

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

1. Five categories
 - Autism
 - Asperger's Syndrome
 - Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
 - Rhetts's Syndrome
 - PDD-NOS

2. Diagnosis: DSM-IV criteria
 - Social interaction
 - Communication
 - Restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities

3. Is neurologically and developmentally based
 - Not result of poor parenting
 - Causes of behavior are not the same as those of typical children

4. What are the areas of weakness?
 - Literal thinkers – “black and white”
 - Executive function deficit – planning, organizing, prioritizing
 - Gestalt – seeing the big picture
 - Sensory issues
 - Reading Non-verbal language
 - Perspective taking – “Theory of the Mind”
 - Generalizing – applying what has been learned to new situations
 - Processing auditory information
 - “Thinking with your eyes”

5. Will have problems with:
 - Social interactions – initiating, maintaining
 - Adjusting to changes in routine, environment, unexpected events
 - Understanding and labeling emotions, i.e. empathy
 - Understanding another person's point of view
 - Understanding the perspective of others – “being in someone else's shoes”
 - Understanding how their behavior impacts how others think and feel
 - Waiting and turn taking
 - Becoming over stimulated resulting in meltdowns
 - Problem solving
 - Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information

6. ASD interferences with communication, social skills, and behavior

7. Interventions

- Sensory Diet
- Visual schedules
- Key chains
- Social stories
- Cartooning
- Lunch bunch
- Circle of Friends
- Social thinking play groups
- 5 Scale emotions chart

What Is

Autism Spectrum Disorder

DSM IV
Pervasive Developmental Disorders

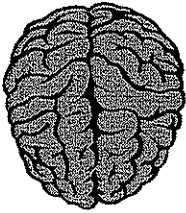
Autism
Asperger's Syndrome
Childhood Disintegrative Disorders
Rett's Syndrome
Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not
Otherwise Specified

Number of Students ASD within JESSE

- December 2000 – 26 students
- December 2001 – 39 students
- December 2002 – 46 students
- December 2003 – 52 students
- December 2004 – 66 students
- December 2005 - 74 students
- October 2006 – 87 students
- December 1, 2006 – 92 students

Autism typically affects the way information is:

- *Processed*
- *Integrated*
- *Organized*



What is it?

- Neurological Based
- Lifelong Disability
- Repetitive Behaviors
- Restricted Patterns Of Interest
- Affects 1 in 150 children
- Affects Boys More Often Than Girls 4:1

Autism Spectrum Disorder Is:

- A developmental disability that significantly impacts
 - Verbal communication
 - Non verbal communication
 - Social interaction
 - Educational performance
 - Functional life skills

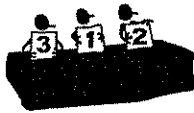
Cognitive Characteristics

- Difficulty with auditory processing
- Difficulty generalizing learned skills
- Cognitive Inflexibility



Cognitive Characteristic (continued)


- Strong rote memory
- Difficulty sequencing and organizing
- Splinter skills



Cognitive (continued)


- Perfectionism and Anxiety
- Cognitive and sensory distractibility
- Weak independent work skills
- Focus on details without seeing the larger picture






Characteristics of Communication (expressive)

- Atypical language development
- Difficulty with social language despite normal expressive language
- Atypical voice quality
- Repetitive language



Characteristics of Autism include impairments in

- Communication skills
- Social interactions
- Sensory integration
- Patterns of behaviors



Information has equal relevance

- ❖ The teacher's red sweater may be more important than what the teacher says.
- ❖ The bug in the corner of the classroom has the same relevance as school work.

Communication (receptive)

- *Literal understanding of language*
- *Limited non-verbal skills*
- *Does not grasp understanding of sarcasm, idioms, and words with double meanings*




Characteristics of Social behaviors

- *Limited eye contact*
- *Prefers limited or no social interaction*
- *Difficulty initiating social interactions*
- *Difficulty understanding social purpose*
- *Difficulty establishing friends*
- *Prefers objects to people*



Patterns of Behavior

- *Enjoys repetitive activities*
- *Does not understand point of view of others*
- *Difficulty with changes in routine*
- *Preoccupation with certain topics or interest, objects, activities or people*

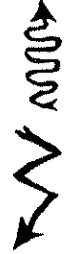


Learning Style

- Difficulty with cause and effect
- Unable to organize
- Visual

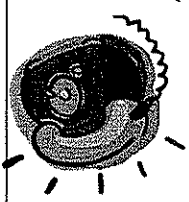
Responses to sensory information can be:

- Hyper
- Hypo



Atypical responses to sensory input

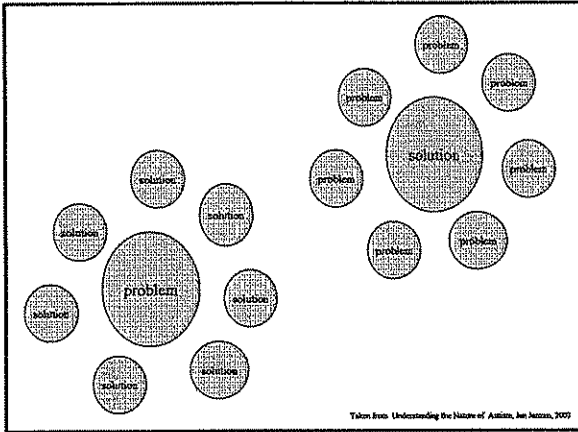
- Sound
- Taste
- Touch
- Visual information
- smell
- Kinesthetic input
- Proprioceptive input



Learning Style (continued)

- Focus of attention is narrow and obsessive
– unable to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information
- Difficulty problem solving





Taken from: Understanding the Nature of Autism, Ian Jaeken, 2007

Learning Style (continued)

- Memory may be episodic
- Perception may be atypical
- Poor independent work skills



Theory Of Mind

- Inability To Understand That Other People Have Ideas, Plans, Thoughts and Points Of View
- Inability To Understand Other People's Beliefs, Attitudes and Emotions
- Poor Ability To Comprehend When Others Do Not Understand Information Or Questions

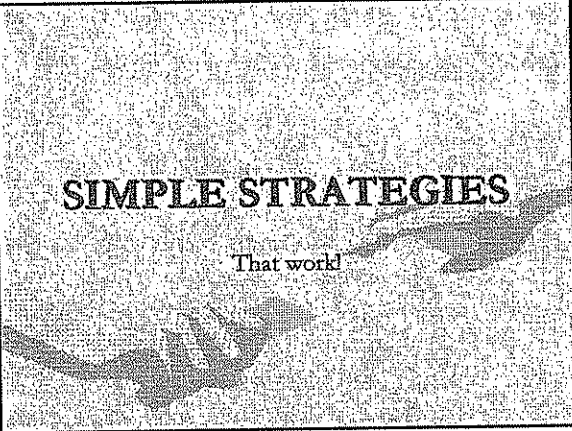
Strengths

- Visual Skills
- Routines
- Mechanical Skills
- Exceptional Skills in Specific Areas
- Cognitive Skills

Asperger's Syndrome

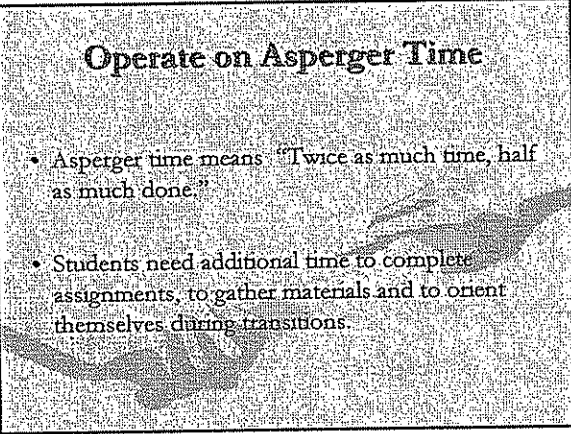
- Neurodevelopmental disorder that shares many of the same symptoms as autism
- Hans Asperger in Europe
- "Invisible Disability"
- Poor Executive Functions

SIMPLE STRATEGIES
That work!



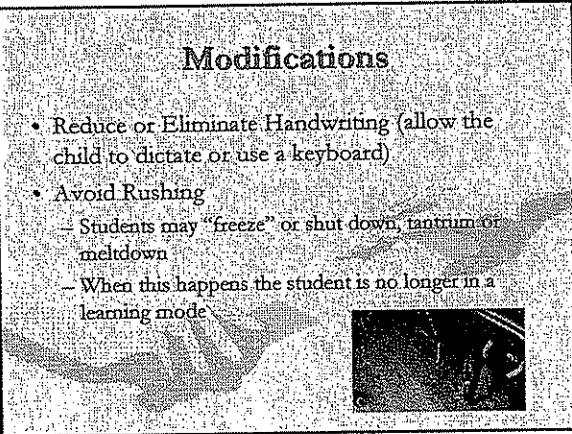
Operate on Asperger Time


- Asperger time means "Twice as much time, half as much done."
- Students need additional time to complete assignments, to gather materials and to orient themselves during transitions.



Modifications

- Reduce or Eliminate Handwriting (allow the child to dictate or use a keyboard)
- Avoid Rushing
 - Students may "freeze" or shut down, tantrum or meltdown
 - When this happens the student is no longer in a learning mode





Results of Stress

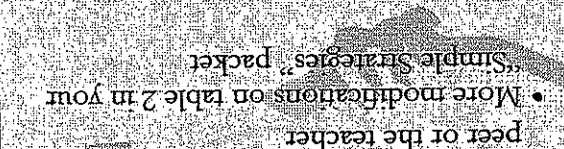
- Lower academic performance
- Decreased attention to task
- Potential increases in behavior problems



Manage The Environment

STRESS AND ANXIETY

- Inability or difficulty managing the environment due to poor sequencing skills, organizational and planning skills causes
- Resulting in lower academic and social performance




- Reduce the number of problems on a page
- Change short-answer questions to true/false or multiple-choice questions
- Have the child dictate answers to a peer or the teacher
- More modifications on table 2 in your "Simple Strategies" packet




To help:

- Teach routines for all activities that occur consistently in school (table 3 in packet)
- Provide a visual cue for all routines as a back up
- Prepare for Change




Any changes no matter how small they seem to others can be a BIG change to a student on the spectrum



- Prepare the child for changes in advance by using a social narrative on change or using a change card.


Time Away or When to use the sensory room

- A safe place, home base, or cool zone is an identified place within the classroom or another location within the school where the student can go to calm down and regroup. This is a positive intervention in which the goal is for the student to eventually be able to recognize when he is over-whelmed and be able to remove himself from the situation, self-calm and return ready to work. It is not to be confused with time-out.



Time away

- A safe place, home base, or cool zone is an identified place within the classroom or another location within the school where the student can go to calm down or regroup.
- Here at Riverside we have a sensory room.



- Incorporate the student's preferences into assignments and school work
- Build in sensory time
- Build in relaxation time or "time away"

Balancing the agenda

- Think of students on the spectrum as having a limited amount of energy reserve.
- That reserve varies from day to day
- Varies from activity to activity (It takes more energy to listen to the teacher than read a high interest book)

Strategies for Balancing The Agenda

- Engage the child in familiar or calming activity early in the school day to prepare for work.
- Incorporate special interests into assignments
- Alternate difficult and less difficult tasks/ alternate preferred and no preferred tasks
- Make occupational therapy-prescribed de-stressing, alerting and calming activities available throughout the day (Table 5)

Share The Agenda

- Children with ASD cannot predict
- Not comfortable "going with the flow"
- Unpredictable activities and people easily cause anxiety which leads to problem behavior and lower performance

Set A Calm Tone


- Many on the spectrum live with a high level of anxiety and can easily pick up on others anxiety.
- Use a calm voice when speaking
- Give facts in an unemotional tone of voice
- Use logical sequences (Asperger children have their set of logic)

Simplify Language

- Comprehension Not Guaranteed
- Watch for Literalness
- Say what you mean and mean what you say
- Don't use idioms and sarcasm
- Teach what the "Hidden Curriculum Means"

Use visual supports to

- List teacher expectations
- Schedule activities/schedule changes
- Homework and assignments/ test reminders
- Schedule changes
- Cue to sensory room



Live Out Loud

- Living Out Loud is a problem solving strategy to facilitate problem solving.
 - Verbalize your actions
 - Model how you would solve the problem



Be Generous With Praise

- Many students with autism/aspergers have low self-esteem and limited self-confidence.
- Afraid to take Risks
- Provide specific praise and on going praise

Listen To The Words

- At times a manner in which a student on the spectrum convey a message may not indicate significance. Many times the student will use a monotone voice with little facial expression to discuss and item of importance or urgency.
- Listen interpret what the student is saying literally and probe.

Autism Spectrum Disorder
does not prevent learning

People with autism have a *different* way of understanding and learning.

Students with Autism and Aspergers live in a world that is often puzzling and unpredictable to them, therefore life is stressful.

- They need support that will foster success and independence

Provide Reassurance

- Become anxious when they do not know what to do
- Tend not to ask questions when uncertain
- Break tasks into segments and communicate how long each task is expected to take
- Teach nonliteral language ("just a second")
- Provide visual cues

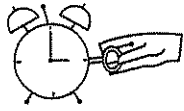
SIMPLE
STRATEGIES
THAT WORK!

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS WITH AS/HA

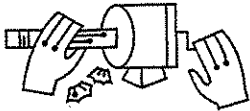
Table 1

- Impairments in social understanding & social skills
- Sensory issues (personal space, sounds/noises, movement, tactile, taste, smell, light, temperature)
- Often interact more successfully with adults or younger children than same-aged peers
- Difficulty establishing and maintaining friendships with peers
- Difficulty understanding and using body language (i.e., eye gaze, gestures, and facial expression)
- Expressive skills often mask comprehension problems
- May "parrot" back information without comprehending the content
- Often fail to seek clarification
- Interpret language literally
- Difficulty in understanding & discussing feelings
- Often show limited interest in others
- Strong preference for sameness
- Excessive time & energy devoted to special interests
- Attention challenges
- Poor organizational skills
- Difficulty regulating their emotions
- Poor handwriting
- Impaired gross-motor skills

SIMPLE STRATEGIES THAT WORK



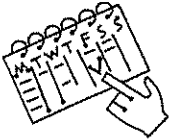
1. Operate on Asperger Time



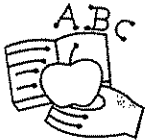
2. Manage the Environment



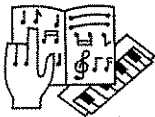
3. Create a Balanced Agenda That Conserves Energy



4. Share the Agenda



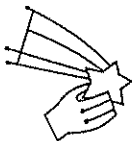
5. Simplify Language



6. Set a Calm, Positive Tone



7. Live Out Loud



8. Be Generous With Praise



9. Listen to the Words



10. Provide Reassurance