

# *Social Skills & Behavior Management for Secondary Students with ASD*

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# *Outline*

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- ◉ Autism Overview
- ◉ Defining Problematic Behaviors
- ◉ Behavior Interventions
- ◉ Social Skills Interventions
- ◉ Conclusion

# *Autism: Fact or Fiction?*

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1. There is an autism epidemic.
  2. Autism can be cured.
  3. Autism is the result of cold and unemotional parents.
  4. Individuals with autism always have hidden or exceptional talents.
  5. Individuals with autism are unable to build social relationships.
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1. Children with autism should not be placed in inclusion classrooms.

# *Autism Spectrum Disorders Defined*

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- Deficits in social communication and social interaction (these are examples):
  - Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
  - Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used in social interaction
  - Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationship

# *Autism Spectrum Disorders Defined*

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- ◉ Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (these are examples):
  - Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech
  - Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns of verbal/nonverbal behavior
  - Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
  - Hyper- or hyporeactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment.

# *Autism Spectrum Disorders Defined*

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## ● Severity specifiers:

- Based on social communication impairments and restricted, repetitive behavior patterns.
- Assessed using a new dimensional assessment
- Severity Levels:
  - Requiring Support
  - Requiring Substantial Support
  - Requiring Very Substantial Support

# *Common Comorbid Diagnoses*

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- ◉ Intellectual Disability (est. 25-70%)
- ◉ ADHD
- ◉ Seizures
- ◉ Anxiety
- ◉ Motor Clumsiness

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*What are the biggest challenges for you  
when working with a student with ASD in  
the classroom?*

# *Defining Problematic Behaviors*

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“The definition of problem behaviors depends on whether the behaviors are considered from the perspective of the child with ASD or from the perspective of the parent or teacher (National Research Council, 2001).”

- From a child’s perspective, problem behaviors include any situation that taps into that child’s areas of deficit.
- From a parent or teacher perspective, problem behaviors include lack of compliance with or disruption of classroom routines, tantrums, destruction of property, refusal to work or transition, & aggression.

## *Difficulties May:*

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- Be related to “Theory of Mind” or social cognition
- Be due to a lack of understanding that others have their own thoughts, feelings, plans and points of view
- Result in difficulty understanding the expectations of others & an inability to predict what others will say or do in social situations
- Note: Most every interaction we have with others is social in nature

# *“The Hidden Curriculum”*

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- The set of rules or guidelines that are often not directly taught but are assumed to be known (Myles, Trautman, & Schelvan; 2004)
- Example:  
*Do you sing out loud when you are listening to your iPod?*
- How do you know not to do that?
- What are some other examples?

# *“Hidden Curriculum”*

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Most of us take comfort , often unconsciously, in the rules, guidelines, regulations & policies that are part of our society because they help us know what to do in most everyday situations.

# *Students with ASD may require direct instruction in the “hidden curriculum”*

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## ○ Examples:

- Lockers & hallway –
  - E.g., You may get bumped in a crowded hallway. It is usually an accident.
- Assignments & Homework –
  - E.g., During class, learn when the teacher will allow you to work on your assignments. You can find this out by asking the teacher.
- Bullying
  - E.g., If other students are teasing you, do not get mad & hit them. Tell an adult who can help you.
- Tattling –
  - E.g., Do not tattle on what every student is doing wrong. It is up to the teacher to catch the students & reprimand them.
- Behavior
  - E.g., If you get in trouble once, it does not mean your entire day is ruined.

# *More “Hidden Curriculum” Examples*

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- ◉ At a school dance, ask, do not grab a person if you want to dance with him. If he says “no,” say “ok,” and walk away.
- ◉ Hallway
  - Sometimes boys and girls will be standing at a locker hugging and/or kissing, it is best to ignore them instead of making a comment or staring.
- ◉ Library
  - Try not to stand over someone’s shoulder when they are checking their email.
- ◉ Keep personal information about your family to yourself during school.

# Figurative Speech & Idioms

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- ◉ *Bite my head off*
  - to speak to someone in a quick, angry way – usually for no good reason
- ◉ *Don't be smart*
  - when you speak to other people in a way that shows a lack of respect
- ◉ *Driving me crazy*
  - to make someone annoyed or angry
- ◉ *Feeling blue*
  - sad
- ◉ *Knock it off*
  - to tell someone to stop doing something that annoys you
- ◉ *Straighten up*
  - to behave well after behaving badly
- ◉ *That cracks me up*
  - to suddenly make someone laugh a lot

# *Social Impairments*

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- ◉ Social Avoidance – the student who tantrums, shies away from, or attempts to escape social situations which may be due to hypersensitivity to certain sensory stimuli
- ◉ Social Indifference – the student who does not actively seek social interaction, but at the same time, does not aggressively avoid such interaction
- ◉ Social Awkwardness - typically higher functioning kids who may try very hard to gain & keep friends, but are hindered by a lack of reciprocity in conversation & interest

# *Choosing an Intervention*

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- ◉ Which behavior, or behaviors, is most problematic? Start with 1 or 2
- ◉ Remember:
  - What is it the student:
    - Doesn't understand
    - Can't communicate
    - Can't do without support/guidance
  - Individuals with ASD typically exhibit strengths in their visual processing skills & weaknesses in their auditory processing of information.

# *Interventions & Strategies*



# *Behavioral Interventions*

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- ◉ Identify Target Behavior
- ◉ Ways to increase or decrease behaviors:
  - Positive Reinforcement
  - Negative Reinforcement
  - Punishment

# *Positive Reinforcement*

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- Definition: Reward for desired behaviors increases the likelihood that they will occur
- Examples: A child with ASD can earn computer time for appropriate peer interactions
- \*\*Reinforcers used with typically developing children may not always be rewarding for children with ASD. (Ex: Verbal praise)

# *Negative Reinforcement*

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- ◉ Definition: Removing an aversive stimulus in order to increase a desired behavior
- ◉ Example: Getting to leave the lunch room early to go for a walk after sitting appropriately for 20 minutes

# Punishment

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- Definition: Presenting something undesirable in order to decrease the likelihood of a behavior
- Example: Removing privileges due to a temper tantrum.
- *\*\*Again, things that might be punishing for typically functioning kids (making them sit separately from their peers), may actually be rewarding for kids with ASD*

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- ◉ Addressing Social Skills and Communication Goals

# *Social Stories*

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- ◉ Created by Carol Gray (1991)
- ◉ Brief, personal stories written for children to help them understand social situations.
- ◉ The situation is described in detail and focus is given to a few key points:
  - important social cues
  - events & reactions the individual might expect to occur in the situation
  - actions & reactions that might be expected of him & why

# *Social Stories*

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- ◉ Goal:
  - To increase the individual's understanding of, make him more comfortable in, and possibly suggest some appropriate responses for the situation in question
- ◉ Social Stories are best for situations in which it is the student's misunderstanding of the expectations & intricacies of the situation that drive the difficulty

# Writing Social Stories

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- Six types of sentences

- **Descriptive sentences** objectively address the “wh” questions: *where* the situation takes place, *who* is involved, *what* they are doing, & *why* they may be doing it.
  - E.g.: The boys bathroom is to the right of the girls bathroom.
- **Perspective sentences** give a peek into the minds of those involved in the story; they provide details about the emotions & thoughts of others
  - E.g.: Most teachers believe students should do their homework at home.
- **Directive sentences** suggest desired responses tailored to the individual
  - E.g.: John might try to sit with Jeff during lunch.

# *Writing Social Stories, cont'd.*

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- **Cooperative sentences** identify what others will do to assist the student.
  - E.g.: My teachers will help me remember to check the board for the day's assignments.
- **Affirmative sentences** enhance the meaning of surrounding statements and often express a commonly shared value or opinion within a given culture in order to stress an important point, refer to a law or rule, or reassure.
  - E.g.: Students try to follow Mrs. Anderson's directions. This is a good thing to do.
- **Control sentences** are authored by the student himself to help him remember the story or deal with the situation. These are not used in every story & are typically used only with fairly high functioning students.
  - E.g.: When John is upset he can go to his safe place.

# *Cautions*

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- ◉ Do not speak in absolutes unless you are 100% certain
  - E.g.: Most people like..., Sometimes students..., Most of the time...
- ◉ At least 1/2 of all the Social Stories written for a student should affirm something he does well
- ◉ Only select one or two situations to address – having too many Social Stories may decrease their effectiveness

# *Steps to Introduce a Social Story*

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1. Find a quiet place with few distractions.
2. Read the story to the student. Can also have the student read it out loud or another student read it.
3. Develop a consistent time schedule to review the story. (e.g., Daily)
4. After the story is mastered, keep it visible and accessible for the student to reference.
5. Monitor effectiveness and, if necessary, revise.

# *Example of a Social Story*

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## **“What is “Personal Space?”**

I have an area around my body that is called my “personal space.” (descriptive) This space is like an invisible bubble (descriptive). Sometimes my personal space is large (descriptive). When it is large, my personal space goes out to my fingertips (descriptive). When my personal space is large, other people stay outside of it (descriptive). When my personal space is large, I do not touch other people, and they do not touch me (directive). This helps all of us to feel comfortable (perspective).

Sometimes my personal space is small (descriptive). When my personal space is small, it is about the same size as my body (descriptive). When my personal space is small, I might touch other people, and they might touch me (directive).

# *Practice*

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- ◉ Write a Social Story for Billy, a 15 year-old freshman who likes to sing Britney Spears songs during class.

“Almost everyone likes to listen to music. Sometimes people like to sing songs that they know. I like to sing songs by Britney Spears...”

# *Comic Strip Conversations*

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- ◉ Carol Gray (1994)
- ◉ Drawing conversations to help the child learn the social rules that others learn more naturally.
- ◉ Provides visual supports

# *How Can Comic Strip Conversations be Used?*

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- ◉ To convey important information
- ◉ For problem solving & conflict resolution
- ◉ To learn social skills
- ◉ To follow simple classroom rules
- ◉ To communicate perspectives, feelings & ideas

# *Elements of Comic Strips*

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- ◉ A description of the event that caused the problem
- ◉ Feelings and thoughts of everyone involved
- ◉ A solution to the problem and ideas of how to avoid it in the future
- ◉ Reinforcement
- ◉ Appropriate symbols (stick figures, smiley faces, thought bubbles)
- ◉ Colors used to express feelings (red = mad, blue = sad)

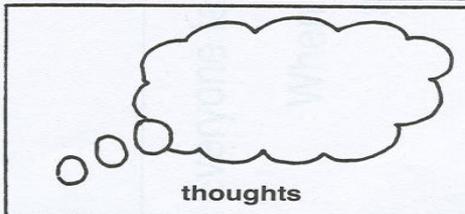
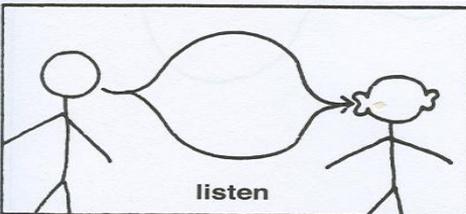
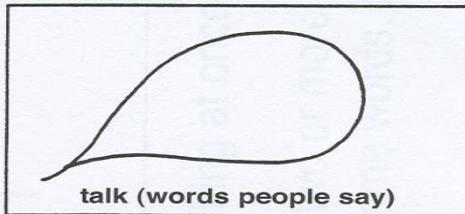
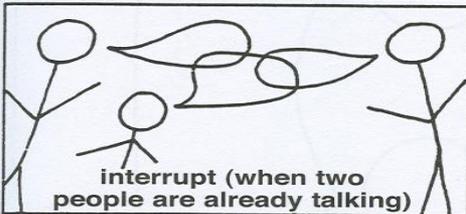
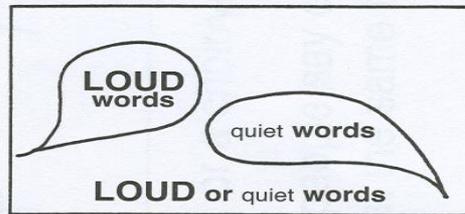
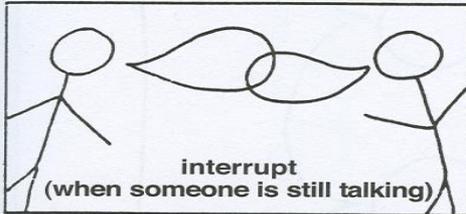
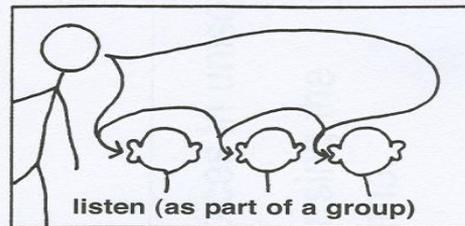
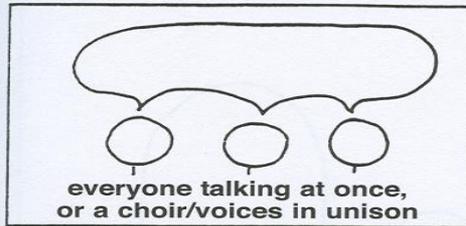
# *How To Create Comic Strip Conversations*

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## ◎ Procedure:

- Student is encouraged to draw while talking
- Student is introduced to the symbols through example & may be given the Symbols Dictionary
  - You may wish to create a Personal Symbols Dictionary for symbols the student creates/uses frequently

# Conversation Symbols Dictionary



\_\_\_\_\_ 's Symbol Dictionary


# *How To Create Comic Strip Conversations*

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- Procedure, cont'd:
  - Sit next to student to enhance shared interaction
  - Begin with “small talk”
  - Introduce the topic of conversation – a situation of difficulty for the student
  - Guide the drawings with questions (“Where were you?”) or statements (“Draw yourself.”)
  - Share your perspective during a natural opportunity in the conversation on order to share accurate social insights (e.g. thoughts & motivations of others)

## ○ Procedure, cont'd:

- Drawings may get jumbled, but they should follow a logical sequence – “What happened first?” “Let’s label that number 1.”
- The student, if able, summarizes the conversation
- To conclude a Comic Strip Conversation, new solutions to the situation are identified – if the student cannot come up with a solution one, or more, is suggested.
- From the list of options come up with pros/cons
- The sequenced list of possible solutions becomes the student’s plan for addressing the situation next time it occurs.

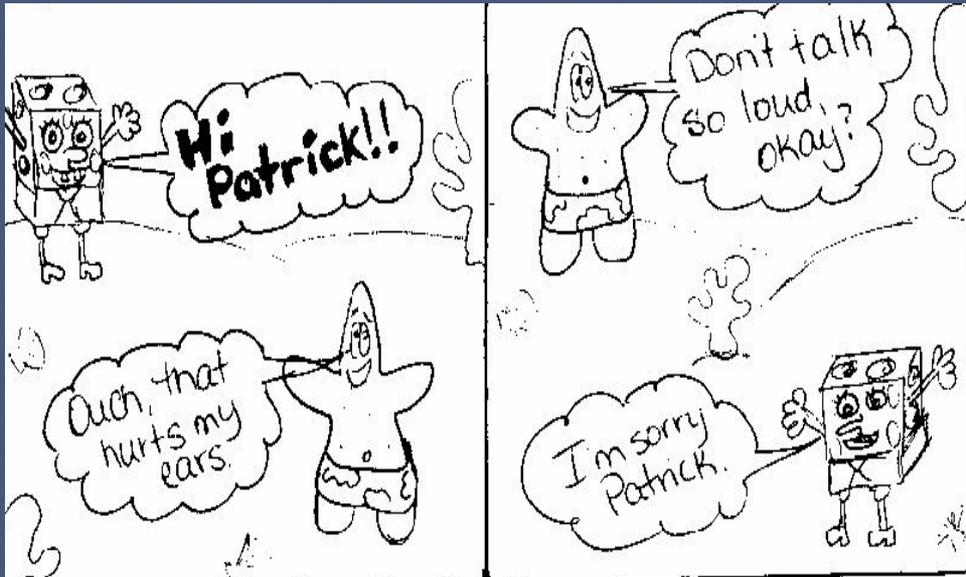
# *Make Your Own!*

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⦿ <http://comiqs.com/editor/>

# Example:

“Jimmy” reacts inappropriately when people in his environment use a loud voice. His favorite show on TV is *Sponge Bob Square Pants*. This comic strip conversation was created to provide him with the appropriate response of “Ouch, that hurts my ears. Don’t talk so loud, okay?” instead of hitting the loud person in his environment.



# Other Considerations

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- Color to depict emotion
  - **Green** – good ideas, happy, friendly
  - **Red** – bad ideas, teasing, anger, unfriendly
  - **Blue** – sad, uncomfortable
  - **Brown** – comfortable, cozy
  - **Purple** – proud
  - **Yellow** – frightened
  - **Black** – facts, things we know
  - **Orange** – questions
  - **Combinations of colors** - confused

# *Other Considerations*

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- ◉ Be Proactive - use them to prepare students for upcoming situations
  - Provides clear & accurate information regarding:
    - What will occur
    - When it will begin/end
    - Who will be involved
    - What will be expected of the student
  - Students with ASD may expect events to occur *exactly* as they have been described so prep them for variations in schedule, activity, people present, etc.

# *Social Scripts*

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- ◉ Involves teaching “scripts” for common social situations.
- ◉ Used to initiate social contact and conversation.
- ◉ The child learns a scripted question or phrase such as, “Did you like playing on the swing today?”
- ◉ The child initially uses a support, such as a reminder card with the script available to read, and then is gradually weaned from this support until the response comes naturally.

# *Social Scripts: Example*

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## Introducing Yourself:

1. Decide if this is a person you want to meet.
2. Wait for a pause before talking.
3. Try to get the person's attention with a gesture or by saying, "Excuse me."
4. Say, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_. What's your name?"
5. Then say, "It's a pleasure to meet you."

# *Social Scripts Example #2*

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## Saying “I Don’t Know”

1. When others ask you questions that you understand, but you do not know what the answer is, say something to respond to their question. You can say,
  1. “I don’t know” – if you do not have the answer.
  2. “Let me think about it” – if you need more time to think about the answer.
2. Do not keep silent. Let the other person know that you are thinking about the question or do not know answer.

# *Direct Instruction*

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- Determine whether the problem stems from a *skill or a performance deficit*
- Performance deficits
  - Incidental Learning – naturalistic; feedback & suggestions are given at the point of performance
- Skill deficits
  - Structured Teaching – Social skills groups, video modeling

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# *Peer Sensitivity Training*



## *Importance of Awareness & Training*

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When students do not have accurate information they tend to create their own interpretations of a disorder. This can lead to marginalizing students with disabilities.

# *Peer Sensitivity Training*

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- Get **parent permission** &/or involvement
- Make training developmentally appropriate (i.e. treat high school students as responsible young adults)
- Allow student with ASD to participate
- Underlying theme: same vs. different; student's strengths
- Provide factual information about the disorder while providing engaging simulations that reflect some of the challenges students with ASD experience

# *Sensitivity Training*

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- The 6<sup>th</sup> sense (No, not seeing dead people) - The “Social” or “Friend” sense
  - Knowing what others know
  - Knowing how to talk to others
  - Knowing how to play with others
  - Understanding how others feel
- The “Hidden Curriculum”
- Bullying – What would be difficult about having ASD? Why might a person with ASD be bullied?
- Individual **STRENGTHS** & challenges for the student with ASD
  - how we’re alike & how we’re different; different isn’t a negative

# *Examples:*

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- ◉ Sensory sensitivity – blow a whistle for 15 seconds to demonstrate sensitivity to school bell
- ◉ Perspective-taking difficulties – Use examples from the “Hidden Curriculum” section
- ◉ Language difficulties – Provide examples of complex or metaphorical language in a way that perplexes typical students

# *Other Interventions & Strategies*

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- ◉ Video Self-Modeling – Student is videotaped accurately displaying desired skill – replayed as a teaching tool
- ◉ Social Skills Groups – to teach specific skills – collaborate with the service providers in your schools. Some groups are comprised of all kids with ASD, while others have a mixture of typically functioning kids and those with ASD.
- ◉ Drama-based intervention

# *Things to Remember When Designing Interventions*

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- ◉ Students with ASD often benefit from the use of visual supports (Gray, 1993; Quill, 1992)
- ◉ Repeated practice is generally most effective (Quill, 1992)
- ◉ Teaching in a naturalistic environment enhances learning (Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin, & Laurent, 2003)
- ◉ Interventions that do not address positive & prosocial behaviors will be unsuccessful in the long-term (NRC, 2001)

# *Resources For Interventions*

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- ◉ Comic Strip Conversations – Gray, 1994
- ◉ The Hidden Curriculum – Myles, Trautman, & Schelvan, 2004
- ◉ Power Cards – Gagnon, 2001
- ◉ Ready-to-Use Social Skills Lessons & Activities for Grades 7-12 – Begun, R. W. (ed.), 1996

# *Resources For Interventions*

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- ◉ Scripting: Social Communication For Adolescents – May & Waldo, 1986
- ◉ The New Social Story Book – Gray, 2000
- ◉ Worksheets! For Teaching Social Thinking and Related Skills – Winner, 2005
- ◉ Social Competence Intervention Program: A Drama-Based Intervention for Youth on the Autism Spectrum by Guli, L. A., Wilkinson, A. D., & Semrud-Clikeman, M, 2008.

## *Resources for Transition Planning*

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- ◉ Preparing for Life: The Complete Guide for Transitioning to Adulthood for Those with Autism & Asperger's Syndrome – Baker, 2006
- ◉ Social Skills Training For Children & Adolescents with Asperger Syndrome & Social Communications Problems – Baker, 2003
- ◉ Succeeding in College with Asperger Syndrome: A Student Guide – Harpur, Lawler, & Fitzgerald, 2007

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