



# PERSPECTIVES

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

## Component

By Liane Holliday-Willey

I am too often under the impression that experts believe the social misunderstandings are the key issues behind most AS related difficulties. While I understand the reasoning here, I maintain that social misunderstandings are a symptom of a cause and therefore, it is silly to merely try and address the symptom which is what so many try to do. As a psycholinguist, and as a person with AS, I stand firm on the belief that language processing problems are one of the main causes of AS difficulties. It is essential, in my opinion, that a strong language component be built in to every IEP or support system. Only when a person with AS learns how neurotypicals use (and expect to receive) language, can they be expected to avoid many social mishaps. Obviously, there are other causes behind social issues- sensory integration problems, generalized anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders, and all the other AS related problems- work together to create a jungle through which proper socializing has little chance of emerging. To insist that social skills training is the be all and end all of AS intervention therapy, is in my opinion, a very misguided view. Language. Teach the verbal components including: an appreciation for metaphors hidden meanings and sarcasm; word usage and word choice; inflection, rate and other speech issues related to prosody (the metrical study of language verse); good listening skills; and good dictionary and thesaurus skills. AND Teach the non-verbal components of language including: the use of gestures; a recognition and understanding of basic facial expressions (this is a tough one- more to follow in other blogs); the importance and correct use of eye contact; proximity; and posture and body orientation. Then and only then, can you begin to make real and meaningful changes in social understanding.

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

## Online Homework Helpers

Ask Dr. Bob: <http://oceanworld.tamu.edu>

Robert Stewart, a Texas A & M University oceanography professor who responds to questions from teachers and students, draws the line when students ask him to complete homework assignment. He receives a \$100,000 a year grant from NASA and hopes to arouse curiosity.



Fliegler's Mathman: [www.fliegler.com/mathman.htm](http://www.fliegler.com/mathman.htm)

Henry Fliegler, a retired engineer from Orange, California. His reward is the thank you notes including one declaring him "my math god."

## Just for Fun

Palindromes are read the same forwards and backwards letter by letter. Example: Go hang a salami; I'm a lasagna hog

They can be a sentence that reads the same word by word forward and backward. Example: Blessed are they that believe that they are blessed.

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

### Inside this issue:

Another View	2
Too many kids diagnosed with AS?	3
Featured Book	4
The Song of Autism	4
Thoughts and Observations on Asperger Syndrome	5
School Cultures that Support Students Across the Autism Spectrum	6
Conferences	7

# Another View

with Linda Hodgdon

## Start With Good Bones

A new school year guarantees changes in a student's life. Some changes may be easier to handle than others. Some new environments will be easier to navigate than others. The questions in WHY?

## Good Bones



Some environments have good bones. Some do not. Sometimes people will say a house has "good bones." That means the designer can look past the pink and purple polka-dot wallpaper and orange shag carpeting. What he sees is a great basic floor plan that needs some help. The essentials are there.

A classroom can have good bones, too. Basics. Essentials. Things that help students navigate through the fundamentals. Here are some **visual** essentials that can create a classroom with good bones.

**1. Daily Schedule.** This is a **must have**. No arguments. Students need to be told **visually** what is happening today. This gives them the big picture. "He already knows the schedule" is not an excuse. (That statement is usually followed by, "He only has a problem when the schedule changes.") Remember, one of the reasons for the schedule is to tell students about changes.



**2. Mini Schedules.** The daily schedule gives a picture of the whole day. Mini schedules (**visual**, of course) break down what will happen during a smaller part of the day.

Mini schedules can describe the routine when going to the library or during a specified activity time. They contain specific information not included in the daily schedule.

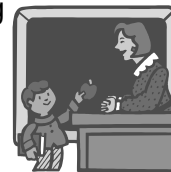
**3. Classroom Rules.** The rules exist. Are they **visual**? They need to be. Just a few simple ones. Review them at the beginning of each day. Refer

to them regularly as you correct student behavior.

**4. Floor Plan.** How is a classroom organized? Can a student tell by looking around where the activity spaces are? Furniture arrangement, tape on the floor or a sign on a table are **visual** ways to help students know where they are supposed to be.

**5. Signs & Directions.** Think about how the outside world communicates important information to us: wait here until it is your turn, stop, go, put your card here, do not touch.... A few well placed **visual** prompts can guide students toward appropriate behavior. (Aim for the right amount. Don't go overboard with this.)

**Go beyond the classroom.** Creating a classroom that supports students is not enough. Think about how much time they spend outside of that room. Where else do they go? Lunch room...gym...library... playground...music, art and more.... Do those places have good bones?



## Set a goal for the whole school.

Look at the entire school building to identify areas of need. Remember, good bones help all students, not just those with learning challenges.

Can you create a whole school building with GOOD BONES?

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## PERSPECTIVES

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# Are too many kids being diagnosed with AS?

by Liane Holliday

Hubby and I were just debating whether or not the AS diagnosis was being given out too freely. Some think AS is merely the psychobabble of today's parenting. I, of course, find that thought wrong and misguided. The neurologists and psychologists I work with seem to think there are several reasons behind the increase in AS. 1) The AS or ADHD genes (if they've been correctly identified, there is some debate left on this) seem to get stronger with each generation. I buy this argument. My father has AS; his great niece has the stronger autism diagnosis. I know, sample of one, but mine isn't the only family fitting this pattern. 2) We with these diagnoses are finally finding other folks with the same symptoms, and then 'we breed' a psychologist friend of mine says that, love it!) and pass on the genes in bigger doses. 3) Today's world seems to bombard the body with too much too soon and perhaps this is forcing the brain to develop too quickly. Research at leading veterinarian schools showed that some of their brightest students were showing too many ADHD traits. Background stories showed a pattern of early walking for the ADHD students. The researchers had the ADHD students actually crawl and the ADHD became more manageable for the students. Interesting stuff, if you ask me, about early brain development and society's expectations/ today's parenting decisions to push kids too fast too far, etc. 4) Finally, folks were far less likely to be diagnosed back in the day. Think the farm days. Sensory integration was at a minimum, for example clothes were well washed and worn and rarely scratchy and starchy and new; there was little to no noise pollution; etc., so it was far less likely these kids would stand out as different because there weren't so many assaults on their system forcing them to stand up and shout and act weird. Think immigration at the turn of the century. There was no need to have to think like others or fit in socially, if one was only working with crops and animals, and people were known to be different via their cultures, thus differences in character could well have been dismissed as cultural differences. Indeed, society expected less

of individuals melting in before mass transit and mass media came in to play. We tended to stay amongst our family and nearest neighbors, we didn't socialize with others as much, we didn't have global debates during which we could show our real thinking differences. In a nutshell: the gene might be getting stronger and causing more gaps between the norm and the deviations from it; society is perhaps forcing developmental issues to occur artificially or at inappropriate times; and it is far more difficult to hide differences these days.

I maintain that AS and even ADHD don't have to be bad things. I believe the hand of God is in everything good and that when cultivated and nurtured correctly, AS and ADHD can be very good things for the world. Dan Akryod, Steven Spielberg, Bill Gates, Thomas Jefferson, Van Gogh, Robin Williams, are among those who have either been formally diagnosed or who fit the criteria for AS or ADHD to a T. Where are the famous women? Females are affected less severely and they are aided with developmental delays earlier on and more widely. If you believe brain hemisphere research, the less affected supposition fits. Brain wave studies indicate people with AS have right frontal lobe damage. If women do indeed have stronger right hemispheres, it would then follow that damage to this area would be less obvious. Finally, society nurtures females earlier on and more often. Think young girls and boys on the playground. Odd duckling young girls are more likely to be mothered by young girls and therefore helped to overcome and deal with their developmental delays, while the young boys on the playground will have far less tolerance and patience for their chums who have delays in physical prowess or immature reactions such as crying because there is too much noise in the cafeteria.

I'm only now on my first cup of coffee, so I can only hope I'm being articulate enough to make sense!

Reprinted from <http://www.aspergersmichigan.org/>

## Featured Book

Freaks, Geeks & Asperger Syndrome:  
A User Guide to Adolescence  
By Luke Jackson

*From Chapter 13—The Dating Game*

AS and dating definitely do not mix. Dating involves a lot of social interaction and I am sure I can also speak for other AS kids too when I say that our reserves are very small. Plus there are not many girls that love talking all day about computers! After a lot of searching, I discovered that there are hardly any tips on dating for quiet kids and kids with AS. I think that this may be purely because it is such a fragile subject. I am now going to rectify this and give out some of the words of wisdom that I have been given myself. Even though I am giving these for kids because I am one, I am sure that they apply to AS people of any age. I don't think this stuff ever gets any easier.



### Contents

Foreword by Tony Attwood

Acknowledgements

1. An Introduction — Me and My Family
  2. Asperger Syndrome and the Autistic Spectrum
  3. To Tell or Not to Tell?
  4. Fascinations and Fixations
  5. Sense and Sense Abilities
  6. A Different Physiology
  7. A Word about Sleep
  8. Language and Learning
  9. The Problem with School...
  10. Bullying
  11. Taekwondo
  12. Friendships and Socializing
  13. The Dating Game
  14. Moral and Principles—Representation and Reality
  15. One Final and Positive Note
- Idioms — an Explanation  
Further Reading  
Useful Addresses and Websites

Reprinted from Freaks, Geeks, & Asperger Syndrome

## The Song of Autism

By Philip Ashton

I bring you joy, delight, happiness and wonder  
I bring you sorrow, sadness and pain  
I am the dawn of each new day, promissful of  
hope  
I am sunshine, I am shadow  
I am a sonata in a minor key  
I am a concerto in a major key.  
I entrance you, intrigue you, bewilder you  
I charm you, exasperate you, amaze you  
I am what in your ignorance you fear  
I comfort you, console you, enlighten you  
Some days all you desire I am  
Some days my leaving you long for.  
I am strong, I am vulnerable, I am confident, I am  
doubting  
I am solitude—peaceful and silent, in self-value  
secure  
I am community—solidarity, unity, strength, love  
I am countless stories in creativity forged—  
imagination opening, knowledge expanding, truth  
revealing  
I am a rainbow reflected tree dappled in a forest  
lake  
I am a mischievous spirit singing and dancing and  
playing with unrestrained glee.  
In myriad forms I come, each one unique  
I am a strange mysterious land, never to be fully  
explored.  
With love I invite you  
Accept me at least  
But if you welcome me, if you befriend me  
Your lives I will enrich.

Reprinted from neurodiversity.com



# Thoughts and Observations on Asperger Syndrome

Author Richard Howlin

## Varied and Complex Journeys

What I have come to discover over the years as a psychologist brought me a long way from my original training in Munich and the scores of textbooks and techniques of academic psychology. Through countless clinical interactions I have come to appreciate the astounding variations in human behavior. Many of the children I see are diagnosed with Asperger syndrome because they see the world in an intense and ingenious ways that refuse the existing paradigms of their school and peer culture. Others, while also unique, are more vulnerable. Their struggle is more complex and often intensified by anxiety and mood regulatory challenges. Learning disabilities can also create significant obstacles to the path of selfhood for these more complex journeys.

## A Common Thread

One could argue that perhaps the one common thread unifying all children diagnosed with Asperger syndrome is a fundamental inability to relate and profit from human relationships in a consistent and age appropriate fashion. I have come to view my role, in part, as diplomat for idiosyncrasies, helping the child "fit in" (with or without diagnosis), expanding the frames of tolerance, but also earnestly attempting to comprehend and honor this unique expression of life and God's work in the world.

## The Basis of Selfhood

Human discourse forms the ground on which our individual existence stands as a unique figure. As such humankind and relationships form an absolutely essential component of development and personal meaning. Finding our own individual and creative expression through the

human drama is fundamental. Psychological reflection and growth is inconceivable in total isolation, the imagined "other" is always there.

## Expanding Paradigms of Social

Thus, human relations are a vital and fundamental part of what it means to be a human being. However human interaction is a multifaceted process involving far more than simply "being social". Societies have long valued the societal (thus social) contributions of those who otherwise were not especially gifted in the area of social discourse. Similarly, in childhood, the development of self is not merely limited to "success" within peer interactions or the cult of popularity. Self development requires also solitude and the countless other forms of relationships that we partake in (animal, material). Thus, tolerating individuality and authentic diversity of thinking is a barometer of health for every civilized society.

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

## Other papers written by Richard Howlin can be found on [www.aspergersmichigan.org](http://www.aspergersmichigan.org):

- [\*Asperger Syndrome and the High School Experience\*](#)
- [\*Asperger Syndrome: Social Dyslexia\*](#)
  - The Primary Difficulties found in Children with Asperger Syndrome
  - Age of Onset of Asperger Syndrome
  - Cognitive Functioning and Asperger Syndrome
  - Variations in Social Expression among Children with Asperger Syndrome
  - The causes of Asperger Syndrome?
  - Asperger Syndrome and Individually
  - Asperger Syndrome and Adolescent Development

# School Cultures that Support Students Across the Autism Spectrum

Cathy Pratt, Ph.D.

## School-Wide Discipline Practices

In this time of zero tolerance and fear of school violence, the school districts response to disciplinary problems has much to say about school culture. Some schools take the approach of creating stricter guidelines and heightened use of suspension and expulsion. Other schools have begun to take a more proactive approach geared toward prevention. Acknowledging that classroom management and discipline issues affect learning, these schools have chosen to develop school wide programs that focus on providing more supportive environments for all students. For example, recognizing that bullying is on the rise, and realizing that some students feel diminished by the school experience, some schools have begun to examine strategies for connecting students to adults and to each

...the school district's response to disciplinary problems has much to say about school culture.

other. By creating a sense of community, there is less opportunity for students to get lost in the system.

Other schools realize that students may not be able to put school rules into practice. For example, what does "be respectful" look like? How

should one act, or what should one do when being respectful? To ensure that students operationalize these rules, some schools have begun to directly teach students how to carry out the rule. These schools are focused on teaching students how to behave rather than on the consequences of their actions. As such, the staff focuses on rewarding positive behaviors as opposed to merely focusing on the negatives. As a matter of practice, their positive comments outweigh negative

comments in their interactions with students.

Finally, some schools have decided to develop programs based on the data collected. If, for example, the data demonstrate that students have a greater chance of engaging in problem behavior more during recess in the weeks preceding a holiday then the school may choose to provide more adult supervision during those weeks. If the data demonstrate that certain teachers are less successful in maintaining classroom order, then support might be provided to assist them in gaining new tools. Most importantly, in the end, these schools report fewer disciplinary problems.

What does "be respectful" look like?

## Conclusion

Sometimes parents choose to send, or desire to investigate autism-specific schools for their sons and daughters. When the culture of the public school is not supportive or conducive to the child's learning, this is understandable. Notwithstanding, this decision is one that must be carefully considered, since placing a student in a setting that isolates him or her from the demands and stresses of the community may not prepare the child for the realities of life after school. Neither will it enable the student to benefit from the positive aspects of community life. Hence, schools that actively collaborate to create supportive learning environments overall, benefit everyone—students on the autism spectrum and their neurotypical peers.

Reprinted from Autism Spectrum Quarterly

## Conferences

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title &amp; Location</b>	<b>Speakers</b>	<b>Fee</b>	<b>Contact Info</b>
Dec. 5, 2005	Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships Calgary, Alberta, Canada	Temple Grandin		www.autismtoday.com 1-866-8EVENTS
Dec. 7, 2005	Practical Approaches to Working with Autistic Children Saginaw, Michigan	Charlene Young, OTR/L	\$189	Cross Country Education PO Box 305006 Nashville, Tennessee 800-397-0180
Dec. 8, 2005	Practical Approaches to Working with Autistic Children Lansing, Michigan	Charlene Young, OTR/L	\$189	Cross Country Education PO Box 305006 Nashville, Tennessee 800-397-0180
Dec. 21, 2005	Practical Approaches to Working with Autistic Children Detroit, Michigan	Charlene Young, OTR/L	\$189	Cross Country Education PO Box 305006 Nashville, Tennessee 800-397-0180
Jan. 11, 2006	ASD Innovative Approaches for Children with Behavioral & Social Deficits in the Classroom, Home & Community Detroit, Michigan	Rebecca Moyes	\$139	www.neei.org Carolyn 413-499-1489 ext 1
Jan. 11, 2006	Understanding Individuals with Asperger Syndrome or High Functioning Autism	Wendy Handrich	Varies	866-352-9539 www.lorman.com
March 2006	Liane Holliday-Willey Traverse City, Michigan	No further information		aspie.com



### **Three Things you can do Today to Protect a Person with Autism**

1. Place decal on the front door or window of your home or on your automobile. (Do not place the decal on the door or window of the individual's room.)
2. Complete the enclosed Personal Information Record and make copies of it for your home, car, babysitters, other caregivers and emergency personnel.
3. Call your locality's non-emergency telephone number and ask personnel to note in the 911 database that someone with autism lives at your address.

Decals are available on the website and they say:

In case of Emergency!

Occupant with Autism may:

- Run away
- Not respond
- Resist help

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Special Education Services Center  
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Flint, Michigan 48507-3493  
Phone: 810-591-4877  
Fax: 810-591-4548



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# Autism Spectrum Support Group



Date: Thursday, December 8, 2005  
Place: Genesee Intermediate School District  
Special Education Services Center—North, GenNet  
classroom  
5075 Pilgrim Road, Flint 48507



Time: 6:00 p.m.

(Pilgrim Road is south off of Maple Avenue, between Van Slyke and Torrey Roads. Parking is in the front and side of the building. Enter through the front doors.)

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.

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