


ADD, Autism, Asperger Syndrome

The background of the slide is a green chalkboard. In the lower-left quadrant, two pink chalk sticks are positioned diagonally. Faint white chalk drawings are visible on the board, including a large 'A' at the bottom, a 'V' to the right, and a circular shape on the left.

Simple Strategies
That Work

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ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER



What is ADD/ADHD?

- ADD refers to a chronic bio-behavioral disorder that initially manifests in childhood and is characterized by hyperactivity, impulsivity and/or inattention





What are the characteristics of Students ADD?

Inattention:

- The child often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities.
- The child often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities.
- The child often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.



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- The child often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions).
 - The child often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities.
 - The child often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework).

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- The child often loses things necessary for tasks or activities (toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools).
 - The child is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli.
 - The child is often forgetful in daily activities.

Hyperactivity:

- The child often fidgets with his/her hands or feet or squirms in his/her seat
- The child often leaves his/her seat in the classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected.
- The child often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate.
- The child often has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly
- The child often talks excessively.



Impulsivity

- The child often blurts out answers before questions have been completed.
- The child often has difficulty awaiting his/her turn
- The child often interrupts or intrudes on others (for example, butts into conversations or games).



AUTISM



What is Autism?

- Autism is a severe developmental disorder that begins at birth or within the first two-and-a-half years of life.
- Most autistic children are perfectly normal in appearance, but spend their time engaged in puzzling and disturbing behaviors which are markedly different from those of typical children.



What are the characteristics of students with autism?

- Autism affects the way a child perceives the world and makes communication and social interaction difficult. The child may also have repetitive behaviors or intense interests. Symptoms, and their severity, are different for each of the affected areas - Communication, Social Interaction, and Repetitive Behaviors. A child may not have the same symptoms and may seem very different from another child with the same diagnosis.



ASPERGER SYNDROME



What is Asperger Syndrome?


- Asperger Syndrome (AS) is classified as an autistic spectrum disorder. Children with AS usually have High Functioning Autism (HFA). These children have great potential, but all too often their abilities and skills are masked by their difficulties. Most often they have impressive knowledge on particular subjects and an exceptional rote memory.



What are the characteristics of students with AS/HFA?

- Impairments in social understanding & social skills
- Sensory issues (personal space, sounds/noises, movement, tactile, taste, smell, light and temperature)
- Often interact more successfully with adults or younger children than same-aged peers
- Difficulty establishing and maintaining friendships with peers
- Difficulty understanding and using body language (eye gaze, gestures, facial expressions)



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- Expressive skills often mask comprehension problems
 - May “parrot” back information without understanding the content
 - Often fail to seek clarification
 - Interpret language literally
 - Difficulty in understanding & discussing feelings
 - Often show limited interests in others
 - Strong preference for sameness
 - Excessive time & energy devoted to special interests
 - Attention challenges

- Poor organization skills due to an executive function disorder
- Difficulty regulating their emotions
- Poor handwriting
- Impaired gross-motor skills



All children deserve a chance to succeed.

Here are 10 simple strategies that can help your students succeed!




#1. Operate on the Time

Children with AS/HFA have an internal clock the differs from that of most of their peers... “Twice as much time, half as much done”

- Make sure that the student has ample time to complete organization and related tasks:
 - *Taking out and organizing books, paper, pens*
 - *Putting away materials*
 - *Finding and turning in homework*
 - *Moving from classroom to classroom*
 - *Organizing backpack*
 - *Eating lunch*
 - *Dressing out in PE*
 - *Organizing materials to go home after school*



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- Modify requirements so that they match the student's pace
 - Reduce or eliminate handwriting requirements and allow the student to dictate or use a keyboard instead. Because these students have handwriting problems and, as a result, they cannot do their best work when having to write
 - Avoid rushing
 - *Because these students become overwhelmed and even immobilized. Rushing can trigger a tantrum, rage or complete melt down.*
 - *Whether the student withdraws or engages in explosive behavior, the student CAN NOT comprehend what is being said to him or follow directions when being rushed*

#2. Manage the Environment

AS/HFA students often do not have the organizational and planning skills that help them navigate through their day due to an executive function disorder.

- Teach students routines for all activities.

- *How to sharpen pencil*
- *Where to turn in homework*
- *How to arrange books on desk*
- *What books to take to which class*
- *When to go to locker*


Routines can be written in small booklet or on a list but is more beneficial if posted in the classroom




Routines That Need to be Directly Taught:

- How to ask for help
- How and when to sharpen pencils
- Where, when and what to throw away
- How to obtain school supplies when they forget to bring them to class
- How and when to turn in homework
- How to pass out papers
- How to organize materials on their desks
- How to place school supplies in locker, backpack or desk so they are easily accessible



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- How to make up missed work due to absences or related reasons
 - How to line up for lunch, recess, etc.
 - How to walk down the hall in a line with other students
 - How to get ready to transition to another activity within the same class
 - How to get ready to transition to another activity that is not in the same class
 - How to get ready for recess
 - How to get ready to go home
 - What to do during free time
 - How to navigate lunchtime

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- Prepare for change
 - *AS/HFA students continually sort through, process and integrate what they are suppose to do each day even when there are NO schedule changes. So, any changes, especially unexpected changes, no matter how small, can create increased anxiety.*
 - *Prepare the child for any change by discussing it in advance*
 - Use social narrative or “social story”
 - Create a picture or visual schedule
 - Incorporate student preferences and relaxation time to help student manage anxiety.
 - *With any trigger, students may need to have “down time” from the stressors in the classroom. Familiar items or time away helps reduce anxiety*



- Provide Choices

- *Having the opportunity to make a choice provides the student more control.*
- *When the student feels in control of the situation, they are less likely to be anxious or upset*
- *Choice making also increases attention, promotes independence and reduces problem behaviors*

#3. Create a Balanced Agenda That Conserves Energy

Think of an AS/HFA student as having a limited amount of energy available to them each day. Their energy “reserve” varies from day to day depending on the “usage” of the energy

- Monitor Demands
 - *It is essential to monitor the demands of the daily schedule, certain classes or activities*
 - *Restructure and prioritize*
 - Ask yourself, “What are the most important activities or tasks for the child to achieve?”
- Use Calming and Alerting Activities
 - *An occupational therapist can provide activities to stimulate or calm the student’s sensory issues*

Strategies for Balancing the Agenda:

- Engage the child in a familiar or calming activity early in the school day to prepare them for work
- Incorporate special interests into assignments
- Alternate difficult and less difficult tasks as well as interchange preferred and non-preferred activities
- Provide “down time” in the schedule
- Incorporate occupational sensory techniques for destressing and alerting the student



#4. Share the Agenda


While typical children can quickly grasp and follow and adapt to a daily schedule without being told, the AS/HFA student cannot. They cannot predict activities without a visual cue. These unpredictable activities easily cause anxiety, which can lead to problem behavior and lower performance.

- Use visual supports
 - *These can be lists of activities to complete, books to take to class, and reminders of what to discuss, etc.*
 - *Sharing the agenda is also important because these students have difficulty distinguishing between essential and non-essential information*

#5. Simplify Language


Social-communication problems play a significant role with students with AS/HFA. These students are usually very verbal but they struggle with effective use and understanding of language in a social context, including nonverbal communication.

- Watch for Literalness
 - *Metaphors, idioms, sarcasm, or knowing what is meant by “nonverbal” communication is difficult for these students to understand*
 - *Clarify language...”say what you mean and mean what you say!”*
 - *Be specific when lecturing or providing instructions*



Strategies to Help Students Attend to Lectures and Following Directions:

- Use the student's name prior to giving a direction or asking a question
- Tap gently on the student's desk prior to giving a direction
- Provide the student with questions in advance
- Combine verbal instructions with pictures, gestures, demonstrations and written instructions
- Have the student demonstrate that they understand or have them paraphrase what they are suppose to do. Do not rely on yes/no responses to indicate comprehension.

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- Teach hidden curriculum rules
 - *Given the tendency to be so “literal”, understanding the subtle, unwritten rules that guide and dictate social behavior are often perceived in a different context and must be taught.*
 - *Samples of “hidden curriculum”*
 - Locker Room – if people are taking showers or changing...don’t stare at them
 - Recess/PE – if you are going to throw a ball to someone be sure to say their name and wait until they have their hands out before throwing it
 - Lunchroom – never throw food, even if other students are doing it
 - Assignments – it is inappropriate to make comments about another student’s work quality
 - Classroom rules – limit yourself to approximately five questions during class time

#6. Set a Calm, Positive Tone

Most AS/HFA students live with a high level of anxiety that impacts their reactions to teachers, peers, tests, changes in the environment, etc. Although they struggle with understanding social subtleties, they do detect highly emotional content.

- Set the tone in class:
 - *Use a calm voice when speaking*
 - *Give facts in an unemotional tone of voice*
 - *Express information in a logical sequence*
 - *Control the tendency to become intense, passionate, or stressed*
- Model Positive Acceptance

#7. Live Out Loud

Many students have difficulty with problem solving and don't know how to systematically solve problems. Living out loud is a strategy that facilitates problem solving and helps them understand their environment.

- Verbalize Your Actions
 - *State what you are doing, as well as the why and how*
 - AS/HFA students are usually distracted by nonessential information and are unsure of which details are relevant
 - *Model Problem Solving*
 - Walk the student through each step of the problem, which in turn, makes the problem seem less significant and that, in it self, reduces anxiety



➤ *Priming*

- Verbally, visually “prime” or prepare the student for an upcoming activity or change in schedule

#8. Be Generous With Praise

Most AS/HFA students have low self-esteem and limited self-confidence which often generates a fear to take risks such as trying difficulty assignments or initiating peer interaction on the playground.

- Provide specific praise often so that the student can see themselves as a valued individual
 - *Find opportunities throughout the day to tell them what they are doing and what they did right*
- Foster Attribution and Understanding
 - *Praise teacher attribution which is an understanding of why things happen*
 - AS/HFA students generally do not understand that their efforts can impact their results

#9. Listen to the Words

The manner in which an AS/HFA student conveys a message may not indicate its significance, importance or urgency because many students use a monotone voice with little facial expression.

- Listen to the student, interpret what is literally being said and probe for clarification
- Seek and Offer Clarification
 - *Encourage student to clarify what he means*
 - “I can’t do this!” – what does he mean?
 - I can’t find my book?
 - I don’t understand the directions?
 - I have to go to the bathroom and can’t do my assignment until after I go
 - I can’t concentrate because I lost my favorite toy
 - My pencil lead broke and the rule is I can only sharpen my pencil between classes.

#10. Provide Reassurance

Students with AS/HFA become anxious if they do not feel they know what to do. To make matters worse, they tend not to ask questions when uncertain, making it difficult to know that they don't understand what they are supposed to do.


- Reduce Uncertainty
 - *Uncertainty creates anxiety that in turn, reduces the student's ability to attend and learn while increasing the risk of tantrums, rage, and meltdowns.*
 - *Students need reassurance about upcoming events, changes to their environment, accomplishing difficult tasks, etc.*



Strategies to Help Students Feel Confident and Composed:

- Provide a daily schedule and refer to it frequently.
- Instead of a traditional clock, used a time timer or some other type of visual timer in the classroom. This will allow students to see the passage of time
- Teach non-literal language associated with time
 - *“just a second” or “in a minute” does not refer to exact time segments*
- Break tasks into segments and communicate how long each task is expected to take



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- Providing reassurance also helps student maintain appropriate behavior
 - *Use of “check-ins” to frequently help the student helps them know that:*
 - Their behavior is appropriate
 - Progress on assignment is suitable
 - *Make frequent positive comments that provide valuable information by telling the student that they are doing what is expect*
 - “I like the way you are _____.”

In Closing

Students with AS/HFA and ADD live in a world that is often puzzling and unpredictable and, therefore, stressful. In order to help each student meet their potential, we as educators must help these students understand the world around them and provide them with strategies and supports that will foster success and independence.

