



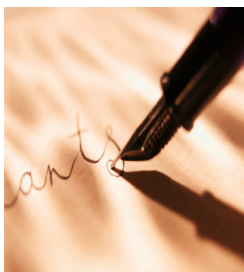
## You, Me, and LD

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I attended a workshop on Asperger's syndrome and the primary focus was on the need for social skills groups. The notes from the presenter were useful and I also included my notes to help clarify the presenter's notes as well. My hope is that you have a better understanding of Asperger's and realize that the ideas and strategies for a student with Asperger's is really not any different than for a "typical" student. The more clear and concise we can be as teachers, the more clear and concise our lesson plans are to all students. Below you will find all of the notes that were presented in the workshop, and following those notes are the notes that I took. The notes that I took are in a different font and in the color purple. I hope that the information presented below helps to clarify what Asperger's is, and how we can help a student with Asperger's.



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[robroy94@myfairpoint.net](mailto:robroy94@myfairpoint.net) and I will add you to my list.

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Notes on Asperger's Syndrome and the Need for Social Skills Groups  
Workshop presented on March 27, 2009  
Title of Workshop: Social Skills: Why and How  
Presented by: Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf  
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Notes from presenter

Each paragraph is denoted as #a, and it is one slide from her power point presentation and my additional notes will be in this format, and will be denoted as #b

1 a.

Who Needs Social Skills?

Children with many different diagnoses: AS, ASD, NLD, ADHD, PDD-NOS, OCD, Tourette's, Sensory integration disorder, ODD...

1 b.

AS-Asperger's syndrome

ASD-autism spectrum disorder

HFA-high functioning autism

NLD/NLVD-non learning disability, non-verbal learning disability (no obsessions like what is found within the autism spectrum) (Have difficulty processing what is given to them, and then having to do an outcome. The information goes in, but has a difficult time coming out in the manner that is wanted or expected.)

ADHD-attention deficit hyperactive disorder (typically an entry diagnosis) (executive functioning is the classic hallmark, such as organizing work)  
PDD-NOS-pervasive developmental delay, not otherwise specified (usually younger children and is a common diagnosis)

Tourette's syndrome-classified by tics, inappropriate vocalizations, obsessive rituals

OCD-obsessive compulsive disorder (missed diagnosed with autism due to deep seated characteristics of the obsessive rituals)

Sensory integration disorder-difficulty with lighting, textures, smells, etc (typically an entry diagnosis)

ODD-oppositionally defiant disorder (also, any other type of conduct disorder) (set of behaviors more than a diagnosis)

Typically, students are bright, but clueless.

Asperger's syndrome is contained within a group of "socially challenged" disorders.

Students with Asperger's can do well in early elementary school, but when they arrive at middle school there are more "executive functioning" (organizational) demands that are placed on them, and they may start to experience more difficulties. They may have increased anxiety, and it may become more difficult to manage.

1 a.

Many children have IEP's or 504's, but some do not.

2 a.

What's Important?

Students need to learn about the social world around them, which includes:

Hidden curriculum

Sensory awareness

Emotional regulation

Intentionality-their and others

Self-advocacy

Dealing appropriately with anxiety and stress

Reciprocity

2 b.

Social groups should be all year long.

Empowers the student.

A way to get answers to why they do what they do.

Northeastern has started a social skills group. All students in the group have been diagnosed with Asperger's. They are also registered with the Office of Disabilities at the University.

3 a.

What is "Hidden curriculum"?

"Hidden curriculum" is the unwritten social rules that typically developing children learn by watching others.

Having good social skills means you are following the "hidden curriculum" in your immediate environment be it school, a workplace, your home etc.

Not being aware of the "hidden curriculum" could also be called having weak social skills.

3 b.

Subtle cues that go on in our lives that we just pick up without direct teaching.

Explicit, specific, "tell me what to do" kinds of learning has to happen to understand the "hidden curriculum.

4 a.

Where is "Hidden Curriculum"?

Across all disciplines-

Academics-school, organizational skills, homework...

Home-friendships, families...

Outside world-workplace, clubs, restaurants...

4 b.

Example-work environment

It is the company picnic. The "hidden curriculum" is that the boss wants everyone to attend. It is an unspoken rule that employees are to go, or that

the boss will not be happy. A "typical" person will go, make an appearance to the boss, and leave. A person with Asperger's will not go because they do not want to go. They will not understand why the boss is "cold" to them the next time they meet.

5 a.

Sensory awareness and Emotional regulation

Children with ASD have difficulty understanding their sensory issues.

Getting a sensory evaluation by an OT would help understanding what the sensory issues are.

Regulating emotions are one of the most difficult challenges for this population.

Finding a skilled person to work on this issue is a start, this ability develops slowly and only with much practice.

5b.

A person with Asperger's really needs to know how to regulate their emotions.

A person with Asperger's has many sensory issues.

They have much difficulty with regulating issues because they don't know what they are. (Lighting, temperature, clothing, sounds, food textures, touch, hunger). Reading the signs of these types of issues are very difficult for the person with Asperger's as well as for the caregivers.

Baseball caps can be a solution to lighting issues. Dimming the lights or changing the types of lights can also be a solution.

Food is a huge issue for many people with Asperger's.

People with Asperger's really need to learn to adapt by utilizing "systematic desensitization", in which there is exposure to the "sensory issue", and then closer exposure, and so on until it is mastered. A person with Asperger's cannot be expected to go from "0 to 100" immediately.

For example, a person that can't stand the "crunch" of chips. They might begin by having to watch a person eat one chip, and then the bag goes away. The next day it might be two chips, and so on until the person is able to watch someone eat a bag of chips without any difficulties.

6 a.

Intentionality-theirs and others

These are children who misunderstand other intentions

AND

Others misunderstand their intentions.

Because of these misunderstanding there is a level of ongoing frustration for many children with ASD, ADHD, and NLD

6b.

"Theory of mind"-is defined as "only seeing it from their point of view".

Person with Asperger's will seem abrupt or rude because they walk away from something, but this is because they think you know what they are thinking, when you don't.

For example, they may need to use the bathroom, and they assume that you know that, so they just get up and go and they do not tell anyone where they are going.

"Degrees of everything"

They do everything on a scale of too soft through too loud. This can be especially seen in voice tone and volume. The person with Asperger's needs to be trained directly to what tone of voice they need to use in different situations.

7 a.

Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy needs to be taught explicitly to this population of children.

They need to understand how they learn and to articulate this to others.

Every child that has an IEP or 504 plans should attend at least part of their yearly meeting.

Practice how to advocate for you is of utmost importance.

7b.

People with Asperger's need to know what their issues are.

They need to be told specifically about their neurology of their brain.

A book titled, "All Cats Have Asperger's Syndrome" is highly recommended.

A person with Asperger's needs to know their specific challenges.

They need to be told when they get their diagnosis so that they can begin to learn explicitly and clearly what it is they need to know to advocate for themselves and to help themselves as well.

In a school setting, they need to attend their IEP meetings so that they can learn to advocate for themselves, and most importantly to see that there is an entire team set up to help them succeed.

8 a.

Dealing appropriately with anxiety and stress

Many people with AS, HFA, NVLD, and ADHD have a level of anxiety that can interfere with social development.

Looking for a physical activity that the child will stick with and do on a regular basis is helpful.

Doing regular physical activity will not only help with stress but can also develop some social relationships?

Examples: swim club, biking, golf, physical trainer at a gym, skiing, horse back Riding lessons, gymnastics, etc.

8b.

AS-Asperger's syndrome

HFA-high functioning autism

NVLD-non-verbal learning disability

The person with Asperger's needs to figure out a way to relieve their stress.

They typically do not like exercise.

Hiking, and Boy Scouts were additional ideas given.

9 a.

#### Reciprocity

Many children with ASD do not understand the meaning of reciprocity-I do something for you, you do something for me. They very often like to do what THEY want to do.

In a good social skills group having lessons on reciprocal behavior would be a priority.

Teaching lesson on reciprocity can be incorporated into any classroom.

Families can help develop an understanding of reciprocity as well.

9b.

Reciprocity is a very difficult concept to grasp.

A person with Asperger's needs to learn to send out cards, to remember people's special days.

A person with Asperger's tends to appear ego-centric. They do not see their whole family, just themselves.

In a social group, it is important for the family to participate in this. For example, a person with Asperger's should participate in picking out a present for someone else. It needs to be stressed that it is for the person, not them, and therefore, it should be something the person will like, not them.

A person with Asperger's does not get "helping others". This needs to be role modeled. They need to be exposed to volunteer opportunities.

A person with Asperger's needs to feel good about what they are doing.

10 a.

#### Student profile

Socially naïve- doesn't always notice what the other kids are doing or seem to care.

Emotionally immature-not necessarily interested in what others the same age are interested in.

10b.

A person with Asperger's needs to have friends that they can relate to.

They do not know how to process information well.

They don't know how to care about others.

They have an emotional age versus their chronological age.

They need to learn how to have conversation with people.

11 a.

Body language

Poor facial recognition

Low or no eye contact

Often doesn't seem to be paying attention to the teacher or parent

Difficulty understanding intentions of others-especially with others use of facial expressions and body language.

11b.

Body language is a key feature to Asperger's.

Eye contact should be replaced with face contact. If you teach a person with Asperger's to make eye contact, they will more often than not stare at a person instead of "eye contact". A skill that is taught is to look a person's face, then nose, then eyes, then chin. It is thought that the entire face should be looked at, not just the "eyes".

A person with Asperger's is capable of doing more than one thing at a time.

12 a.

Stress and anxiety

Anxiety and stress can contribute to misunderstanding.

Sensory issues are also a factor.

Underestimates tone and volume of voice when stressed.

Misunderstands other intention which can cause others to avoid them.

Miscalculates their behavioral impact on others.

12b.

A person with Asperger's needs to build some level of "getting along" to form friendships.

Need to continue to focus on emotional regulation.

People with Asperger's will avoid people to avoid the misunderstandings.

Depression is common.

13 a.

What to do

Be clear and specific.

Be careful of hidden meaning of language.

Mean what you say.

Careful with tone of voice.

Dissect misunderstanding.

Strategize for the future.

Teach the "rules of the road" as much as possible.

Find a place where social skills are explicitly taught, such as an after school group, is very important. Otherwise, there are not many opportunities to teach and practice these skills in an accepting environment.

13b.

One cannot have an "all or nothing" approach to a person with Asperger's.

Tone of voice can be misconstrued by a person with Asperger's.

Need to always be aware of the "hidden curriculum".

Figurative language must be explained, for example one someone says to "hold the door", make sure they know it means to open the door and let someone go through.

A person with Asperger's needs to know the concrete steps that are needed to be taken to complete the task at hand.

Transition planning must begin for post-high school by age 14.

Time must be allotted to teach the skills that are being presented to the person with Asperger's. A time and place must be allocated for the person to learn the skills that they need to be successful.

14 a.

Michelle Garcia Winner:

"There is nothing more complex to teach than teaching social thinking and related skills to persons who are not born with solid social cognition that enables them to learn all of this information intuitively."

Michelle Garcia Winner, speech language pathologist and specialist for persons with social thinking challenges, is internationally recognized as an innovative therapist, energetic and enthusiastic workshop presenter and author based in San Jose, California.

14b.

Think in regards to creating a "social curriculum". The idea is to make a person with Asperger's social, and to be able to understand the norms of society.

15 a.

How Parents Can Help

Make a plan to foster friendships.

Organized/structured play dates.

Keep it simple.

Stay involved start with short time span and build.

Advocate for transition planning at school-choose teachers sensitive to children with social challenges.

Be sure to schedule in some 'down time'-over scheduling can lead to stress.

Find or look for a professional to start a social skills group-talk to other parents, join a support group.

15b.

There always needs to be supervision.

A person with Asperger's likes to be busy.

Avoid possible sabotage situations. For example, their home. They may have something special to them, and the person coming to visit may not realize that and that could cause a "melt down" if it is touched, looked at, and so on.

Down time is a must.

Social skills groups must be taught by professionals.

Social recreation groups are to be supervised by parents and caregivers.

16 a.

How Teachers Can Help

Help develop a transition plan before the next school year.

Be aware of bullying and teasing behavior.

Say what you mean.

Be flexible-if there is a misunderstanding find out the reason.

Be careful in the use of sarcasm.

Give extra time for English assignments that include ambiguous working, i.e. similes, metaphors, and irony.

Make sure you teach specific lesson on figurative language-this may need to be done multiple times.

Check in using a quiet manner and be sure the student understands the lesson.

16b.

Create the correct IEP/504 plan with accommodations that will help in transitioning.

Help to build positive relationships.

Help to identify/discern teasing behavior versus being picked on.

17 a.

Both Parents and Teachers

Be a team-keep lines of communication open to help with stress, misunderstandings organization, and anything that can fall under the definition of hidden curriculum.

When everyone, including the student, works together, success can be achieved.

17b.

Continue to work on communication.

Realize that a person with Asperger's knows the information, they just have a hard time organizing it. Checklists, long term project breakdowns are key to their success.

18a.

Social skills

Direct instruction is necessary.

Find someone who leads social skills groups and see if you can observe or interview them.

Find out if your afterschool program would be willing to host a social skills group.

Join local and national organizations-these are places that often have information on professionals working in your area.

Social skills are not taught quickly or easily-need repetition, a skilled group leader, a structured environment and specific instruction.

Normally developing peers should be excluded-they will be bored and defeat the purpose of the group.

Time for practice-part of a good social skills curriculum should include time to practice skills in a natural setting, i.e. going to restaurants, community activities, and events.

18b.

Don't "read between the lines"

Social skills groups may/not include typically developing students. Typically developing students can contribute in important ways, but many experts believe that more benefit comes from being in a group of people with similar cognitive and social abilities.

Much practice has to be applied for a person with Asperger's to generalize situations learned in social groups as compared to real life situations.

Families have to practice what is learned in social groups.

19 a.

Some confusing language

Listen up

All eyes on me

Sit down

In a minute

Get a life

How are you

What's happening?

Hold your horses

Are you crazy?

19b.

Try to speak clearly and explicitly at all times.

Question and Answer Period

A person with Asperger's is identified with an autism identification.

A person with autism is lower functioning than a person with Asperger's.

Mixing people with Asperger's and those with autism in social groups does not work since the people with Asperger's are higher functioning.

In the current DSM, autism is under the PDD label. The question is, where will it be in 2012?

If a person developed language at regular developmental milestones, they would be identified with Asperger's.

If a person had language delays, they would be diagnosed with autism.

Each specialist will diagnose a person in their field of expertise.

Debate of autism and Asperger's being a medical diagnosis versus an educational one.

Debate of identified autism and Asperger's as a team decision, consisting of Speech, OT, educators, psychologists, medical doctors, special educators, parents and the one being tested.

Tests that should be administered to determine autism or Asperger's:

- Test of Pragmatic Language (speech/language pathologist)

- Daily Living Skills (Vineland is one type)

- Sensory Assessment (OT)

- Psychological testing

- Academic testing



GO  
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