



# PERSPECTIVES

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

## !April is Autism Awareness Month!

It has been the history of this nation to pride itself on its multi-cultural population. In theory, at least, we are a melting pot. Most individuals, when asked, will indicate that there is a need for diversity or life could be boring. Let's think about neurodiversity and in particular, the autism spectrum. Ours is a very social society and for those on the spectrum that can be a very difficult challenge. As Carol gray has said, it takes two people to have a conversation. Can we, as neurotypical individuals, step up to the plate and recognize the unique perspectives of those on the spectrum? Can we have patience and consideration for the possibility that they may need more processing time? Can we try to understand that they speak the truth and while it may not always be flattering, it is not meant to be rude?

Lack of theory of mind, or simply put, the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes is considered to be another aspect of social interactions that can be a challenge for those on the spectrum. It has been my experience, that it can be just as difficult for neurotypical individuals to try to understand what it is like to be an individual with an autism spectrum disorder. The challenge for this month of autism awareness, and hopefully beyond that, is for all of us to try to imagine what it is like to be in their shoes. Read something new about ASD and share it with someone else. Take that time to say something positive to someone with an autism spectrum disorder. Try to recognize the challenges they face every day and the unique perspective and varied talents that they bring to our society. Let's celebrate neurodiversity!

Becky Downing, Teacher Consultant for Autism Spectrum Disorders

## PAC Library

The Parent Advisory Committee has a library of books, DVDs, and videos on various special education areas. Many of these resources are about Autism Spectrum Disorders and can be checked out at GISD's Special Education Services—North (SESC-N), 5075 Pilgrim Road, Flint 48507. For further information contact Marcia Clark at 591-4881.

## Autistic Pride Day

June 18th is Autistic Pride day around the world. The day is for positive events relating to autism spectrum conditions for people on the spectrum and their families and friends. The autism spectrum includes autism, asperger's, hyperlexia, and PDD-nos.

Events such as walks, parades, picnics and parties are expected, for people to have fun and relax and know that people with autism are valid members of the community. In 2005 there were many celebrations, it is expected that there will be even more in 2006. Have a look at the 'Events' link on the website to view planned events for 2006 coming soon.

Reprinted from



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# International Asperger's Year Hans Asperger Centenary: 1906-2006

February 18, 2006 will mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Hans Asperger, discoverer of Asperger's Syndrome. Dr. Asperger's centenary also marks the 25th anniversary of the publication of Dr. Lorna Wing's article "Asperger's syndrome: a clinical account" in the journal Psychological Medicine. Dr. Wing's paper, the first major English-language presentation of Dr. Asperger's work, helped bring worldwide attention to Asperger's Syndrome.

We invite you to observe International Asperger's Year, to be held in 2006, the year of these two landmark anniversaries. International Asperger's Year is an appropriate time to honor Dr. Asperger and other researchers, encourage people who might have AS to seek diagnosis, correct misconceptions about AS, improve and expand AS public services, develop AS mentoring programs, and recognize the special needs of AS adults.

International Asperger's Year is the first worldwide celebration dedicated solely to Asperger's Syndrome. Organizations and individuals may observe IAY as they wish. The initiative was conceived by the Asperger Adults of Greater Washington, has been sanctioned by the World Autism Organization, and has been endorsed by the following specialists and leaders:

- ⌘ Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, Professor of Developmental Psychopathology and Director of the Autism Research Centre at Cambridge University;
- ⌘ Professor Uta Frith, Deputy Director, Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London;
- ⌘ Hon. Angela Browning, M.P., Asperger political advocate and mother of an Asperger adult;
- ⌘ Stephen Shore, author and consultant;
- ⌘ Roger N. Meyer, author and advocate;
- ⌘ Jerry Newport, author, and inspiration for the film Mozart And The Whale; and
- ⌘ Michael John Carley, nonprofit executive.

A Committee for International Asperger's Year has

established an open listserv for the exchange of IAY-related ideas, information and announcements: <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/asperger-year/>

## Famous People with ASD

Notable persons known to have an autism spectrum disorder:

- ⌘ Temple Grandin
- ⌘ Craig Nicholls
- ⌘ Gary Numan
- ⌘ Stephen Shore
- ⌘ Jim Sinclair
- ⌘ Wendy Lawson
- ⌘ Stephen Wiltshire
- ⌘ Stephen Spielberg
- ⌘ Vernon Smith

Living people widely suspected (but not confirmed) to have an autism disorder:

- ⌘ Woody Allen
- ⌘ Syd Barrett
- ⌘ David Byrne
- ⌘ Bob Dylan
- ⌘ Kevin Mitnick
- ⌘ David Helfgott
- ⌘ Al Gore
- ⌘ Bill Gates

Historical notables suspected (but not confirmed) to have had an autism spectrum disorder:

- ⌘ Albert Einstein
- ⌘ Glenn Gould
- ⌘ Howard Hughes
- ⌘ Thomas Jefferson
- ⌘ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- ⌘ William James Sidis
- ⌘ Ludwig Wittgenstein
- ⌘ Andy Warhol
- ⌘ Jane Austen
- ⌘ Ludwig van Beethoven
- ⌘ Alexander Graham Bell
- ⌘ Emily Dickinson
- ⌘ Thomas Edison
- ⌘ Henry Ford
- ⌘ Thomas Jefferson
- ⌘ Carl Jung
- ⌘ Andy Kaufman
- ⌘ H P Lovecraft
- ⌘ Friedrich Nietzsche
- ⌘ J.R.R. Tolkien
- ⌘ Alan Turing
- ⌘ Walter Pitts
- ⌘ Isaac Newton

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A publication of GISD's Special Education Services Center

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- ⌘ Alfred Hitchcock
- ⌘ Ayn Rand
- ⌘ Socrates
- ⌘ Leonardo Da Vinci
- ⌘ Michaelangelo
- ⌘ George Mendel
- ⌘ Charles Darwin
- ⌘ Marie Curie
- ⌘ Paul Erdos

Reprinted from <http://aspiesforfreedom.com>

## Dan Ackroyd

Dan Ackroyd has aspergers. He is 53 and is Canadian. Dan had problems in school as a child and at one point got expelled. He has had a lifelong obsession with the police and studied criminology at University. He had Tourette's syndrome, as well as aspergers. He has an obsession with police work, and carries a police badge at all times.

He started out at comedy clubs performing shows, and moved into show business full time. He works as a comedian, actor, and screenwriter. He has appeared in 64 films and received an Academy Award nomination as Best Supporting Actor for Driving Miss Daisy. He was one of the founders of the House of Blues. Its mission is to promote African-American cultural contributions of blues music and folk art. As of 2004, it was the second-largest live music promoter in the world, with seven venues and 22 amphitheatres in the United States and Canada.

He is on Canada's Walk of Fame. In 1994 Ackroyd received an honorary Doctor of Literature degree from Carleton University. In 1998, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada. Dan is married and has three children.

## Jonathan Lerman

Jonathan Lerman is autistic. He is 18 and lives in the USA. Jonathan stopped talking at the age of two, and when he was three he was diagnosed with autism. Jonathan is technically classed as 'retarded' as he has an I.Q. of 53, however IQ results are not very accurate for people with

autism, as they focus on language in a neurotypical way.

As a child he loved to watch TV, and had no particular interest in art. As he grew he started to draw doodles, his parents started taking him to art museums. When he was ten he started to show an amazing creative talent for art. He created pictures of faces in charcoal. Amazingly, two years later Jonathan, at 12, had his first solo art show. Kerry Schuss, whose gallery, K. S. Art on Leonard Street has represented Jonathan for four years and sold about 60 of his charcoal drawings for \$500 to \$1,200 each.

John Thomson, chairman of the art department at the State University at Binghamton, said his work was "really exceptional, characterized by an amazing lack of stereotypes common to drawings of all age levels." Jonathan's mother said to Jonathan after an exhibition, "People really love your art," and he was happy.

In 1999 he had his own solo exhibition at the KS Art gallery in New York City. He has had personal exhibitions, and has also exhibited his work alongside others. This is a book about Jonathan - 'Jonathan Lerman: Drawings by an Artist with Autism'

This site shows Jonathan's drawings - <http://www.ksartonline.com/jl.html>.

## Richard Borchers

Richard Borchers has aspergers. He is 47 and is from South Africa, and now lives in the USA. He was born in Cape Town and educated at Cambridge University. He suspected he might have aspergers after reading an article about it when he was in his 30s and recognized himself in the description. He was then diagnosed.

Richard has talked about his social problems, and is scared of using the telephone. His work doesn't depend on social skills and he has been very successful, he says, "I've spent most of my life in universities, where eccentricity is fairly common, which probably made me stand out less. Most

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math departments I've been in have at least one person who is clearly weirder than I am." He is currently a professor of mathematics. In 1998 he won a very high award in the Math world, the Field's Medal.

## Stephen Wiltshire

Stephen Wiltshire is autistic. He is 31 and is from Britain. As a child, Stephen was mute and did not relate to other people well. At three, he was diagnosed as autistic. He was non-verbal, and had behavior problems. At five years old, Stephen went to Queensmill School in London, where he started drawing.

He was obsessed with cars and drawings of cars at this time, and he liked to draw London landmarks. Stephen was introduced to Sir Hugh Casson, of the Royal Academy of Art, he called Stephen "the best child artist in Britain." Stephen's work has been on many television programs around the world. In 2003, thousands of people saw Stephen's drawings at Orleans House gallery in Twickenham near London, England. It was the first major retrospective of Stephen's work.

Books about Stephen - Cities, Floating Cities, and Stephen Wiltshire's American Dream.

## Bram Cohen

Bram Cohen has aspergers. He is 30 and lives in the USA. Bram graduated from High School in 1993, and attended University in New York. Bram's hobbies are origami and juggling. His main interest is mathematics. He says his aspergers has given him great ability to concentrate, while also making it difficult for him to relate to other people. He states "I tend to get obsessed with technical problems, and have a very long attention span, which are obviously good traits for being a programmer, and seem like Aspergers traits."

Bram Cohen works as a computer programmer, best known as the author of BitTorrent. He is also the co-founder of CodeCon. In April 2001 he began work on BitTorrent. Bram designed

BitTorrent to be able to download files from many different sources, thus speeding up the download time, especially when the peers are on ADSL connections. Bram is married and has children.

Bios reprinted from [www.aspiesforfreecom.com/](http://www.aspiesforfreecom.com/)

## Following are excerpts from The Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships (pages xi & 10) by Temple Grandin & Sean Barron

(Page xi) Early on in the project, during some of our more frustrating months, Sean succinctly summed up the difficulty we were having with defining the unwritten rules of social relationships: "There is the world of the neurotypicals and the world of the person on the autism spectrum. Our perspective and understanding—indeed, our very thinking process—is so very different than yours, yet we are required to conform to your set of rules. For you, social understanding is innate. For us, it is not. Asking me to define the unwritten social rules that help or hinder us in forming relationships is like asking me to write a book about the unwritten rules of the people of France. I'm not French; I wasn't born into that culture and I don't know their rules. The same logic applies here."

(Page 10) Cathi Cohen, in her book, *Raise Your Child's Social IQ*, offers the following list of characteristics of children with positive and negative self-esteem:

### **Kids with High Self-Esteem:**

- Have fairly stable moods
- Set realistic goals and achieve them
- Have self-motivation and "stick-to-it-ness"
- Can accept rejection or critical feedback
- Can say "no" peers
- Are realistically aware of their own strengths and weaknesses

### **Kids with Low Self-Esteem:**

- Often blame others for their actions
- Need to be liked by everyone
- See themselves as losers
- Are critical of others

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- Get frustrated easily
- Have trouble accepting responsibility for their actions
- Make negative comments about themselves
- Tend to be quitters

## FAQ & A

By Liane Holliday-Willey

To whom do you credit your success as a successful Aspie adult? Without question, the biggest bit of credit goes to my father. As an Aspie, he too understands what it is like to live with a neurological difference. But more importantly, he is the person on earth who accepts me precisely as I am, no ifs ands or buts about it. While there are others in my life who enjoy and even love me, it is Dad who has always thought there was nothing at all wrong with his daughter, but rather, things wrong with a society who too often fails to accept people with differences. Though I am in my early forties and Dad is in his early eighties, we remain daily phone pals and the best of friends. And so, to you parents out there, take a hint from my father and learn to accept your children as they are—Aspieness and all. Then, and only then, can you find the best ways to encourage their growth and development.

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

## Social Competence Techniques for Children with ASP

By Laurie Jacobs, M.A. CCC-SLP

AS A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST who treats children affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD), I've struggled to find the best approach for combating their all-too-common loneliness and frustration. Unlike their typically developing peers, children with ASD do not naturally acquire basic social skills, such as understanding the emotions and thoughts of others, and establishing meaningful friendships through general experience and observation. Many of these children are interested in social interaction and they want to have friends, but they simply don't know how to effectively use the nonverbal skills that make up 93% of the way

we communicate. These elusive skills play a major role in interpersonal dynamics. Without formal instruction, children with ASD often get lost trying to navigate the complex social cues that their peers take for granted, such as:

- Recognizing how and when it's appropriate to touch someone
- Understanding how tone of voice can add to the meaning of a persons words
- Reading facial expressions to accurately pinpoint a persons feelings and emotions
- Adhering to the boundaries of personal space
- Using the right speech volume in one-on-one or group situations

Because social skills are required everywhere, all the time, children with ASD are faced with their social inadequacies on a daily basis—at home, at school, and in their communities. Not surprisingly, then, these children tend to experience anxiety, depression, social avoidance, academic difficulties, and challenging peer relationships. Fortunately, social skills can be both taught and learned, and this article will address a variety of proven methods that families, educators, and clinicians can use to bolster a child's social competence.

## The Solution: Social Skills Training

Research by the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities and others have demonstrated that social skills training helps children with ASD to improve functioning in their personal and academic lives. Social competence training techniques can be implemented in any and every environment from school and home to community events, as well as in monitored Internet chat rooms.

It usually isn't difficult to identify the child with social skill deficits. I prefer to interview the child's caregivers and to observe the child interacting within his or her environment. Teachers and clinicians can do this too, by watching the child during unstructured activities such as recess, and by using support staff to report on the times when breakdowns occur. Once the problem is identified, we can

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**Social competence training techniques can be implemented in any and every environment...**

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set about to treat it.

In my speech-language pathology practice, I apply a combination of "low-tech" (no technology) and "high-tech" (technology)

devices to teach social skills to children with ASD. Some of the "best practice," low tech applications are described in the next section.

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**...children and adolescents alike are usually motivated by the "game like" computer format since computer activities are typically areas of interest and strength for them.**

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### Low Tech Training Methods

Many low-tech training methods have withstood the test of time, facilitating the acquisition of critical social skills by leveraging modeling and visual aides. My favorites include:

- Creating an "emotions" scrapbook using magazines and photographs
- Employing social skills workbooks and board games
- Engaging in one-to-one thematic and pretend play
- Forming social skills groups with the child's peers
- Reading single-themed social stories and comic strips with the child
- Dissecting social situations as they occur in a non-blaming, nonreprimanding way

These practical, low-cost solutions provide families, clinicians, and educators with a hands-on approach that encourages rapid learning and relationship building with the child with ASD.

### High Tech Training Methods

In recent years, technology (referred to as "high-tech" devices) has allowed for the development of computer-based, interactive training methods. Such techniques are highly effective because they are designed to facilitate learning by providing opportunities to pause and discuss information. Scenarios can also be re-played to facilitate greater recall and understanding. In addition, children and adolescents alike are usually motivated by the "game like" computer format since computer activities are typically areas of interest and strength for them. "Best practice," high-tech exercises include:

- Using voice-recording systems to help the child identify topic maintenance, different tones of voice, and volume variances
- Watching, pausing and discussing television and videos, like age-appropriate sitcoms or child-friendly soap operas that feature dramatic emotions and social scenarios
- Practicing vivo or video modeling by having the child watch live players re-enact a social situation, or by taping the child and his or her peers in a social situation
- Using interactive computer programs that depict real-life video of social scenarios, and asking the child to determine what should be said or done next.

The well-adjusted child with ASD must master the nuances of communication and socialization while still of school age. Though social skills training can be implemented in many low-tech and high-tech formats, today's interactive software programs allow children with ASD to practice everything from appropriate social touch and speech volume, to appropriate classroom behavior and lunchtime interaction in a safe, non-threatening environment. They also provide a forum to help children carry over learned skills into everyday interactions, so that they may ultimately gain the confidence they need to establish relationships and interact with others more successfully and appropriately in everyday life.

### BIO

Laurie Jacobs, MA. CCC-SLP, is the owner of Community Speech Language Services, an independent speech pathology practice that treats pediatric and adolescent language disorders including autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and Down Syndrome. She is also the co-founder of Social Skill Builder a company that provides interactive software tools for teaching social skills to children affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Social Skill Builder's CD-ROMs, *The Birthday Party*, *My School Day*, *My Community*, and *School Rules*, use interactive video sequences to imitate real life social scenarios where children commonly interact with peers. Visit Laurie's website [www.socialskillbuilder.com](http://www.socialskillbuilder.com) or call (866) 278 1452.

Reprinted from Autism Spectrum Quarterly Fall/Winter 2005

## Conferences

Date	Title & Location	Speakers	Fee	Contact Info
Mar. 3, 2006	Supports for Students w/ASD Macomb ISD	Kelly Dunlap	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Mar. 4, 2006	Grandparents Only! Macomb-Oakland Regional Center	Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Mar. 10, 2006	Looking at ASD Differently Shepard, Michigan	Maureen Ziegler	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Mar. 17, 2006	Super Skills Workshop: Building Social Competence in Students with ASD GISD	Judy Coucouvanis	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Mar. 17, 2006	Consultation Time with Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle GISD	Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Mar. 24, 2006	The Functions of Behavior for Individuals w/ASD Marquette, Michigan	Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Mar. 31, 2006	ASM Spring Conference Lansing	Temple Grandin Eustacia Cutler	Varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Apr. 5, 2006	Augmenting Communication & Interaction for Individuals with ASD St. Johns, Michigan	Lynn Sweeney	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
Apr. 5, 2006	Transitioning Individuals w/ASD from School to Work St. Johns, Michigan	Renee Schmoebel	varies	www.autism-mi.org 1-800-223-6722
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 1-800-223-6722
June 20, 2006	Using Verbal Behavior to Analyze Language & PECS Detroit, Michigan	unknown	\$205	www.pecs.com 1-888-732-7462
June 22-23, 2006	2-Day PECS Training Detroit, Michigan	unknown	\$395	www.pecs.com 1-888-732-7462

## Support Groups

- ☞ Autism Support Group of Genesee County:  
www.geneseeaautism.org
- ☞ Autism Support Group in Flushing: Christina  
Franklin (810) 732-1776
- ☞ Linden Community Schools Support Group for  
parents & guardians of children with an autism  
spectrum disorder: Moilanen (810) 591-9138 or  
591-0708, Nyman (810) 591-9174

- ☞ ASA/Oakland County Chapter Events:  
www.asaoakland.org
- ☞ Jack's Place for Autism: www.oakland.edu (click  
site map, then centers)

**Perspectives is now on the GISD website at  
www.geneseeisd.org under Publications tab,  
then click on the newsletters link. Scroll  
down to find Perspectives.**

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# Autism Spectrum Support Group



Date: Thursday, April 13, 2006

Place: Genesee Intermediate School District

Special Education Services Center—North, GenNet classroom

5075 Pilgrim Road, Flint 48507

Time: 6:00 p.m.



Alyson Beytien's experience with her children's diagnoses motivated her to make the study and understanding of Autism her life's pursuit. Family to Family is the first of a series of DVDs designed to assist families in dealing with the daily challenges of autism spectrum disorders.

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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