Staying Ahead of The ASD Game: Communication Transitions

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What’s The Game?

- Who are the players?
- How do we start this game and who do we turn to?
- Where are the landing points / transitions?
- How do we win the journey?

*Autism is a journey*
Before starting the game, know the new DSM-5 Classifications for ASD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity Level for ASD</th>
<th>Social Communication</th>
<th>Restricted interests &amp; repetitive behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>Limited initiations, minimal response to others, likely under 20 words, unusual approach to meet needs.</td>
<td>Preoccupations, fixated rituals and/or repetitive behaviors markedly interfere with functioning in all spheres. Marked distress when rituals or routines are interrupted; very difficult to redirect from fixated interest or returns to it quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Requiring very substantial support’</td>
<td>Severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills cause severe impairments in functioning; very limited initiation of social interactions and minimal response to social overtures from others.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>Limited initiations and unusual responses, uses simple sentences, narrow interests, odd nonverbally.</td>
<td>RRBs and/or preoccupations or fixated interests appear frequently enough to be obvious to the casual observer and interfere with functioning in a variety of contexts. Distress or frustration is apparent when RRB’s are interrupted; difficult to redirect from fixated interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Requiring substantial support’</td>
<td>Marked deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills; social impairments apparent even with supports in place; limited initiation of social interactions and reduced or abnormal response to social overtures from others.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Difficulty initiating, decreased interest in socialization, speaks in complete sentences but conversation often fails &amp; making friends is difficult.</td>
<td>Rituals and repetitive behaviors (RRB’s) cause significant interference with functioning in one or more contexts. Resists attempts by others to interrupt RRB’s or to be redirected from fixated interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Requiring support’</td>
<td>Without supports in place, deficits in social communication cause noticeable impairments. Has difficulty initiating social interactions and demonstrates clear examples of atypical or unsuccessful responses to social overtures of others. May appear to have decreased interest in social interactions.</td>
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The Diagnosis of ASD in the DSM-5
(Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

• To receive a diagnosis of autism, all 3 deficits for social impairment must be present.
  1. Deficit in social-emotional reciprocity including in social contexts.
  2. Deficit in communication behaviors in social interactions such as poor integration of verbal and nonverbal communication including but not limited to abnormal eye contact and facial expressions, difficulty understanding, and use of gestures in social contexts.
  3. Deficit in relationships across social contexts such as difficulty adjusting behavior.

• Other areas include challenges in imaginative play and failure to make friends.
Sensory Overload & Fatigue Contribute

- Debilitating symptoms
- Sensory oversensitivity - loud noises, clapping, or fluorescent lights, scents, clothing, etc.
- May be nearly impossible to participate in normal activities
- When tired, sensory sensitivity worsens


Photo - https://sfari.org
Primary Domains of ASD

1. Language structure
   - Language Skills
   - Specific Language Impairment

2. Social interaction and communication
   - Social Skills
   - Repetitive & Ritualistic Behaviors
   - Previously – Asperger Syndrome

3. Stereotyped behavior and restricted interests
   - Autism
   - SCD
   - AS
The Early Signs of Autism and Communication

Watch the differences of children with and without ASD characteristics-

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtvP5A5OHpU#t=52

1 in 68 (CDC, 2014)

Boys = 1 in 42
Girls = 1 in 189
Communication (Nonverbal & Verbal)

Speech:
- Speech sounds (articulation),
- Voice, Fluency

Language:
- Receptive (understanding),
- Expressive (expressing)
At what phase is the child functioning?

1. Preverbal (6-12 mos.)
2. First Words (12-18 mos.)
3. Word Combinations (18-30 mos.)
4. Sentences (30-48 mos.)
5. Complex Language (48+ mos.)

Progress varies by individual child and communication should be connected to activity-based themes for activities of daily living (ADLs).

Functional examples include communication for dressing, feeding, grooming, hygiene, toileting, getting food, playing, etc.

Source - [http://therapyfunzone.net/blog/ot/dressing/](http://therapyfunzone.net/blog/ot/dressing/)
1. The Preverbal Learner

Profile

- Few verbal skills
- Behavior problems
- A “challenge to teach”

Priorities

- Compliance training
- Learning to request (manding)
  - Manding allows a child to get what he wants and get rid of what he does NOT want

Watch video of a tantrum - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8psCYcwQTc&feature=youtu.be
Bopp, Mirenda, & Zumbo (2009) found the following to be the best predictors of language development in children with ASD

- Number of words said
- Verbal imitation ability
- Use of objects for pretend play
- Number of gestures to initiate joint attention (follow adult line of regard - point, show, give)
- Language skills at 4 years of age predicted language at 10-13 years old

2. The First Words Learner

Profile
- Simple forms
- Can be cooperative
- Variety of behavior problems
- May be echolalic

Priorities
- Increase number or items/activities child wants
- Increase motor and vocal imitation
- Benefit from naming and receptive (understanding) language
- Build vocabulary words to further develop communication
Watch as the parent and therapist interact with the child to increase understanding and use of words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQW4TncfP7g
Beginning Words:
Child starts to make wants known by learning to mand. Communicative Temptations Help!

Motivation → Response → Specific Reinforcement

Child wants cookie → “Cookie” or picture given → Child receives cookie

Open for link of Communicative Temptations -
I want

- big wheel
- golf
- trampoline
- bubble blower
- sand and water table
- sidewalk chalk
Visual Supports Help Communication

First / Then

Brushing Teeth

Morning Schedule

I am going...

Grocery Store  Gas Station  McDonald's

Circle Time  Snack  Reading
3. The Word Combination Learner

Profile

• Some advanced communication skills
• Acquiring at fast pace

Priorities

• Expand requests (manding repertoire)
• Name (tacting) wider variety of objects/pictures
• Increase receptive skills
# Developing Two-Word Utterances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULE</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action + Locative</td>
<td>Look here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recurrent + Object</td>
<td>More butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributive + Entity</td>
<td>Paper cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action + Object</td>
<td>Find ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessor + Possession</td>
<td>My bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributive + Entity</td>
<td>Poor baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action + Object</td>
<td>Cook carrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative + Entity</td>
<td>That cupcake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action + Dative</td>
<td>Feed dolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent + Action</td>
<td>Car crash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Phrases & Sentences Learner

Profile

- Good imitation skills
- Labels numerous items
- Improved receptive skills
- Poor understanding of lengthier descriptions
- Moderately limited interactions

Priorities

- Sees characteristics of objects
- Responds more appropriately
- Expands descriptive labeling with greater comprehension
- Obtains needs by asking Wh-?s
- Facilitates social interactions with peers
5. Complex Language Learner

Profile

- Sizeable vocabulary, but pragmatic language deficits
- May have inappropriate discourse
- Voice prosody and intonation deficits
- Nonverbal paralinguistic deficits

Priorities

- Responding Interactively:
  - Wh-questions (who, what, where, when, why, how)
  - Turn-taking & topic maintenance
  - Engaging in conversation

- Complex Requesting:
  - Initiating questions about items & events
  - Cause-effect explanations
Taking This Information Into the Real World with Mom and Kyaira
Communication is Key

- Share enjoyment
- Make social connections
- Gain social opportunities (through play)
Recommended Game Rules From Research

- Slow down and pay attention to the child
- Follow through with treatment suggested by teachers and therapists
- Use visual input to assist understanding of language

Adapted from:
Navigating Through Some Important Transitions for Children With ASD

- Extended family input
- Getting the diagnosis
- Early intervention (EI)

- Special education in the schools
- Extended school year program (ESY)
- Extended social programs
  http://www.spininc.org/site/PageNavigator/PACE/pace_home.html

- Finding a middle school and a high school
- After graduation options

ChildLink through PHMC (Public Health Management Corp.)
http://www.phmc.org/site/programs/services-to-special-populations/children-with-special-needs
Watch child communicating with more complex language - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmKfKvomFM4&feature=youtu.be

The goal is to increase successful interaction!
Communication skills often dictate options at various transition points

What we need as our children move toward the future ...

- Acceptable level of interaction with others
  - Boundaries and personal space (arm’s length)
- Understanding expectations at school & in public
  - Appropriate grooming and hygiene
- Interactive communication skills
  - Distance when talking, appropriate hugging
  - Eye contact and gestures when talking
  - Rules in school and at work

What other skills are needed to help individuals with ASD transition?

Skills to consider for the young adult with ASD who plans to enter the workplace (by Dr. Paul Wehman in Autism and the Transition to Adulthood)

- Using social amenities
- Using appropriate greetings
- Terminating (ending) conversations
- Sharing workspace
- Waiting in line and taking turns
- Accepting correction when constructively criticized
- Responding assertively
- Asking for help and revealing a problem

Also Remember to Review the Hidden Curriculum...

The hidden curriculum refers to actions and behaviors people tend to know without being formally taught.

These skills might include:

- How to walk in the hallways (keep to the right)
- What to do during breaks from work or tasks
- What topics to discuss and not discuss with different people
- How to get to and from ordinary local places
- How to dress and groom oneself properly
- How to maintain a schedule and be on time
- How to get help from others when needed
- How to self-advocate
Take Home Message for Winning the Game

- Have a long-term plan in place - the time is NOW
- Keep planning and goal-setting with the end in sight
- Seek a good support system
- Continue to educate yourself and others about autism
- Work on improving communication that is geared toward specific, functional tasks
- Don’t give up!
Questions ?