Developing Autism Friendly Schools and Communities

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Children and Young People with ASD:

- Experience the world differently;

- Think about the world differently;

- Experience higher levels of stress than the non-autistic person;

- Have greater difficulty than the non-autistic person in acquiring the skills that lead to emotional intelligence.
Children’s behaviour is underpinned by the stage they have reached in social and emotional development, the level of skills they have in this area, and their emotional well-being whilst interacting with the social, emotional and physical environment.

Busy settings are inevitably confusing and stress inducing for children and young people with ASD resulting in behaviours which can confuse and stress the adults who work with them and/or care for them.
Anxiety/Stress Triggered Behaviours

High anxiety pupils with ASD spend much of their time in the “flight/fight” mode
However they are not alone ……

With mid-brain on high alert so do pupils:
- with ADHD, Tourettes, FAS, OCD, Insecure Attachment
- victims of Bullying/Abuse
- those experiencing Bereavement or Loss
- anyone experiencing “Stress Overload”
The Stress Curve

Distress

Breakdown!

Freefall
What works well:

- Iceberg
- STAR
- Visual Schedules
- PECS
- OWLING
- Social Scripts/Social Stories
- Written Schedules
An Example:

Observed Behaviour

- Doesn’t stay in bed

Possible ‘ASD drivers’ of the behaviour

- Oversensitive to noise.
- Doesn’t understand expectations.
- Resists change.
- Oversensitive to feel of sheets etc
- Unaware of others needs / tiredness
- Too “hyper”
Visual Schedules Example: Toilet

- Pants down
- Pants up
- Underwear down
- Flush
- Use the toilet
- Wash hands
- Wipe
- Underwear up
- Great
PECS

The Picture Exchange Communication System

- Frost and Bondy (1994)
OWLING
(The Hanen Centre)

Observe
Wait
Listen
..Count...
“Social Scripts”

Example of Autism Social Stories

‘Lining Up’

“At school, we sometimes line up. We line up to go to the gym, to go to the library, and to go out to recess. Sometimes my friends and I get excited when we line up, because we're going somewhere fun, like out to play. It is okay to get excited, but it is important to try to walk to the line. Running can cause accidents, and my friends or I could get hurt. I will try to walk to the line.”
Written Schedules

My Morning Routine At Home:

1. Get out of bed. Turn off alarm clock.
2. Take off dirty clothes.
3. Get dressed. I will need:
   - clean underwear
   - clean socks
   - pair of pants
   - clean T-shirt or long sleeve shirt
   - deodorant.

Remember: Take off dirty clothes first, then get dressed. Put dirty clothes in the laundry basket.

4. Go downstairs and get out breakfast routine
Communication

~ summary ~

✔ PECS
✔ OWLING/ turn taking
✔ Prompt and fade/reinforce and reward to teach new skills and behaviours
✔ Adjust language
✔ Use Visual Structure (revisit at times of stress or to teach something new)
✔ Use gradual change and small steps
✔ Work towards written schedules
Sensory Issues

Sensory Audits: www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/
Sensory Audit for Schools & Classrooms

Devised by Ian Attfield, Amy Fowler and Val Jones

This sensory audit is to help staff to assess and create an environment that enables the participation of pupils with autism.

It does not cover all aspects, but gives ideas on the ways in which a setting might be altered if pupils experience sensory processing difficulties and find it hard or very anxiety-provoking to tolerate certain sensations or situations.
Sensory Diets/Sensory integration

National Autistic Society website – checklists → diets

Sensory Perceptual Issues in Autism and Asperger Syndrome: Different Sensory Experiences - Different Perceptual Worlds. Olga Bogdashina
Ways of Sharing Information

1. Pen Portraits - useful when pupil changes year band or moves within a setting

2. School Passports - useful when pupil changes school or begins with a new group based experience.

   Also extremely useful for pupils with severe learning difficulties.
Pen Portraits - 1 example

- Name & Age/Year Band
- Background
- Progress
- Difficulties
- Needs
Pen Portraits

BACKGROUND:

- Significant language difficulties and ASD diagnosis.
- Attended language resource unit since April 2004.
- Since June 2004 he has been in a class with five other children.
- Integrates into mainstream classes with support.
- He enjoys the company of others and beginning to develop a good sense of humour.
- Finds it difficult to look at conversation partners.
Pen Portrait continued

PROGRESS:

✓ Will now play in classroom, make models and play with the train track.
✓ Will tolerate other children alongside him as long as they don’t use his equipment.
✓ Functioning at National Curriculum level one for reading and writing, NC level 2 for number and p-levels for speaking, listening, using applying maths and shape and space.
✓ Copes with outings if forewarned.
✓ Joins mainstream classes for PE. Can work independently when using computer programmes.
✓ Now writes a few sentences independently. Is able to listen and attend in 1:1 settings, but requires constant prompts.
✓ Ability to use vocabulary accurately is developing.
✓ He is beginning to interact more with other children in play situations, however he chooses activities that he can carry out alone.
Pen Portrait continued

DIFFICULTIES:

- Understanding abstract ideas (questions such as ‘how’ and ‘why’), imagination, or uncertain outcomes.
- Will switch off attention, become distracted by movement and can withdraw and begin talking to himself.
- Difficulties with listening and attention, significantly impact on his ability to follow instructions.
- Has unsettled periods that can last several days, without currently unidentified trigger.
- Dislikes lack of apparent structure and when upset or disturbed, will become angry with himself.
- Is co-operative with adult led tasks. Finds it difficult to identify complex emotions such as anxiety/surprise.
**NEEDS:**

- Support to help him with times of change to usual routines.
- Needs support with organisation and confused by processes such as getting dressed.
- Needs step by step instructions.
- Reasonable adjustments for accommodation of inflexible eating habits.
I have Asperger's Syndrome. I find social communication and group work hard. I prefer to work on my own or with people that I trust.

I also have asthma and bad hay fever. I have IBS, which gets worse when I am stressed. Sometimes I have to go out to the toilet a lot.

I am slightly short sighted and have very sensitive hearing. Loud music and shouting hurts my ears and I find it difficult to concentrate if it is very noisy in the classroom.
Young Person’s voice

As we go through the Pupil Passport think how you could work with your young person to create one.
Things I am interested in and things or people that are important to me
Things I’m good at
(at school and at home)

These are the things I am good at school:

✓ Science, Maths, Food Technology, Reading.
✓ I am also good at gardening, making intricate card models, cycling, swimming, cooking.
Things I find difficult

- Working in a very noisy classroom
- Making friends
- Writing fast and neatly
How I Communicate
(and any difficulties I have with communicating)

- Some peoples jokes.
- Sometimes I think people are cross with me when they are not.
- I do not always interpret.
- I sometimes find it hard to understand expressional communication.
- Sometimes I don’t understand language in the same way as other people and will not always understand when you think I have done something wrong. Please try to let me explain what I think I was doing rather than assume I am being difficult.
How I need you to communicate with me to help me understand

- If you raise your voice when you speak to me I can think that I am being told off.

- If I am not 100% sure what to do, I will probably ask you to repeat some of the instructions.
Things that help me to work well

- Clear instructions
- A reasonably quiet environment
- If we are working in groups / pairs, it helps to be with someone I trust
Things that make it difficult for me to work well

- A very noisy classroom
- Having the sun in my eyes
- Not understanding the task
- Working with someone who won’t listen to my views
When I’m stressed I:

- Get upset!
- Bite my nails!
- Find it hard to concentrate!
- Get worse Irritable Bowel Syndrome symptoms!
- Raise my voice!
- Think everyone is cross with me!
If I’m stressed it helps if I can....

✓ Have time to calm down before I have to explain something
How you can help me

✔ Not mention my problems to anyone else and not talk to me about them if other members of the class are around - this upsets me and makes me embarrassed.
Examples of Pupil Passports


PCP Resources

- http://www.helensandersonsohnassociates.co.uk/reading-room/how/person-centred-planning.aspx
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTl7Rvdi-_g
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3osS0gmP0I
- http://onepageprofiles.wordpress.com/
Person Centred Plans

Jim is:
✓ Happy
✓ Great fun to be with
✓ Full of life
✓ Bouncy
✓ Friendly and cuddly
✓ A complete charmer
✓ Beautiful
✓ A keen singer
✓ Loves music and videos, especially Disney
✓ Brave and skilled in physical activities
✓ Completely unselfconscious
✓ Gets lots of pleasure from simple things
Examples of sub-headings

- WHAT PEOPLE SAY THEY MOST LIKE AND ADMIRE ABOUT JIM
- JIM’S FAVOURITE ACTIVITIES
- RELATIONSHIPS AND PLAY/LEISURE ACTIVITIES
- UNDERSTANDING HOW JIM COMMUNICATES
- HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH JIM
- ESSENTIAL ROUTINES - AT SCHOOL / AT HOME/AT RESPITE
- MEALTIMES
- TOILETTING
- TRAVELLING AND OUT & ABOUT
- AT HOME
- THINGS TO AVOID WHERE POSSIBLE
- WHAT JIM NEEDS TO STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEST PEOPLE TO SUPPORT JIM
- WHAT JIM NEEDS US TO FOCUS ON AT THE MOMENT
- JIM’S PREFERED FUTURE
Transition Planning

• All change is challenging
• Everyone reacts to change
• Most people with Autism find change extremely difficult… there are some exceptions e.g. PDA
• Begin to make a list of Transitions your young person faces – daily – weekly – monthly - yearly
The Key to Transition Planning

Steps:

- Begin as early as possible
- Introduce the question mark
- Create visual cards (Plus words)
- Small step change \(\rightarrow\) book
- Don’t make assumptions
- Plan for everything!
- Use what’s out there e.g. Transition Toolkit
Transition planning for children in school (England)

Drawing up a transition plan

RESOURCES

http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/60

http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/transition%20toolkit.aspx

http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits
Contact:

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