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Issue 17

Oral-Motor Strategies for Self-Regulation

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Students with an ASD often exhibit difficulty attaining and sustaining functional attention, alertness, activity level, and the postural control necessary for effective interaction and learning. Due to the relationships between oral-motor mechanisms, sensory-motor systems, and behavioural functions, *Sensory Diets* prescribed by occupational therapists often include oral-motor strategies to address these challenges. In addition to nourishing themselves, infants use suck/swallow patterns to calm, self-regulate, bond, and develop social interactions. They also use their mouth to explore and learn about their environment. This is observed through the sucking of body parts, mouthing toys, pacifiers, etc. Thus, the suck/swallow/breath mechanism is a primary developmental pattern requiring timing and sequenced movement.

Adults, like children, use oral-motor strategies (e.g., chew gum, bite their nails, take deep breaths, chew on a pen, suck on a candy, smoke) to change their arousal current state. The sensory-motor input necessary for each person to achieve and maintain a particular level of alertness varies amongst individuals. Students with an ASD may seek oral input for a variety of reasons (e.g.: lick/mouth to explore, bite to express anger/release stress, seek strong proprioceptive input at the jaw, chew on clothing to counteract smell/taste, suck on fidgets to self-regulate, etc.). Therefore, it is important to understand the function of behaviour within a developmental context in order to address the student's needs and, if appropriate, provide them with opportunities for oral exploration and work.

Oral-motor strategies used for self-regulation (such as alertness, grounding, centering and focus) include *sucking, blowing, biting, crunching, chewing and licking*. These strategies may be incorporated at meals, snacks, or during play activities with food or non-food items. Activities are sometimes recommended to be embedded throughout the child's day and to be used during work at the table.

- ◆ *Sucking* activities can include sucking thicker liquids through curly straws, eating pureed foods (such as pudding or apple sauce) with a thick straw, moving bingo chips with a straw from one place to another, sucking ice chips or cold water from a sports bottle and sucking on a piece of latex-free *Theraband* or candy. Varying the taste, texture and temperature (cool to cold) can be used to impact alertness.
- ◆ *Blowing* with a good tongue and lip seal helps develop oral musculature and respiratory control. Blowing activities can include blowing soap bubbles, using a straw to make water bubbles in a glass, blowing in Kazoos/music makers (Harmonica, flute, etc.) or a variety of whistles/blowers including a visual component or not (for example, Train Whistle, Magic Ball Pipe, Rainbow/Bottle Pipe, Party Blow-Out), blowing in large flexible latex free tubing, and blowing balloons.
- ◆ *Biting, crunching and chewing* are used for organizing and grounding. Biting is also used to decrease oral sensitivity, hyper-reactive gag, and tongue thrust because it promotes stability at the jaw articulation. Activities that are usually suggested include 'bite-and-tug' with a piece of flexible latex-free tubing/licuorice/washcloth, using a *Chewy Tube* or other oral supplies, eating crunchy/chewy foods such as crackers, pretzels, bagels, carrots, celery, apple, etc.
- ◆ Finally, *licking* activities may include licking lollipops, frozen yoghurt popsicles, ice cubes, peanut butter/cheese spread/pudding on a spoon, etc.

Please keep in mind that the student's oral-motor abilities need to be considered prior to identifying the appropriate activities to use, as not all the strategies listed above are appropriate for every student. You should always consult with an occupational therapist for suggestions of appropriate activities for your student.

Joëlle Hadaya, erg., Occupational Therapist

Communication Corner

Social Stories™ were developed by Carol Gray in 1991. Since that time, many parents and professionals have used Social Stories™ to successfully assist students in understanding social situations. A Social Story™ describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. Social Stories™ are a tool that parents and educators can use to: (a) help guide our students through situations that may be stressful, (b) provide the reasoning behind rules and, (c) reinforce a student's successes and positive behaviours.

Social Stories™ are successful with students because they present information about social skills that the student may find difficult with a patient and reassuring quality. They include positive language and provide appropriate responses to social situations rather than focusing on the negative behaviours exhibited.

Social Stories™ are most effective when we consider the situation from the point of view of the student. Try to understand *HOW* your student is interpreting a situation. You will need to be a detective to determine *WHY* a student reacts the way they do in certain situations. Only when these questions are answered can

you begin to write the story. These stories often help with social understanding for *both* our students and the people around them.

There are many resources available to help you get started:

- ◆ Visit the Gray Center website at www.thegraycenter.org
- ◆ Visit the following website to read the article: "Behavioral Issues and the Use of Social Stories" (<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/SocialLeisure/clarifySStories.html>)
- ◆ Visit the ASD link on the Lester B. Pearson website for sample stories that can be individualized: <http://www2.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/asdn/index.asp>
- ◆ Request to borrow the New Social Story book by Carol Gray from the ASD library
- ◆ Request assistance from your school Speech-Language Pathologist

Helene Packman, Speech-Language Pathologist

Reference: Gray, C. (2000). *The New Social Story Book (Revised and Illustrated)*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, Inc.

Teacher Tips

Teachers usually involve students in creating class rules in order to allow them to feel like a part of the classroom community, as well as to get them on board in following the rules. Another way to support a collaborative student-centered classroom is by using a [class size visual schedule](#) and allowing the students to remove or flip over finished activities. Doing this will encourage students to attend to the schedule and, in turn, lower anxiety about transitions, create independence and minimize repetitive questions such as "When is gym?".

To download a Boardmaker class schedule template check out the *Materials* link on the ASD website. <http://www2.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/asdn/index.asp>

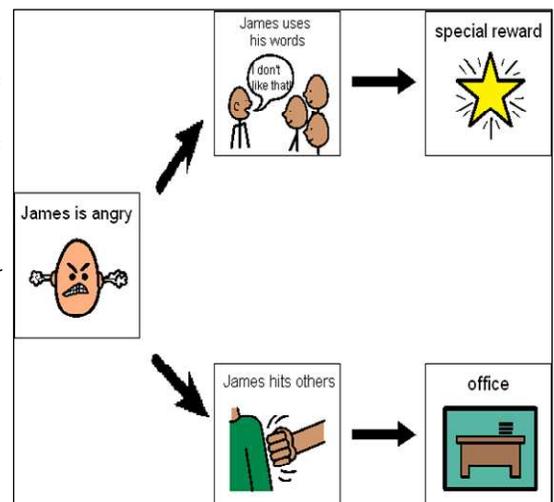
Behaviour Strategies

As we all know, students with an ASD will occasionally exhibit negative behaviours for a number of reasons. The important thing to remember is that they often have great difficulty associating consequences to their actions, regardless of their level of functioning. Due to this lack of internal self-monitoring, they need to be shown the connection between action and consequence by an external source.

The "consequence map" is a great visual tool which can be used to represent this concept in a very easy and concrete manner. Consider how the student likely feels just prior to displaying the negative behaviour and use that as a starting point; then create a trail on the "map" according to positive and negative actions, which are ultimately linked to positive and negative consequences. The pictos and words on the map can be easily created using a software called Boardmaker.

Once the map is completed, it should be introduced to the student at a time when he/she is calm enough to absorb the information and then reviewed with them at least once a day until the negative behaviour begins to subside.

The "consequence map," offers many advantages. It is a tool which assists in teaching students right from wrong; it is a first step to teaching responsibility and accountability for one's own actions; and it also provides the student with an opportunity to identify and select a positive alternative. All of these factors are critical in helping a student with autism develop more appropriate coping mechanisms. Being able to reliably access such coping mechanism, in turn, is an invaluable life skill.





MR. GREEN PREPARES FOR HIS CHILD'S IEP MEETING

Top Shelf



The Boy Inside (2007):

DVD produced and directed by Marianne Kaplan, MSK Productions

This award-winning DVD follows the story of Adam, a 12 year old student who has Asperger's Syndrome. It covers the daily challenges that Adam faces in his inclusive elementary school. Adam and his family poignantly offer insight into what it is like to have an autism spectrum disorder. This moving documentary is an excellent sensitization tool for teachers and students alike.

This DVD and accompanying teacher handbook can be borrowed from the ASD library. It can also be purchased from www.movingimages.ca

Shopping Corner

Now that many of you are starting to download or create your own materials, you will want to preserve your resources. Our ASD Team has saved a great deal of money by purchasing laminating film from a company called Have Our Plastic (HOP) Canada. You may contact them at 905-821-7550 or 1-800-263-5995 (in Canada) or by emailing them at sales@hop.ca. Films come in a variety of sizes and thicknesses. We recommend the 3 mm film, which costs \$11.97 or the 5mm film which costs \$22.49 (100 films per box). Please note that there is a minimum order of \$50.00.

Mailing address: Les Attaches Karina Ltée
5525 Cote de Liesse
St.Laurent, QC H4P 1A1

In addition, Karina Fasteners is a supplier we like to use for Velcro. We recommend ordering the adhesive white, half-inch dots which will cost about \$25 per roll of 1000, including shipping. You will need to order one roll of hooks and one roll of loops (the hard and soft Velcro). You can order by calling 514-744-9352 or by emailing karina@sandmate.com. For more information please go to www.sandmate.com.

Mailing address: HOP Inc.
4 - 6990 Creditview Road
Mississauga, ON N 8R9

Try This!

Many students with an ASD who have difficulty learning how to read benefit from a whole-word approach. Before you begin, ensure that your student has acquired the prerequisite skill of *matching*. The student should be able to match shape-to-shape, object-to-object, photo-to-photo and picto-to-picto as well as objects to photos/picto and photo/picto to objects. Initial vocabulary words should be meaningful to the student, e.g. family members' names or favourite objects. You should also introduce basic verbs (e.g. like, want) so that the student can eventually form basic sentences from the learned words.

1. Choose 4 vocabulary words
2. Make up your grid with additional flash cards to match to the grid as shown on the right.
3. Use **Match-Select-Name** to teach the words:

Matching: Ask the student to match each word to the one on the grid, e.g., Match *mom*, Match *dad*, etc. (do this 3 times in total)

Selecting: Place the flashcards randomly in order and ask the student to select each word that you give and name e.g. "Give me *grandpa*, give me *mom*," etc. (do this 3 times in total)

Naming: Ask the student to name each word you hold up, e.g. "What's this?" (do this 3 times in total)

4. To test for comprehension of the learned words, ask students to match the words to pictures, photos or real-life objects
5. Keep a log of the words learned and revise them every so often.



mom	dad
grandma	grandpa



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We're on the web!

<http://www2.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/asdn/index.asp>

Our team is comprised of many professionals with a variety of specializations. Designated as a Centre of Excellence within the province, our mandate is to assist LBPSB schools in the implementation of best practices for the inclusion of students with an ASD and to serve as a resource to the other English school boards in Quebec. Our team provides assistance to students and families and works to support educational personnel in augmenting their capacity to meet a wide range of needs in the classroom. We do this through direct intervention, coaching, consulting, professional development, and the sharing of materials.

WELCOME!

We would like to extend a warm welcome the newest member of our team, Christina Kyriakidou, Consultant for Autism. Welcome aboard, we look forward to working with you!

Coming Soon!

The ASD team is proud to announce its second Parent & Professional Seminar with **Dr. Tara Flanagan, Ph.D. on February 3rd, 2009.** Check out our website for more information.

Please stay tuned for more information on Center of Excellence for Autism Annual Symposium with **Josée Roy on May 17th, 2009.**

WWW

The **Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA)** article page contains a wealth of information related to Autism Spectrum Disorders. Over 100 articles are featured, addressing a variety of topics such as: family, educational programming, behaviour, communication, social/ leisure and sensory. The articles are short, easy-to-read, and extremely practical in nature. New articles are added on a regular basis. To find out more about this great resource for parents and teachers, please go to:

<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/ftrainpapers.htm>

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Michelle Garcia-Winner is an internationally renowned author and SLP who has developed tremendous expertise in the field of autism and, more particularly, in the area of social thinking. In her article, *Social Thinking: Teaching the Unthinkable* (Feb 2008, p. 16), Winner introduces readers to social thinking and perspective-taking and describes how and why this skill is a core challenge for students who have an ASD. This article is the first of a new regular column related to social thinking that will appear in every edition of the Autism Asperger Digest Magazine.

This magazine can be borrowed from the ASD library. For a subscription to this magazine, please go to: www.autismdigest.com

Garcia-Winner, M. (2008). *Social Thinking: Teaching the Unthinkable?* (p. 16 – 17, January-February 2008). In Autism Asperger Digest Magazine. Texas: Future Horizons.

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