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Clearing the Autism Stereotypes

By Jonathan Sullivan



As with anyone with a physical or mental disorder, autistic people deal with a wide range of reactions from others, from full support to uncaring ignorance. Unfortunately, even those who support autistic family members, co-workers, and friends may not understand autism very well. This leads to stereotypes, which can result in hatred, embarrassment, or other unhappy situations. By becoming

educated about autism, you can help others in your community cope with this disorder.

It is most important to note that not all autistic people are the same. Other diseases and disorders have their own sets of rules, but autism is such a complex medical condition, that everyone reacts differently to it. Autistic people are usually rated on a functional scale, with high-functioning people being able to hold jobs and low-functioning people needing 24-hour-a-day care. Symptoms include behavioral challenges, uncontrollable movements, speech and communication difficulties, and emotional inadequacies. Some show all symptoms, while other show few, and still others may have most under control to the point where you cannot tell they have autism at all.

Because every person is different, no one thing can be said about autism and be true overall. However, most autistic people have trouble communicating emotions. This does not mean that an autistic person does not feel. He or she simply cannot express this feeling. It also does not mean strong relationship bonds are not possible. On the contrary, many autistic people are happily married and in love. Forming relationships is more difficult for most, but can be accomplished over time.

Many people believe that being autistic coincides with being a genius in some aspect. While it is true that some autistic individuals have extraordinary math, music, and art skills, this number is nowhere near the majority-in fact, relatively few autistic people function outside of the normal range in any skill. This stereotype is perpetuated in the movies and on television, because the story of a talented person fighting disadvantages (such as autism) makes a good plot. However, this is not the norm, so nothing more than the best they can personally do should be expected from an autistic person. However, it is important to note that autism is not a form of mental retardation. Some autistic people are mentally retarded as well, but most are not and should not be treated as such.

In the end, the most important lesson to take away from your studies on autism is one of tolerance. You will probably need to be patient when dealing with autistic people, but by understanding a little more about the disorder, perhaps this will be easier. Learn what you can and spread the knowledge to those you know to help create a more tolerant setting for autistic individuals in your community.

Article credits:
www.articlesbase.com/mental-health-articles/clearing-the-autism-stereotypes-480897.html

Events

10/14 - Sign Language Class
 Melbourne Public Library,
 Melbourne 3:30pm. For ages six
 and up. Call 952-4514

10/15 - Jigsaw Jones-The Case of the Class Clown King Center,
 Melbourne 10:30am
 Educational Theatre. Based on the
 book by James Preller, it is show
 brimming with music, charm and
 humor. Call 674-0808

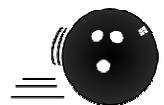
10/16 - The Living Sea BCC
 Planetarium, Cocoa. 8:00pm. Film.
 Other titles and shows available.
 Call 433-7373

10/23 - Communication - An Important Piece of the Puzzle ESF
 (School Board Building), Viera.
 10am-12noon. For parents of
 students on the autism spectrum.
 Speakers: Terry Tomaka and Jim
 Gerhauser of the Family Liason
 Project. Contact Ginny Gleason by
 Oct 19 to reserve a seat. 633-1000
 x389

11/9 - Angels Bridging Gaps Holiday Bowling Party - Shore Lanes, Melbourne. 3:30-5:30. R.S.V.P. By Oct. 30. Bowling is free. Compliments of Shore Lanes. Contact jbyearby@angelsbridginggaps.org



PARTY!!!



Our upcoming Events

10/13 - Parent Support Meeting - Malabar Baptist Church, Malabar 6pm-7pm. Call 723-1602

10/26 - Bowling - Shore Lanes, Palm Bay 4pm-5pm Come out and join us. \$2.99 including shoes.

11/14 - Horseback Riding - Rescued Horses Saves Kids, Malabar. 10-12noon. R.S.V.P. By 11/11. Contact jbyearby@angelsbridginggaps.org

Treatments & Therapies

Solving Sleeping Children Challenges with Autistic Children

By Rachel Evans

Parents of autistic children often struggle to get them to sleep, and therefore struggle with their own sleep as well. However, we all know the importance of ensuring children get the sleep that they need in order to get the most out of the various therapies and efforts being made to improve their symptoms. However, it can be easier said than done!

Over-sensitivity to stimuli can be a frustrating challenge for both autistic children and their parents. Over-reaction to various sounds in the child's environment, as well as smells, lights, or any other sensations may make it difficult for a child to fall asleep or stay asleep. Many autistic children have sensory issues within their sleep environment. This can make it difficult for them to relax enough to fall asleep or to find a comfortable position in which to sleep.

In Siegal's book *The World of the Autistic Child*, it was suggested that the sleep problems faced by autistic children may also be a result of the way autistic neurotransmitters in the brain function. It stated that about 56 percent of autistic children struggle with sleep-related issues that they will rarely "grow out of".

So one of the first steps for remedying the lack of sleep is to try to identify what is causing your child to struggle to sleep. Is it anxiety, sensory issues, medical issues, attention seeking, or something in the bedroom itself?

The following tips are for parents to help their autistic children get to sleep and stay that way until morning:

- Set a bedtime and stick to it, including the routines that occur before bedtime. This allows the child to experience a

degree of consistency and predictability, which is often vital to an autistic child's proper functioning.

- Provide your autistic child with visual rules that indicate the rule for staying in one's room or bed at night. These visual rules should be posted in various visible areas of the bedroom.

- Pair the bedtime rules and routines that you create with social stories that can help to speak to your autistic child's sleep-related anxieties.

- Change the bedroom environment to make it more appealing to your autistic child. While some autistic children respond well to having a nightlight, others require total darkness with a black out blind over the window for blocking the exterior light as well. Many autistic children sleep better when their bed is pushed up against the wall, as they feel more secure; a corner is even better. To block out any sounds that may be distressing your child, use a white noise machine or run a fan in your child's bedroom.

- If you usually sleep in the same bed as your autistic child and he or she is struggling to sleep alone, "replace" yourself with a sleeping bag or body pillow to mimic the pressure that would usually exist if you were lying in the bed.

- Use layers for your child's pajamas and tuck him or her in well so that any tactile sensitivity will be minimized.

By rooting out any disturbances causing your child not to sleep and by introducing routines and an effective sleeping environment, your autistic child should be **able to enjoy a great deal more sleep** - as will you.

References: http://www.hsc.mb.ca/autismprogram/topic_of_the_month.htm

Grab your free copy of Rachel Evans' brand new Autism Newsletter - Overflowing with easy to implement methods to help you and your family overcome autism sleeping challenges and for information on effective autism strategies please visit *The Essential Guide to Autism*.



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YOU'RE INVITED!



"COMMUNICATION - AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE PUZZLE"

SPEAKERS: TERRY TOMAKA & JIM GERHAUSER,
FAMILY LIAISON PROJECT

FOR: PARENTS OF STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

DATE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2009

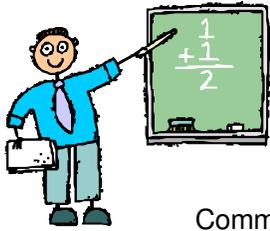
TIME: 10:00 AM TO 12:00 NOON

PLACE: ESF (SCHOOL BOARD BUILDING)
2700 JUDGE FRAN JAMIESON WAY, VIERA
BOARD ROOM

RSVP: GINNY GLEASON 633-1000 EXT 389 OR
GLEASON.GINNY@BREVARDSCHOOLS.ORG
BY OCTOBER 19TH TO RESERVE A SEAT.



Education is Key



Learn Why Autistic Children Think In Pictures Instead of Words

By Bonita Darula

Communication skills for autistic children differ from the norm, including their thinking process. Children with autism find words too busy, so it's easier to retain information through pictures. Through remembrance of pictures, autistic children are able to understand others and express themselves.

Autistic children learn verbal language by converting text to pictures. While typical thinkers do tasks sequentially, those with autism have a visual style of thinking. Therefore, shapes of pictures and color of pictures play an important role in the way they think. They help autistic children learn a vocabulary that is easier to express.

According to research, individuals with autism think visually because the part of the brain associated with visual tasks is more active. In addition, the language and spatial centers in the cortical regions of the brain are not as synchronized as those without the disorder.

Visual thinking allows children with autism to compensate for spoken and written words. Because their brains function differently, they can better comprehend things by building visuals and memorizing them. They take concepts, which are sensory rather than word based, and compartmentalize them into little details to form a whole picture.

Autistic children can be taught abstract words and ideas through visual concepts, like pictures and objects. For example, if a particular stuffed animal makes a child happy, it would become their visual symbol for the word happy. Bright colors for pictures can stimulate brain activity in the thinking process of autistic children.

Autistic children find it easier to express themselves within a structured environment. Because people with autism think visually, it's important that they are taught using visuals, such as pictures, objects, line drawings, or symbols. Through spatial memory to pictures or objects, people with autism are able to associate the appropriate words and develop communication skills that allow them to function in society.

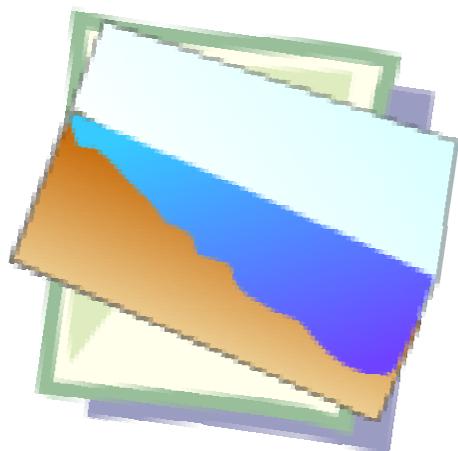
For children with autism, a string of words or verbal instructions are learned through visual demonstration. For instance, the word "up" is easier to express in a picture of balloons in soft colors being lifted upward. Concrete visual methods, like flashcards and blocks in soft colors, are easier to retain among autistic children and help in teaching numbers and other concepts. Long verbal phrases need to be avoided or written down because autistic children have difficulty remembering a lot of steps or word sequences.

Research that compared the brain regions of people with autism to those without found that most people with autism excel in art and drawing. As such, autistic children do well with a color coded system that allows them to think through a remembrance of pictures. For example, an autistic child learns about what to do at an intersection by thinking of its concept. These thoughts are tiny color coded pictures of various types of intersections. When the situation arises, the mind gathers this information and presents it visually so the autistic child remembers what to do at an intersection.

Autistic children think in pictures instead of words because it is easier for them to sort and retain information. By associating a noun to the color and shape of pictures or objects, the autistic child creates a spatial way of thinking that makes it easier for them to comprehend and communicate.

Article Source: ABC Article Directory

About The Author: "Bonita Darula is widely renown for her insights into the prevention of autism. Her celebrated materials have helped thousands of people from around the World find a new sense of hope. If you'd like to discover the secret truth about autism in its early stages, take a few moments to look here=> www.autismintoawareness.com



Holiday Card Contest

Assist The Able Trust in celebrating the December holidays and New Year by creating a greeting card front piece

Open Call to Florida Artists!

1st Prize, \$150
2nd Prize, \$75
3rd Prize \$50



Contest Opens: Thursday October 1, 2009
Entry Deadline: Tuesday November 3, 2009 at 5 PM.

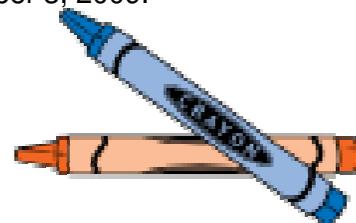
Format: Original Artwork on paper no larger than 8 ½ X 11 OR on a JPEG file between 750KB-1MB on disk. Artwork should be sent along with an "About The Artist" statement of 50 words or less. The Statement should be personal and about the piece of art, the holiday season and/or disabilities. Both submitted Artwork and Statement should be labeled with the Contact name, complete address, phone number and email of Artist.

Attention: Original Artwork will be returned only if accompanied by a self addressed and stamped envelope. Not responsible for lost or damaged pieces. One Artwork Submission per Artist. Artists must currently maintain a Florida address. Artists with disabilities encouraged to apply. Artwork submitted in formats other than outlined above will not be considered.

Selected Artwork: Images of the top 3 Selected pieces will be retained for any use by The Able Trust for up to 2 years from the date of selection. Winners will be notified after November 12, 2009 of their selection.

Send To: The Able Trust; Holiday Card Contest; 3320 Thomasville Rd, Suite 200; Tallahassee, FL 32308. Arriving no later than 5 PM November 3, 2009.

Questions: 888-838-2253 or info@abletrust.org



Which ribbons are the same?

