Asperger Syndrome: Teaching Strategies and Social Language Groups

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What’s In A Name?

- Asperger Syndrome
- High Functioning Autism
- Nonverbal Language Disorder
- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Semantic Pragmatic Disorder
- Hyperlexia
- Auditory Processing Disorder
Definition of Asperger Syndrome

• Language, self-care skills and adaptive behavior and curiosity about environment show normal development up to 3 years of age.

• Qualitative abnormality in reciprocal social interaction and circumscribed interests and repetitive, stereotyped patterns of activities.
In Summary

- They do not know what to say
- Rule and routine bound
- Want things their way
- Perfectionist
- Have narrow interests
- Anxiety increases quickly
- They are smart
- Uncoordinated
- Sensory Issues
Evaluation

• Academic Skills
• Social and Play Skills
• Speech and Language Skills
• Motor and Sensory Skills
• Medical Evaluation
Academic Evaluation

- Organization skills are weak
- Knowledge based subjects may be a strength
- Math may or may not be weak
- Clumsy
- Handwriting is often poor
- Writing creative sentences is difficult.
Classroom Accommodations

From

ASPERGER SYNDROME AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

BY SUSAN THOMPSON MOORE
Communicate with Staff

Classroom Assistants are Terrific!

*Training is the key!*

*Prepare them to work with an autistic student.*
3-Ring Binder

1. Students with AS need more time than other students to learn how to keep track of work, due dates, notes, etc.

2. Put the following in the binder: Assignment Notebook, Take-Home folder, Give to the Teacher folder, Homework folder, Extra’s pocket, labels, reinforcements, paper.

3. Take to school and home every day!
The Assignment Notebook

1. Keeps the student organized
2. Informs parents
3. Teaches responsibility
4. Establishes a routine
5. Provides for planning ahead
6. Notifies of schedule changes
7. Everyone checks it!!!!!
Homework

- Busy work
- Purpose
- Amount
- Written directions
- Check for understanding
- Divide into sections
Tests

See directions prior to test date

Look at test before test day

PRACTICE!!!

Matching, Multiple Choice, True-False, Fill-in-the-Blank, Essay, Recall
Tests
Preparation, Preparation, Preparation

• Teacher-provided outline
• List of topics and terms
• Copy of test
• Practice test
• Nothing NEW!
• Multiple choice
• No Fill-in or T/F
• Oral exams
Handwriting

1. Print
2. Reduce emphasis on neatness
3. Try *Handwriting Without Tears* program
4. Ability to formulate ideas and transfer to written form may be impaired
5. The best way to assess your child’s actual knowledge of a subject or proficiency in self-expression may be to write for him/her or use assistive technology
Writing is difficult

- Fine motor problems and difficulty creating language make writing creative sentences difficult
- Use Assistive Technology
  1. Be his secretary
  2. Use tape recorders or computers
  3. Alphasmart
  4. Co Writer
  5. Write: Out Loud
  6. Voice activated problems
Cut & Enlarge

1. Enlarge worksheets
2. Cut into sections
3. Attach to graph paper
4. Don’t do all at once
Follow-Up!

Phone calls or Email
Take Home Folder
Team Meetings
Lunch with the Teacher
Frequent Checks
Home-School Communication

- Communication Notebook
- Picture Charts
- Support Services
- Change in Routine Notification
Speech and Language Evaluation

• Pragmatics
• Language skills-syntax and vocabulary
• Speech-articulation, voice and fluency
Pragmatic Disorder

• Lack of understanding about the reciprocity of verbal and nonverbal communication
• Decreased understanding and use of gestures
• Decreased use of questions
• Difficulty maintaining a conversation
Tests

- Test of Pragmatic Language
- Test of Problem Solving
Language Disorder

• Sometimes language learning is precocious
• There must be words by 2 years and phrases by 3 years
• Style of learning language may be like an autistic child: echolalia, difficulty learning pronouns, difficulty understanding verbal explanations
Tests

• Preschool Language Scale-4
• Clinical Evaluation of Language
• The Test of Language Development
• Expressive One Word Vocabulary Test
• Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
Language Test Scores Show an Unusual Profile

- Highest scores are in expressive vocabulary,
- Next highest are in receptive vocabulary,
- Next are in grammatical structures,
- Often below average are tests of problem solving,
- Lowest area is in pragmatic language skills.
Difficult with Higher Level Language Functions

- Understanding idioms, figurative language
- Understanding sarcasm
- Understanding what is being asked in When, Why, How, What if questions.
- Understanding verbal explanations.
Speech Disorders

- Often there is a prosody difference in the melody and intonation and pitch
- Articulation disorders – same as in all children
- Fluency – same as in all children
Do Speech Therapy If the child with Asperger Syndrome:

• Has low language scores.
• Does not understand what is being asked by “where,” “who,” and “when.”
• Has difficulty carrying on a reciprocal conversation.
Effective Strategies to Teach Higher Level Language Skills

- Traditional language therapy to teach specific language skills including questions, pronouns, and direction concepts.
- Use Fast ForWord to speed up auditory processing.
- Use materials such as Linguisystems to teach idioms, problem solving, etc.
Effective Strategies to Teach Pragmatic Language

- Social Language Groups
- Carol Gray’s Social Language Stories
- Reciprocal Conversation with Therapist
- Role Playing
- Videotaping
- Coaching During Social Times
HELP WANTED
Social Interpreters Needed!

Must be able to explain verbal and non-verbal language to communication-disabled Student.

Must be able to coach the student in how to communicate effectively with peers.
Techniques That Work in Social Language Groups

- Scripting and Rehearsal
- Coaching
- Teach Flexibility
- Give Visual Prompts
- Teach Question Asking
- Use Their Interests
- Keep Anxiety Low
Scripting and Rehearsal

Give the child the exact words to say:

- Say, “Dad, I want to go to the store,“
- Say, “Teacher, I need help.”
- Say, “Joe, it’s my turn.”
Coaching

• Show and tell the child what to do.
• Teach the protocol of the activity.
• Have the child practice.
Coaching

Getting Points

Make it very clear what he is to work on in the group such as:

• Sharing
• Asking questions
• Following someone else’s rule
• Give compliments
• Be explicit about getting points means you are doing it right
Teach Flexibility

“I HAVE TO BE RED!”

- Let him be red and explain to the others that maybe next time he can let someone else be red, but it is too hard to change today.
- If two want RED, let them share turns
- If the argument persists then you can either give in or let him wait until it is his turn to be RED.
Teach Flexibility

“I have to win!”

- Make losing, fun.
- Make winning not fun.
Teach Flexibility

“I HAVE TO HAVE IT MY WAY!”

• Announce that we can either argue for a long time or play. Which would you rather do?
• Are you having fun yet?
• Whoever “compromises” gets a star.
Teach Flexibility

COMPROMISING

• Teach the rule: If you compromise, you are doing right.

• Compromise means letting the other guy have his way.

• If you let the other guy have his way, you get a point.
Teach Flexibility

BEING BOSSY

• They turn the other children off by being bossy, controlling and judgmental.
• They lose a point (or a turn) for teasing criticizing another child.
• They get extra points for saying something nice.
  
  If the child starts out saying several nice things, he is not teased as much.
Use Visual Aids

• Visual Charts
• Written Lists
• Plan It Together
• This Takes Away The Unexpected
• Be Sure To Include “Things might change.”
• Get Them Hooked On Lists
Hyperlexia

Children with obsessive interest in reading and a diagnosis of autism or Asperger’s.

- Reading comprehension level is at the level of their language comprehension.

IT DOES NOT EXIST UNLESS IT IS WRITTEN
What To Do with Anxiety

STOP the activity,

• Ensure safety,
• Decrease the causes of the anxiety,
• Reestablish calmness,
• Then REHEARSE it using coaching, enticing, and “sweeten it up.”

• BROADEN HIS INTERESTS AND SKILLS
• Medication
Social Language Groups
Goal: Engage in Reciprocal Communication

• Talk to each
• Play together
• Make friends
• HAVE FUN!
SETTING UP SOCIAL LANGUAGE GROUPS

• Select 3 or 4 children who are compatible in age and language level and interests.
• Find a time to meet regularly, usually once a week.
• Rehearse game protocol in individual sessions.
• Have the child participate in the decisions.
Beginning the Groups

• Start by saying that we will make a list of activities for the day.
• First they sit at the table.
• Then the list is written (or pictured) and activities are crossed off as they are finished.
• At the end we often summarize the activities emphasizing the good behaviors they displayed.
Determine the Level of Social Communication

What Do They Do When They Play?

- Play by themselves or next to each other
- Has to win
- Argue and are bossy and gives commands
- Monologues
- Difficulty understanding feedback
Level One

- They Start Out With Parallel Play
- Use Scripting and Rehearsal

Teach Rule: Take Turns.
Level Two

• They Start With Simple Turn Taking Games
• Use Activities With Simple Winning

Teach Rule: Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Lose.
Level Three

- They Have To Control, Argue, Are Bossy
- Use Activities That Need A Little Discussion

Teach Rule: Say Things That Invite A Response – Talk To Make Friends.
Level Four

• They Monologue
• Use Structured Conversation

Teach Rule: Say Two Things and Then Ask A Question.
Level Five

- They Do Not Give Or Get Feedback
- Use Conversation

Teach Rule: Look At Your Listener. Learn What The Other Person Is Feeling.
Tasks that will need adaptation

- Organization
- Staying on task
- Breaks
- Circle of friends
- Recess
- Lunch
- Verbal explanations
- Communication with parents
BE A TEAM PLAYER

• The key to academic and social success for students with Asperger Syndrome is TEAM WORK!