

Introduction

Tools For Building Social Success

ASD Children and Social Communication

- The Language of Social Success
- In this short presentation we will learn some strategies and tools for learning relationship and social skills
- Story for audience

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Agenda

- Listening and Understanding
- Emotional Reciprocity
- Rules of the game
- “Getting Out of a Fix”
- Problem Solving
- Humour and lowering stress

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In Their Own World

- With an ASD child there appears to be something different about listening and understanding. It is almost as if there is no recognition that you are in the same room.
There is an unseen barrier which divides you from each other.
This doesn't mean that communication with an Asperger's or ASD child does not occur. It does but it is very different. You may know the symptoms from the DSM-IV:

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DSM – IV Criteria

- Impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviours.
- A lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests or achievements with others.
- Lack of social or emotional reciprocity.
- Encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of behaviour that is abnormal.
- Inflexible adherence to specific non functional routines or rituals.
- Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms.

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Implications of Diagnosis

- These symptoms form the disorder known as Asperger's. To many people who are unaware of this they will assume that the child is:
Rude, cold or indifferent, aloof, out of it, odd looking, inattentive anxious, withdrawn.

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Communicating

- The same language that you share with every other person you meet each and every day - clear, empathic, compassionate, caring language in easily understood vocabulary.
- Believing that the child may be listening even if their body communicates otherwise. Do not personalize their seeming indifference.

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Communicating

- Acceptance that their reality, without harming self or others, is acceptable.
- Listening for the presence of other problems – depression, severe aggression, anxiety. Asperger's children are no different than the rest of us, in that we can all experience multiple or concomitant health problems.

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Emotional Reciprocity

- Building the “give and take” skills of relationships can be difficult when a child may seem to give us the message that “I can take you or leave you”
- May seem to be extremely egocentric; focusing on own needs and concerns and seems unaware of those of others
- Can often talk “at” people instead of to them

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Emotional Reciprocity

- Practise social scripting before entering a learning opportunity at home, in community, visiting museums, anywhere you can!
- Concrete rewards are very helpful in building the goodwill in the friendship
- Foster the connection of the concrete reward with the “feeling of belonging, being helpful, being loved, and being liked

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Connecting the dots

- Misinterpreting social cues and misunderstanding facial expressions and body language can cause problems
- Verbalizing the “emotional transaction” can lay the groundwork for the unwritten social cues that most of us pick up without effort
- Review, reassess, rehearse for next time

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Social Story – Going Places at School

- At school we do not sit at our desks all day long. We go to a number of other places, both inside and outside the building
- Some of the places we go are: Specials, to the cafeteria, out for recess and to and from our buses
- Most of the time, when we go from place to place in school, the students are in a line.
- Students stand in line stand pretty close to each other
- When I am getting in line, it is important not to run into other students

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Going Places at School cont...

- When I am standing in line, it is important to be careful so that I do not bump, hit or poke other students
- When I am in places such as the classroom, the hallway, or at recess, it is important to be careful so that I do not bump, hit, or poke other students
- If I run into other students, or bump, hit, or poke them, they will not be safe, and neither will I
- Someone could get hurt

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At School cont.....

- Also, if I run into other students, or bump, hit or poke them, my classmates might get upset with me because I am not being careful and considerate
 - Being careful and considerate when I go from place to place with my classmates is a safe way to behave
 - My classmates, my teachers, and my parents will be happy that I am acting in such a responsible way
- Taken from "Asperger Syndrome and Your Child" by Michael D. Powers Psy.D

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Scripting

- Practicing what we say and how we say it in everyday social situations
- English language learning courses are excellent resources
- Practise social scripting before entering a learning opportunity at home, in community, visiting museums, anywhere you can!

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Rules of the Game

- "Just because you told him, don't expect he learned it; just because he learned it, don't expect he can generalize it."
- We all know that the social/relationship rules of life are not black and white
- For example, if I am familiar with someone, I may stand closer to them but it depends on other factors as well

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Getting Out of a Fix

- Try to stay calm and de-escalate the situation
- Don't try to have a discussion or analysis during the episode because the child is unlikely to be able to absorb much useful information while he is so upset
- After things calm down – REVIEW, REASSESS, REHEARSE
- If age appropriate conduct a social autopsy and perhaps work on the incident as a Social Story

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Problem Solving

- It is very important that we reinforce the "problematic" nature of incidents, not that the child is the problem
- Use Social Autopsies developed by Richard LaVoie – conducted as investigations, not punishments
- After a problematic social encounter, the child meets with a teacher or parent and talks over what happened and what the result was

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Social Autopsies

- What happened?
- What was the social error?
- Who was hurt by the social error?
- What should be done to correct the error?
- What could be done next time?

Humour and Lowering Stress

- Sometimes children with ASD have a difficult time finding the humour in their mistakes, or other finding it humorous
- Sarcasm is likely to be a very difficult concept for the child to grasp
- Plays on words, idioms, ie., “ Cat got your tongue?”, and ambiguous language can be a challenge to understand

Humour and Lowering Stress

- Concrete explanations work well
- For example, “We laugh at ourselves when we make mistakes, everybody makes mistakes.”
- Or in the context of peers, “Gentle teasing of friends is what we do when we are friends, let’s practice some gentle teasing.”
- Laugh at yourself! It can be an excellent way to model behaviour!

Resources

- “Teaching Your Child The Language of Social Success” by Marshall P.Duke Ph.D
- “Asperger Syndrome and Your Child” by Michael D. Powers Psy.D
- “Pretending to be Normal: Living with Asperger’s Syndrome and Asperger Syndrome in the Family: Redefining Normal” by Liane holiday Willey Ed.D