

Going to a Birthday Party



Avril Webster



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Illustrated by David Ryley

Dedication

This series of books is dedicated to Stephen and Christia, the children who inspired its creation.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank David Ryley, the artist for the series, whose talent, compassion and sense of humor is evident in all the illustrations.

I would also like to thank Stephen's speech & language therapist, his teachers and the mothers of his classmates for their contributions to these books.

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It is my friend's birthday.
I am invited to the birthday party.



We wrap the present
and write the birthday card.



I get dressed for the party.
I look nice!



Here we are at the party.

Hello from the Author

My name is Avril Webster and I am the author of this book. I am married to Robert and we have three children; Stephen, Michael and Rachel. Our eldest son Stephen has a moderate to severe intellectual disability (no specific diagnosis).

This book helps your child's:

- Confidence
- Self esteem
- Language development
- Communication skills

We feel passionately about including Stephen in our activities and everyday outings. Like many children with special needs, Stephen finds it difficult to cope with new experiences and changes to his routine.

We searched to find clear uncluttered books on everyday events, but we could not find any to suit Stephen's needs. With the help of teachers from Stephen's school, speech and language therapists and other mothers, I wrote this book and the other eleven in this series. (The list is on the back cover.)

Through Stephen's classmate Christia, I met the artist of the *Off We Go!* series, David Ryley. He has drawn the pictures for this book and also created the *Off We Go!* logo which features Stephen and Christia, the two special children that inspired the creation of these books!

We found that by preparing Stephen for an upcoming event or experience, he was not so scared and was able to get through it more easily. At the time of creating these books for Stephen, our daughter Rachel was at pre-school and we found they were helpful in explaining new events to her as well. Our other son, Michael was learning to read and he enjoyed reading the books independently.

We use this book in a number of ways:

- We read the book at home to prepare for the upcoming event/experience.
- We role play and play "let's pretend" games using practical items from the home alongside the book to practice what is going to happen.
- We bring the book to the actual event and read it as we go through the event/experience.

Some re-occurring features in all the books are:

- Twelve clear pictures in a sequence (as advised by speech and language therapists).
- The same multi-ethnic characters are used in all books so the reader gets to know them.
- Where relevant, I have used a clock symbol to show a period of waiting or time up.

While reading and actively using this book with all our children, we have found that we have not only enjoyed the intimacy and power of reading together, but it has also improved **communications skills, language development and the children's confidence and self-esteem.**

The words used in these books are based on the actual words we use in our home. The speech and language therapist advised using language that Stephen would hear regularly. I have specifically used practical words to describe everyday events to build vocabulary and support language development. Please change the words to the ones you would use in your home.

We use visual communication with Stephen all the time. We find using pictures essential for Stephen to understand what is happening. Thank you for choosing this book and I hope you enjoy the others in the series too! I hope it is as useful to you as it is in our family.

For more information please visit www.otb.ie/offwego

Best wishes,



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