Five Keys to Supporting a Person with Autism

Alyson Beytien, BCBA
Hills and Dales
Dubuque, IA

First

Then
1. Assume competence

- Used to believe that 80% of individuals with ASD were mentally retarded
- Now believed to be 30% or less
- Allow peers to model
- Verbally encourage prior to attempt
- If at first you don’t succeed...make it more visual!!
Competence in Community

- Consider the time frame for competence
- Connect to special interest
- Call ahead and explain what you hope happens
- “How can we make this happen?”

2. Use visuals and a communication system
Communication System

- In times of stress, language decreases.
- Communication System should support the student’s worst day
- Communication between everyone involved is critical
- Know the “script”
- Environmental Analysis if possible
- Calendars, schedules
- Signal or icon for “change”
Communication System

- Signal or icon for “change”
- “Turn around” time
  - More for an “unpreferred change”
  - Less for a “preferred change”

Communication in Community

- Visuals for exploring zoo, museum, parks, fairs
- Encourage interaction
- Set expectations for community partners
The Incredible 5 Point Scale

- **5** Emergency
- **4** Outside/Gym Activity
- **3** Classroom Voice
- **2** Whisper
- **1** Silence

3. Be aware of sensory needs
Sensory Needs

- Hypo or Hyper Sensitive
- May struggle to process all the senses at once
- Environmental challenges
- Need to take breaks to support sensory system

Sensory in Community

- Overall loud noise may not be an issue
- An engaging activity is more important than silence
- Take the tools!
- Ignore self-stim behaviors for coping
- Target vs. Walmart
4. Have typical peers around for modeling and friendship.

Modeling and Friendship

- We WANT to have friends, we just don’t know how!
- Look for related interests
- Not just girls!!
- Will struggle to just “talk”—need scripts, projects to share, and conversation starters
It doesn’t matter what they know.

If the person doesn’t have appropriate social interaction skills, they won’t get the job or keep the job.

Social Interactions

- Consistent, daily teaching individually and within group
- Vocal tone, facial expression and words may not match emotion
- Frequently does not respond well to sarcasm and teasing—a learned skill
- Targets for bullying
Social in Community

- Step away from the child!
- Where do the peers hang out?
- What skills do peers need?
- Appropriate hello and goodbye

All Behavior is Communication!

If we do the prior “keys” then we reduce or eliminate inappropriate and troubling behavior.
5. Have Fun!

Thanks for coming!

abytien@hillsdales.org
www.hillsdales.org  www.alysonbeytien.com