



PERSPECTIVES

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

Punishment or a Teachable Moment?

It's a story about a soccer ball and a brick wall. Seems pretty predictable, right? I was at the soccer field watching my grandchildren play Saturday morning soccer. Something I LOVE to do! While the game was going on in front of us, there was activity behind us, too. The parents and grandparents were sitting in chairs along the field to watch the game. Behind us was a strip of grass that ended at the brick wall which was the backyard fence for the houses that backed up to the soccer field.



Several children who were not playing in this game were kicking soccer balls around in that grassy area. I happen to know some of those children, and one of them caught my eye. Let's call her Suzi.

So here's what happened

Suzi caught her mother's eye too...just in time to see her kick the soccer ball over the brick wall and into the backyard of the home there.

And then here's what happened

Suzi's mother started to yell at her. It was one of those "What did you do that for...I saw what you did...yada, yada, yada now you lost your ball it's gone...blah, blah." Mom was a little long and a little loud. It was obvious she was mad. Suzi ended up in "time out" for a while.

But here is what else I know

I happen to know Suzi. As a first grader, she is delightfully bright about a lot in life. But at times she has some issues. Sometimes she is a bit "ADDish" (How's that for a "professional" term?). Sometimes her behavior is impulsive. When she gets "wound up" it is hard to get her to "come down" again.



A diagnosis?

This is not about a diagnosis. It really doesn't matter. But as I observe that child, I see that sometimes on a scale of 1-10 she is a 10. By that I mean she is focused, on target, doing everything she is supposed to be doing and more. At other times, I think a zero would be generous. (And doesn't that sound like lots of kids out there???)

Does this sound like someone you know?

I think there are lots of students who would fit that description of behavior. Some of them have a special education diagnosis. Some of them are "regular education" kids. The point is...kids act like kids.

So here's the rest of the story

Dad to the rescue. He was tall enough to look over the fence. After checking things out, he lifted Suzi over the fence to retrieve the beloved ball.

But here's what I wonder

Did they miss a really good "teachable moment"?



And this is why I ask the question. I don't think Suzi set out to kick the ball over the fence. I think it was an accident. I may be wrong, but I don't think that was her intent.

I suspect she was paying more attention to trying to kick that ball than she was to which direction it was going to go. It's that attention thing. After all, making contact with the ball and aiming where you kick it are two different skills.

I can understand how a child can be focusing so much on one thing that they forget to check out the other thing. Could

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Suzi have used some instruction about aiming away from the brick wall? Probably yes.

It is easy to get mad

Mom reacted with anger. The “you did something wrong” kind of anger. Maybe it was justified. Maybe not. I don’t know what the rest of the day had been like. But the point is, Mom chose to punish instead of teach. And that makes me wonder.

So here’s the question

How often do we miss teachable moments? It is so easy to react to the end result. It’s natural to respond with correction for the behavior. But being in time out didn’t equip Suzi for a better result next time.

What does she need to learn?

When children are having difficulty with behavior or tasks or social situations, my favorite question is...**What does she need to learn?** It’s a different mind set that will produce a different result. This was a teachable moment.




Reprinted from www.usevisualstrategies.com

Autism Research Centre Links Autism and Genius

By Carin Yavorcik

Study connects autism and intellectual gifts

 New research suggests that some of the genes responsible for autism are also connected to mathematical, musical and other intellectual skills.

“The finding has emerged from a study of autism among 378 Cambridge University students, which found the condition was up to seven times more common among mathematicians than students in other disciplines. It was also five times more common in the siblings of mathematicians,” reported the *Times* of London. “If confirmed, it could explain why autism - a disability that makes it hard to communicate with, and relate to,

others—continues to exist in all types of society. It suggests the genes responsible are usually beneficial, causing autism only if present in the wrong combinations. Read the *Times* article online for more information.

Reprinted from www.autism-society.org.

Research May Unlock Mystery of Autism’s Origin in the Brain

In the first study of its kind, researchers have discovered that in autistic individuals, connections between brain cells may be deficient within single regions, and not just between regions, as was previously believed.



Tony Wilson, Ph.D., lead researcher and assistant professor of neurology at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, said he hopes this study will eventually lead to earlier diagnosis and more targeted medications for autism.

Using magnetoencephalography (MEG) brain imaging technology to measure brain electrical activity, the researchers administered a test called the 40 hertz (cycles per second) auditory steady-state response test. The test measures electromagnetic wave cycles and indicates brain cell discharges at the 40 hertz frequency.

“This test measures the brain’s capacity to mimic what it’s hearing. A healthy brain’s cells will fire back at 40 hertz,” said Wilson. “We chose this test because it is a robust metric of how well individual circuits are functioning.”

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A publication of GISD’s Special Education Services Center

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The results were reported in *Biological Psychiatry*.

A group of 10 children and adolescents with autism, and 10 without autism, listened to a series of clicks occurring every 25 milliseconds (ms) for a duration of 500 ms. The MEG measured the brain's responses to these clicks.

In the right hemisphere of the brain, which controls attention and spatial processing, there was no significant difference in the groups. But the results showed a considerable discrepancy between the two groups in the left



hemisphere, the area of the brain that controls language and logic.

In the auditory area of the left hemisphere, the group without autism delivered a brain response to the 40 hertz stimulation 200 ms after it began. However, the group with autism failed to respond entirely at the same 40 hertz frequency.

"Our results made sense. Both anecdotal and behavioral evidence suggest children with autism have significantly disturbed brain circuits on the local-level within an individual brain area," said Wilson. "For example, they tend to restrict their visual gaze to a part of someone's face, like a nose or an eye, but not the person's whole face."

The results also support previous research that showed disconnections between two or more brain regions, known as long-range connectivity. This new study supports the idea that the network as a whole is broken, but shows the disconnection in long-range connectivity may actually start within individual brain regions, known as local connectivity.

Wilson explains the difference between local and long-range connectivity using vision as an example. "With vision, one part of your brain identifies color, another perceives motion. Within each of these areas of your brain, there is local connectivity between brain cells that allow the region to do its job. When you see a red ball flying across the room, both of these areas of your brain start communicating with each other and put together flying and red as qualities of the

same ball. That's long-range connectivity."

Reprinted from www.medicalnewstoday.com

Pediatrics Study Looks at Unmet Health-Care Needs of Families Affected by ASD

By Carin Yavorcik

A new study published in the journal *Pediatrics* has found that "children with special health-care needs with autism spectrum disorder are significantly more likely to have problems regarding access to care and unmet needs."

The research is based on a nationally representative 2005-06 survey of nearly 40,000 children with special health-care needs. According to the study, 30.9 percent of children with special health-care needs who have autism have an unmet need for specific health-care services and 13.8 percent had delayed or foregone care, compared to 12.3 percent and 6.8 percent of other children with special health-care needs, respectively. Moreover, the costs of care had caused financial problems for 38.7 percent of families affected by autism, and 27.4 percent spent more than 10 hours a week providing or coordinating care for their child.



"Overall, we found that, among [children with special health-care needs], those with ASD had less access to important components of health care and were less likely to receive family-centered care," the study states. "Families of [children with special health-care needs] with ASD were more likely to report problems, such as receiving referrals, coordinating care and obtaining family support services."

In conclusion, the authors say the research suggests that children with ASD significantly challenge the current health-care system, and systems reform including financing reform and national quality improvement initiatives could improve the situation. The study is available at the *Pediatrics* Web site.

Reprinted from www.autism-society.org

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Excerpt from *You're Going To Love This Kid!*

By Paula Kluth
(Page 164)



Consider the last time you lost your temper. Did you yell? Scream? Did you cry? Did you say things you would later regret? How did you feel when you were engaged in these behaviors? Embarrassed? Furious? Lonely? When most people are in this type of crisis, they need gentle support to calm down. They may need to take a short walk, curl up with a favorite book, find a place to be alone, or call someone who will listen to their problems. An individual experiencing stress will most likely not be helped by

- Loud voices
- Punitive statements (e.g., "You had your chance," "You made your choice, now you need to leave class")
- Confiscation of preferred or comforting materials or activities
- Physical redirection
- Angry tone or body language

Although a student experiencing challenging behaviors might need to know how the behavior is being interpreted or might benefit from information or teaching related to the behavior, it is seldom, if ever, appropriate or useful to intervene in these ways while the behavior is taking place. One of the most critical skills a teacher can have is the ability to be calm and comforting in a crisis situation. When a student is kicking, biting, banging her head, or screaming, she is most likely miserable and scared. The most effective and human response at this point is to offer support, act in a comforting manner, and help the person relax and feel safe.

Autism Hangout Podcast Helps Prepare Students with Autism to Succeed In College

By Robin Gurley

Early preparation and careful planning are among the six keys to helping a student with autism have a successful college career, according to Jane

Thierfeld Brown, Ed.D., whose remarks are featured in a new podcast published at <http://www.autismhangout.com>.

In an Interview with Craig Evans, founder of Autism Hangout, Brown said preparation for post-high school education and research into appropriate colleges should begin as early as ninth grade rather than in junior or senior year. Developing independent living skills and choosing a college wisely are crucial, she said.

"If a student is still using an aide by junior or senior year, you really have to look at a college choice very carefully because there are no colleges anywhere in the country that are going to provide an aide for a student," Brown said.

In addition to starting early and choosing wisely, Brown emphasized careful planning of the transition to college life, working with the appropriate people, establishing a good foundation of skills and using available services. She expands on each factor in the podcast.

Brown, who is Director of Student Services at the University of Connecticut School of Law, has worked in disability services for 30 years and has a teenage son with autism.

She said high school guidance counselors "can only do so much" to help students prepare for college, in part because of the vast differences in affected students' capabilities.

Reprinted from www.autism-society.org

New DVD Helps Young Children with ASD Recognize and Understand Emotions

By Robin Gurley

"Transporters" series teaches 2 to 8 year olds about 15 key emotions

The brainchild of Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, a leading world authority on autism at the Autism

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Research Center at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, the "Transporters" DVD is an animated series that teaches children with ASD about emotions. Eight lovable vehicles (trains, trams and cable cars), specifically designed to appeal to children with autism and Asperger's syndrome, have adventures based around 15 key emotions. The vehicles have real human faces so the children learn to recognize emotions on real faces rather than cartoon ones, which helps them to generalize what they learn into everyday life.



A new study from Cambridge University, to be published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, found that after watching the DVD for just 15 minutes a day for 4 weeks, most children with autism caught up with other children in their ability to recognize emotions.



Parents who have used the DVD have reported noticeable improvements and stronger emotional bonds with their children. Professionals have noted children commenting on other people's feelings, often for the first time. The DVD includes:

- ☺ 15 fun 5-minute episodes, showing key emotions in context;
- ☺ 30 entertaining interactive quizzes to reinforce and test understanding; and
- ☺ a 36-page booklet explaining how to get the most out of the DVD at home and at school.

Reprinted from www.autism-society.org

Your Child has Asperger's if...

1. You're shocked when you find out that your child's spontaneous language is actually a collection of lines from ads, movies and commercials. Then you marvel how he can actually do this and make sense!
2. Your child is fascinated that your skin can actually crawl and he lightly touches your bare arm to witness this incredible event.
3. You ask your son if he's ready to go to the Park and he doesn't answer right away because he's thinking about the last time he was in the park when he saw a toy car, which reminds him of the



Toy Store, which reminds him that the Toy Store also sells dinosaur figures, which reminds him of a museum he went to 6 years ago, which reminds him...

4. Your child thinks there's nothing more fun than reading about the mechanics of a fan, unless of course he's explaining it to someone.
5. He simply does not see the point in making a car race down a ramp when you can turn it upside down and watch the wheels spin in unison.
6. He finds the word "ripple" hilarious, "dabble" bothers his ears and he firmly believes the word "tip-top" should be "top-tip"
7. You're late and you ask your child to please hurry and find his shoes. He finds them but doesn't put them on because you forgot to mention that part.
8. You ask your child which book he borrowed from the school library this week. He replies and then proceeds to tell you the name of every book and its author that he's borrowed from the library the entire year - in the order he borrowed them!
9. You know facts about things like the Homo erectus species who lived in bamboo forests with huge primates called Gigantopithecus and that the very first Europeans were called called Homo heidelbergensis.
10. Not only do you know these things but your child makes sure you never forget by explaining this era to you in detail, every moment he can.
11. His uncle explains that it was just a figure of speech when he said "My head is about to explode" and your child is devastated because he wanted to see what that would look like.
12. You'll never be silly enough to ask your child if you look fat because you know you'll get the truth.
13. You assume your six year old is mumbling to himself but on closer listening, you realize that he is actually reciting the Gettysburg Address.
14. You have no idea how your 6 year old even knows about the Gettysburg Address and where he could have possibly learned it.



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15. Your child appears deep in thought when for no apparent reason, he suddenly bursts into laughter. He looks around surprised that no one else found his thought funny.



Reprinted from www.nlconcepts.com (owner Jene Aviram)

Local Autism Groups

The **Autism Support Group of Genesee Co.** (ASGGC) has locked in its date for the 2009 Awareness Walk. May 30, 2009 is the big day! For more information contact Cheryll at 810-694-8034 or Valerie at 810-659-7004. Other ASGGC activities for little or no cost:

- ☺ January 11, 2009: Family bowling. RSVP required. Contact Pat Spohn at 810-694-0244.
- ☺ February 21, 2009: Puppet show "Jack and the Beanstalk." Contact Cheryll Ennest at 810-694-8034.

Bill Nason Education Series on the Autism Spectrum at Atherton High School. Contact Pat Spohn at 810-694-0244.

Asperger Teen Nights (3rd Friday of each month). Contact Amy Daleo at 810-655-5752.

Cub Scouting for Boys with Autism. Contact Frank Mitchell at 810-394-1293.



OUCARES offers music, social skills, basketball, soccer, Animals in Art, Cartooning I & II, and an



after hours adult social. Go to www.oakland.edu/oucares. E-mail: oucares@oakland.edu

Phone: 248-370-2424

Judson Center Trainings:

Babysitting Training

Professional Lecture Series

Biomedical Support Group

Nick Dubin: A Five Week Course in Asperger's and Personality

For more information go to www.judsoncenter.org or call 248-549-4339.

Brain Waves Show Sound Processing Abnormalities in Children with Autism

By Carin Yavorcik

Abnormalities in auditory and language processing may be evaluated in children with autism spectrum disorder by using magnetoencephalography (MEG), according to a study presented recently at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA). "Using MEG, we can record the tiny magnetic fields associated with electrical brain activity," said Timothy Roberts, Ph.D., vice chair of research in the Department of Radiology at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, in a release. "Recorded brain waves change with every sensation, thought and activity. It's like watching a movie of the brain in real time."

Typically used for epilepsy evaluation, MEG can also be used to identify timing abnormalities in the brains of patients with autism. "We found that signatures of autism are revealed in the timing of brain activity," Dr. Roberts said. "We see a fraction-of-a-second delay in autistic patients." For a MEG exam, a helmet that houses magnetic detectors and looks similar to an old-fashioned hair dryer is lowered over the patient's head while the patient remains in a seated position. The helmet analyzes electrical currents from the brain.

For the study, 64 patients, ages 6 to 15, with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, were evaluated with MEG. Audio stimulation was introduced to the children in the form of beeps, tones in pairs, vowels or sentences. Sounds were presented at different frequencies and tone pairs in rapid succession, including unusual streams of incongruous tones and vowels. The results were analyzed and compared with the results from a control group of age-matched non-autistic children.

The findings showed that in the children with autism there was a fraction-of-a-second delay in the brain's response while processing the rapid

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Conferences

Date	Title & Location	Speakers	Fee	Contact Info
Jan. 15, 2009	Potty Training Your Special Needs Child Abilities Center		\$25	www.asaoakland.org 248-926-0909 therapy@abilitiescenter.com
Jan. 23, 2009	Response to Intervention Model Ann Arbor	Teri Wallace, Ph.D.	\$238	715-836-9900 www.meds-pdn.com
Jan. 29, 2009	Red Flags & Green Lights-Knowing When to be Concerned about Autism Abilities Center		\$25	www.asaoakland.org 248-926-0909 therapy@abilitiescenter.com
Feb. 5-6, 2009	PECS Basic Training Grand Rapids	Jill Waegenare, MA, CCC/SLP	\$395	616-957-0100 www.pecs.com
Feb. 25, 2009	52 Strategies for Aspergers Syndrome, Non-Verbal Learning Disorder, & High Functioning Autism Bay City	Dr. Ortiz	Varies	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Feb. 26, 2009	52 Strategies for Aspergers Syndrome, Non-Verbal Learning Disorder, & High Functioning Autism Grand Rapids	Dr. Ortiz	Varies	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Feb. 27, 2009	52 Strategies for Aspergers Syndrome, Non-Verbal Learning Disorder, & High Functioning Autism Ann Arbor	Dr. Ortiz	Varies	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Mar. 4-6, 2009	CEC Conference Grand Rapids	Multiple	Varies	810-588-6886
Mar. 18, 2009	Sensory Integration Processing Grand Rapids	Susan Larson Kidd, Ed.D., Ed.S.	\$179	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Mar. 19, 2009	Sensory Integration Processing Lansing	Susan Larson Kidd, Ed.D., Ed.S.	\$179	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Mar. 20, 2009	Sensory Integration Processing Ann Arbor	Susan Larson Kidd, Ed.D., Ed.S.	\$179	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Mar. 27, 2009	Asperger Syndrome & Adolescence: Building Skills for the Real World Grand Rapids	Talmer Sahockley Teresa Bolick		www.thegracenter.org
Mar. 30-31, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Clinton County RESA	Dr. Lucy Jane Miller	\$295	989-224-6831 www.ccrea.org
May 12, 2009	Aggression, Rage & Meltdowns! Strategies for Managing Students with Behavioral Emotional & Spectrum Disorders Southgate	Kay Otten	\$199	800-678-8908 www.sdresources.org

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succession sounds and the unusual streams, giving researchers insight into the dysfunction of the auditory processing system in autistic children.

"This delay in processing certain types and streams of sound may underpin the subsequent language processing and communication impairment seen in autistic children," Dr. Roberts

said.

Dr. Roberts predicts that the signatures of autism found in brain activity will become biomarkers to improve classification of the disorder and aid in treatment and therapy planning.

Reprinted from www.autism-society.org

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Support Groups

- * Autism Support Group of Genesee County:
www.geneseeaautism.org
- * Advocates for Autism (formerly Flushing Support Group) meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at North Baptist Church, 4004 Lennon Rd. Contact Valerie Land 810-659-7004.
- * ASA/Oakland County Chapter Events:
www.asaoakland.org
- * www.oucares.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
- * Kathleen's House: www.kathleenshouse.org, 810-720-0667.

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
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