

# Autism Classroom Strategies

Always remember - no two children with autism (ASD) will respond exactly the same. Individualize!!



Inappropriate laughing or giggling and talking out of turn

- ◇ Use parallel talk during activities- tell the child what he or she is doing rather than what he or she should do.
- ◇ Constantly and consistently praise positive behavior. (Give attention for positive action - not negative. behavior - be specific - "Thank you for raising your hand")
- ◇ Use facial gestures, along with tone of voice to express pleasure or displeasure.
- ◇ A visual chart of emotional responses may help the child relate to how both you and they are feeling.
- ◇ Ignore inappropriate behavior (attention = reward) then redirect the child to another activity.

**Related  
classroom  
strategies**

## Behaviors



Difficulty in expressing needs; may use gestures

**An essential trait of ASD is difficulty communicating**

- ◇ Be literal in your directions and expect to be taken literally - be sure to have their attention - FIRST.
- ◇ Use facial gestures, along with tone of voice to express pleasure or displeasure.
- ◇ Recognize that sometimes behind "acting out" is a sense of frustration at not understanding what is happening or not being able to participate.
- ◇ A visual chart of emotional responses may help the child relate to how both you and they are feeling.
- ◇ Encourage use of language but work to understand how the child communicates using gestures and signs.
- ◇ **Use as many pictorial and physical aids as possible and use demonstration to make ideas "concrete."**
- ◇ Teach the child a non-verbal cue which signals "I understand." (thumbs up or stand/sit to release energy)
- ◇ Allow extra time for the child to process information and directions.



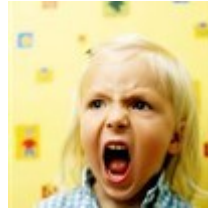
No real fear of dangers

- ◇ Never assume the child understands what is safe and what is not.
- ◇ Be literal in your directions and expect to be taken literally. "Please walk" is better than "No running."
- ◇ Use facial gestures, along with tone of voice to express pleasure or displeasure.

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- ◇ Consistent class format and routine helps the child who needs a strong sense of order.
- ◇ Providing a visual “map” of the class process and constantly referring to it helps the child anticipate change. Many can not retain a sequence of events.
- ◇ Review the schedule before class begins.
- ◇ Give advance notice of when activities will begin and end to avoid surprise.
- ◇ Make directions short and consistent.
- ◇ Recall - you are teaching children not subjects so teaching social skills and social interaction is part of the process.



**Insistence on sameness;  
needs help making  
transitions from one  
thing to another**



**May not want to be  
touched**



**May avoid eye contact**



**May prefer to be alone**



**Difficulty interacting  
with others**

## **An essential trait of ASD is difficulty interacting**

- ◇ Take important cues about this from parents.
- ◇ You get the behavior you expect, so expect normal.
- ◇ Remember - this is not about you - so do not take their withdrawal personally - they may only process visual information through peripheral vision.
- ◇ May signal the child has reached a limit - plan for “down time” or unstructured time.
- ◇ Respect their personal space.
- ◇ A visual chart of emotional responses may help the child relate to how both you and they are feeling.
- ◇ Structure social interaction and teach how this interaction is done appropriately.
- ◇ Teach specific social rules.
- ◇ Plan time for desensitization to fear of the “new” and allow time to build up trust in a new situation.
- ◇ What appears “anti-social” (screaming, biting, walking away) may have an entirely different meaning for the child - don’t assume you understand.

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## Behavior



Sustained unusual or repetitive play; uneven physical or verbal skills



Spins objects or self



May echo words or phrases



Inappropriate / extreme response to sounds / lights

## Related classroom strategies

**An essential trait of ASD is repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior**

- ◇ Take important cues about this from parents concerning the meaning of particular behaviors such as drumming on surfaces / self.
- ◇ May need dim uncluttered space to reduce visual stimulation.
- ◇ A low tone of voice may be helpful.
- ◇ May flee / hide from unanticipated loud noises or sudden bright lights.
- ◇ Echoing is “practice” more often than “being flip.”
- ◇ When giving directions or changing up the class process make sure you have their attention which may require a verbal or physical prompt or both.
- ◇ Structure social interaction and teach how this interaction is done appropriately.
- ◇ Teach specific social rules.
- ◇ Plan time for desensitization to fear of the “new” and allow time to build up trust in a new situation.

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- ◇ **Keep notes:** what preceded an incident - what was your reaction; what was the child’s reaction - can you see any pattern that would help?
  - ◇ **Take important cues from parents !**
  - ◇ **BE CONSISTENT!; BE CONSISTENT!; BE CONSISTENT!**
  - ◇ **DON’T GIVE UP** -poor behavior should never be a reason to interfere with completion of a task.
  - ◇ **Physical activity is essential** - they must move!
  - ◇ **Each autistic child responds to different stimulus** - what works for one may not be needed by the next.

## General Helps