



PERSPECTIVES

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

Summer Camps

The end of school is near and the countdown has begun. There are many summer activities to check out. This is not a recommendation, it is strictly for informational purposes.

- * Oakland University—www.oakland.edu/oucares offers Art, Basketball, Cartooning, Learning thru Movement, Music, Soccer, Social Skills, and a Summer Day Camp. Registration forms and application are on the website or phone 248-370-2424.
- * Easter Seals programs include The Play Project, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Sensory Integration, Therapeutic Camp Experiences, and Early Intervention. Get more information at www.mi.easter-seals.org.
- * Grand Blanc Parks & Recreation, Special Needs phone 810-694-0101
- * Southern Lakes Parks & Recreation, phone 810-591-0080
- * For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum. For more information call the nature preserve at 810-789-8567 or the arboretum at 810-736-7100, ext. 6 or go to www.geneseecountyparks.org
- * Michigan Summer Camps, www.camppage.com/michigan.htm
- * Sloan Museum, phone 810-237-3450. Many activities are provided throughout the summer.
- * The Flint Institute of Arts, phone 810-234-1695 or website www.flintarts.org. The institute offers many classes in the summer.
- * Flint Youth Theatre, phone 810-237-1530. Classes are offered in the summer.
- * Flint Institute of Music, phone 810-238-1350. Classes are offered in the summer.
- * PAC Library. The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) has a library of books, DVDs, and videos or various special education areas that can be checked out.

Come by this summer and see what's available at GISD's, SESC-N building, 5075 Pilgrim Rd., Flint, MI 48507. For further information contact Marcia Clark at 810-591-4881.

- * Mott Children's Health Center
 - ☞ Kid Power for brothers and sisters of kids with special needs. Phone 810-237-8692.
 - ☞ Parent Empowerment Program for parents with newly diagnosed/suspected ASD. Phone 767-5750, ext. 5292.
- * Thomas the Tank is back in August at Crossroads Village!

Using Photos to Teach Conversation Skills

Linda Hodgdon, M.ED., CCC-SLP is the author of the best-seller, *Visual Strategies for Improving communication*. She is featured in the award winning Visual Strategies Workshop-Video Program. To learn more or to sign up for her FREE E-newsletter, visit www.UseVisualStrategies.com

Do you have a photo in your wallet or purse? Your children? Grandchildren? Buster, the family dog? Do you proudly pull that picture out to show your friends or coworkers?

When we search for ways to use visual strategies to improve communication, special photos are an important choice. Photos are great tools to help students engage in conversation and create deeper relationships.

Take a Photo to Talk About
Learning effective conversation skills ranks as one of the greatest challenges for students

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with autism spectrum disorders and many others with communication challenges.

Where do you begin?

Teaching conversation skills is a huge task. Photos can help. Keep your camera handy. Watch for opportunities to capture events that would be good conversation topics. The photos will provide a bridge to better conversation and social interaction.

What should you take pictures of?

There are lots of possibilities. Look at the world from the student's perspective. Observe what other students talk about. Is there anything this student finds especially interesting? Here are some ideas:

1. **Where did she go?** Take photos when students go someplace that is unique. A vacation or a movie or a trip to the zoo. Don't stop there. Photos of more common activities are also valuable. Going out to eat, visiting Grandpa or going to the playground can also be conversation topics.
2. **What did he see?** There is some road construction at the end of our street. There are big bulldozers and dump trucks and holes in the road. Think of the great conversation that can occur with a few photos to help.
3. **What does she have?** It may not be possible or appropriate to bring a favorite video game or a new bike, but a photo of it will encourage conversation.
4. **What happened?** Life is full of new things or unexpected events. Think about the excitement that comes from telling people that the dog had puppies or that mom crashed the car. But even more regular events are worthy to talk about. If a student is interested in something, it can become a topic to talk about.

Here are more ideas:

- **Practice** - Keep talking about the picture or the event it represents. Help her rehearse before talking to someone else.
- **Write information** - Who is in the picture? What is happening? Try writing what the student will say. Write on a sticky label that you can stick on the front or back of the picture. His can help a communication partner know what to ask or talk about. If the student reads, it can help him remember what to say.
- **Show the student how to use the picture** -

Demonstrate how to hold the picture For someone to see. Teach him to say, "Look" or "Guess what I did" or something similar to begin a conversation.

Lots of people take photos. Common practice is to store them in an album or box on a shelf. Instead, make photos a valuable part of each student's communication system. Use them and reuse them. They will make social interaction richer and more meaningful.

P.O. Box 71, Troy, MI 48099-0071

Phone: 248-879-2598

Fax: 248-879-2599

Email: linda@lindahodgdon.com

If I Were in Charge of the World

by Justin Harlan, inspired by Judith Viorst

If I were in charge
of the world,
I'd cancel quicksilver,
Bad drugs,
Heights, and also
Car accidents.

If I were in charge
of the world,
There'd be autism
insurance,
Homes for all people,
and
Foods in deserts.

If I were in charge
of the world,
You wouldn't have
homework.
You wouldn't have
war.
You wouldn't have
pain.
Or "Ha ha"
You wouldn't even
have
Bullies.

If I were in charge
of the world,
A full bag of Corn

PERSPECTIVES

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Jan D. Russell
Assistant Superintendent
Special Education Services

Compiled by
Becky Downing
Teacher Consultant
for Autism Spectrum Disorders

Layout & Design
Text Processing
Patti Dombrowski

GENESEEE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Thomas Svitkovich, Ed.D.
Superintendent
2413 West Maple Avenue
Flint, MI 48507-3493
(810) 591-4400
TDD (810) 591-4545

www.geneseeisd.org

Chips

Would be a vegetable.

All "Harry Potter" movies

would be G.

And a person who sometimes

forgot to get their backpack

out of the car before going to school

Would still be allowed

to be in charge of

the world.

Reprinted with permission from Stephanie Harlan

The Reality of Severe Autism

By Nathan E. Ory, M.A.

Coping with the reality of severe autism

General concepts for supporting emotionally fragile individuals who display maladaptive patterns of adjustment.

How are care providers to support a person who is not connected to others, who lives in-the-immediate moment, who reflects and magnifies other's emotions, and who has little continuity of experience?

1. Vulnerability to "meltdown."

The inner place where a person's emotional attachments were formed is the place that people "come back to" when there is nothing else happening around them.

Who are you when there is no one else around? A person who is comfortable with yourself? A person who can fill your time with personally meaningful activity? A person who has to fill the quiet moment with frantic activity? A person who is worrying about all the unanswered questions in your mind? A person who is anxious about whatever may be happening next? Where do you go in your mind when there is nothing outside of you to organize your thoughts and actions?

A. What is it like to be connected to others in space and time?

If you have the experience of being real, validated, and attached, you have a system of core beliefs that sustain you and allow you to regulate your thoughts and actions. You know how to consider options and

know what the operating principles are in the world. You can prioritize and organize your thoughts and activity. You can plan things for the near and distant future. You can postpone things and get back to them later. You can change your mind. You know how the pieces of your thought and memory fit together in a fabric with a past, present and future.

B. What is it like to be lost in interpersonal space and time?

If you have developed no sense of being real, validated, and attached, you do not have a system of core beliefs that sustain you. You have no sense of predictability and cannot regulate your thoughts and actions. You cannot consider options. Your immediate experience takes precedence over all other thoughts. You cannot prioritize your thoughts and activity. You cannot plan for the future. You cannot postpone anything, because as soon as you are not thinking about or continuing to act on what is on your mind, your immediate thought disappears!

You can't let go and change your mind because to do so causes you to feel that you have "lost" your mind. (And, for the moment, you truly have "lost" your mind because you cannot reconnect to your previous thought unless someone assists you to bring it back into mind.) You have no sense of how all your pieces of thought and memory fit together. You have a past, but it is not connected to your present. You have a present but it is not connected to your past or future. You live in a state of vulnerable reflection your immediate, momentary sensations.

Where do you "come back to" if you don't have an experience of continuity and real connection to others? If you are alone, and you don't have core feelings to rely on, you experience momentary nothingness (the existential VOID). Without an organizing sense your empty moment is one of vigilant threat. Your unconnected moment is filled with the primitive emotions of flight or fight.

C. What is it like to be an emotional mirror?

When a caregiver is in your presence and projects positive feelings you are able to reflect positive feelings and can feel secure and calm. When a caregiver is in your presence and projects feelings of distress you reflect feelings of distress and may flee or defend yourself from these uncomfortable

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feelings.

If you are alone and you do not have feelings of others to reflect you may protect yourself from your feelings of emptiness. You may do any number of impulsive actions to stifle the aversive feeling experience of having nothing to reflect. You may do addictive actions to fill the void.

D. What is it like to be unable to regulate your own strong emotions?

Some individuals become highly emotionally aroused when they experience any strong emotion (positive or negative.) Impulsive, acting out, rejecting and oppositional behaviors may be extreme.

In the person's attempt to self-regulate internal emotions that are out of control, the experience of emotional distress can be so intense that a wide range of maladaptive behaviors may be accidentally learned. When individuals act out maladaptive patterns, no matter how disturbed these may appear, they are doing the best they can to give themselves a sense of control, and to test whether or not their world is a safe place to be. If they confirm it is not safe they may escalate into an extreme, retributive meltdown.

Nathan E. Ory, M.A.

Registered Psychologist

Nathan Ory is a psychologist with the Island Mental Health Support Team, Victoria, B.C.

Reprinted from www.autismtoday.com

2008 Walk for Autism

Saturday, June 7th to benefit Autism Support Group of Genesee County's Residential Project for Autistic Adults

Where: YMCA, Pierson Rd., Flushing, MI.

When: Saturday, June 7th, **Registration 11:00 a.m. FREE!!**

Activities: Musical entertainment, kid's activities and entertainment, great food & drink, vendor's tents, raffles & prizes. Two

paved walking trails- .4 mi. & .7 mi.)

Register

Online: Go to www.firstgiving.com/ASGGC to register online and create your own Personal Fundraising Page. You can 'Start a Team' or 'Join a Team' or just sign up yourself.

Why: Autism now affects 1 out of every 150 children born. All net proceeds from this event will go toward the development of a farm-based Residential Community to provide for the care that will be necessary when these children reach adulthood. Our Residential Project is based on the successful Bittersweet Farm model. They have been providing state of the art services to people with autism for over 20 years. We are working with the staff at Bittersweet in order to replicate the Bittersweet model locally. This would be a wonderful and much needed addition to our community!

Our Mission: To provide residential, employment and general life supports for adults with autism so that they can lead involved and valued lives and achieve their maximum level of functioning and independence.

Contact us: Visit our website at www.geneseeautism.org or email/call: Cheryl at 810-694-8034, email cennest@comcast.net. Visit our website www.geneseeautism.org

Central Elementary in Flushing

Hats off to Central Elementary in Flushing and the GISD Project Choice ASD Class located there. Training on autism was done and Central students volunteered to be Peer Pals.

Central Elementary School had an essay writing contest with the theme "My Dream." One of our 6th grade peer pals, who interacts regularly with our classroom won first place for her grade level. She got to eat lunch with Curtis Granderson from the Detroit Tigers and her essay was published in the Flushing

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Observer. The essay is printed with permission from Izzi.

My Goal In Life

I have four amazing friends. To have an idea or a very strong feeling stuck inside, that can't come out. If you don't learn as quick as others do or you can't find the words to fit your feelings, must be very hard. Four kids that I've grown to know very well have a disability called autism.

I am part of a group called "peer pals." More and more students from each classroom are becoming a peer pals and setting positive examples for our friends.

My goal or ambition in life is to help people with special needs. It makes me very happy to know something as small as a high-five at the end of the day makes a big a big difference to them.

I believe that because such a simple thing can make them feel so good inside. We can all do our part in helping them to achieve their goals and ambitions.

By Isabella Mount

On April 15th at the Flushing Board Meeting, Isabella read her winning essay. A PowerPoint presentation made by the Peer Pals was also shown. It was a moving and powerful evening. Thanks to all The students and staff involved. This is what autism awareness is about!

How does the autistic brain 'see' human faces?

Studies show that many autistic individuals have difficulty recognizing faces, and new research by Yale researchers indicates that the autistic brain processes faces as though they were objects.

Robert Schultz and colleagues used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to study face perception in 14 high-functioning individuals with autism or Asperger syndrome (AS), an autistic-spectrum disorder. The researchers compared autistic and AS subjects' responses to those of two groups of matched controls.

"Individuals with autism spectrum disorders demonstrate a pattern of brain activity during face discrimination that is consistent with feature-based strategies that are more typical of nonface object perception," the researchers report. The autistic and AS subjects showed reduced activation in the fusiform gyrus, the area of the cerebral cortex that appears to "encode" human faces so that they can be recognized. In contrast, they showed increased activation in an adjacent brain region that processes objects.

"Of the things that the developing child routinely encounters, the human face is probably the most frequent and important," Schultz says. "The ability to recognize and remember people by their face is critical for all types of interpersonal relationships. The face conveys many important types of information, including a person's age, sex, and emotional state. Decoding this information is critical to successful functioning within a group. It is precisely these things that are so difficult for these patients."

The researchers note that it is not possible to know whether an innate lack of interest in faces leads to altered processing, or whether the altered processing is one cause of autism. Earlier research at Yale and Brown Universities, however, indicates that facial processing is a learned process. In this research, Isabel Gauthier and Michael Tarr found that subjects trained to be expert at recognizing novel shapes (called "greebles") showed similar activity in the fusiform gyrus whether they looked at greebles or faces. "Novice" greeble viewers, in contrast, did not show this type of fusiform gyrus activity. This suggests that humans develop skill in processing faces, rather than being born with this ability.

Schultz agrees that the face-processing deficit in autistic individuals may result from an absence of learning experiences. "This may be a result of a lifelong disinterest in people, and a failure to develop normal expertise for faces," he says. If so, he speculates, direct intervention with very young autistic children, whose brains are still developing, could help these children learn to process faces more normally.

"Abnormal ventral temporal cortical activity during face discrimination among individuals with autism and Asperger syndrome," R. T. Schultz, I. Gauthier, A. Klin, R. K. Fulbright, A. W. Anderson, F. Volkmar, P. Skudlarski, C. Lacadie, D. J. Cohen. and J. C. Gore, *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 57, No.4, April

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2000, pp. 331-340. Address: Robert Schultz, Child Study Center, Yale University, Box 207900, New Haven, CT 06520-7900.

—and—

"People with autism and Asperger syndrome process faces as objects, Yale study of brain abnormalities finds," Yale University press release, April 17, 2000.

—and—

"Brain region used in face recognition is active in new object recognition," Brown University press release, June 22, 1999.

Reprinted from Autism Research Review International

do2Learn...see, do and learn online.

A web site providing activities to promote independence in children and adults with special learning needs

FREE Teacher and Parent Material

- ⌘ 350 - 1", 2", and full page Picture Communication cards with instructions
- ⌘ Homework helpers, math grids, tables, & lined writing paper
- ⌘ Alphabet, number, color, and shape learning print activities
- ⌘ Work system setup, activity choice boards, home teaching kit, art project layouts
- ⌘ Classroom tips and print material for teachers
- ⌘ Disability guides and links
- ⌘ Product guide to helpful commercial products
- ⌘ Over 2,000 pages of free printable material on Site Map

Make-A-Schedule Program

- ⌘ Easy-to-use schedule creation software
- ⌘ Customize and save your schedules, no cutting and pasting
- ⌘ Combine text and picture cards, change image names
- ⌘ Using a password, print from any web connected computer
- ⌘ Over 1000 most requested images in 1", 2", and full page sizes
- ⌘ Images in color, and black and white
- ⌘ Both English and Spanish image names
- ⌘ Easy-to-use format with complete HELP

instructions

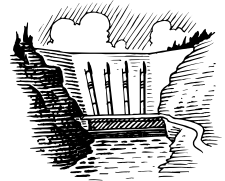
Computer-based instruction

- ⌘ FREE learning games include *7 Color/Number*, *Word* and *Emotion* games
- ⌘ Interactive Facial Expressions game to match expressions with emotions
- ⌘ FREE songs with FLASH animation to demonstrate street and fire safety rules
- ⌘ printable lyrics, activity sheets and picture cards

Reprinted from www.do2learn.com

Welcome to SUN News--a weekly update for The Gray Center Social Understanding Network!

I recently saw a television advertisement for a financial advisor. In it, two engineers are walking along a dam on a river, checking its structural integrity. Suddenly a small crack develops, and water begins trickling out. The two individuals look at each other, obviously questioning what to do next. Then one removes a wad of gum from his mouth, and sticks it on the center of the crack. The trickle stops, and the two engineers move on. However, we're able to see that behind them, the gum has let loose, and now the trickle of water has become a geyser, spelling disaster ahead!



The point of the commercial is that the advisor could help you develop your financial portfolio in such a way that you're not relying on one single small strategy to prepare for retirement and other expenses. Instead, this business can help you diversify in order to prevent financial disaster.

It struck me that while there are many valuable strategies that are used with individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), at this point in time, no one strategy is able to guarantee the structural integrity of a person's life. Instead, diversification is usually necessary. Most people with a diagnosis of ASD are going to need a variety of supports, possibly including therapies, behavioral supports, teaching strategies (Social Stories™, Social Behavior

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Mapping™, Social Response Pyramid™, The Incredible Five-Point Scale™), diet, biomedical interventions, etc. And they may not need (or be able to utilize) all of those at the same time. I often tell parents that their implementation of strategies to help their child may resemble a revolving door. First, they should select those strategies which have the greatest likelihood of addressing the most pressing issues (or will bring about the greatest success). As the child learns and changes, some may be able to be discontinued, while others are added. Someday they may need to return to one or more strategies which were employed earlier.

Other components of structural integrity may include consistency, flexibility, a sense of humor, and the desire and ability to be interdependent--working with others to promote successful outcomes!

While one strategy may do a great job of solving an immediate issue, long-term, it may not be enough! Using it along with other strategies, and recognizing the benefits and drawbacks to each strategy, is more likely to bring about lasting success!

Do you have other thoughts you'd like to share? You may post those at <http://graycenter.wordpress.com>.

Laurel Hoekman, Executive Director, The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding

Reprinted from www.thegraycenter.org

Push Button Keyless Padlock



For students who have difficulty with the locks on their lockers, there is a push button padlock at Independent Living Aids, Inc. 1-800-537-2118

It is a keyless, high security lock. Item # 569400. Cost \$5.95

Reprinted from www.independentliving.com

Possible Autism Causes From Parents, Pregnancy, Birth

By Miranda Hitti, reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD

Pregnancy factors, parental psychiatric history, and preterm delivery may be associated with an increased risk of autism, says a study in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

Here are the potential associations noted in the study:
--Breech presentation of the baby --Low Apgar score, an index used to evaluate the condition of a newborn five minutes after birth --Birth before 35 weeks of pregnancy --Parental history of schizophrenia-like psychosis --Parental history of affective disorder, which includes some psychoses, depression, and bipolar disorder. However, those traits are not presented as definite causes of autism or as the only possible risk factors for the condition. Of course, not all babies born under those circumstances have autism or related disorders.

'Possible Associations' Noted "Right now, we have only identified possible associations," says CDC epidemiologist Diana Schendel, PhD, in a news release. "But if we can find a cause-and-effect relationship, it may help our efforts to prevent autism." Schendel worked on the study with other experts. It's not known how those characteristics might interact with autism risk.

About Autism

Autism spectrum disorders are a group of developmental disabilities that are caused by unusual brain development, says the CDC's Autism Information Center. Some studies have shown that a rapid and excessive growth in head size during the first year of life may be an early indicator of autism.

The spectrum includes autistic disorder (infantile autism), pervasive developmental disorder, and Asperger's syndrome. People with autism spectrum disorders tend to have problems with social and communication skills, and many have unusual ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to different sensations, says the CDC.

The rest of this article can be found online at <http://www.autismtoday.com/articles/Possible-Autism-Causes.asp>

Genesee Intermediate School District
Special Education Services Center
2413 West Maple Avenue
Flint, Michigan 48507-3493
Phone: 810-591-4877
Fax: 810-591-4548



Support Groups

- × Autism Support Group of Genesee County:
www.geneseeautism.org
- × Advocates for Autism (formerly Flushing Support Group) meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at North Baptist Church, 4004 Lennon Rd. Contact Cris at 810-732-1776 or Valerie at 810-659-7004
- × ASA/Oakland County Chapter Events:
www.asaoakland.org
- × Jack's Place for Autism: www.oakland.edu
(click site map, then centers)
- × Mott Children's Health Center Parent Empowerment Program for parents and caregivers of newly diagnosed or suspected ASD. Karen Shoemaker 767-5750, ext. 5292

Websites

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



Have a great summer!!

