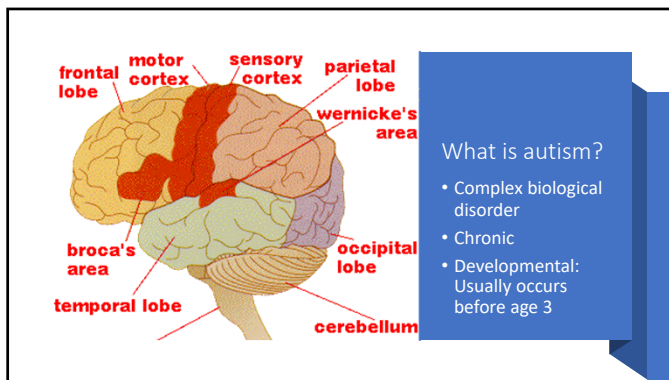


Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Strategies that Work!
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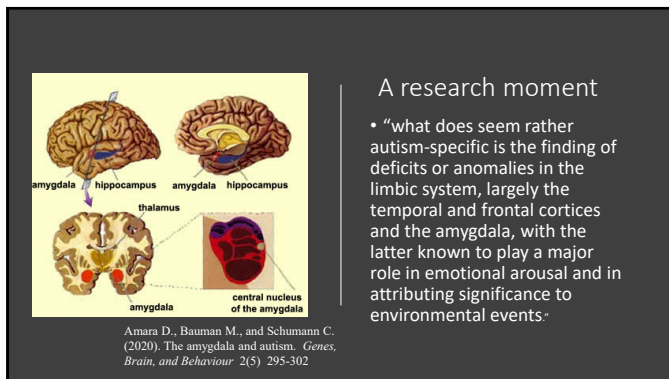
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What is autism?

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

2



A research moment

- "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."

Amara D., Bauman M., and Schumann C. (2020). The amygdala and autism. *Genes, Brain, and Behaviour* 2(5) 295-302

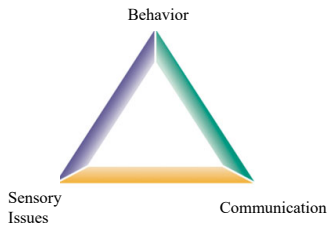
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- Autism is considered to be a spectrum disorder because the characteristics range in severity and in type.
- They can be mild such as in the case of some children with Asperger's Syndrome or quite severe.



4

Triad



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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 do, or they may not be interested in other people at all.
- Children with ASDs may not make eye contact and may just want to be alone.
- 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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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.

8



Stages of Communication

1. "It's all about me" – Egocentric Stage
2. "I want it" – Requesting Stage
3. Actions and reactions – Emerging Communication Stage
4. Two-way street – Reciprocal Communication Stage

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All About Me!

- **Objective:** To enable the child with autism to feel part of your class and to help his classmates get to know all about him and his family.
- **Materials needed:** Pictures and information about the child, ribbon, paper, or other materials to decorate a bulletin board.
- **When to use this strategy:** When you want to help the children in your class get to know more about the child with autism. This strategy also helps the child with autism feel special and valued.

10





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?

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.

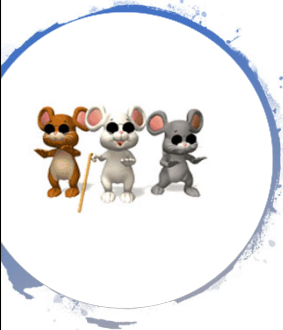
Step 2: Explain to the child that the cue card will help him know what to do when he meets someone new.

12



- **Objective:** To greet the child with autism and start the day out on a positive note.
- **Materials needed:** Picture schedule
- **When to use this strategy:** When the child first arrives in the morning. Remember, sometimes the child may arrive upset and needs a few minutes in the quiet area before the day begins.
- **What to do?**
 - Step 1: Start every day with the same routine. It is important that you use the same words and phrases each day. You might try something like, "Good morning _ _ _." Wait to see if the child responds. "Let's check and see what we do first."
 - Step 2: Either kneel down to eye level and show the child a picture schedule of what you want him to do, or, if you wearing a **picture apron**
 - Step 3: If the child does not respond to a spoken welcome, he may respond to a song. Try the following, sung to the tune of *Three Blind Mice* (first verse).

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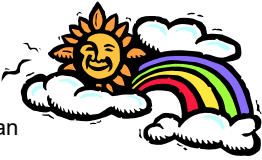
Welcome Song (sung to the tune of *Three Visually Challenged Mice*)

Hello ____ (child's name)
 Hello ____ (child's name)
 I'm glad you're here.
 I'm glad you're here.
 Let's put your things away and find out what to do today. I'm glad you're here! I'm glad you're here!

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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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Hands at Home



Objective: The child learns a strategy to keep her hands at *home*, therefore reducing stereotypical behaviors such as hand-flapping and hand-wringing.

Materials needed: Paper, scissors, glue, laminator, string or yarn, and hole-punch.

When to use this strategy: When you want the child to attend to what you are saying and during times of transition. This strategy is particularly effective when you are moving the child from one setting to another. This strategy is least effective when the child has already become so stressed he is tensing his body and preparing for an outburst.

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The Top "10" Things Teachers Should Know about Autism Spectrum Disorder

- 1. Autism is a spectrum disorder:** Children with autism display a range of behaviors and abilities from very mild to quite severe. In other words, the word autism can describe a child who fits anywhere within that range.
- 2. Always use 'child-first' language or people-first language, when describing the child:** The child in your classroom with autism is just that – a child with autism and not an autistic child. People-first and, in this case, 'child-first' language helps others see that you view the child first and the disability second.
- 3. Focus on the child's interests:** When trying to encourage a child with autism to play, focus on the interests of the child and make interactions with others as natural as possible.

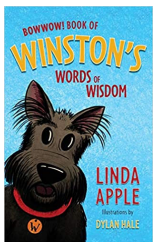
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- 4. Novel situations can be overwhelming:** Recognize that children with autism may have difficulty adjusting to new play situations and new play materials.
- 5. The environment is important:** Children with autism need a special place in the room where they can go without distraction and without all the sensory input they receive elsewhere.
- 6. Social skills training should begin early:** Learning how to respond in social situations should begin as early as possible. It is a critical skill for children to possess and enables them to interact with others more easily.

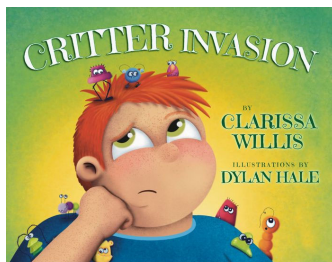
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- 7. View parents as partners:** Parents often agree that the one thing a teacher can do to understand their perspective is to be respectful of their opinions and treat them as valued contributors.
- 8. Value the uniqueness of each child:** Each child is unique, and while she may have characteristics typical of other children with autism, she will have other characteristics that are not.
- 9. There is no one single method that works:** There is no magic pill or specific program that can *cure* or *fix* autism. While many programs and methods have been tried and are successful with some children, they may not be successful with others. Look for methods with a solid research base.
- 10. Learning about autism is a process:** Learning about autism is not about a product; it is about a process of gathering information and making informed choices, based on the needs of the individual child.

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Winstonswisdom.com



Both of these are excellent resources for children with anxiety and to help children with autism face real world problems.

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