

Strategies for Teaching Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder- Using Evidenced Based-Practice

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Meet Clarissa Willis

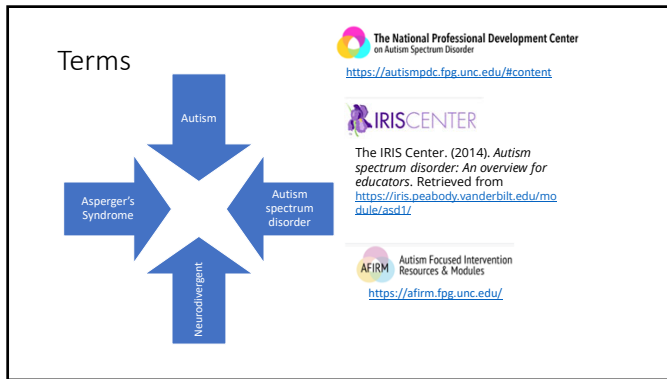
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What is autism?

- Complex biological disorder
- Chronic
- Developmental: Usually occurs before age 3*
- Umbrella definition

A child can be reliably identified as having ASD by 24 months of age; however, the average age of diagnosis of ASD in the United States is approximately 4½ years old. (CDC, 2021)

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Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Autism is considered to be a spectrum disorder because the characteristics range in severity and in type.
- They can be mild such as in the case of some children with Asperger's syndrome or quite severe.

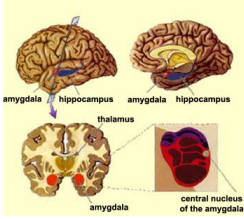
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Diagnosis

Medical Diagnosis	Educational Determination
• Made by a licensed physician or psychologist • Usually based on the criteria listed in the <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)</i> • Diagnosis: autism spectrum disorder	• Made by a multidisciplinary school team • Based on the regulations governing <i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA '04)</i> • Required to access educational services • Eligibility determination: autism

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A research moment

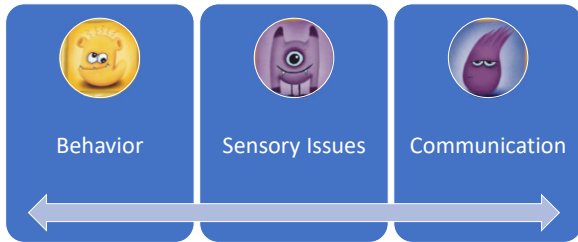


Amara D., Bauman M., and Schumann C. (2023). The amygdala and autism. *Genes, Brain, and Behaviour* 2(5) 295-302

“what does seem rather autism-specific is the finding of deficits or anomalies in the limbic system, largely the temporal and frontal cortices and the amygdala, with the latter known to play a major role in emotional arousal and in attributing significance to environmental events.”

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The Big Three



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Behavior



- Literal thinking
- Hand-flapping or hand-wringing (self-stimulation or self-modulation)
- Angry outbursts
- Lack of self-regulation skills
- Adherence to strict routines
- Time to calm down (NOT TIME OUT)

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Points to Keep in Mind

Some children who engage in non-socially motivated challenging behaviors could also be taught functional communicative alternatives.

It is essential to determine the function of the challenging behavior before attempting to teach a child an efficient communicative replacement.

If the teacher chooses to teach a communicative replacement, they must ensure that the communicative replacement serves the same function as the challenging behavior.

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Nothing is free!

- Children must ask or communicate what they want and need
- You are not now nor will you ever be a GAME SHOW HOST!

A cartoon illustration of a game show host and a contestant. The host, a man with a large mustache and a suit, is standing and gesturing towards the contestant. The contestant, a man with a large mustache and a suit, is sitting in a chair and gesturing back. A sign on the chair reads "THE SHADRACK ZUZ SHOW".

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What Is Meant by Challenging Behaviors?

"Behavior is the mirror in which everyone shows their image."- Goethe

Self-harm

Injury to others

Prevents acquisition of new skills

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Behavior Defined

What is Behavior?

1. Behavior serves two purposes: (1) to get something or (2) to avoid something.
2. All behavior is learned.
3. Behavior is an action that is observable and measurable.



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Traditional Strategies: *"You Act Therefore I React!"*

Reinforcing
alternative
behaviors

Extinction

Time out

Over-
correction

Satiation

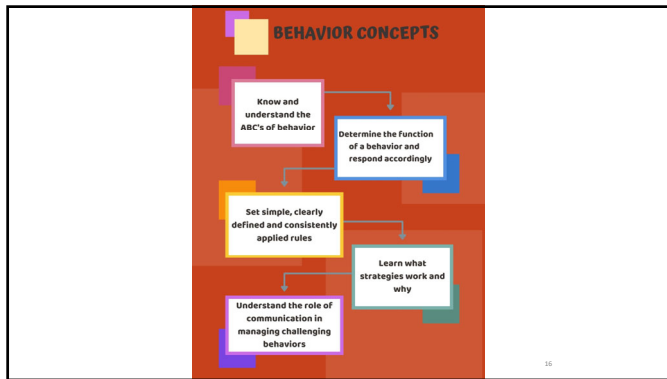
Punishment

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Antecedent Strategies:

- **Teacher** controls the opportunity not the child or the behavior.
- Less overall disruption and chaos.
- **Education:** New skills may be acquired in the absence of the frazzle that surrounds challenging behavior.
- Opportunities may be created that interrupt anticipatory chains associated with challenging behavior.

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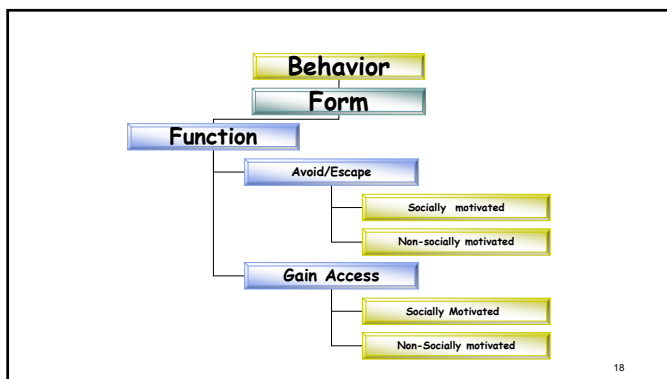


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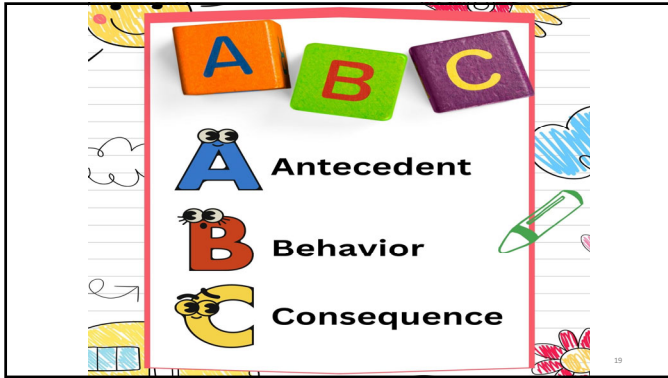
Setting Events

- Staff changes
- Medication change
- Slept more/fewer hours than usual
- Showed symptoms of illness
- Demand situations increased
- Chaotic environment
- Surprise visits
- Was agressed upon by a peer
- Temperature of environment too hot/cold
- Had to wait a long time for something desired

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Social Interaction

- Social interactions with other people, both physical (such as hugging or holding) and verbal (such as having a conversation).
- Children with ASDs do not interact with other people the way most children or they may not be in other people at all.
- Children with ASDs may make eye contact and want to be alone.



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Continued.....

- They may have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings.
- A child with an ASD may not like to be held or cuddled and may not form the usual attachments or bonds to other people.

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Communication

- 40 to 50% of children with ASD are non-verbal
- Effective communication is about sending/receiving messages
- Reason or function of communication
- Initiation is more likely a result of a strong desire/need
- Sign language will not impede verbal communication
- The desire to be alone is a strong motivator



One day, a big wolf came up to their door. They had heard stories of that trick before.

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Deciding When to Use a Communicative Replacement

- When a teacher chooses to replace the challenging behavior with a communicative alternative, there must be general agreement that the function of the behavior was acceptable but the form used to achieve the outcome is unacceptable.
- For example,



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About autism by a person with autism....

Autistic children don't deserve to be molded into someone they are not. They deserve to learn and grow, and feel comfortable about themselves. Their worlds can expand to include new experiences, and they can become teachers, opening others to their viewpoints.

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Tools that can be used to teach/learn about autism:

- Autobiographies: reading and writing (e.g., books, portfolios)
- Having conversations about autism, giving students information, asking students to provide information
- Giving students opportunities to educate classmates about autism
- Asking students with labels to create educational products for teachers/students (videotapes, tip sheets)

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Social Secrets

- You can call the teacher names but only in private.
- When people say “How are you?” in the hallway, they don’t really want to know. Just say “Fine.”
- If you need a break, you can say, “May I use the bathroom?” You can do this even if you don’t need to use the bathroom.

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Aspects of Communication

Communication	Definition	Example
Form	A way to communicate	Crying, talking, gestures, sign language, pointing to picture cards
Function	A reason to communicate	Hungry, want something, need something or someone, need attention
Content	Something to communicate about	The child needs experiences and opportunities to explore, so that he will have something to communicate about

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2. Going to the movies

- *Going to the movies* means that when a child repeats a phrase from a movie or television show the teacher tries to identify if the child is using that phrase to communicate a message.
- Once the teacher has figured out what the phrase means to the child, she can make a key for others to follow. For example, Dusty, uses the phrase, "Beam me up Scotty!" when he is frightened because, to him, it means, "I'm scared and don't understand what to do next."

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Whisper

- Finally, the work of Gail Gillingham has suggested that some children with echolalia respond better when the person who is talking with them whispers.
- The idea is that the listener becomes occupied with trying to hear the speaker and doesn't respond with echolalia.

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Why Do Children With Autism Have So Much Trouble Communicating?

- Effective communication is more than just sending and receiving messages.
- It requires that one person, either the sender or the receiver of the message, interact with the other person.
- Actually, in order for the interaction to be successful, the other person must reciprocate in some way.

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Why they communicate?

- In initiating an exchange of a message or information, the sender must be willing to approach the person she will be communicating with.
- Even though the child with autism may be able to answer a direct question or make a statement about what she wants, starting a conversation is especially difficult.
- In fact, a child with autism will more likely initiate a communication when she wants or needs something. It is less likely she will initiate communication simply for the sake of a social interaction.

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A child will communicate when

- he is able to attend to what is being said.
- he is able to understand what is said
- he experiences the responsiveness of others to his attempts at communication.
- he has a reason to communicate.
- He is motivated.
- Look for reasons why he might or might not communicate.
- Learn to recognize that children with autism do not communicate in the same way as their peers.

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Egocentric

1. "Nothing is free" – Require the child to show you what he wants by pointing, gesturing, or using sign language.
2. Play simple games that involve taking turns, like rolling a ball back and forth. Verbalize what you are doing. Say, "It is my turn" and point to yourself, then say, "It is your turn" and point to the child.
3. Consistently respond to every communication attempt, even if it is unintentional. Verbalize what the child is doing.

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Requesting

1. Play a game or start an activity. Then, stop and try to get the child to request "more," either by moving his body or looking at you.
2. When the child pulls you toward something or points to a desired object, respond. Then, verbalize what he wanted and say the name of the object.
3. Describe everything the child does. Remember to use simple sentences.
4. Children with ASD often respond poorly to continuous talk. They are under-responsive to verbal stimuli. Provide a model. Say it from the child's point of view. Wait expectantly, and show rather than say often.

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Emerging Communication

1. Continue to play games that involve taking-turns. But, encourage the child to play with other children.
2. Provide an exact model of what you want the child to say and do.
3. Respond to any situations where the child initiates a communication interaction.
4. Build on the child's expanding vocabulary, by giving him experiences that will help him develop new words.
5. If the child is using pictures to communicate, try to encourage him to use words, too.

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Reciprocal Communication

1. Set up classroom situations that encourage conversation.
2. Throughout all stages, the environment plays a major role in helping children interact.
3. Play games where you practice the rules of conversation such as starting, stopping, and waiting for a turn.
4. Help the child use communication for more than just simple requests. Talk about communicating feelings or opinions.
5. Ask other children in the classroom to be peer buddies and talk with the child.

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Sensory Processing Issues

- All children with ASD have sensory processing issues
- All children with SPD do not have ASD
- Sensory Seeker vs Sensory Avoiders
- Strategies must include a sensory processing component
- Sensory processing issues vary
- Think about sensory sensitive ways to change the environment

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Sensory Integration

- Organization of sensation for use
- Organizing information coming in from the senses: visual, tactile, auditory, vestibular, and proprioceptive to make an adaptive response.

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Naturalistic Interventions

- Friendship Activities
- Incidental Teaching of Social Behaviors
- Developmentally appropriate practices
- Peer/Buddy systems
- Natural consequences
- Communication needs
- Adaptations
- Behavior Issues



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Sensory Integration



- Organization of sensation for use
- Organizing information coming in from the senses: visual, tactile, auditory, vestibular and proprioceptive to make an adaptive response.

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Characteristics of Children with SPD

1. Overly sensitive to touch, movement, sights or sounds:
 - Sensory Modulation Dysfunction with Hyperresponsive Behaviors
2. Underreactive to sensory stimulation:
 - SMD with Hyporesponsive Behaviors

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Characteristics of Children with SPD

3. Activity level that is unusually high or low
4. Coordination problems:
 - gross motor
 - fine motor

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Characteristics of Children with SPD

5. Delays in speech, language, motor skills, or academic achievement.
6. Poor organization of behavior
7. Poor self-concept

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Calmers and Organizers

- Surviving Sitting: Successful Circle Time
- Concentration Station Lane
- Wearable Calmers: Dress for Sensory Success!
- Visual Calmers

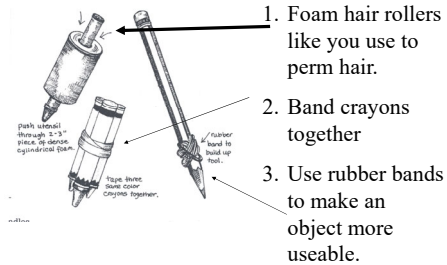
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Who needs a chewy?

- Frequently used in two situations
 - Individuals who need to use chewing to calm or refocus
 - Individuals with speech or eating-related disorders that need to make muscles stronger.
- How do you know which chewy to select?
 - Choose one that the child will USE!
 - Choose one that reaches the muscles in the back of the mouth.
 - Safety first.

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Built up tool handles



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Body Readiness

- Heavy Work Calmers
- Move to Learn
- Transition Time

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Resources

- Building Bridges Through SI
- Out of Sync Child
- Teacher's Ask About SI
- Henry OT Services

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ITSY BITSY
SPIDER
AWARD

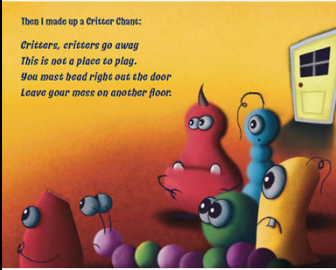
For trying to _____

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Strategy One

Pairing hand-flapping with a preferred activity
Gentle reduction of time spent
Ultimate reduction in hand-flapping

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Strategy 2-Rhymes

When someone tries to bully you
 Don't stand there until it's through
 Find a teacher or adult friend,
 They can make the teasing end!
 Defend yourself with what you say,
 Then turn your back and walk away.

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Strategy 3 Making New Friends

- **Objective:** The child learns how to meet new people.
- **Materials needed:** Cardstock or heavy paper; pencils, markers, or a picture meaning stop; a picture of the child; and clear contact paper or laminating machine.
- **When to use this strategy:** This strategy can be used to encourage the child to make a new friend.

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What to do? (Strategy)




Step 1: Make a cue card with two cues Have one for the child's name and one to remind him to wait for the other person to respond. Laminate the cue card, if possible.

Step 2: Explain to the child that the cue card will help him know what to do when he meets someone new.

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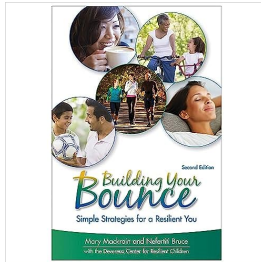
Challenges-

- What not to do-
 - Punish the child
 - Use too many words children don't understand-
 - Negative responses
 - Let yourself get overwhelmed

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Get Support

- Building your own bounce
- Routines are comforting



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Autism Focused Intervention
Resources & Modules

<https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/node/137>

Autism Spectrum Disorder Fact Sheet

<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/autism-spectrum-disorder-fact-sheet>



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>



<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

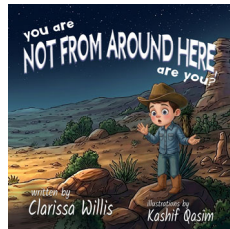
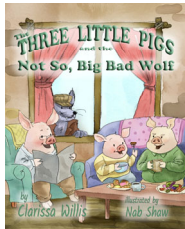
- Look for evidence-based strategies
- Listen to the people who live in your head
- Questions?

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I am special, I am unique.
I may not hear or even speak.
But I can learn, and I can do
Just how much depends on you.

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- Thank you for coming today. I hope you learned something you could take home. Remember, for free resources including.....this handout go to:
- Clarissawillis.com/handouts

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