

ASC and COVID 19 – meeting the needs of learners 18.11.20

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Aims of the Session

- To be able to plan for and use a range of practical tools to support autistic pupils

MR. WORRY



Content covered in the session

- Understanding Social Rules
- Structure and Transitions
- Managing Emotions
- Supporting Sensory Sensitivities
- Teaching Communication Skills

Understanding Social Rules

- Social Stories
- What is it?
- A social story is a short description of a particular social situation, event or activity which includes specific and accurate social information about what to expect and why. They can provide a pupil with some idea of how others might respond in a particular situation, and therefore provide a framework for appropriate behaviour.

Aim of a social story..

- The aim is to not change the behaviour but to identify and share information that supports alternative responses.
- Social stories answer the 'wh' questions:
 - When and where the situation occurs
 - Who is involved
 - How events are sequenced
 - What occurs
 - Why

When would you use it?

Variety of reasons to use a social story...

- Introducing changes and new routines
- Explaining the reasons for the behaviour of others
- Teaching situation-specific social skills
- Describing routines, rules, situations
- Upcoming events or abstract concepts
- Developing understanding around expectations
- Teaching new academic skills

How to use it?

- Identification of pupils needs via observation and assessment.
- Consider it from the pupils view – seen, heard and felt?
- The story needs to be at the right level of comprehension for the pupil.
- The story will include descriptive, directive and perspective statements.

Guidance for writing social stories

- State the behaviour positively (state what to do rather than not what to do)
- Avoid referring to negative behaviour
- Describe more than direct
- Tailor the story to the individuals abilities and interests
- Beware of presenting literally accurate information

Examples of COVID 19 Stories

- <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-Story-in-English.pdf>
- <http://www.speakingspace.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Moderate-read-Cornavirus.pdf>

STRUCTURE & TRANSITIONS

Pupils on the autism spectrum experience high levels of stress and anxiety. The level of stress, the causes, and the ability to cope with it will vary from individual to individual, day to day and context.

You can help reduce anxiety and increase focus by answering these four basic but essential questions:



4 BASIC QUESTIONS

- What am I doing?
 - How long am I doing it for?
 - What will I be doing next?
 - When will I get to do the things that I really want to do?
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- Some children will also benefit from knowing:
 - How do I know I have started and finished?

Why Visual Strategies?

- Visual strategies will facilitate learning and independence by:
- Enabling the young person to “see” the task. They don’t disappear from them as spoken instructions do.
- Giving additional time for processing time.
- Promoting independence by providing a tool learners can refer to in order to identify and carry out the stages of a task.
- In addition, they can be looked at, sequenced, rehearsed and learned.

When you might use a visual strategy

- Give information
- Explain social situation
- Give choices
- Provide structure of the day
- Teach routines and/or new skills
- Be more independent in the environment
- Organise the space in the environment
- Support transitions
- Stay on task
- Manage time
- Communicate rules
- Assist students in coping with change
- Support Self regulation
- Aid memory
- Communicate emotions
- Clarify verbal information

Visual Timetables – Key points

- Whole day
- Parts of the day
- Objects of reference / photos / line drawings / written word
- Whole group or individual
- Location – wall/desk/clipboard
- Now/Next or First/Then
- Work and reward

Managing Emotions

- We all have an optimal level of arousal that keeps us alert enough to be able to pay attention, but not so stressed that we are unable to comprehend and/or engage in learning.
- ASC pupils have a narrow window of ‘optimal stress levels for learning’.

Causes of stress / anxiety..

- Sensory integration
- Differences in communication
- Uncertainty about what is going to happen
- Changes to routines
- Literal interpretation of situations
- Anxiety about failure
- Difficulties in knowing, understanding and applying rules, including difficulties understanding why rules are not consistently implemented.

'I am working for' charts

- Visual reminder of what reward a child will receive once they have completed the work or activity set.
- Choice board – 2 to 6 activities for the pupil to select from.
- Rewards need to be immediate at first and the task to achieve them needs to be short and simple.
- Once the pupil understands the task and reward it can be extended.

Token reward charts

- Token reward charts are useful when extending the amount of time spent on a task before a reward is given.
- Start with just two tokens.
- Child decides what they would like to work towards – this is to ensure that they are motivated.
- Frequent rewards to start with then extend over time.

Motivator Puzzles

- Similar to reward charts but more visual.
- Cut up a picture of a motivator – the number of pieces depends on the level the child is working at.
- It is intrinsically motivating as every time the child achieves a reward they can see the picture building.

Supporting Sensory Sensitivities

- The majority of pupils on the autism spectrum will have sensory processing difficulties, and may be over or under sensitive to a range of environmental factors depending on their individual sensory profile.
- Low arousal environments
- Work spaces
- Regular breaks

Observing behaviour to identify sensitivities

- Tactile
- Visual
- Auditory
- Gustatory
- Olfactory
- Proprioceptive
- Vestibular

Strategies to Address Hyper/Hypo Sensitivities

- Hypersensitivities
 - Warn the child if you are about to touch them
 - Remember hugs are painful rather than comforting
 - Gradually introduce new textures
- Hyposensitivities
 - Consider tight clothing e.g. leotards under clothing
 - Weighted blankets
 - Sleeping bags
 - Work with sand bag on lap

Teaching Communication Skills

- Communication Cards
- A way for the pupil to communicate to their teacher through a visual mean
- The pupil shows the card to the adult and the adult responds in the agreed way.
- Particularly useful when pupils are feeling anxious or upset as they are less likely to be able to use their language skills when they are experiencing distress.

Examples of communication cards:

- I need help
- I am ok
- I am feeling anxious
- I don't know what to do
- I know what to do
- I need to leave the room for 5 minutes

Next Steps

- Consider the six different elements of support that we have just talked through.
- How many of them are securely in place for your ASC pupils?
- Do staff know why these tools are so important for supporting ASC pupils?
- What are you going to do tomorrow / next week / next month from what we have talked about today.

Thank you!

- Thank you for your attendance today.
- Please get in touch if you have any queries or questions.