

## THOUGHTS ABOUT COLLEGE READINESS for Autism

**Your son or daughter may have been one of those kiddos, graduating from high school this year. It is also possible that due to CORONA VIRUS they may not be able to attend right away, so there are still preparations that could take place for a successful transition to college.**

Yes, of course, some students with autism have been able to obtain a high school diploma. They have completed the required number of courses. They have passed exams. Now, they may have had some reminders about completing their homework assignments. They may have required some organizational support to get ready in the morning, break their assignments down into manageable chunks and prepare for test taking. They may have also had tutors; speech therapists and occupational therapists provide consultations to help with the successful outcome of high school completion.

Some students may have even been held accountable for completing self-help, hygiene and daily living tasks that will be required of them, if they are to live on a college campus, but many may not have. Some students may have had their parents lining up after-school activities, social engagements and taking them where ever they may have needed to go but if they are transitioning to college life how will these areas of need be met?

So, here is a check list for you, parents do go through with your son or daughter and perhaps lay out a plan of action.

- Has your student toured the campus, obtaining a MAP of the site and perhaps circling or underlining key sites for access? Maybe color code sites.
- Has your student met with the Disability Service Office and identified a key contact for them? Have you identified a positive and consistent contact for yourself?
- Does your student know where the laundry is on campus? Does he/she know how to use laundry equipment? Does he/she know how to obtain food on campus?
- Do they know where public phones are in case something happens to their cell phone?
- Do they have a list of important phone numbers (doctors, parents)
- How do they plan on getting around the college campus? Do they know what to do if they get lost?
- Do they know how to get to each of their classes? Have you discussed safe walking at night?
- If they have a bike, do they know how to lock them up or how to obtain maintenance?
- If they drive, do they know how to keep up their driver's license and find parking on site?
- If they are going to take a bus or train, do they have schedules and have they practiced, so they can arrive on time?
- If your student has a problem sitting with large groups have them talk to instructor and found a way for them to have a specific seat near the back? Could they leave earlier or late to avoid crowds.
- Does your student know about their strengths and challenges related to autism? Do they know how to ask for accommodations? Do they have a plan/goal(s) for college? Do they know what types of courses they want to take?

- Can they identify learning and memory challenges?
- Can they identify attention and organizational challenges?
- Can they identify Communication challenges?
- What sensory needs do they have? What strategies are in place for them?
- What social areas will they need help in? Connect to social clubs on site?
- Do they have strategies for their emotional well-being?
- If they have any medical issues or take medication, do they know how to do this independently and also obtain refills? If they are seeing a counselor, physician for on-going support are they prepared to continue and maintain without your support?

**With colleges not knowing how they will open, when they will open and how they will accommodate students, there is still time to go through the above questions and begin to develop a plan to address each of those areas key to the success of your son or daughter.**

Check out the book, Students with Asperger Syndrome: A guide for College Personnel by Wolf, Brown and Bork published by AAPC [www.aapcpublishing.net](http://www.aapcpublishing.net) for some tools.

## Everyone Needs to Know About Sex Education

### ***Some First Thoughts:***

- Relationships are tricky for everyone, especially those on the autism spectrum.
- Do they understand, how love is supposed to feel?
- Do they know how a real friend act?
- Do they know how a lover is supposed to act?
- Do they know if they are flirting or if someone is flirting with them?
- Do they know what sexual attraction feels like?
- Many on the spectrum may be confused and have limited insight into these areas above.
- They may need help understanding what is really needed in order to full-fill these types of relationships?

### **What are Some Important topics?**

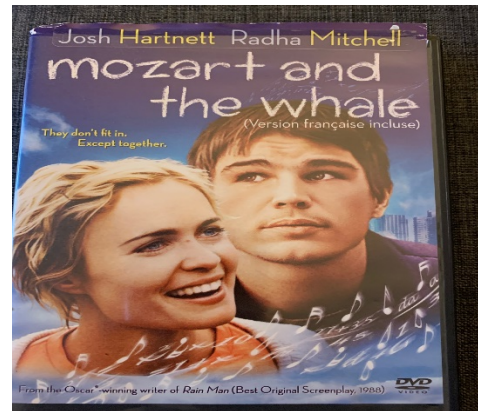
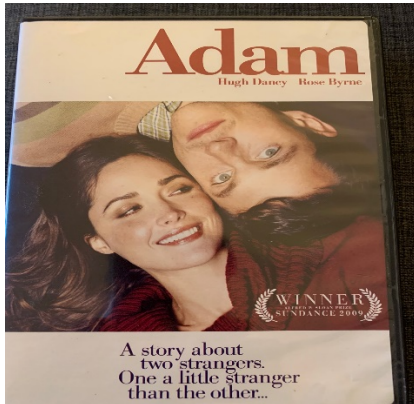
- Understanding emotions and the emotions of others.
- What are the feelings for different types of people they meet?
- How do they act with different types of people they meet?
- What is flirting? What is dating? What is sexual harassment?
- What is masturbation? What is intimacy?
- What protection do they need so they do not get pregnant?
- Gender differences.

### **Some General Resources**

- [\*Making Sense of Sex: A Forthright Guide to Puberty, Sex and Relationships for People with Asperger's Syndrome\*](#) by Sarah Attwood covers physical changes as well as the social and emotional aspects of puberty, sex, and relationships. It includes hygiene, personal care, emotional changes, moods, sexual feelings, social experiences, and reproduction.
- [\*The Aspie Girl's Guide to Being Safe with Men: The Unwritten Safety Rules No-one is Telling You\*](#) is another book: "For Aspie girls and women, dating and sexual relationships can be confusing, intimidating and potentially dangerous. A lack of understanding about acceptable social interaction between men and women can leave Aspies vulnerable to negative experiences. It is vital, therefore, that the facts and unwritten rules about sexual conduct and relationships are clearly laid out for girls and women on the spectrum."

- [\*Middle School: The Stuff Nobody Tells You About: A Teenage Girl with ASD Shares Her Experiences\*](#) is a book by Haley Moss, a teenage girl with autism. This book comes recommended for middle school girls. Also, by the same girl a few years later... [\*A Freshman Survival Guide for College Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Stuff Nobody Tells You About!\*](#)
- [\*Life on the Autism Spectrum: A Guide for Girls and Women\*](#) by Karen McKibbin is one of the new books on girls with autism, especially teenage girls. It follows the story of Alison, a girl diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, through both [childhood](#) and adulthood.
- Another book for about girls and women on the autism spectrum is [\*Women and Girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Understanding Life Experiences from Early Childhood to Old Age\*](#) by Sarah Hendrickx.
- [\*Been There. Done That. Try This! An Aspie's Guide to Life on Earth\*](#) provides advice from several accomplished people who have Asperger's. It talks about overcoming anxiety and poor [self-esteem](#), accepting change, living with meltdowns, overcoming [depression](#), living with sensory issues, making and keeping friends, understanding and succeeding with intimacy, dating, sex, and [marriage](#), and more.
- [\*Making Sense out of Sex\*](#): Sarah Attwood, A guide to puberty, sex, relationships for people with Asperger.
- **Adolescent issues:** Jackson, L. (2002) [\*Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome\*](#). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- **Sex and Relationships young adults:** Edmonds, G and Worton, D (2005) [\*The Asperger Love Guide\*](#). London: Paul Chapman Publishers
- Edmonds, G. and Worton, D (2006) [\*The Asperberger Social Guide\*](#). London: Paul Chapman Publishing
- Heinrichs, R. (2003) [\*Perfect Targets: Practical Solutions for Surviving the Social World\*](#). Kansas: Autism Asperger Publishing Company,
- Henault, I. (2006) [\*Asperger's Syndrome and Sexuality\*](#). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing Company

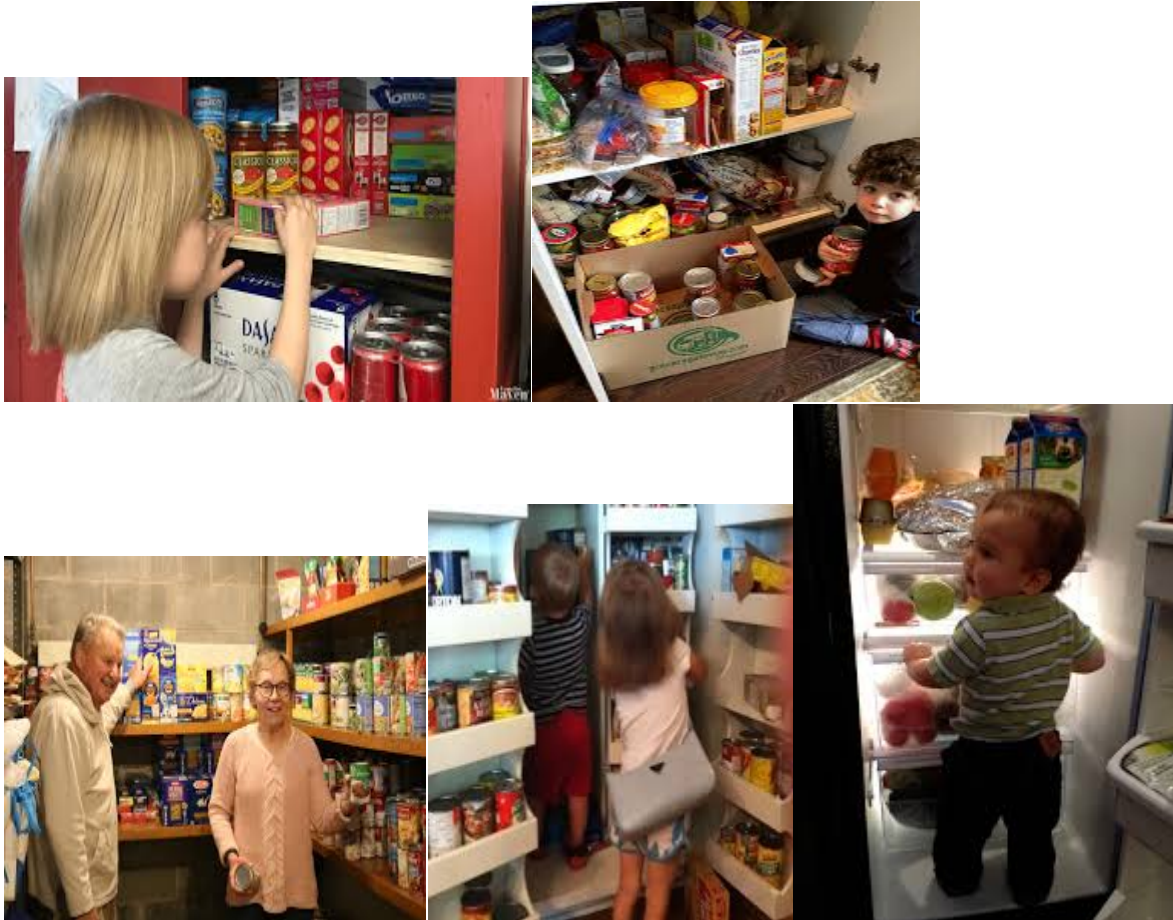
## Films of Interest



- Growing up is natural. Having sexual feelings is part of growing up.
- So, teach your son or daughter about their body.
- Teach them about puberty.
- Teach them about understanding others' emotions and theirs.
- Teach them about the different kinds of friendships that exist.
- Teach them how to flirt and date. **Netflix Dating Show "Love on the Spectrum"**
- Help them be knowledgeable about fertilization and pregnancy and birth.
- Encourage them to talk about sexual matters with only trusted adults and get guidance and support.

## Just Let Them Help Put Groceries Away

Build independence, teach sorting and matching, teach reading and motor planning, by teaching your son or daughter to help put groceries away in the cupboards or pantries. The result is they know where items they need are located, they can follow a simple direction you give them to obtain an item and they are building vocabulary comprehension as well as participating in family life.



### The Circles in Your Teen/ Young Adult's Life

I have always pushed the whole idea of **independence**, for the students, that have crossed my path in special education settings (public, private and residential). I still believe that we should work to nurture this philosophy, as it expects us to expect those, who learn in different ways, to reach their highest potential. BUT we must not forget that we are **interdependent** beings. We need to be able to develop a community of supports in order to accomplish our goals. So, what about those who have different learning styles? It's not just a circle of supports to listen to us, give us advice but also circles to provide what we may need to live effectively. Most of us take this notion for granted.

There is a tool parents and educators can use to help identify those circles and then help the individual expand. All My Life's A Circle by Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint and Rosenberg outlines this tool. They identify four circles that need to be developed, so the individual does not feel isolated and without connections to help them live, work and recreate in their own communities.

This project can be completed at school with a teacher or counselor. This project can be created at home with parents. This project can be completed if someone lives in a supported living environment with help of the house manager. Four circles are draw, with the smallest circle being in the middle. This In the middle of that circle, place a picture of the person the plan is focused on (daughter, son, student, resident).

The first circle around the person is called his/her circle of **intimacy**. Here the person names all the closet people in their lives, perhaps some have passed, but could be listed. These could be parents, grandparents, husband, wife or siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins.

The second circle is the circle of **friendship**. Explain that these are close friends but not as close as family.

The third circle is called the circle of **participation**. Explain that these are people you like but not close to. Maybe someone you know at church or in a class you are taking. These are people you only see occasionally.

The fourth circle is called the circle of **exchange**. These are people we pay to be in our lives, like the doctor, dentist, housekeeper, veterinary and plumber.

I believe we learn a great deal by completing this exercise. Does the individual you are supporting actually know who are the people placed in each circle? Do they remember their names? Do they have a picture of them? Do they know how to connect with them? (phone, address, email). Have they been programmed into their iPhone or tablet? Do any of these goals need to be put on their next education plan?

Do they have friends? Do they understand what **friendship** is? Do they need to learn how to make a friend, schedule a date with a friend and keep a friend? How can they make friends, now? Can they join a group that enjoys the same activities as they do and begin to develop this important circle? Can they learn the communication skills they need to call, invite, converse with a friend? Does this goal need to be put on their program plan? Is this something the speech therapist could work on at school?

If these young people are living in a group situation or with another roommate, do they know how to take care of the house or apartment needs and who to call for help? If they live with their family, do they understand what helpers the family calls upon to help take care of the home? (electrician, plumber, pool maintenance, lawn or garden maintenance, heat and air repair).

This circle of **exchange** is important for their independence. But first they need to have their attention drawn to it and then begin to develop this circle. They can create a list for their refrigerators or iPhone. House managers can prepare a binder with helpers' names and contact information, for them to refer to, with a picture when possible. Parents can have them listen when they call helpers, meet helpers and see how they are paid and thanked. Home care doesn't happen magically.

In addition, the person needs to understand who their wellness helpers are. They need to know that their physical body, their teeth, their eyes all need support. They need a list of wellness helpers to refer to. Perhaps a picture of that doctor can be obtained and put next to their name. Perhaps a picture of the body part they take care of can be put with the entry. What about filling a prescription? Do they know their pharmacist? These are all people that need to be included in the Circle of Exchange.

So, no time like the present to look at your son, daughter's, student, resident or guests CIRCLES and see what needs to be created to help support **independence** and **interdependence**.



## **Not Everyone Chooses to Work**

### **What About Volunteering First?**

Frequently students with autism or other learning differences may not be ready for the world of work when their school-time comes to an end. Perhaps not enough time was focused on developing interests, during their school years, which generally lead the majority of us to our world of work.

Perhaps the way to go is to first create volunteering opportunities. Volunteering helps develop curiosity which leads to interests which could lead to job development skills and then a job. Volunteering provides a way of observing and learning first.

Try making a list of curiosities or interests or activities, places and people your son, daughter, student or client are happy going to, have enthusiasm over or engaging with.

Next, think about what tasks, places, businesses and people in your home and community could offer opportunities to expand interests. Make observations of these places with them. Take pictures of these places and develop a visual story around these places. Take pictures of people in these places doing work and talk about the work they do in your visual story. Develop curiosity.

Have you ever taken your son, daughter, student or client to the library, book store, coffee shop, bike shop, auto shop, museum, garden shop, flower shop, art-store, pet-store, hardware store, fire department, laundry mat, gym, movie theater etc.? Have you visited parks and outdoor centers? Are they aware they could be working in one of these? They could be volunteering in one of these.

Have you introduced your hobbies to them? Do they know their grandparents' hobbies? If they have siblings, have they shared their hobbies with them? Hold hobby sessions. They can first watch the hobby being enjoyed. Then they can participate in the hobby or help with the hobby.

Be a good observer. What tasks and places do they smile more at? What activities do they seem to enjoy engaging in and stay focus on the longest? Identify the top three to five and then explore with those sites volunteering opportunities. Assure the businesses you are not looking for a paid job. Make sure they know the strengths of the volunteer. Maybe model activities at home, use videos of activities and put them through similar activities at home/school/your center before on-site volunteering occurs.

Make volunteering very short at first. One hour, once a week. Find out what the site really could use some extra help with. Make their needs the priority to encourage them to collaborate.



## Teens & Adults Need to Build Action Plans with (MAPS)

MAPS (Making Action Plans) created by Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint, and Rosenberg,  
[inclusionpress@inclusion.com](mailto:inclusionpress@inclusion.com)

First let us be clear: **A map is a visual tool, helping us get from one place to another.**

Secondly, all of us have dreams. We all dream unique dreams. We might dream of becoming teachers, living on our own, in an apartment, driving a car, having many friends, singing, dancing, creating games or even becoming a musician, writer, a model or actor.

Now, the question is really, how do we find out if our dreams are possible and will we need to make them possible or adjust them a bit.

So, teachers, counselors and of course moms and dads or grandparents can help the teen or young person, who learns differently, to create their dream map.

This map can be created one on one or with a group of persons involved in making the person's dream reach reality. Everyone involved needs to know what a map is and the history of this person the map is going to support.

It is a great idea to purchase some crayons or marking pens and some very big poster board paper or rolled paper where you can draw out this map. Different people could do the drawing and writing as you move along or person who is leading the group can or even the person the map will be used by. You could use an IPAD or SMART Board as well with sketching ability. The idea is to draw or write out, on the paper or board or device, answers to key questions.

**First write out the dream.** I want to live, on my own in an apartment and get a job at the local pet store. I want to go to college and learn to write poetry. I want to be a D.J. I want to sign on stage.

Write out the nightmare too. These are the challenges or fears about this dream.

Now, words that describe this person, always from a positive perspective (learning different, not learning disabled, sensitive not irritable, not phobic but cautious.) should be put under the dream.

Next, the group, including the person identify his/her will identify strengths, gifts and talents.

Then, list what the person will need to achieve the dream (skills, certificates, finances, transportation)

Then an action plan, with goals and timelines and people responsible for helping the teen/adult reach each goal, is developed. The facilitator, parent, counselor, or teacher would hold check in sessions, marking off small steps towards reaching the dream.

### TAKE A LABYRINTH WALK WITH YOUR SON or DAUGHTER

I know you have all been taking walks around the block and around the neighborhood but have you taken a Labyrinth walk? **Well, why not?** It's easy. You walk in, you pause and you walk out. BUT you could help your son, daughter or even YOU by using the walking into the labyrinth for counting and breathe deeply. Or, you could just walk in slowly and when you get to the center, take 10 deep breaths, letting tensions out. You might teach your son or daughter to walk in slowly and each step taken, say something each of you do not like. Then pause in the middle, take a few deep breaths and walk out slowly, saying the things you do like and want to have in your life. If you are walking on your own to get a break from the day, you could walk in letting go of all that does not help you and walk out wishing to bring in only that which does make your life better.

Marin County has several Labyrinth walks.



San Anselmo has two



Novato just off Grant has one



Terra Linda has one off Gallinas



Tiburon has one on Rock Hill Drive



If you are up for a drive, there are two in San Francisco, Grace Cathedral and at Lands End

You could make a Labyrinth in your front yard with chalk, in your back-yard with paint, bricks, rocks.



### Teach Kindness, It's a Social Skill!

**It is thought that when we do something to help another, we feel good. When we see that someone is having a hard time and we find one little thing to help them, it is said we feel kinder. When someone does something nice for us and we pay it forward, that kindness feeling spreads.**

Parents, **help your son or daughter** this summer identify what they might do to help a friend, a family member, a neighbor or someone who is less fortunate during these times. One simple act of kindness helps everyone. Ask your child, teen or young adult to identify a charity and find a way to help it.

- 1) Notice if a neighbor's car is very dirty. Offer to wash it or give them a certificate from a carwash.
- 2) Offer to bring back empty garbage cans once pick up time is over.
- 3) Make a card for a friend and send it to them via mail.
- 4) Facetime grandma and grandpa just to say hi.
- 5) Make some cookies and bring them to a friend or neighbors' home.
- 6) If you own lawn equipment but your neighbor does not, offer to mow their lawn.
- 7) If there are children on your block, grab some chalk and make some chalk drawings that tell you. do something (jump, dance, smile, laugh, turn around, clap, touch your toes).
- 8) Plant tomatoes and share them.
- 9) Cut flowers from your garden and bring them to someone.
- 10) Send a stipend to your hairdresser, housekeeper just because, since they have been unable to perform work.
- 11) Send a gift card to a family member.
- 12) Purchase Netflix for a month so someone in your family or a friend can watch special movies.
- 13) Share books you have already read with others.
- 14) Clean out closets and garages and bring items to a church, good-will, a community center.
- 15) Leave something special for the post person or garbage collector.



## Turning 18 Soon?

Dear Parents: Work through these **questions** with your student. Create an action plan. Establish goals on the transition plan at school. Ask Them:

Do you know what **type of housing** situation you want to be living in when you turn 18, 22 or 30?

- Will you live with your parents?
- Will you be living with some other type of caregiver in your family home or other type of home?
- Will you live alone or will you want roommates? How many? Male or female?
- What type of space will you need to feel comfortable and safe in your home?
- What type of transportation will you need to move around your community?

Do you know how much it will cost to live on your own or with others?

Well, it is time to create a **budget** to visually see what your costs could be?

- Will you have moving in costs and on-going costs? (moving, phone, electric, water, internet, garbage)
- Will you need to purchase furniture, kitchen equipment, towels, linens, bathroom supplies?
- Will you have to come up with first and last month's rent?
- Will the place require a security deposit?
- What will the rent be?
- What will your food costs look like?
- What cleaning products for the home will you need?
- Will the space have a washer or dryer or will you need to use a laundromat?
- Will you have transportation costs?
- What about medical insurance and medical and dental costs?
- Do not forget house maintenance (plumbers, electricians, yard up keep) costs?
- What will small tools cost to help you fix things around the home?
- What about entertainment costs? (movies, concerts, eating out)

**Remember**, once you move to independent living, it does not have to be forever. You can make a change. Your choice of housing may change as your needs and likes change. This is OK. So, continue to evaluate your living situation and what is or is not working.

## IT'S ALL In the ADVERTISEMENTS

**Build Verbal Expression and Comprehension right from your mail box or Sunday paper delivered.**

**Okay Parents**, how many of you are still getting advertisements at least twice a week in your mail box? Perhaps a few of you are getting the Sunday paper delivered. Well good news, you can use those items to increase your individual's, fine motor skills, reading, skills, communication skills and independent living skills.



**Ideas for building vocabulary, math, reading, planning and problem solving.**

- 1) Find the grapes in the ad? How much do they **cost**?
- 2) Find the meat? How much does it cost?
- 3) Let's make a **shopping** list. Let's cut out the pictures of the items we need, put them on a separate piece of paper and go shopping?
- 4) Let's **add up** all the costs of the items so we can make sure we take enough money with us.
- 5) Let's **plan** a meal from the pictures we see.
- 6) Does the pizza place deliver? Where is their phone number? What time can we call them?
- 7) Let's find and **underline** some words (in, on under, big, little, city, street, car, today)
- 8) Let's **cut** out some words and make a sentence or let's cut out the follow letters and make a word)



## WINDOW WASHING

### *Preparation for Reading and Independence*

Grab a plastic squirt bottle and add liquid, some paper towels or cloth and pick up a window wiper at ACE Hardware, The Dollar Store, CVS, or Rite Aid. Grab whatever glass cleaner you like and put all in a carry case for ease.

Teach your son or daughter how to squirt the plastic bottle. Start with water. Help them count each time they squirt. Have them aim at specific objects and spray that object 2, 4, 6 or 8 times.

Discuss the concept of dirty and clean. Show them dirty windows and then clean windows. Model for them. Then have them help you with the first step. Grab all items in the carry case and bring to the window.

Then add steps. Pick up spray bottle, squirt left to right, top to bottom. Put bottle down. This is how we read. Then add pick up window wiper. Start in left corner and move wiper from top to bottom, left to right. You could add a green DOT, (go) (paper, tape) in the left corner and a red dot (stop) in the bottom right corner of the window.

This same process can be done when wiping a table off. Squirt, left to right, top to bottom. Dry left to right, top to bottom.

