

Success in the Workplace for People with Asperger Syndrome

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Our Goals for Today

- Define important transition goals
- Dispel myths about AS
- Discuss techniques to ready students with AS for employment
- Determine if we should be teaching some skills differently
- Identify resources for effective transition programs for students with AS.

We will address:

- Identification and elimination of dangerous and potentially dangerous behavior: an essential element of transition plans
- Strategies for effective team communication in transition planning
- Restricted and repetitive interests as assets in vocational planning
- Strategies to involve parents, families and the community

All Students Need Work and Social Skills in Adult Life

- Many of the skills needed by students with ASD are skills that are needed by ALL students. Every graduating student needs social, daily living, and work skills
- Many potential employers complain about the upcoming workforce's lack of work and social skills.
- How can we make these skills a focus for ALL students?

When to start vocational training?

- Identify needed skills and begin to teach them in elementary school, middle school, junior high school, and high school
- High schools are changing in response to laws but also in response to the population presented to them (Remember when students with Learning Disabilities presented to us?)

Get a True Picture of the Future

- Allow an option as part of human resource development activities that high school staff and team members visit the closest "sheltered workshop"
- Have your Job Placement Team members go, too
- Determine if this is the goal for your students



Essential Questions

- How important is what you KNOW in your daily life?
- How important is what you can DO in your daily life?
- Which is more important: what you KNOW or what you are able to DO?

Did You Know?

- Employers are often satisfied with the quantity and quality of work from people with AS
- Employers fire workers with AS for having social and safety issues in the workplace.
- Some social issues include over-reacting and not controlling one's emotions
- *Incredible 5-Point Scale Assisting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Understanding Social Interactions and Controlling Their Emotional Responses* by Kari Dunn Buron

Safety Skills Trump Everything

Unsafe people have:

- Limited, unsatisfactory lives
- Less access to environments
- Need for more expensive and intrusive supports
- Less participation and contribution
- Limited belonging and relationships
- More ways to be jailed, institutionalized, depressed, isolated, or dead

Safety Trumps Everything

If you have AS and you are unsafe in any way:

- you will not get or keep any job
- no one will want to be your friend or live with you (except other dangerous or unstable persons who may victimize you)
- your life will become more restricted
- you will end up in jail or institutionalized
- you will be unable to be a contributing citizen

Prioritize Behavior to Address

- Dangerous
- Stigmatizing
- Unconventional
- Conventional



Prioritize Dangerous!

Take a look at the
*Behavioral Prioritization
Grid*

Dispelling Some Misconceptions

- Autism Myths and Facts : Watch the slide show (You have a handout too)
- Cannot be good employees? People with AS are devoted employees, less distractible, more focused, and more likely to obey company rules.
- Cannot be a true friend? Can learn and use friendship skills.

Dispelling Some Misconceptions

- Should not associate/partner with others with AS? Often these are the most successful relationships.
- Girls with AS are more successful because they have better manners or are pretty? Many girls with AS lead lonely, isolated, and/or victimized lives



Dispelling Some Misconceptions

- Students with AS need to put aside their safe but restricted interests. Wrong.
- Do not describe interests with psychiatric terms like "obsession," "compulsion," or "perseveration." See your handout on the use of terms
- Look for jobs and social opportunities within restricted interests
- Use restricted interests as motivators

Restricted Interests: The Silver Lining

- Remember: restricted, repetitive interests are diagnostic, not voluntary
- If restricted interests are dangerous, shape and expand them
- Handout with more ideas: *Working with Restrictive, Repetitive Interests*

Dispelling Some Misconceptions

- Parents want to "hold his hand?" Parents know the *true effects* of the limitations of AS in real life situations. Parent "stories" can help guide the development of IEP transition and vocational goals.
- Work with parents and parent groups to identify what can be taught outside of school, when, where, and by whom.

Parents as Partners in Teaching

- Survey parents to identify needs
- Identify all community resources
- Develop a structured parent support group to address specific areas of need for success in adult life. (Parental problems and issues with the district are dealt with at other times.)
- A Parent Focus Group works with educational staff to select topics for the year, engage presenters, arrange meeting places, special events, etc.
- Publish a parent training calendar each year

Did You Know?

- Difficulties starting, stopping, changing, and switching tasks at the lead of another person are workplace issues
- This may be motoric and not attention-cognition related
- **Autism: Sensory-Movement Differences and Diversity** by Anne M. Donnellan, PhD and Martha R. Leary, ISBN-10: 0966037685

Focus on Communication

- The inability to talk is not the same as having nothing to say: everyone should leave their FAPE with a voice
- The ability to talk is not the same as being able to communicate: high risk in Asperger Syndrome and higher functioning ASD
- National Assistive technology Technical Assistance Partnership
www.resna.org/taproject/at/statecontacts.html

Working Memory

- The ability to remember one thing while doing or thinking about something else. Essential skill for success in life and work.
- A word about working memory and Asperger syndrome: DEFICIT
- Develop remembering strategies, self-monitoring devices, and strategies for getting back on task *without* someone else telling you to do it

Needed Employment Skills

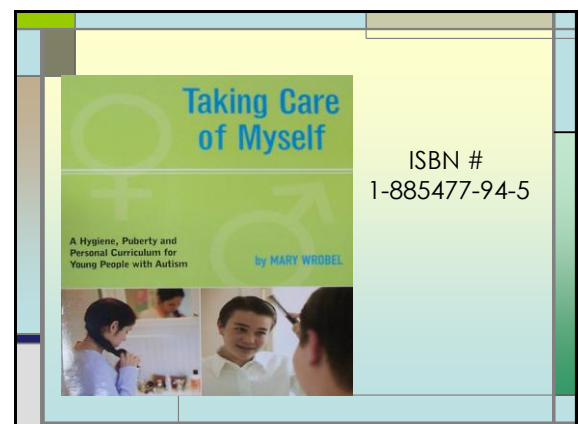
- Multitasking and task transitioning
- Self-monitoring, individual calendars, daily schedule lists, task lists, timers, and alert systems
- Project management using physical folders as well as computers files and work management
- Visual/Spatial is a primary strength!

Needed Employment Skills

- Listen and Do
- Read and Do
- Use calendars, planners, timers
- Move quietly away from an intolerable stimulus
- Self-regulate emotionally
- Regain self-regulation quickly when upset
- Keep "hot topic" opinions to oneself

Essential Social and Daily Living Skills

- Social skills assessments are needed. High skill areas **mask** low skill areas!
- Create and sustain relationships with others: Use the Social Communication and Relationship Development Checklist
- Hygiene and cleanliness: *Taking Care of Myself* by Mary Wrobel. This is a wonderful book with pictures, lists, and social stories. Can use as young as 9 or 10 years old



Workplace Social Skills

- Social reciprocity: saying (verbally or non-verbally) and doing nice things for other people
- Recognizing when your attention is not wanted and removing it
- Some other job social skills:
 - ask other people about themselves
 - give compliments
 - learn the likes and interests of co-workers
 - learn when help is needed and how to get it from another person on the job
 - postponing talking about most favorite topics

Peer Supported Learning

- Working with peers with supervision can teach needed workplace skills
- Supervision and coaching is essential!
- Chose peer mentors from students geared to education, special education, psychology, nursing, social work, and computer technology



Essential Social and Daily Living Skills

My handouts to help with assessment, IEP development and program planning

- [Ten Essential Skills for a Safe and Independent Life](#)
- [Social Sexual Checklist](#)
- [Safety in Society 20 Questions](#)
- [A Short Skills List for Students with AS](#)

Disclosure and Self-Advocacy

Students with AS need to be able to:

- Understand the implications of AS
- Identify their needs and ask to have them met
- Describe AS to others socially
- *Asperger Syndrome: What Does It Mean to Me* by Catherine Faherty

Disclosure and Self-Advocacy

- Describe and defend the need for accommodations in socially appropriate ways
- Understand and apply the laws regarding disclosure of their disability to get accommodations in the workplace
- Most programs do not include this training
- Find out who can help provide this training where you live

The Enemy

- Verbal prompting: Talking is NOT Teaching!
- Verbal prompt dependence is taught from the first day of school!
- Verbal corrections are stigmatizing and demeaning.
- Verbal prompting prevents the student from doing the task alone
- There is no aide at work!

Take Another Look at What We Teach

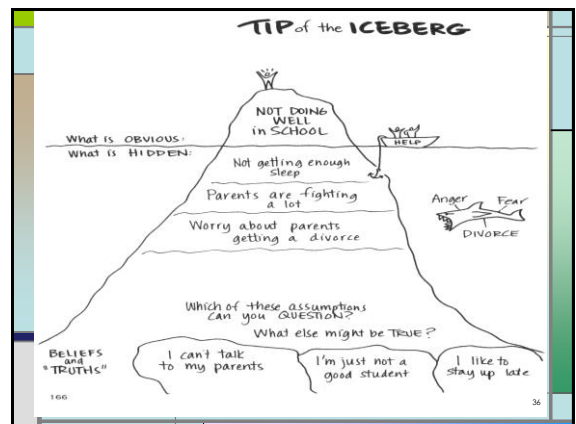
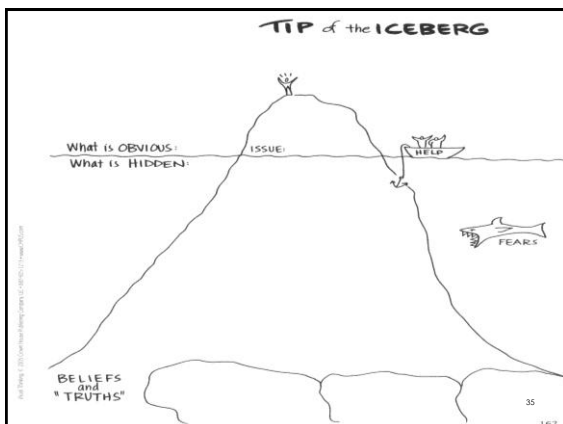
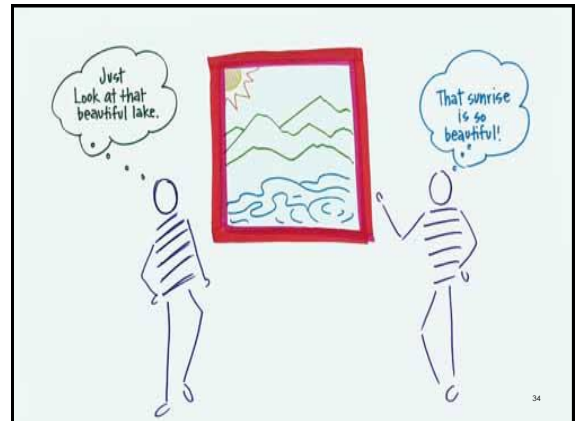
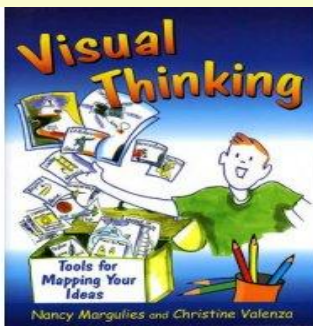
- "You must finish your work now."
- "Get used to it."
- "Do what adults tell you."
- People and things are: "right or wrong," "good or bad," "nice or mean," etc.
- "Do it yourself. You do not need help."
- "You know what to do."
- "Don't let that bother you."
- "You need to defend yourself."

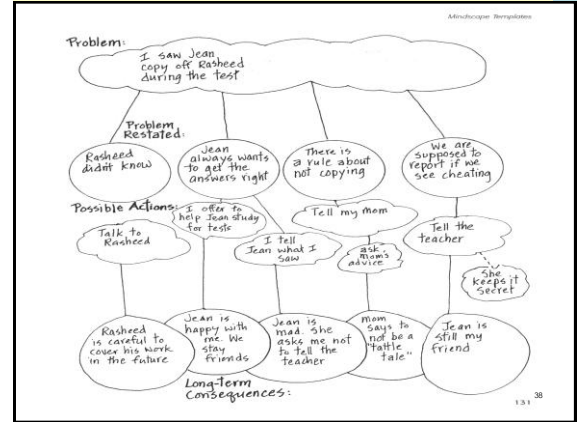
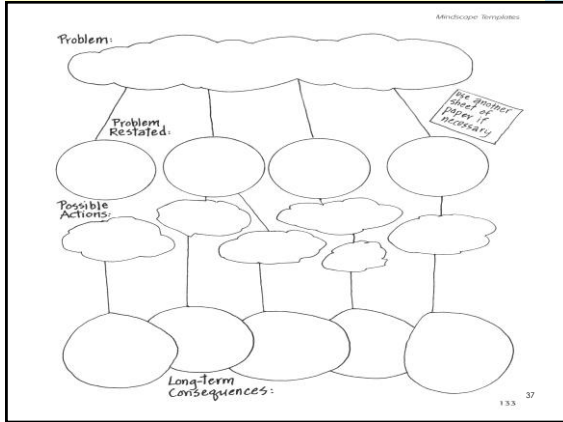
Teach With Learning Strengths

- Visual
- Spatial
- Concrete
- Rote
- Scripted
- Logical
- Mathematical
- Sequential
- Excellent factual memory
- Video modeling
- Computer games
- Flow charts and other graphics
- Can become rule based (always teach the exception)
- Self-monitoring devices



The templates are used with permission of the authors.





Who Can Teach and How and When

- Look for opportunities throughout the school day; teaching can take just a minute. Remember to use informed peers for support.
- Anyone and everyone should be empowered to "teach"
- Use my Visual Strategies handout the next time you design an instructional moment or opportunity

Who Can Teach and How and When

- Play "let's make a deal" with families to decide who will teach which skills
- Teach families to involve extended family and friends in teaching
- Tell families what services are available outside of school; make a list and send it home via print and email. Put it on local TV late night announcements.

How Can We Do This?

- When viewed in total, you might be overwhelmed with the amount and types of specific instruction required for successful transition to adult work life
- Determine which skills will be added to the curriculum at every grade level beginning with kindergarten.
- Engage families, parent support groups, local agencies, community service groups, and adult providers

Develop an In-House Resource Center

- Store materials used for other students
- Organize based on transition area
- Inform teachers, parents, and others where to find needed materials
- Have a Asperger syndrome materials session where teachers and other staff can see and share needed materials

Community Colleges are Resources

- Start a Community Living Program in each community.
- Smaller colleges are beginning to see that they can help maintain their student population by becoming accessible to students with ASD.
- Add community college vocational and living experts to your team.

Community Colleges are Resources

- Take high school students to college campuses starting in the first year of high school. Let them SEE what they are working towards
- Take students to visit workplaces starting in the first year of high school. Your parent group can help with this.
- Do not travel in herds.



No Walls

- The high school building is not the high school program.
- Work out in the community with students.
- Students can dually enroll in community college courses.



The high school population has changed!

- So change what is going on in your community!
- Create a Job Placement Team: set up a team of people from the community who identify resources: Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau, SCORE, families, interested staff, vocational agencies, other out of school agencies, K of C, Lions, Rotary, etc.
- Together create a job experience and placement plan, identifying needed steps

Identify Job Skills

- Ask the Job Placement Team to identify which skills are really needed in jobs
- OOPS: People who are already successful in business sometimes do not score well on the job skills tests
- We need to create reality-based assessment checklists

PROGRESS WITHOUT PUNISHMENT

EFFECTIVE APPROACHES FOR LEARNERS WITH BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

ISBN#

0-8077-2911-6

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Make an Action Plan

- When we close, take a few minutes and begin an action plan
- Consider developing an in-house Asperger Syndrome focus group of staff and parent representatives
- Let me know if I can help!

Thank you for all you do!

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