

13. If the student does not read or write, try role playing the repetitive verbal question or argument with you taking their part and them answering you. Continually responding in a logical manner or arguing back seldom stops this behavior. The subject of their argument or question is not always the subject which has upset them. The argument or question more often communicates a feeling of loss of control or uncertainty about someone or something in the environment.

14. Individuals with autism often have trouble "getting" your points. If the repetitive verbal argument or question persists, consider the possibility that he is very concerned about the topic and does not know how to rephrase the question or comment to get the information he needs.

15. Since these individuals experience various communication difficulties, don't rely on the student with autism to relay important messages to their parents about school events, assignments, school rules, etc. unless you try it on an experimental basis with follow-up, or unless you are already certain that the student has mastered this skill. Even sending home a note for his parent may not work. The student may not remember to deliver the note or may lose it before reaching home. Phone calls to the parent work best until this skill can be developed. Frequent and accurate communication between the teacher and parent (or primary care-giver) is very important.

16. If your class involves pairing off or choosing partners, either draw numbers or use some other arbitrary means of pairing. Or ask an especially kind student if he or she would agree to choose the individual with autism as a partner. This should be arranged before the pairing is done. The student with autism is most often the individual left with no partners. This is unfortunate since these students could benefit most from having a partner

A final thought:

Dealing with an Asperger's child can be very challenging and at the same time very rewarding to the teacher who puts in the time and uses the resources given to you. Don't go it alone talk to other professionals who deal with this disorder on a daily basis. If you have further question feel free to contact me as well.



James Michehl M.Ed., LPC

Phone 847-347-4357

email james@danasteiner.com

www.jamesmichehlcounselor.com

Asperger's Syndrome Tips for Teacher's

People with autism have trouble with organizational skills, regardless of their intelligence and/or age. Even a "straight A" student with autism who has a photographic memory can be incapable of remembering to bring a pencil to class or of remembering a deadline for an assignment. In such cases, aid should be provided in the least restrictive way possible. Strategies could include having a student put a picture of a pencil on the cover of his notebook or reminders at the end of the day of assignments to be completed at home. Always praise the student when he remembers something he has previously forgotten. Never denigrate or "harp" at him when he fails. A lecture on the subject will not only NOT help, it will often make the problem worse. He may begin to believe he can't remember to do or bring these things.

James Michehl M.Ed., LPC

Phone 847-347(HELP)4357

e-mail jame@danasteiner.com

www.jamesmichehlcounselor.com

BE SUPPORTIVE! BE CREATIVE! BE FLEXIBLE

These students seem to have either the neatest or the messiest desks or lockers in the school. The one with the neatest desk or locker is probably very insistent on sameness and will be very upset if someone disturbs the order he has created. The one with the messiest desk will need your help in frequent cleanups of the desk or locker so that he may find things. Simply remember that he is probably not making a conscious choice to be messy, he is most likely incapable of this organizational task without specific training. Train him in organizational skills using small, specific steps.

1. People with autism have problems with abstract and conceptual thinking. Some may eventually acquire a few abstract skills, but others never will. Avoid abstract ideas when possible. When abstract concepts must be used, use visual cues, such as gestures, or written words to augment the abstract idea.
2. An increase in unusual or difficult behaviors probably indicates an increase in stress. Sometimes stress is caused by feeling a loss of control. When this occurs, the "safe place" or "safe person" may come in handy, because many times the stress will only be alleviated when the student physically removes himself from the stressful event or situation. If this occurs, a program should be set up to assist the student in re-entering and/or staying in the stressful situation.
3. Don't take misbehavior personally. The high-functioning person with autism is not a manipulative, scheming person who is trying to make life difficult. Usually misbehavior is the result of efforts to survive experiences which may be confusing, disorienting, or frightening. People with autism are, by virtue of their handicap, egocentric and have extreme difficulty reading the reactions of others. They are incapable of being manipulative.

4. Most high-functioning people with autism use and interpret speech literally. Until you know the capabilities of the individual, you should avoid:
 - Idioms (save your breath, jump the gun, second thoughts, etc.)
 - Double meanings (most jokes have double meanings)
 - Sarcasm, such as saying, "Great!" after he has just spilled a bottle of ketchup on the table.
 - Nicknames: "Cute" names, such as Pal, Buddy, Wise Guy, etc.
5. Be as concrete as possible in all your interactions with these students. Remember that facial expression and other social cues may not work. Avoid asking questions such as, "Why did you do that?" Instead, say, "I didn't like the way you slammed your book down on the desk when I said it was time for gym. Please put your book down on the desk quietly and get up to leave for gym." In answering essay questions that require a synthesis of information, autistic individuals rarely know when they have said enough, or if they are properly addressing the core of the question.
6. If the student doesn't seem to be able to learn a task, break it down into smaller steps or present the task in several different ways (e.g., visually, verbally, physically).
7. Avoid verbal overload. Be clear. Use shorter sentences if you perceive that the student isn't fully understanding you. Although he probably has no hearing problem and may be paying attention, he may have a problem understanding your main point and identifying the important information.
8. Prepare the student for all environmental and/or routine changes, such as assembly, substitute teacher, rescheduling, etc. Use his written or visual schedule to prepare for change.
9. Behavior management works, but if incorrectly used, it can encourage robot-like behavior, provide only a short term behavior change, or result in more aggression. Use positive and chronologically age-appropriate behavior procedures.
10. Consistent treatment and expectations from everyone is vital.
11. Be aware that normal levels of auditory and visual input can be perceived by the student as too much or too little. For example, the hum of fluorescent lighting is extremely distracting for some people with autism. Consider environmental changes such as removing some of the "visual clutter" from the room or seating changes if the student seems distracted or upset by his classroom environment.
12. If your high-functioning student with autism uses repetitive verbal arguments and/or repetitive verbal questions, try requesting that he write down the question or argumentative statement. Then write down your reply. As the writing continues, the person with autism usually begins to calm down and stop the repetitive activity. If that doesn't work, write down his repetitive verbal question or argument, and then ask him to formulate and write down a logical reply or a reply he thinks you would make. This distracts him from the escalating verbal aspect of the argument or question and sometimes gives him a more socially acceptable way of expressing his frustration or anxiety.