task of setting the table. As the photographs were taken they were checked off the list:

### Photographs to Take:

- bare table
- cabinet where tablecloth is kept
- laying the tablecloth (show with two people putting the tablecloth on)
- how many for dinner? (helps child to know how many place settings)
- lay out x number of plates (making sure they are in front of a chair)
- lay out forks to the left side of the plate (picture to show child left)
- lay out knives to the right side of the plate (picture to show child right)

- lay out spoons to the right of the knife (picture to show child right again)

- place water glasses above where the knives are

- put centrepiece in centre of table

- take final picture (this is to help the child check and make sure it looks like the big picture they made before they started taking photographs) Once all the pictures have been taken, they are printed and the child must then place them in order. This parent and child wanted only one picture per page, so they glued one picture onto a piece of cardstock and then they worked on decorating it any way the child wanted. The only requirement the child's mother had was that each picture be labelled to help the child read words like plate, glass, fork, spoon, knife. Then she allowed her child to cut out pictures from catalogues that were pictures of the major words on the page. If the page was about a spoon, she had the child cut out pictures of spoons and glue them onto that page. This way the child knew what a spoon was, could associate the word with the object, and was able to put it in its proper place. As the child used the pages of the book to figure out where to place each of the items on the table, the parent took pictures of the child setting the table. This way when they went back to the PhotoBook they had a few more pictures to add to the pages. These were pictures showing the child setting the table, modelling behavior for herself of doing what her mother asked. She said the PhotoBook took them about a full week to create, but now her daughter sets the table every night for dinner, and each night she uses her PhotoBook and reads the words out loud as she works. This same technique can be used to set the table for more casual dinners, for picnics, and for very formal events. Just be sure to break it down into enough steps and take photographs of those steps so that your child can successfully complete the task once the PhotoBook is finished.

### ***Preparing Food***

Food preparation can be as simple or as complicated as your child is able to handle. Juice Box: Some parents need to start with a very, very basic skill, such as teaching a child how to drink from a juice box. Some children never remember to take the plastic off the straw, some don't know to push the straw down far enough once some of the fluid has been consumed. Such a PhotoBook would have photos in this order:

- Pull off straw (show child pulling straw off the glue of the juice box)

- Take off plastic (show child removing the plastic from the straw)
- Throw plastic in trash (show child throwing plastic away)
- Place straw inside juice box, PUSH! (show child pushing straw into juice box)
- Push straw all the way down (show a picture of the straw too far up, then a picture with the straw correctly positioned)
- Drink! (show a child enjoying his drink from the juice box)

### ***Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich:***



This is a fun project and can often be done with two children at the same time. Start by having the children get out the ingredients. The pictures would be:

- peanut butter
- jelly
- bread
- knife
- plate
- napkin or cloth (for cleaning up spills)

Once all the ingredients are gathered, then show the child making the sandwich:

- placing two pieces of bread on a plate
- opening the peanut butter jar
- using knife to obtain peanut butter from jar
- spreading peanut butter on one piece of bread
- opening jelly jar
- using spoon to scoop jelly from the jar
- spreading jelly on the other piece of bread
- putting both pieces of bread together
- cutting sandwich in half
- biting into sandwich

If you want to be thorough about this, you can then complete the PhotoBook about peanut butter and jelly sandwiches by showing photographs of the child cleaning up any mess, closing the peanut butter and jelly jars and putting them away. It all depends on what you wish to teach your child.

Grilled Cheese Sandwich: Start by having the children get out the ingredients. The

pictures would be:

- butter

- cheese slices
- bread
- knife
- cooking pan (always supervise a child when cooking)
- spatula
- plate
- napkin or cloth (for cleaning up spills)

Once all the ingredients are gathered, then show the child making the sandwich:

- placing two pieces of bread on a plate
- opening the cheese slices
- placing cheese slice on a piece of bread
- place both pieces of bread together
- using knife to get butter
- show spreading butter on outside piece of bread
- show carefully placing the buttered side of sandwich onto a hot pan or griddle (label this picture HOT!)
- show spreading butter on the top side of bread
- show turning sandwich with spatula
- show toasted side of bread in the pan
- show removing sandwich from the pan
- cutting sandwich in half
- biting into sandwich

If you want to be thorough about this, you can then complete the PhotoBook about grilled cheese sandwiches by showing photographs of the child cleaning up any mess, and putting everything away. Again, it all depends on what you wish to teach your child. This process can be repeated over and over again on simple foods that your child is actually capable of making. Once you teach your child to actually make a few foods that he or she really likes to eat, then mealtimes will stop being so stressful.

### ***Salads and Relish Trays***



This is another project that is relatively simple for a child to do once they have a model set in place. As with creating the sandwiches above, you need to make a list of the necessary ingredients, show how the child prepares the lettuce, add the onions,

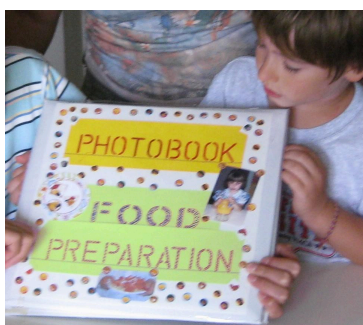
olives, and tomatoes to the salad, place the serving forks in it and pose with a completed salad in hand.

Fruit platters and veggie platters are similarly easy to create. It is again a simple matter of having all the materials ready. Some children are allowed to cut with a plastic knife, so you can show a child making careful cuts into either vegetables or fruits with a plastic knife, then arranging all the ingredients in a prearranged order on a tray. Do you recall how the mother took a picture of the completely set table first? This is what you will need to do. You'll need to have a completed photograph for your child to use as an example. If your child really hates change and melts down whenever anything is different, you might want to make sure you always use exactly the same fruits and vegetables each time. If your child is not quite so rigid in expectation, you can be a little more flexible as the seasons change.

### ***Gingerbread Houses***

This is another of my favorite PhotoBook projects. This one usually uses graham crackers and empty lunch-sized milk cartons as a base. I do make the frosting (often referred to as “glue” throughout this section) ahead of time because the store-bought frosting isn't strong enough to hold the “house” together. Each picture shows how a house is built with one half of a graham cracker being used for each of the four walls of the house. The milk carton will be hidden on the inside of the house, it is just used as a base to help the child get started. The roof is the hardest part, and will sometimes require the assistance of an adult to get the two pieces “glued” together with frosting and set in place at the perfect angle to form a pitched roof. The glue must dry for a little while, so I usually do this project in two days. Day two and the children are now allowed to decorate their houses. I like watching them sort the candies and try to decorate their miniature houses with the candies. Some children just glue any candy anywhere onto the house. Other children have more of a sense of order and will cover the roof with one kind of candy, then create a pathway with another type of candy. Each gingerbread house is a result of each child's personality. This is a fun activity, and the resulting PhotoBook is a joy to look through. Most children like going through it over and over again.

### ***Cookbooks***



One mother shared this idea with me. She enjoyed this process so much that she and her son created a cookbook of his favorite recipes.



They took step-by-step photos of making basic foods such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and graduated to him actually making boxed macaroni and cheese. They were very thorough in their photography and once they had put their little cookbook together they decided to have it printed. She told me that lulu.com prints and binds cookbooks for individuals for a pretty reasonable price. For this mother and her son, that book became a real treasure for them because they worked on it together, and by getting it professionally bound it looked like a real book that they were able to give to family members as a gift. Later on we're going to be talking about special events and holidays. This same mother took this idea of turning these PhotoBooks into cookbooks and she and her son are in the process of creating cookbooks for their family thanksgiving dinner. They are gathering recipes from all their family members, taking pictures of either the family members, or their dish, and they will then print enough Thanksgiving Feast cookbooks to share with their entire family. This is one of the best ideas I've heard of because they took the PhotoBook idea and really made it their own. Both mother and son enjoy working together in the kitchen, so creating cookbooks together is an activity that they can share without too much conflict.

### ***"Feed the Birds"***



I never forgot watching Mary Poppins and listening to the song "Feed the Birds". For some reason that really rings a bell with me and so I decided to gather some basic materials and teach a group of children how to create some simple bird feeders with pinecones, peanut butter, bird seed, popcorn, cranberries, apples, and oranges. While the children were busy spreading the peanut butter on the pinecones and rolling them in peanut butter, I was busy snapping photos of them making the bird feeders. They strung popcorn and cranberry strings, and emptied out orange halves with bird seed. Once they were all done, we traipsed outside and hung everything up in a tree just outside the classroom window. Just as I expected, within days, birds began to visit the feeders. The children were ready with their cameras and snapped picture after picture of the feathered visitors. Once we had a number of photographs, we created a "Feed the Birds"

PhotoBook that showed the first pages of all the children busily creating the bird feeders. Then we were able to put in many pictures that

the children had taken of the birds visiting the feeders. We were able to turn this into a learning session by looking up pictures of birds and trying to name some of the birds that the feeders had attracted. This was a terrific project because it was one of the first time these students had actually thought about another living being beside themselves.

### **Personal Hygiene Photobooks**

Life skills is an area where everyone can benefit. PhotoBooks in this category include everything from learning to wash one's face to learning to make one's bed. Any area where your child is having difficulty is where you should start. Making a PhotoBook about getting dressed can be helpful for the child who insists on resign himself but cannot seem to remember the order of how to put clothes on. I've had parents say they created PhotoBooks on how to take a shower or a bath because their child routinely forgets to do something, like rinsing shampoo out of their hair. This chapter will have a few ideas on some PhotoBooks that you may wish to utilize to help your child to understand the steps required to complete a task. PhotoBooks in this area are also great for showing a child how to do particular chores the right way. Do you remember when I worked with Debi? We used a similar approach to help her to know how to do basic chores in her group home. Rather than being reproached for not doing something, Debi now has a tool that she can use to make her life calmer, without unexpected surprises from upset residents who thought she was doing things just to upset them. Quite the contrary, she wanted to work hard to show the other residents that she wanted to work there and be helpful.

#### ***Bathing or Showering***

Obviously, you need to use common sense when taking photographs of this nature. No child wants photos of them naked posted about. Be discreet in how you photograph your child, keeping in mind that you are trying to help make things easier for her rather than embarrass her at some point in the future. If you're in doubt, ask yourself, would you like for a complete stranger to see these photographs of your child? If the answer is no, then you need to revise how you take the picture. Here are some common photographs to include in this PhotoBook:

- soap
- shampoo
- washcloth
- towel

- clean clothes or pyjamas

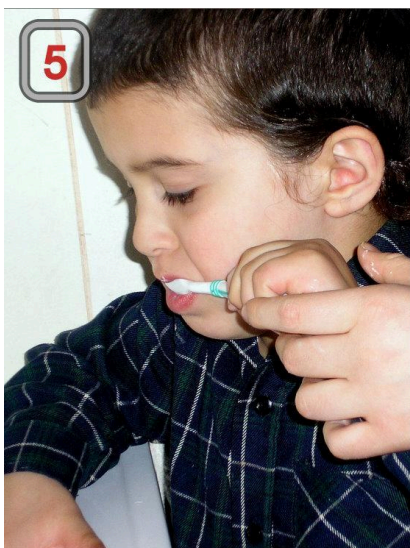
These first photographs show what your child needs to gather prior to going into the bathroom to bathe. Once everything has been gathered, then you may take photographs of the actual bathing process.

- getting wet
- shampoo (show how much to use)
- washing hair
- rinsing hair
- rubbing soap onto wet washcloth
- washing face (behind ears), neck, arms, upper body then rinsing
- washing legs and feet, then rinsing
- show drying off, or your child bundled in a towel...mmm, cozy!

After bathing, you may wish to show how your child should comb or brush his hair:

- comb hair, show it messy from being dried with a towel
- show child combing or brushing hair into place
- show hair combed
- show child putting comb away
- show dressing, either in clothing or in pyjamas
- if necessary, show order of dressing, shirt and underpants, pants
- next show putting on socks
- shoes...they might be on the wrong feet...this could be a funny picture

### ***Brushing teeth***



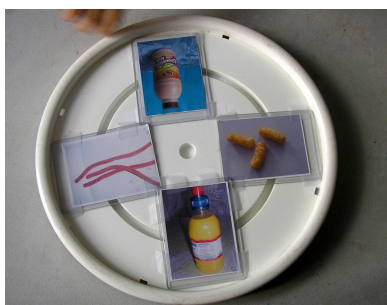
It is another step you can include in the same PhotoBook or a separate one:

- show child wetting toothbrush
- applying toothpaste to toothbrush, and be sure to show how much to use
- show child brushing teeth in all four quadrants...you may wish to actually show four pictures so your child doesn't forget to brush certain teeth.
- rinse mouth
- rinse brush
- show child putting toothbrush away
- show sparkling teeth



## Other Life Skills

### *Playing Games*



Playing games is often a problematic area for special needs children. Sometimes they just don't get the point of the game, and will insist on playing it their own way. That may be a hard problem to solve with a PhotoBook, but if it is a matter of learning to play nicely and wait patiently for a turn, and rolling dice and moving a game marker, then a small game

PhotoBook is a great idea. Learning to be patient is one of the hardest things for a special needs child to do, and by showing your child being patient, and showing pictures of other children being patient, this behavior is modelled repeatedly, and can make a lasting impact on your child.

### *Telling Time*

A PhotoBook can be created to help your child learn to tell time, or it could be used to help your child understand the day's schedule. This can be especially helpful for those days when something extra may be scheduled. By creating a PhotoBook about time, and a regular schedule, you can then add a page that shows when the schedule had to be adjusted. You will likely experience some meltdowns while you create the "changed schedule" pages, but the more of them you can add to your PhotoBook, the more your child will realize that your schedule is not always set in stone.

### *Chores*



Teaching your special needs child how to do chores can be a chore all by itself. By creating a PhotoBook about a specific chore, or a set of chores that will be your child's responsibility, you are not only encouraging your child to be helpful, you are teaching your child skills that could lead to independence.

Remember to use words with the pictures in all of your PhotoBooks. These are to be books in every aspect of the word. Make a big deal out of the process of creating the PhotoBook and make sure your child is made to feel very important about their role in

the whole process of creating the PhotoBook. Remember, it's about your child...all about your child.

### **Special Events**

One of the most often reported problems of special needs individuals is when there is a change in routine. So many families absolutely shudder to think of having a family gathering because their special needs child always has a melt-down and makes the day a disaster, leaving them with the feeling that their family really believes that they are poor parents and that their child is simply out of control. All too often, special needs individuals merely need to know what to anticipate. For them, to go into a totally foreign situation is worse than terrifying, and all they can do to protect themselves is to have a meltdown so that they can go back home to where they feel safe. There are very few books on the market that actually deal with helping special needs kids prepare for a change in their routine. One or two parents have created their own books, and have written about them in various books. This application is perfect for PhotoBook method.

The idea is to consider what the event is, what it means or stands for, who will be there. Will it be loud? Will it be noisy? Will there be a place for your child to go if he or she is overstimulated? What kind of food will there be? By anticipating every aspect of the upcoming special event, you can help your child to prepare for it and quite possibly allow both you and your child to actually enjoy the day. As with all PhotoBooks we've talked about, preparation is the key. You know your child better than anyone else in the world. You know what his triggers are. You know when she is going to shut down. You know the warning signs of an impending meltdown. With this information, you are well armed, and by starting well ahead of the event, you can work with your child to prepare a book that will help her to anticipate what lies ahead. By taking away some of the mystery and uncertainty of the event, you will be giving your child the gift of confidence.

What events might you consider? Anything that is out of the ordinary. Do you meet once a month at your sister's house for Sunday dinner? If so, who is usually there? What is the atmosphere like? Will there likely be loud people or animals present? Is there any place your child can go for some quiet time? Once you've answered all these questions, then you begin to put your PhotoBook photography list together. If at all possible, visit the location where the event will be held

and take photographs of the location in as many ways as you can. If there will be a room your child will be allowed to go in order to find a calm place, take pictures of that as well. Then try to make a list of every person you can think of who will be there. Get photographs of each of those people and make labels for them, or have your child make labels. By getting your child involved in this activity early, you will both have a great time “writing” the book, just as you have with other books you’ve created in the past. When you work with your child on a PhotoBook project, make it as pleasant as possible. Never work longer than your child can tolerate, even if you want to finish “just one more page”. This project is not about what you want, but about what your child needs. Try to make a list of the kinds of foods that will be served at the event. Try to find foods that your child actually likes to eat. Remember making the “Foods I Like” PhotoBook? This is a great place to go for proof that your child will eat some of the offerings that are likely to be at the special event.

Once you believe that you and your child have collected every photograph you could possibly need, and taken pictures of everything you can possibly take in advance of the event, it is time to sit down and put your book together. The whole time you are working on the PhotoBook, talk about how much fun your child will have at this event. Talk about the people who will be there, point them out and have your child read their names. Will they be seeing an aunt and uncle they rarely see? You might show how they are related to you. Are they your sister and her husband, or are they related to your husband? By giving them appropriate titles and then showing how they’re connected to your family, you are giving your child more information, more understanding about the event and the people he rarely sees.

Talk about the wonderful foods. Thanksgiving and family holidays are really great examples of this. Most families have traditional foods that they serve, and they are served at this event because they are very much loved. Do you recall the cookbook PhotoBooks that a mother and her son created in an earlier chapter? This is a perfect extension of that idea. You could even prepare some of the foods you know will be at the event. Work with your child, create a smaller version of a cookbook and include it in this special event PhotoBook. Every time you talk about something, you make it more real for your child. One mother used this technique and she reported that her child would recite certain parts of the book they’d created together, over and over, as if it were some kind of incantation. She

thought it was strange, but when her daughter did not react negatively when they got to her sister's house for the new baby's baptismal celebration, she realised that it was her daughter's way of preparing for a new and strange event.

### ***Special Events***

Here is a list of events that might require PhotoBook preparation for your special needs child:

- Weddings
- Baptisms
- Confirmations
- Bar/Bat Mizvahs
- Quinceaneras
- Thanksgiving
- Hanukah
- Christmas
- Birthdays
- Anniversary parties
- Sunday dinners
- Any event where a large number of people will gather

Special events are stressful on everyone. Do you recall the last special event you attended without feeling a little bit nervous? Consider your special needs child. Their ability to handle this kind of stress is very limited. By taking the time to really work with your child, you will be giving him a really great opportunity to enjoy the event rather than spoiling it for you and everyone else who attends.

Once you get started, you will have your own ideas, and almost certainly your children will flood you with their ideas. This will bring you much joy and satisfaction. Good luck!

### **Story told by Mother of a Special Child**



I want to tell you how the system for creating thematic photobooks has helped our family. My son has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, and with intact intelligence, he has serious problems both with understanding speech addressed to him and with the ability to speak. At the same time, there are significant problems with controlling his behavior.

One of the main problems of our communication with our son is the enormous difficulty in understanding each

other. Like many children with autism, the smallest details are of great importance, which ordinary people very rarely notice and do not attach any importance to them. For example, if he needs an album, then it is always some particular album. And it is very difficult for him to explain what exactly he needs. Our dialog usually looks like this:

- I want to buy the album.
- What album?
- With dogs.
- What dogs?
- Two dogs!
- Where can I buy it?
- In the shop.

At this stage, our dialogue usually comes to a standstill, because I could not understand in which store and when he saw this album. He knew exactly where and which shelf this album was on, but he could not explain. And it all ended with the cries and tears of my son and my feeling of powerlessness.

When I learned about the system for creating thematic photobooks, I decided to try to solve our problem with its help. Our son is very good at handling electronic devices, including computers. Therefore, I began to always take a small camera with me and give it to my son wherever he liked to be. At first I offered to take a photo, but very soon he understood the principle and began to ask for a camera himself. At home, he transferred photos to a computer, then choose the best ones and printed them out, and then we cut them out together and pasted them into an album with thick sheets. Sometimes we added inscriptions like "PARK " or "PLAYGROUND". So gradually we got a photobook, where we collected photos of all the important places for my son: parks, playgrounds, shops, our friends' houses, when we visited, and much more. Now, if the son wanted to go somewhere, he would find the right photo and show it to us. And we could safely say if we could go there now or some other day, and gave him the exact date.

For our family, this photobook has become an invaluable communication tool, and I hope that this wonderful method will help other parents of special children.

**With thanks,  
Uliana Zarnikova (Australia)**

## **Chapter 4 The development process of a special child with the help of the TPB system**

The system for creating thematic photobooks does not claim to be exclusive, or superior. However, it has the right to exist among equals.

Initially, the basis of the system was only practical work led by intuition, then it received theoretical support and reinforcement by the ideas of L. S. Vygotsky and Activity Theory. It then became clear in which direction to move.

The principle of the system is quite simple. It does not matter what features a child has (we are all special in our own way) – s/he, like any other person, is realised through activity, and development. Special children should be helped in the implementation of activities - to choose a goal, to arouse a desire for action, by finding the right motive.

The motive is found and goal set, and a child, with the help of an adult, begins to perform certain actions to achieve the goal. Imagine a doctoral candidate who has a clear goal in mind: to prepare a worthy qualifying paper to move to a new level of excellence. Does it develop in the process? Undoubtedly. The same is true for a special child. The only difference is that he is not engaged in the development of tons of scientific literature, does not travel to conferences, but, as a child also brick by brick, collects a kind of "scientific work" made up of images of reality. And s/he is also working on a project.

The result of the effort is a photobook, an artefact made in cooperation with other people, so someone else can use it. So, through the production of photobooks, the child becomes a full-fledged part of the social system of people. This is a measurable achievement that captures not only episodes from life, but also development stages of the child, and in the future can become a guide for the development of others.

### **Monitoring the development process**

Finally, a few recommendations that will help you observe the development of children and help them in this.

Seize opportunities to be inspired by a child's achievements. Use the opportunity to make contact. By working together with the child to create photobooks, parents get the chance to establish a relaxed and natural contact with the child. This contact is based on a common goal which will bring you closer to your child. For example, "together we make a photobook for dad's birthday."

### ***Study the child's personality***

Giving the child the opportunity to choose objects for photographing, parents get to know his preferences and inclinations better.

### ***Discover your child's talents.***

In the process of creating photobooks, parents study their child in different situations. You will be pleasantly surprised to discover the abilities and talents of a child would not have manifested under other circumstances.

### ***Take advantage of natural learning***

The acquisition of new skills takes place in a relaxed atmosphere in a natural way, since their development is due to the need in creating the final product.

### ***Enjoy the achievements***

The child learns many useful skills. The camera captures achievements; photographs serve as a visual aid.

Photobooks will remain with you for life - the result of your joint creativity. They will visually demonstrate progress in development.

### ***Enjoy the communication***

Photos easily create topics for conversation. Discussing photos develops attention, logical thinking, which increases the child's vocabulary.

### **Possible changes to expect**

Here is a brief list of possible positive changes associated with the use of the TPB system

1. Increased self-esteem.
2. Improved communication skills.
3. Learning how to interact when working with a mentor.
4. Learning to take initiative.
5. Developing imagination.
6. In the process, the child's talents, abilities, preferences are revealed.
7. Joint work on the photo book helps to understand the inner world of the child.
8. Fine and gross motor skills are developed when using improvised means (scissors, paper cutter, stencils, etc.) for making photobooks.
10. Independent decision-making in sorting, selecting, sequencing images is formed.
11. Increased attention to detail and ability to concentrate on tasks at hand.
- 12.. A sense of self-worth through visible accomplishments.

## **Instead of conclusion**

### **A Word for Parents of Autistic Children**

One mom wrote:

"I love my son Dan so much and I accept him, but I like Dan would be healthy"!

I don't know what mom meant by health, regarding her son Dan. Probably she meant her son to be like everybody else, as the majority of typical kids. I have to disappoint her. Her son always would be different and the sooner mom would accept that and start to understand him and the way he functions-the better it'd be for her and for her son. The longer she'd be sorry that her boy is autistic the longer she'd prevent his development as personality. He would be different from her expectations and she always would be disappointed.

I think as soon as parents of children with autism would change their attitude - stop mourning about that, stop comparing them with regular kids, accept their kids the unique way they are -the better for them and for their children.

Mom also wrote

-"I'm dreaming that Dan doesn't have autism and shows me emotions."

I spent with Dan only one hour and saw a happy child with a lot of emotions. Dan was curious about a new environment he has gotten into and actively explored it. If in the beginning he expressed displeasure when I tried to take his hand, in the middle in our meeting he did not resist body contact as patting on his shoulder and in the end, he gave me "high five" without any hesitation

He showed an interest in some stuff around the house and expressed pleasure when I offered him some entertainment. He kept a good eye contact. He has shown irritation when he couldn't get what he wanted but he showed satisfaction with substitution. He displayed cooperation when I helped him with water and cooperated vocalising his request for chocolate, when I insisted on it. It's a lot of emotions and feelings for one hour from the boy during the first meeting. He built a pretty good rapport with a person he just met

I also had a chance to work with Dan in the school. That highly energetic and active boy could sit quietly for a very long time, just cutting paper-an activity he liked a lot. If to make the cutting process more complicated, more diverse and interesting, he would not only object, but



would be happy to cooperate. And that is a great start to teach him different knowledge and skills

When he moves aimlessly around the room and you offer him moving purposely, he cooperates willingly. It's possible to teach him numbers or colors or different concepts such as up and down, high and low and he will learn it. He is an intelligent boy, but the trick is an adult has to follow him, carefully expanding his world in mutual cooperation

If parents expect from a child the emotions of loving them in the way which is habitual to them, then probably those expectations could not be fulfilled. But then parents have an opportunity to learn the way their child express his feelings and also have an opportunity to practice Unconditional Love...that is a love when a loving person does not expect anything in return.

Parents who start to understand their kids, assist them in their unique ways, start to feel proud and happy with their kids' individual progress, they start to find great things in their kids. Not any country or government support can give that to parents. It's parent's personal unusual life experience with their autistic child.

It's a difficult life experience being a parent of autistic child, but it's an opportunity for a parent to grow, expand their own world, learn new things and develop themselves in a way they may never have expected, but then could be grateful and satisfied. I'm saying that from my personal experience of becoming a different person thanks to communication with those kids and learning something new from every one of them feeling grateful to all of them.

I hope the system of creating Thematic PhotoBooks could be a good support for creating that mutual understanding and be a helpful learning and developmental tool for kids and their parents.