

Priming and Modeling

Excerpt from *My Trip to Cancun* by Kelly Londenberg

Like many autistic adults, Kelly Londenberg finds comfort in rules and in structure, as these things provide predictability to her world. When things are unexpected or startling, she sometimes struggles. Traveling, which is one of Kelly's favorite pastimes, is full of unexpected or novel events. Without planning, this could turn a positive experience into a traumatic one.

Kelly routinely uses strategies in her life without ever calling them that. In her chapter, "My Trip to Cancún," Kelly describes being overwhelmed by dealing with the realities of Covid in a foreign place, but uses the techniques of **priming** and **modeling** to deal with them.

"Could I get on a plane with so many people? Could I tolerate wearing a mask for so many hours? What if I got sick in Cancun and could not go home? Is it responsible to go on vacation now?"

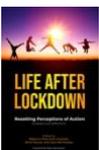
Priming means to prepare for an upcoming experience by discussing or visualizing what will happen. Just as priming an object with a base coat of paint ensures that the top coat will stick, priming behavior means that the person will have a solid base of expectations on which to build their experience.

I spoke with my friends and they answered some of my questions. They were all vaccinated and would not leave me alone in Cancun. They knew I had difficulty with changes in social rules and reassured me they would be there to help me navigate the novel situations."

Modeling occurs when an individual gets to observe another person doing something before trying it themselves. This can be done by watching in person or on a video.

"Before leaving the country we had to get tested for COVID. I stayed home most of the pandemic so I had not needed to do the COVID-19 test before that day. I did not know what to expect and was fearful of the process. Would the swab hurt? How long would it take? Would I catch COVID while my mask was off? Questions rushed through my mind once again, but I knew I had to do it to board the plane. Upon arrival, my friends helped me fill out the forms. They once again demonstrated the process and got the test before me so I could watch the process. Their support increased my confidence. When my turn approached, I sat down, pulled down my mask, and let them swab my nasal cavity. While the test was uncomfortable, I did it. I was proud."

Priming and modeling are unobtrusive and effective strategies that can allow a person to be more independent and to enjoy new experiences.



<https://www.amazon.com/Life-After-Lockdown-Reseting-Perceptions/dp/1956110038>