

More ideas for classroom activities to facilitate children on the autistic spectrum

Children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) often find it hard to adapt to classroom activities or follow classroom routines. However, there are a number of simple ideas and programs that can be implemented to help the child follow routines, the curriculum, and also replace inappropriate behaviours.

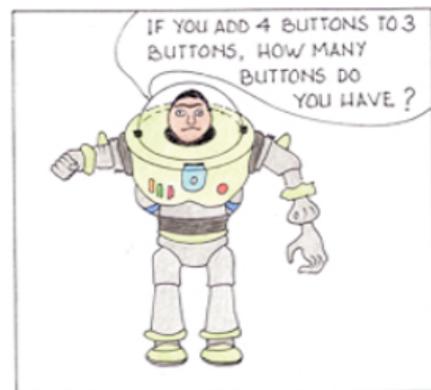
Adapting lessons

It will often be difficult for a child with ASD to attend to lessons in the classroom and learn like the other children, because most children with ASD learn differently. Lessons may need to be adapted to help the autistic child learn. When adapting lessons we must be aware of how the child learns, what motivates them, their cognitive abilities and their ability to listen and attend. We may also need to be aware that the child may communicate differently and not use speech, so we may need to provide assistive communication such as picture cards, sign, or assistive technology. Some children will also need 1:1 support from a special needs teacher or teacher aid. To help the child stay focussed, it may be necessary to break up each lesson into small chunks so that the child has small timeouts doing something fun or motivating.

Introduce topics of interest

By using things that interest or motivate the child we are more likely to encourage them to learn new things or at least take an interest in a more diverse variety of subjects. An interest can be used in many ways to encourage the child to take part in a lesson.

For instance, if a child has an interest in the characters from the Toy Story movie, we can incorporate these characters into our lesson. Using the computer you can make small picture copies of the characters in Toy Story and then use these to teach addition in a maths class, for instance. You can show the characters with different facial expressions and talk about feelings, empathy and emotions. You could encourage the child to draw something from Toy Story in the art class. You can print some pictures of the characters from Toy Story and make a dice game like snakes and ladders, so the child can play the game with another child and learn about turn-taking.

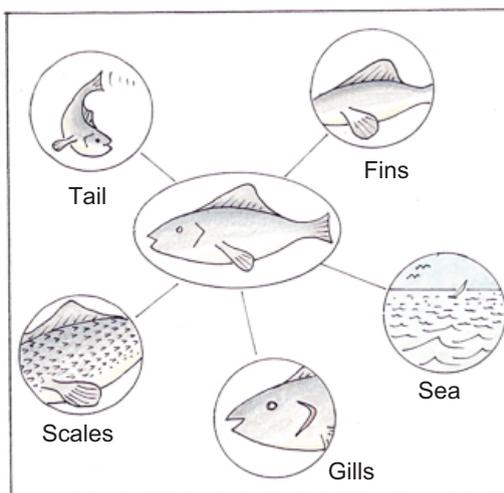




These are very simplistic examples, but it shows that with a bit of imagination you can take a special interest and turn it into a learning activity which will motivate the autistic child.

Generalising and using Mind Maps

By making links between items in a category we can help children make connections between subjects and concepts. Using Mind Maps is a very visual way to show how things are linked and connected. For instance, food can be divided into meat, vegetables and fruit, and then meat can be divided into lamb, chicken and pork etc. We can use a mind map to talk about a fish(see diagram opposite), its distinguishing features and where it lives.



Adapting the Classroom

Have an awareness of the child's sensory sensitivities. Have an awareness of things like noise and light and how they will effect the child (sensory overload). Also have an awareness of the amount physical space they need and the seating arrangements. Pay attention to the location of distractions or temptations for the child.

Have an awareness of communication and understanding

Make sure you prepare the student for change, by explaining, using visuals or guiding him to his visual timetable. Use gestures, visuals and talk slowly when you are explaining things. Give the child plenty of time to respond after you have explained things and prompt him when he goes off task. See www.icommunicatetherapy.com for more information on strategies in the classroom.

Functional Goals

Sometimes it may be important to deviate from the curriculum and concentrate on functional goals instead. It may be more beneficial for your child to learn how to communicate his needs or ask for help, than attempting to do algebra. Although this is a silly example, it is often the case that teachers stick rigidly to the curriculum when the child really needs to learn some key living and communication skills. The important thing is to set goals and prioritise what is important to the child and family. It does not mean the child has to forget about the curriculum, but time needs to be spent on the important day to day skills such as initiating, requesting, social skills and communication, so that the child can learn to function independently.



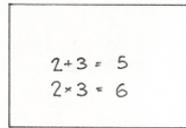
Using timetables

There are many ways to use timetables in the classroom to help autistic children. Timetables can give the child some structure and routine to their school day and help relieve anxiety. Timetables can be used to incorporate changes in the day and they can also include rewards to give the child time-out.

For more information and ideas about visual strategies and visual timetables see www.icommunicatetherapy.com



Circle time



Numeracy



Free Choice



Writing



Morning Tea



Art



Physical Education



Lunch

A simple example of a visual timetable

For non-verbal individuals requiring a system that is understood by everyone across environments, visuals are one of the best systems to develop. A book of visuals is portable, easily accessible and robust. Visuals can also be used to develop language skills, as a series of visuals can be used to create a grammatically correct sentence.

See www.icommunicatetherapy.com for more information on Autistic Spectrum Disorders, adapting the classroom and programs for adults and children with communication difficulties.

www.icommunicatetherapy.com

Your Total Online Speech, Language & Communication Therapy Resource. Visit us today. Click here.



To learn more about Autism, classroom strategies, and communication, click this link to see our [Book Shop](#) to look at, and purchase books.

Suggested Reading:

1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Veronica Zysk and Ellen Notbohm

Enabling Communication in Children With Autism by Carol Potter and Chris Whittaker

Sensory Perceptual Issues in Autism and Asperger Syndrome: Different Sensory Experiences, Different Perceptual Worlds by Olga Bogdashina

Using Intensive Interaction and Sensory Integration: A Handbook for Those Who Support People With Severe Autistic Spectrum Disorder by Phoebe Caldwell and Jane Horwood

Functional Behavior Assessment for People With Autism: Making Sense of Seemingly Senseless Behavior by Beth A., Ph.D. Glasberg

Visual Supports for People With Autism: A Guide for Parents and Professionals by Marlene J. Cohen and Donna L. Sloan

Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community: Strategies for Individuals with Autism and Asperger Syndrome by Jennifer L. Savner, Brenda Smith Hyles, and Brenda Smith Myles

A Picture's Worth: PECS and Other Visual Communication Strategies in Autism (Topics in Autism) by Andy, Ph.D. Bondy and Lori Frost

Solving Behavior Problems in Autism (Visual Strategies Series) by Linda A. Hodgdon

Visual Language in Autism by Howard C. Shane and Sharon Weiss-Kapp

The New Social Story Book : Illustrated Edition by Carol Gray

My Social Stories Book by Abbie Leigh White, Carol Gray, and Sean McAndrew

The Social Skills Picture Book Teaching play, emotion, and communication to children with autism by Dr. Jed Baker

Comic Strip Conversations by Carol Gray