📄 Strategies for students with ASD

Academics and organization

Academics and Organization

- Minimize distractions, or provide access to an individual work area.
- Teach what "finished" means, and help student understand when something is finished.
- Break down large assignments into manageable parts.
- Use various means of presentation - visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, etc. Keep in mind that many students with autism tend to process information much better visually than verbally.
- Try to link work to the student's interests.
- Intermix high probability tasks (easier tasks) with lower probability tasks (more difficult tasks).
- Explore computer-based learning.
- Allow access to narrow interests / obsessive behavior as a reward, break activity, or calming activity (but clearly establish rules regarding frequency and duration of access).
- Give fewer choices to reduce confusion.
- Select repetitive motions when working on projects.
- Keep voice low and clear when teaching.
- Use visual schedule along with visual reminders.
- Use picture icons and social stories to encourage appropriate

Socialization

- Recognize that the target for anger may not be linked to the source of that anger.
- Do not take rude or aggressive behavior personally.
- Be aware that student may feel very uncomfortable with eye contact.
- Work to expand the student's reinforcer and leisure activities repertoire; work to increase *social* reinforcers and activities.
- Pair existing reinforcers with new activities to expand repertoire.
- Explicitly and frequently teach social rules and skills, such as turn-taking and social distance.
- Break down social skills into non-verbal and verbal components.
- Explain rules / rationales behind social exchanges.
- Target perspective-taking skills.
- Teach student to accurately label his / her own emotions.
- Use cartoon conversations, coping comics, and thought stories to teach social responses.
- Be aware of teasing by peers; teach and rehearse appropriate responses to bullying.
- Explicitly teach discrimination between private versus public behaviors.
- Provide modeling and role-play opportunities to teach social skills.

behavior and to maintain attention.

- Use a picture or other system to list the procedures and tasks to be completed.
- Give students a visual menu of appropriate behaviors to use when they become agitated or overwhelmed.
- Use visual reminders of transition times and activities.
- Use a work system to clarify the following: How much work to do, what is the work, when finished, and what's next?
- Provide frequent breaks in response to sensory and attention issues.
- Structure the layout of the room so students know where work areas are located.
- When using worksheets, highlight directions and number the steps to complete tasks.
- Explain the purpose of all activities.
- Provide rubrics or rules with due dates for each part of a multi-step or multi-part assignment.
- Create a color-coding system to keep track of due dates.
- Encourage students to summarize and paraphrase.
- When doing group work, provide a list of clear expectations and tasks for each member.
- Use peer buddies.
- Teach student how to use and organize daily schedules and planners.

- Program for generalization of social skills across all contexts.
- Build social interactions around common interests.

- ***Social Stories** can be used to teach social skills to children with autism. A situation, which may be difficult or confusing for the student, is described concretely. The story highlights social cues, events, and reactions that could occur in the situation, the actions and reactions that might be expected, and why. Social stories can be used to increase the student's understanding of a situation, make the student feel more comfortable, and provide appropriate responses for the situation. We recommend that you incorporate visuals into the stories as well. These visuals can be drawings created by the student, imported images from Google, picture symbols / icons, or photographs.

Communication

- Identify and establish appropriate functional communication system (e.g. sign language, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), voice output, etc.).
- Ensure that the student has a way to appropriately express their wants and needs.
- Ensure that the student has access to their (portable) communication

- Set up a routine and procedure for homework, long-term assignments, and tests.
- Laminate daily schedules and place on the student's desk or in the front of a binder.
- List tasks or work assignments to be completed during the day that can be checked off.
- Create a color-coding system for pocket folders or binders in each subject area.
- Separate binder or folder into sections for assignments, homework, and handouts.
- Use notes to prepare or calm students during stressful times.

Restrictive and self stimulation behaviors

- Provide clear structure and a set daily routine.
- Reinforce desirable behaviors that serve as alternatives to inappropriate behaviors (teaching the student **what to do** rather than **what not to do**)
- Ensure that the student knows the day's schedule at the start of each day and can reference schedule throughout day.
- Vary the activities within the daily schedule so that the student does not become inflexible about the sequence of the schedule or routine itself.
- Provide warning of any change of routine, or switch of activity. Present this warning visually.

system across all contexts, *all of the time.*
- Reinforce communication attempts (e.g. their gestures, partial verbalizations) when the student is non-verbal or emerging verbal.
- Understand that picture schedules and functional communication systems are NOT the same thing; they do not serve the same purpose.
- Paraphrase back what the student has said or indicated.
- Simplify your language, highlighting what is important. For example, for a non-verbal student, simply say "*Sit in chair*" instead of "*Sit in your chair please.*"
- Label areas in the room with words and pictures.
- Use sequencing cards to teach order of events.
- Use clear and unambiguous language.
- Avoid sarcasm (students with autism may have a hard time understanding).
- Explicitly teach the meaning behind puns, idioms, figurative language, etc.
- Try to be as literal and clear as possible.
- Use words in addition to gestures and facial expressions.
- Help student interpret conversations.
- Remind other students that some students may not get jokes or non-verbal language.
- Repeat instructions and check for understanding.

- Be aware that some change in manner or behavior may reflect anxiety (which may be triggered by a change in routine).
- Be aware of bright lights, loud noises or too much touching.
- Teach student to accurately identify how they feel as often as they can.
- Provide student a "time out" pass for a few minutes of free time to leave the classroom.
- Set up a special time-out location, so student has a place to go to take a break (could be a quick trip to the restroom or water fountain).
- Encourage students to keep their noise levels down.
- Have a "hands to yourself" rule to respect personal space of all students.
- Organize classroom and teach students how to use and maintain organization.
- Ensure understanding of all assignments and tasks (and materials needed).
- Develop routines for organizing materials and work completion.
- Ensure consistency of expectations among all family members and staff.
- Create a structured environment with predictable routines.
- Create a picture schedule with daily routine.
- Allow student opportunities to move during instruction.
- Use consistent classroom routines.
- Teach student to identify signs of stress, anxiety, anger, etc.
- Use visual organizers to help student evaluate appropriate

- Use short sentences when giving instructions.
- Engage student in role-plays to target reciprocal conversation.
- Program for generalization of communication skills across all contexts.

alternatives to maladaptive behavior.

- Use visual scales to label escalating emotions (e.g. 1-5 scales, Volcano scale).
- Teach and practice coping strategies to reduce anxiety, stress, anger, etc.
- Develop a coping plan; rehearse plan with student when they are calm.
- Introduce opportunities for free writing, journaling, or drawing to express feelings.
- Create a "calming area" or a "sensory area."
- Provide stress release activities or items, such as drawing, brushing, squeeze toys, weighted blankets, headphones, and music.
- Be aware of signs of anxiety or difficulties a student may be having with sensory and emotional overload (hands over ears, plugging ears, or repetitive behaviors, like rocking).
- Allow student to avoid certain activities which may cause anxiety (e.g. large assemblies).
- Minimize verbal demands when the student is upset, or escalating. Use visuals instead.
- Provide clear, explicit feedback on behavior.
- Set up consistent written rules for each classroom.
- Use color-coded system for behavior and class participation.
- Use an individualized points system / token economy to increase target behaviors.

- **Behavior management techniques** can be used in the home, school, and community settings. *Functional Behavior Assessments/Behavior Intervention Plans* can be created by examining a student's specific problem behavior, identifying antecedents, understanding consequences that maintain the behavior, and developing strategies to reduce the inappropriate behavior and increase desirable behavior.