



**Autism Society**

**Maine**

**Autism & Strategies**  
**Module 1**

# Autism is...

- A developmental disability.
- Evident during the first three years of life.
- Present in one out of every 36.  
(Center for Disease Control - statistic)
- Over 10,000 individuals in Maine



# 2 Domains for Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis

1. An individual must exhibit persistent difficulties in social interaction and communication across multiple contexts.

Demonstrates difficulty with at least 3 of the following:

social-emotional reciprocity

nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction

developing maintaining and understanding relationships

AND...



# Continued from slide 3

2. An individual must exhibit restrictive, repetitive patterns of behavior , interests, or activities.

Exhibits at least 2 of the following:

stereotyped or repetitive motor movements

insistence on sameness or inflexible adherence to routines

highly restricted, fixated interests

hyp0 or hyper reactivity to sensory input

unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment

# General Strategies

- Do not insist on eye contact.
- Try to build a rapport using his or her hobbies or interests as a building block.
- Maintain personal space.
- Create an environment that is not over stimulating.
- Pay attention to nonverbal signs of comfort/stress levels.



# General Strategies continued...

- Provide a safe and predictable routine/environment.
- Familiarize yourself with common behaviors someone with autism may exhibit (refer to “symptoms list”).
- Avoid stopping repetitive behaviors unless harmful to self or others.
- Accept and respect differences.

My Daily Routine	
 Morning	 Evening
Get dressed 	Go to the toilet 
Eat breakfast 	Have a bath 
Have a wash 	Put on pyjamas 
Brush teeth 	Brush teeth 
Brush hair 	Bedtime story 
Put on shoes and coat 	Go to sleep 

# Strategies: Module 2

Autism Society of Maine

# Index – Module 2

- Environmental Strategies
- Sensory Strategies
- Communication Strategies

# Environmental Strategies

- Designate and identify specific areas for specific tasks.
- Designate and identify areas for individuals' belongings.
- Be sure the individual knows restroom and other important locations.



# Environmental Strategies continued

- Make sure the schedule is known and predictable.
- Provide a written or visual schedule.
- Make sure rules are known and consistently applied.
- Plan and prepare for changes.



# Environmental Strategies workspace

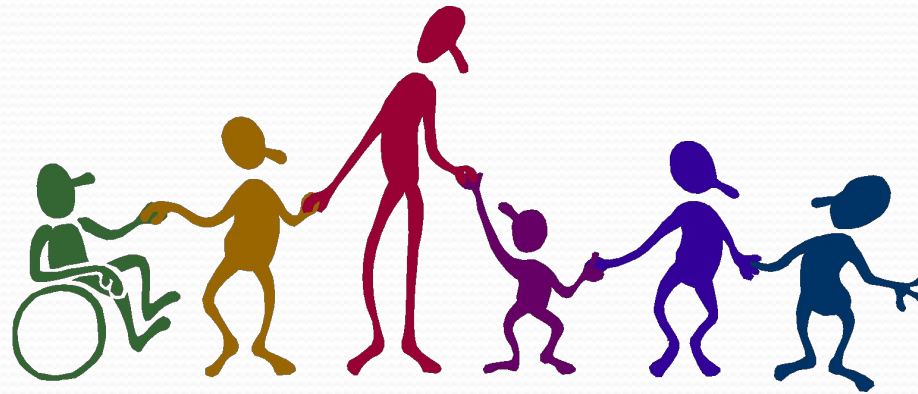
- Set up workspace away from doors, windows, mirrors, or other visual distractions.
- Be flexible with accommodations. (Bend the Rules)



# Sensory Integration

“Sensory integration is the organization of sensation for use.”

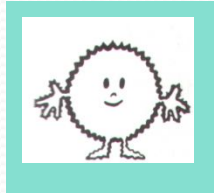
- A. Jean Ayres - (1979, p.5)



We all use sensory integration to understand our environment. No matter what a person's age, disability status or daily activities, sensory integration is important.

# The Sensory Gang

Courtesy of the Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

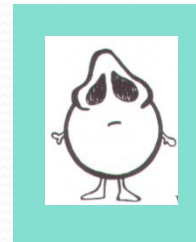
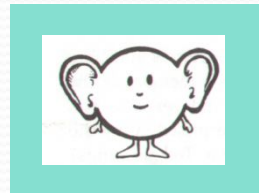


Tactile: Touch:  
What do I  
feel?

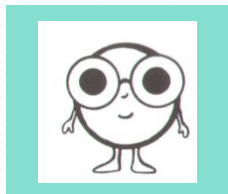
Gustatory: Taste:  
What do I taste?



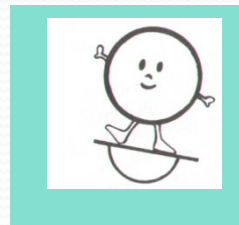
Auditory: Hearing:  
What do I hear?



Olfactory: Smell:  
How do things smell?



Visual: Sight:  
What do I see?



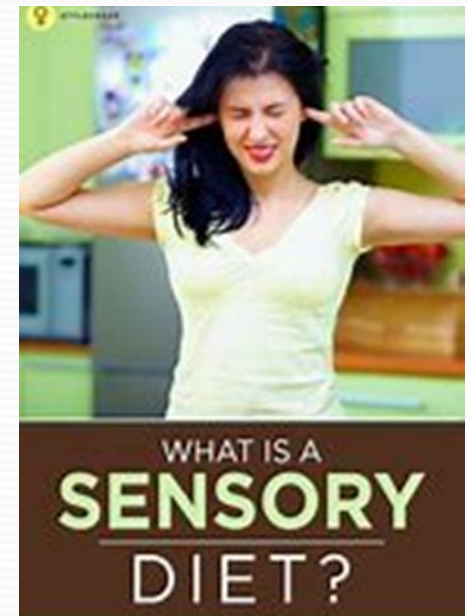
Proprioceptive:  
Kinesthetic:  
Where is my body?



Vestibular: Balance:  
Am I stable?

# Sensory Strategies

- Modify stimulation level to meet individual needs.
- Rely on Natural Lighting as much as possible.
- Implement the sensory diet recommended in the individual's plan.
- When individual becomes frustrated or overloaded, redirect to an easier, more familiar, or preferred task.



# Sensory Strategies Continued...

- Attempt eye contact but do not insist on it.
- Face the individual when speaking.
- Maintain soft-spoken reassurance.
- Maintain relaxed posture & neutral tone of voice.



# Sensory Strategies

continued...

- Give a break from demands.
- If necessary, remove the individual from a stimulating environment.
- Provide a break for self-stimulatory behaviors if needed.
- Provide a quiet space for self-regulation.
- Try a weighted blanket or vest





The vest has 2 side and 2 shoulder closures



Provides deep pressure to the body



helps focus and reduce response to stimuli



Helps the individual maintain a comfortable body temperature





New England Adaptive Equipment

Sue Hoffman

[sueot1447@gmail.com](mailto:sueot1447@gmail.com)

207-269-2816

# Sensory items and fidget toys



# Communication

- Communication skills vary depending on intellectual ability and social skills.
- Many individuals with autism have speech & language therapy to help with using and understanding language effectively.
- Individuals with autism struggle with pragmatic language (social language).



# Communication continued ...

- An individual with pragmatic difficulties may:
  - say inappropriate or unrelated things during conversations.
  - tell stories in a disorganized way.
  - have little variety in language use.
  - have difficulty recognizing body language or facial expressions.
  - have uneven language development.

\* American Speech-Language-Hearing Association



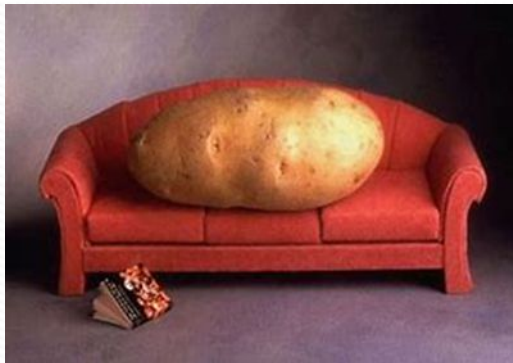
# Communication Strategies



- Find out what mode of communication the individual uses.
- Know the level of understanding of each individual and speak at their level.
- Use concrete, specific language.
- Speak slowly and allow time for the individual to process what you have said and generate a response.
- Repeat messages in a positive and direct manner.

# Communication Strategies continued ..

- Provide visual and gestural supports as needed to clarify your message.
- Avoid using vague terms such as “later”, “maybe”, “always”, “never”, etc.
- Avoid using sarcasm, idioms and metaphors such as, “It’s raining cats and dogs”.
- Avoid using slang and double meaning phrases such as: “it’s cool”, “wicked good” “she’s hot”.



# Metaphors

A metaphor is a word or phrase that is used to make a comparison between two people, things, animals, or places.

he's a night owl    pick your feet up    Keep your eyes peeled  
The apple of my eye  
Come on slow coach    A recipe for disaster    the weight of the world on my shoulders  
You can't pull the wool over my eyes  
peas in a pod    Turning over a new leaf    ants in your pants  
butter fingers    he's a road hog

# Communication Strategies continued...

- It is often helpful to utilize a communication book or email between guardian and day program to help prompt conversations with the individual.
- If individual has an augmentative communication device become familiar with it and ensure that it meets the needs of the individual.

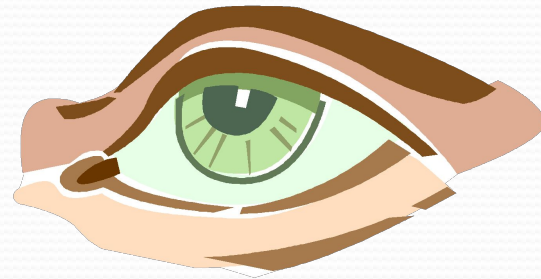


# Communication Strategies



Remember, whenever possible:

Present Information  
Orally AND Visually!!!



# Resources

Safety – Pathfinders for Autism

[pathfindersforautism.org/resources/safety/](http://pathfindersforautism.org/resources/safety/)

Big REDBox

[nationalautismassociation.org/](http://nationalautismassociation.org/)

Project Life Saver

[projectlifesaver.org/](http://projectlifesaver.org/)

# Resources



- Autism Society of Maine

[www.asmonline.org](http://www.asmonline.org)

- National Autism Society formally known as Autism Society of America

[www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

- Asperger's Association of New England

[www.aane.org](http://www.aane.org)

# Resources continued



- Department of Education – Special Ed.

[www.maine.gov/education/speced/index.htm](http://www.maine.gov/education/speced/index.htm)

- Department of Health and Human Services

[www.maine.gov/dhhs/](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/)



Thank You

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[www.asmonline.org](http://www.asmonline.org)

1-800-273-5200