



# PERSPECTIVES

A publication for parents and professionals serving individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

## New Books

The following is an excerpt from Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships, Decoding Social Mysteries Through the Unique Perspectives of Autism by Dr. Temple Grandin and Sean Barron

### The Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships

Unwritten social rules probably number in the billions—a staggering thought for anyone, an inconceivable image for a person who has any level of impairment in social understanding. An exaggeration, you suggest? Surely, it's not in the billions? Ponder this: social rules govern situations that are experienced solo, between two-people, or among groups small to large to gigantic. Different rules apply based on the cultural or subcultural similarity or differences among group members. Unwritten social rules among the very private Japanese are markedly different than among the more liberal natives of the Scandinavian countries. Age groupings, public versus private settings and personal versus professional environments all have different social nuances that further confound and confuse. Clearly, fostering social awareness and social connectedness is a train ride with no final destination. At each stop along the journey people get off and new people get on—each an opportunity to hone existing skills, learn new ones, and stretch our social muscles in new directions.

In discussing a vast array of unwritten social rules, we discovered that many seemed to be aligned with others, and some seemed to be pivotal in nature, i.e., a focal point around which other unwritten rules revolved. The more we talked about them, the more they made sense to us; new meanings surfaced. In a way, they helped us restructure some of our own thoughts on unwritten social rules, which in turn,

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## Websites on ASDs

Excellent websites for information on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

- ☞ Autism Society of America: [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)
- ☞ Autism Society of Michigan: [www.autism-mi.org](http://www.autism-mi.org)
- ☞ ASA Oakland County Chapter: [www.asaoakland.org](http://www.asaoakland.org)
- ☞ Dr. Tony Attwood: [www.tonyattwood.com](http://www.tonyattwood.com)
- ☞ On-line Asperger's Information and Support-OASIS: [www.aspergersyndrome.org](http://www.aspergersyndrome.org)
- ☞ The gray Center: [www.TheGrayCenter.org](http://www.TheGrayCenter.org)
- ☞ Liane Holliday-Willey: [www.ASPIE.com](http://www.ASPIE.com)
- ☞ Free pictures of visual schedules, etc.: [www.usevisualstrategies.com](http://www.usevisualstrategies.com)
- ☞ Picture Exchange Communication System: [www.pecs.com](http://www.pecs.com)
- ☞ TEACCH: [www.teacch.com](http://www.teacch.com)

## Don't Forget!!

The Autism Spectrum DVD Workshops Series is on the 2nd Tuesday of every month starting at 4:00 p.m. Ending times may vary. Share this opportunity with others that may not know about it! Flyers are mailed prior to the workshops.

### Inside this issue:

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unlocked new doors of understanding. These pivotal rules became the basis for the second half of this book.

We've selected the ten rules we think every child or adult with ASD should be taught. These are rules that will be taught over time, they are rules that will grow with the child as his social understanding blossoms. They are rules that apply across chronological age, across areas of functioning, in single and group settings. They are akin to the "Golden Rules" of social understanding—the big guiding principles that govern our social actions.

How they are taught will vary from child to child, teen to teen, adult to adult, based on their predominant thinking pattern (visual versus verbal) and a careful and comprehensive look at other brain- and body-based challenges present in the person. As we've mentioned several times already, the seeds of social awareness can't burst forth and thrive amidst conditions that detract from, rather than nurture, their growth. Each child will require a different mixture of nutrients for social understanding to ripen. Attend closely to sensory issues, build positive self-esteem, cultivate perspective-taking, discover what motivates and excites the child. Within this rich environment, social awareness will flourish.

The following is an excerpt from the [The Autism Source Book](#) by Karen Siff Exkorn

## **I was told by the doctor who diagnosed our son that he lacks both "imaginative and purposeful play." What does this mean?**

Typical children engage in pretend play. For example, they may use their imaginations to create fortresses out of cardboard boxes or zoom around the house wearing a towel as a cape pretending to be their favorite superhero. Children with ASDs don't do this. Generally, if you watch them play, it's not really playing at all. Children will push a train back and forth rather than push it around the

track—or, if they do push it around the track, it becomes a perseverative behavior that they repeat in the same sequence and in the same way. Parents may report that their children with ASDs run around the playground like other typical children; but upon closer examination, it's observed that the children are running aimlessly, without a purpose. Purposeful play is a playful activity with a goal, such as running a race, or chasing another child in a game of tag.

There are other ways that children with ASDs may appear to be engaged in creative play. They may act out one of their favorite TV characters, mimicking their voices and body language. But often they are simply copying the character without being inventive. Some children with ASDs will appear to be interested in fantasy cartoons or movies; yet it's the stimulating music of flashing lights that is capturing their attention. Their lack of imagination may be due in part to their literalness; even a sentence from a nursery rhyme such as "the cow jumped over the moon" requires that we think out of the box and engage our imagination.

Can purposeful play and imaginative skills be taught? Some children with ASDs can learn how to engage purposeful and pretend play. Some treatments will set up scenarios where a child can learn the steps involved in play sequence to

promote purposeful play. For example, a child may be taught to pick up the toy train, put the train on the tracks, push the train around the tracks, stop at the station to pick up the passengers, and so on. Children can also be taught pretend play; a child can be taught how to pretend to be scary monster or an airplane through imitation. Ultimately, the goal of these treatments is for children to generalize these skills into

### **PERSPECTIVES**

A publication of GISD's Special Education Services Center

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spontaneous play activities with other children.

The following is an excerpt from The Feelings Unmutual by William Hadcroft

I found myself identifying with the quiet-natured Dr. David Banner as he lived the life of a fugitive, all the time trying to “control the raging spirit that dwelt within him.” The opening titles would cast a spell upon me. Taken from the pilot film which I would not see for a good few years hence, the titles depict David Banner crouching by the wheel of his car during a night-time thunder storm. He is cold and wet and getting to the end of his tether. He is trying to undo a wheel nut and change his flat tire. There’s a flash of lightning and a crack of thunder, and the lug wrench slips. He yells out in frustration. Actor Bill Bixby conveys real emotion here. The lug wrench slipping under any other circumstances would not provoke such a reaction, but here it is the final straw.

It’s like me trying to undo the wheel nuts on my bike, or attempting to screw something together with a screwdriver. It slips, and the frustration—oh, it’s so deep. It’s like me pouring myself a cup of tea from the teapot and missing the cup; it’s like me trying to tackle in football and tripping over the other boy’s feet; it’s like me saying the wrong thing at the wrong time and feeling so embarrassed. IT’S LIKE ME!

We get a shot of David’s rushing adrenalin and then a close-up of his DNA helix, with one of its cells flickering green. He shivers in his fury, his brown eyes having turned white. His clothes burst around his swelling body, his skin turns green, his hair grows wild, and his face takes on a beast-like quality. Ex-body-builder Lou Ferrigno becomes the personification of Banner’s rage.

The lug wrench slipping, the yell of frustration, the adrenalin rush, the glowing DNA: these images rooted themselves deep into my mind and, whenever I was faced with frustration, anger or fury, I would immediately recall Dr. David Banner. I’d watch as the gentle scientist faced the bullies of his world, getting beaten up in some back street—only to transform into the huge green-skinned man-beast. The white eyes, accompanied

by a high-pitched sound effect and tense music, signified the start of the transformation and, as I absorbed the Incredible Hulk into my own persona, I would often be found impersonating the sound vocally during moments of stress.

## Looking for the Positive

If you are the parent of or a staff person who works with someone with ASD and have something positive to share, I would like to make that a regular section in the Perspectives. It can be art, something written, musical, or something they said. Anything you want to share would be appreciated.

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## ASA Chosen to Participate in Rehabilitation Study Group

### Study to Shape Direction of Vocation Rehabilitation Program

The Autism Society of America (ASA)—including President & CEO Lee Grossman, Chair of the Board Cathy Pratt, Ph.D., Board Member Stephen Shore, Honorary Board Member Ruth Sullivan, Ph.D., and Former PPA Chair David Holmes, Ed.D.—has been selected to participate in the 32nd Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) study group entitled “Rehabilitation of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders.”

The IRI is sponsored by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and represents a collaborative effort amongst RSA; state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies; consumer groups; regional rehabilitation continuing education programs; and other stakeholders in the VR program, in developing a linkage between knowledge development and practitioner

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utilization.

As a result of the study, the RSA hopes to put together best practices, skills, techniques, and systems to encourage professional VR counselors to engage consumers in meaningful partnership that result in the achievement of meaningful employment for individuals with autism.

Reprinted from [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

## Mozart and The Whale

"Mozart and The Whale", a fiction romance based on the lives of Future Horizons authors, Jerry and Mary Newport, made its international debut at the Puerto Vallarta International Festival on Saturday, November twelfth. "It had the largest audience of any of the festival's films. People sat in the aisles to see it and there was a surprising number of teenagers. It had a very positive response!", said Robert Lawrence, one of "Mozart's" producers in attendance. The film is said to be close to a distribution deal. Go to [www.mozartandthewhale.com](http://www.mozartandthewhale.com)

Reprinted from [www.autismtoday.com](http://www.autismtoday.com)

## Tips for Viewing Aspies in a Positive Light

By Liane Holliday Willey

1. **Don't** think of Aspies as insensitive. **Do** think of us as *objective*.
2. **Don't** think of Aspies as obsessive. **Do** think of us as *engrossed*.
3. **Don't** think of Aspies as obstinate. **Do** think of us as *tenacious*.
4. **Don't** think of Aspies as rule-bound. **Do** think of us as *rule-governed*.
5. **Don't** think of Aspies as unfeeling. **Do** think of us as *stoical*.
6. **Don't** think of Aspies as inflexible. **Do** think of us as *precise*.
7. **Don't** think of Aspies as intrusive. **Do** think of us as *diligent*.

8. **Don't** think of Aspies as dogmatic. **Do** think of us as *pragmatic*.
9. **Don't** think of Aspies as blunt. **Do** think of us as *honest*.
10. **Don't** think of Aspies as having a dysfunctional sensory system. **Do** think of us as have a *finely-tuned sensory system*.

## Special Needs Activities

### Coming up...

Grand Blanc Parks and Recreation has two programs in January for special-needs children. Participation is not restricted to Grand Blanc-area residents:

- **Winter Wonderland:** A dinner/dance from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Jan. 27 in the Grand Blanc Senior Citizens Center, 12632 Pagels Drive, off Holly Road. Cost is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children ages 12 and younger.
- **Music Class:** 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. for ages 5-9, 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for ages 10-14 on Tuesdays for six weeks starting Jan. 10 at Reid Elementary, 2103 Reid Road. Cost is \$15.
- **Details or to sign up:** (810) 694-0101.

Grand Blanc also has music and art classes, T-ball and basketball clinics and social events for the whole family. Southern Lakes Parks & Recreation, covering Fenton, Linden, and Fenton Township, also put on a few events each year.

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## von Economo neurons: a key to autism?

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Biologist John Morgan Allman and colleagues speculate that autism involves abnormal development of cells called "von Economo neurons," believed to facilitate quick intuitive assessment of complex situations.

Allman et al. say evidence indicates that the von Economo neurons, which are unique to humans and apes, relay output from the fronto-insular and anterior cingulate cortex to parts of the frontal and temporal cortex, "where fast intuitions are melded with slower, deliberative judgments." These

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neurons, they suggest, "are a neuronal specialization that enables us to reduce complex social and cultural dimensions of decision-making into a single dimension that facilitates the rapid execution of decisions."

Allman and colleagues note that unlike most cortical neurons, which arise well before birth, the von Economo neurons first appear in the 35th week of gestation and dramatically increase in number between birth and age four. The researchers suspect that the von Economo neurons fail to develop normally in individuals with autism spectrum disorders which could explain why autistic individuals "may have extensive formal knowledge of social situations but lack of intuitions that serve to guide normal subjects through complex social interactions."

Reprinted from [www.AutismResearchInstitute.com](http://www.AutismResearchInstitute.com)

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## Profiles aid in picking right intervention

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No single educational intervention works for all autistic children, and parents often spend months or years seeking a program that will benefit their child. According to Michelle Sherer and Laura Schreibman, educators can facilitate this process by developing predictive profiles of children most likely to succeed in each type of therapy.

Schreibman and colleagues are the developers of an educational method called "pivotal response training" (PRT; see ARRI 6/2 and 8/1), which is highly successful for many but not all autistic children. To see if they could predict which children would benefit from PRT, the researchers first evaluated data from children who responded remarkably well to PRT and those who did not respond, and developed a profile of each group. (For instance, responders typically showed an interest in toys, tolerated close proximity to another person, and had fewer nonverbal and more verbal self-stimulating behaviors than non-responders.)

The researchers then enrolled three children who fit the "responder" profile and three who fit the "non-responder" profile, matching the predicting responders and non-responders according to IQ, language age, and symptom severity. Each child

underwent 90 minutes of one-on-one PRT four to five days a week.

After five weeks, the children fitting the non-responder profile exhibited no progress, and were transferred to other programs where one made significant gains. In contrast, the researchers report, "Participants whose profiles matched the PRT responder profile evidenced improvements on standardized assessments and demonstrated gains in the areas of language, play, and social skills during treatment sessions and generalized these new behaviors to no-treatment environments and untrained stimuli."

Says Schreibman, "We in the autism community know there is no one-size-fits-all approach. To reduce outcome variability, we need to continue finding predictor variables and to develop a full inventory of tailored treatments."

Reprinted from [www.AutismResearchInstitute.com](http://www.AutismResearchInstitute.com)

## Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Middle School Anyone?

As a psychologist specializing in social processing, I have attempted to support many children with Asperger Syndrome through the social jungle of school. Middle school is by far the most troublesome and for many children, the worst of times. On some occasions the classic pattern of "predator" bullying behavior has been apparent. The child with AS child is targeted for a variety of reasons, ranging from timidity, outspokenness, weak physical stature or academic ability. Perhaps one of the most difficult realities faced by parents and caring adults is the fact that we often find ourselves powerless in the social arena of our children. Intimidation occurs at many levels and when children step into the school environment they are instinctively aware of how separate and challenging this world can be.

Protecting children from hostile behaviors of peers should, I believe, be a concern shared by adults. Schools must overtly address these issues and seriously pursue harassment and bullying. This does not however, guarantee acceptance and tolerance at

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more subtle levels. These behaviors reflect the character and culture of the peer population and their home environments. In a macro pop culture where clothing is

accepted as the main criteria for acceptance or rejection by many circles of teenage girls, we have a serious problem. Culture, character and behavior are frequently dictated by popular images beyond the classrooms. In shopping malls and television music shows, teens are continually exposed to an early sexual emphasis and countless fads. Such influences are typically not conducive to positive character traits and emphasize superficiality and sexual attraction above all else.

Thus concerned educators, teachers and parents have to somehow negotiate this enormous backdrop in the politics of the classroom. In my own experience with the social lives of aspergian children, I have found that one of the most potent supports through the difficult early adolescent years can be found in friendship or interest groups. Many children with AS are oblivious or unconcerned about the latest fad or "in" group. Their wish for contact and camaraderie is frequently driven by their interests rather than social impression. Thus providing groups for interests and exchange is a potent force against alienation. This is an intervention that is relatively simple to implement. Examples are chess, animae and science clubs.

Along with helping the children with AS find their social niche, we must also continue to foster character development in all children. Beyond the media culture lie real and fundamental human needs and concerns. Helping autistic spectrum children adapt and develop social competence is a key concern, however, as adults we must also confront the destructive distractions that infect the social behaviors of all children.

Richard Howlin, Ph D.  
Chelsea Center for Learning and Development  
Winter, 2003

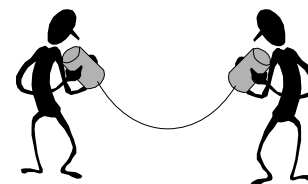
Reprinted from [www.aspergersmichigan.com](http://www.aspergersmichigan.com)

## Ideas to Help You Understand How I Communicate With People

By Jordan Ackerson

1) If possible, please let me finish what I'm trying to say rather than jumping in, interrupting, and trying to finish my sentence for me.

2) If you ask me a question, please *give me enough time to process* what you asked me so I'm able to give you a clear answer. If you repeat the question too soon, or ask me another question, then I forget your original question and I don't know what to say.



3) Slow your pace down when you're talking to me or otherwise my brain can't process auditorily what you said. I don't have trouble hearing; it just takes my brain a little longer to interpret what is being said to me.

4) Before changing the topic, it's fine to ask me if I was tracking what you were saying. I will also try to let you know if I am not following you, or if I forget what you were saying.

5) Very general questions are harder for me to answer. It would be very helpful when you ask me a question if you could give me choices from which to answer.

6) Sometimes people who have autism tend to go on talking about one subject a little bit longer than they really need to. If that happens, you have my permission to let me know, in a very courteous way, when you're having trouble listening to me. You can let me know when you're feeling like you are ready to change the topic.

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## Conferences

Date	Title & Location	Speakers	Fee	Contact Info
Jan. 11, 2006	Understanding Individuals with AS or high Functioning Autism East Lansing	Wendy Handrich	Varies	www.lorman.com (866) 352-9539
Jan. 19, 2006	Springboards: Sibling Issues Oakland	Julie Frei	Free	No RSVP required www.asaoakland.org
Jan. 29, 2006	Communication Make & Take Pontiac	Toni Brandt	Free	248-393-3131 to register
Feb. 15, 2006	Looking at Behavior Plans Through a Different Set of Lenses East Lansing	Wendy Handrich	\$269	(866) 352-9539 www.lorman.com
Mar. 2, 2006	Understanding Individuals with AS or High Functioning Autism	Beverly Bishop	\$289	(866) 352-9539 www.lorman.com
Mar. 31, 2006	ASM Spring Conference Lansing	Temple Grandin Eustacia Cutler	Varies	www.autism-mi.org
Apr. 21 & 22, 2006	Autism & Asperger's Reflecting on the Spectrum Edmonton, Alberta	Karen Siff-Exkorn Mary Wrobel Stephen Shore Teresa Bolick	Varies	www.autismtoday.com



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- 7) Even though it takes me longer to process what's being said, that *doesn't* mean that I don't understand what's going on in the world.
- 8) Please understand that it takes a lot of my energy to focus on what's being said to me. If I don't follow what you're saying, that doesn't mean that I'm not trying to listen.
- 9) To let you know, my brain thinks very fast and I can't get words quite as quickly as my thoughts. This sometimes causes me to pant, or to repeat the same words to make sure that people are still listening to me while I'm working on getting my words out.

- 10) Whenever I'm feeling an emotion I make a distinction between feeling that emotion and being that emotion. For example, if a sad event happens, I like to say that sad is not what I am, but how I feel at the time.



Reprinted from [www.autcom.org](http://www.autcom.org)

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# Autism Spectrum Support Group



**Date:** Thursday, February 9, 2006

**Place:** Genesee Intermediate School District  
Special Education Services Center—North, GenNet classroom  
5075 Pilgrim Road, Flint 48507

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

Back by popular demand! GISD Occupational Therapist, Jimmy Colley, will help us understand why some children avoid touching, refuse to wear certain clothes, cover their ears or are picky eaters. Why do some children want to swing, twirl, jump, tire easily, or are slow? These are all symptoms of sensory integration dysfunction. He will also let us experience activities that can help to get children in sync.

If you plan to attend or have questions PLEASE CALL Becky Downing at 810-591-4868 and leave your name and phone number.

Hope to see you there!

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