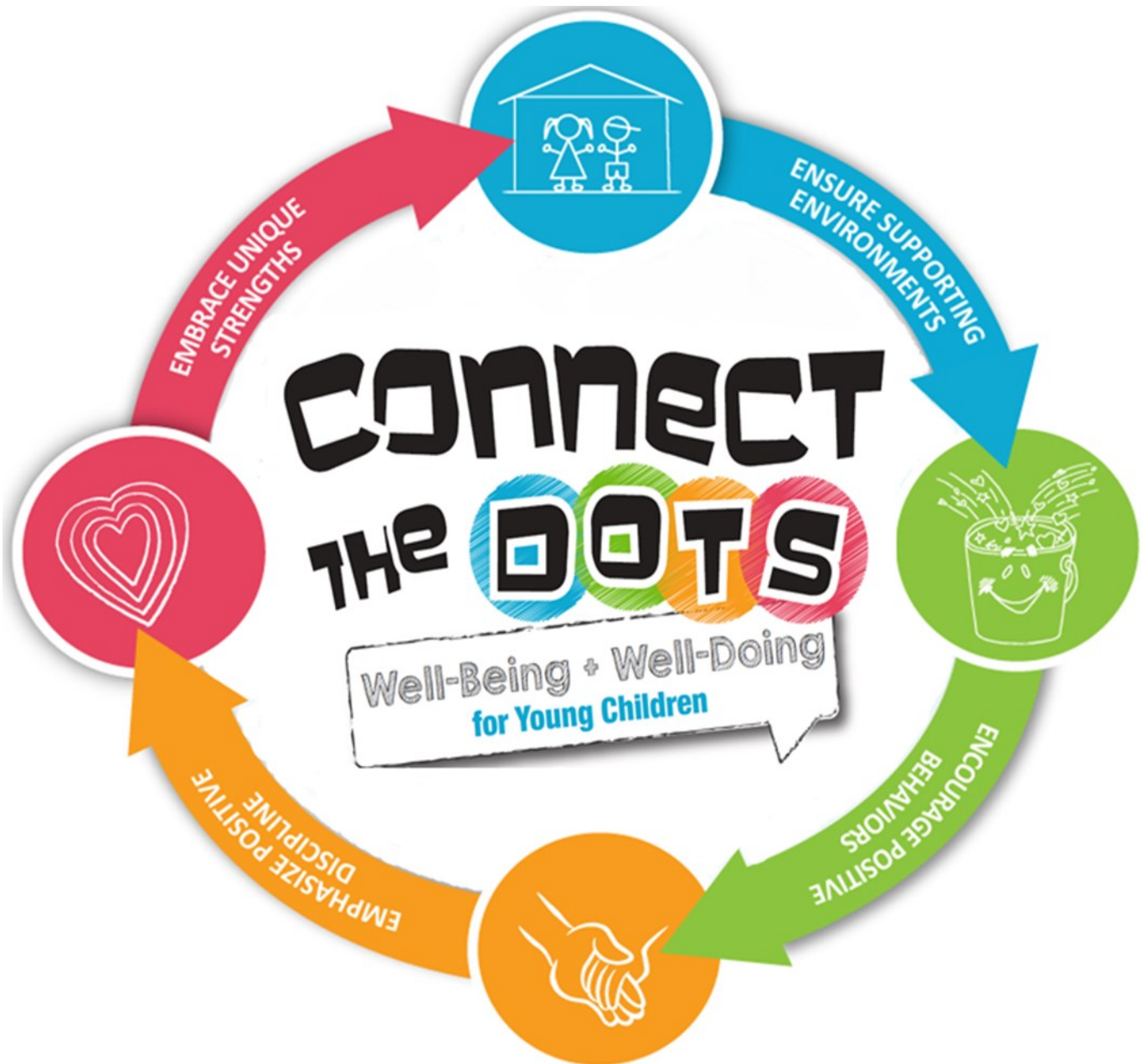


Connecting the Dots for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



Quick Guide Resource Packet

Connect the Dots summarizes social and emotional best practices into 4 easy-to-remember steps! Use all 4 steps to reduce challenging behaviors while building strong social and emotional skills!

We should remember that each family has a preference for how they reference their child. In these materials we will use person first language i.e. *children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*. When meeting a new family always ask and listen to what the family prefers.

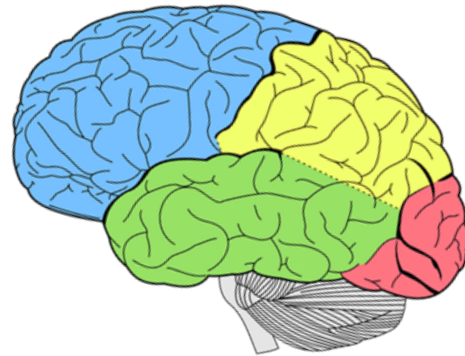
Remember...

- Always ask a family/child what words they prefer to use such as “autistic”, “child with ASD”, “child on the spectrum”, etc.
- ASD is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease.
- People “have” ASD, they do not “suffer from” it and are not “afflicted by” it.
- “Typically developing” or “neuro-typical” is preferred over “normal.”



ASD and the Brain

- It is important to understand that the brain development of a child with ASD differs from those without ASD
- The root cause of ASD in the majority of children is unclear.
- There is no one cause of ASD, but many genetic and biological factors
- ASD may have many different causes
- No single genetic disorder accounts for more than 1 to 2% of total cases of ASD
- It is complex!
- ASD impacts the brain on a cellular level (Haney, 2013)
- ASD seems to impact all areas of the brain (Akshoomoff et al., 2002)
- ASD has an impact on a child’s performance across a range of areas (e.g., communication, learning, motor skills).
- When researching information on ASD and the brain be sure you are reading a trusted source.
- For a list of trusted sources and more information on ASD visit kyaca.org and kyautism.org





Common “Hot Buttons” for Children with ASD

What you might see...	Why you might see it...
Does not use vocal language similar to their same-aged peers	Children with ASD often do not develop speech at the same rate as their peers, and, in some cases, they do not ever acquire the functional use of speech and may require instruction in sign language or picture-based communication systems
Placing hands placed over ears Refusal to eat a range of foods, Distracted by sounds, smells, and visual stimuli	Some children with ASD respond in atypical ways to things in their environment. This may make it difficult for them to attend and participate in certain activities.
Engaging in repetitive behaviors, sometimes referred to as “stereotypy.” (e.g., flapping hands, rocking, self-injury, repeating lines from a Disney movie, fixating on certain objects or topics)	Some children with ASD engage in repetitive and sometimes atypical behaviors because of the feedback they receive. In some cases, it may be pleasurable and calming. It also may reflect a lack of other appropriate skills related to independent play, communication, and participation in daily routines.
Does not follow directions	Some children with ASD have difficulty learning to respond to the spoken language of others and will require extra teaching to be successful
Saying what they think, even if it is not socially appropriate (e.g., “This is yucky”)	Some children with ASD have difficulty understanding the perspective of others and thus, may say things without considering the impact their words have on others.
Engages in challenging behaviors in group settings such as birthday parties	Many children with ASD may have difficulty navigating complex social situations where they are not clear of expectations, may not have acquired critical skills (e.g., communication, turn-taking) and may have less supervision. In addition, many children with ASD learn that the quickest route to adult attention or escaping a difficult situation is through challenging behavior.



Blue Dot: Ensure a Supportive Environment

So the child feels safe, prepared and ready to succeed

ASD

- What does “safety” look like and feel like for your child?
- How can you increase daily structure and independence?

What to Connect...	Why it works...
Use visual supports	Visual supports (e.g., pictures, objects, written scripts, videos of expected behavior) can help children with communication challenges understand expectations during transitions and daily routines.
Be predictable and prepare children for changes in routines.	Children with ASD often have difficulty in less structured settings where it may be difficult to understand the expectations required of a new activity. Predictable routines (e.g., performing specific activities in designated areas, following a schedule, using signals [e.g., timer, songs] to indicate changes) provide opportunities for children to become increasingly independent as they come to rely less on adult directives.
Facilitate success with prompting supports	Children with ASD often have difficulty persisting when tasks become difficult or when faced with negative feedback. Parents, teachers, and, sometimes, peers are taught to provide assistance when children struggle and then to gradually decrease supports. It is important that children view tasks and activities as opportunities for success.
Be responsive to attempts at communication	Acknowledging a child’s attempts to communicate (e.g., getting close to a preferred item, making a sound similar to the item name, looking at or pointing to something) will likely enhance the child’s language development and may serve to strengthen his/her understanding of the speaker and listening partner relationship.
Facilitate relationships through peer and sibling supports	By teaching peers and siblings how to support children with ASD, we can decrease the needs for adult supports, increase independence, and develop lasting healthy relationships. Often, the best models for age-appropriate behavior are presented by other children.



Daily Schedule Template

TO DO	DONE

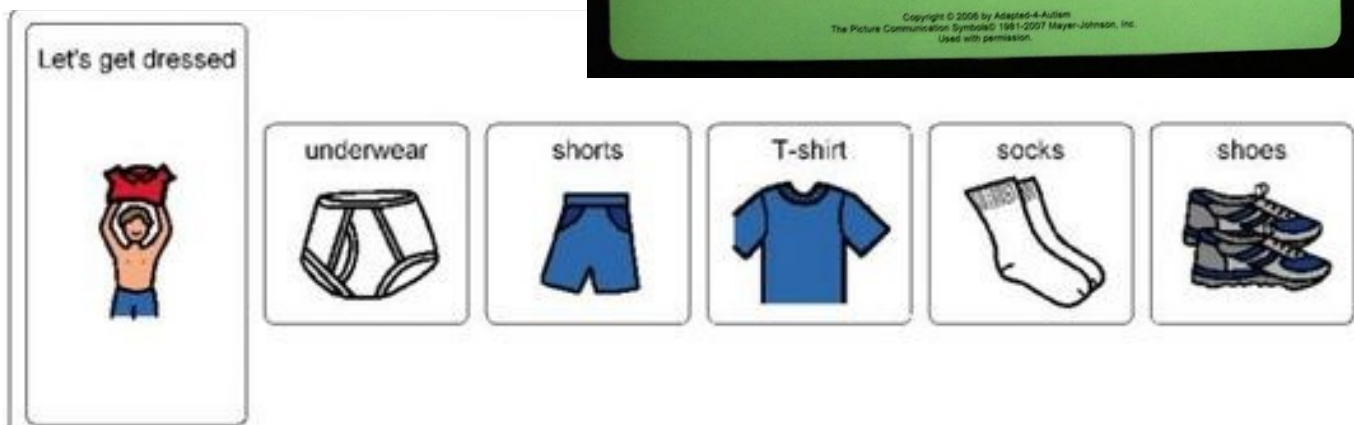
Source: www.abaresources.com



Other Visual Schedule Examples



Snack choices with pictures from food containers and coupon advertisement.



Sources: Combination of Boardmaker© and Tips for Visual Schedule by R.Lentini, L.Fox, University of S. FL

Connect the Dots© for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder was created in partnership with the Kentucky Advisory Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Division of Child and Maternal Health, Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists (Dec. 2017)



Green Dot: Encourage Positive Behaviors:

Help the child link positive behaviors to healthy relationships.

ASD

- How does your child “connect”? What fills his/her bucket?
- How can you reinforce positive behaviors more?

What to Connect...	Why it works...
Social Narratives	By breaking down a potential crisis into small manageable steps, the child can prepare for their reaction ahead of time promoting security and confidence. The child also benefits from hearing a success story about how his/her positive reaction created a positive experience.
“Comic Strip Conversations”	By illustrating conversation through simple drawings, the child identifies “what other people say and do” and emphasizes, “what other people may be thinking.” Drawing a short conversation with symbols to represent persons and speech while talking, assists the child in learning how general conversations occur. This links positive reactions to positive experiences through real scenarios. <i>This tool is more geared toward older children, 5+.</i>
PRIDE Play*: Adjust for child comfort level	A main goal of PRIDE play is to strengthen the relationship between adult and child. Choose an activity, materials, and sitting position that makes the child feel most at ease. This is a total child-led moment meaning there are no questions or criticism.
PRIDE Play*: Special Emphasis on Labeled Praise and Description	Strong emphasis on “Labeled Praises” and “Description” to bring special attention on what constructive play looks like and feels like. Be a sports caster catching each ‘good play’ for example, “Thank you for looking at me when I said your name”, “I like it when you let me hug you/hold your hand”, “Good job looking at what I’m looking at”. Leave enough time between praises that these series of compliments isn’t overwhelming and they have plenty of time to speak and think.
PRIDE Play*: Special Emphasis on Ignoring undesired behaviors	Ignore undesired behaviors if they are not dangerous. This includes repetitive behaviors (e.g., flapping hands, rocking back and forth).
Bucket filling (5:1 rule) for parent and child is critical	Keeping a full bucket is essential to managing caregiver stress level, which directly effects the child’s stress level. Before heading into a “trigger” situation, be sure the adult’s and the child’s buckets are as full as possible. Have the adult identify 5 to 10 ways he/she keeps a full bucket and 5-10 ways the child experiences relationship deposits and/or bucket fillers.

*PRIDE Play is a type of one-on-one play. It is a component of Parent Child Interaction Therapy by S.Eyberg: pcit.phhp.ufl.edu/, pcit.org.
PRIDE play style is covered during the full Connect the Dots training



Encourage Positive Behaviors

Reduce Challenging Behaviors by Promoting the Positive!

Catch the Good and Narrate Their Play!

Catch the Good—Be on the lookout for positive behaviors (instead of negative) and be ready to praise every time. *"Thank you for playing so gentle with your toys!", "I love how you said thank you to grandma."*

Narrate Their Play—Act like a sports caster giving them the play-by-play. This helps children take notice of what they are doing. *"What nice manners. Sitting there with your hands in your lap, so quietly and waiting your turn."*

How Full is My Bucket? 5:1 Rule.

+5

Fill my bucket by...

- + Showing interest in my ideas
- + Laughing at my jokes
- + Letting me take the lead
- + Giving away control and saying yes when you can
- + Complimenting me "secretly" to another adult
- + Making time to play or read with me

-1

My bucket begins to drain when...

- I feel tired, hungry or sick
- I sit still too long and need physical activity
- You say "No, don't, stop" or use a loud voice
- Too many demands are placed on me
- You taking away all my independence
- I can tell you are frustrated or aggravated

Be Your Child's #1 Fan! Everyday.

I'm so excited to see you every morning; it starts my day off just right!
 What a great idea, I'm so proud of you!
 You are being such a good friend by sharing those toys!
 Wow, you are so creative!
 I can see how hard you trying, you are such a hard worker.
 Hmm...what an interesting question. You are so curious.
 I love you.



P

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PRAISE –

"I love how gentle you are with these blocks"

REFLECT –

Child says *"That's a red block!"*-

Parent says *"That **IS** a red block!"*

IMITATE –

Child begins making a line with the blocks and parent joins in (rather than correcting the child that "blocks are for building")

DESCRIBE –

"You are putting all the blocks in a line"

ENTHUSIASM –

"It is so fun playing blocks with you!"

Encourage Positive Behaviors is part of Connect the Dots.
 To learn more about Connect the Dots, visit www.kentuckycchc.org





About Social Narratives

Writing a Social Narrative

Begin by observing the child in the situation you are addressing. Try to take on the child's perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story.

Also, include usual occurrences in the social situation and the perspective of others along with considering possible variations when possible. Keep the story short and sweet so the child is able to remember steps on his/her own.

A social narrative should have 3 to 5 descriptive and perspective sentences for each directive sentence. Avoid using too many directive sentences. Write in first person and on the child's developmental skill level.

Add pictures such as clip art, photos, or drawings, that fit within the child's developmental skill level to supplement text.

There are three types of sentences used in writing social narratives:

- 1. Descriptive sentences:** objectively define anticipated events where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing, and why. (e.g., When people are inside, they walk.)
- 2. Perspective sentences:** describe the internal status of the person or persons involved, their thoughts, feelings, or moods. (e.g., Running inside could hurt me or other people.)
- 3. Directive sentences:** are individualized statements of desired responses stated in a positive manner. They may begin "I can try..." or "I will work on..." Try to avoid sentences starting with "do not" or definitive statements. (e.g., I will try to walk in inside.)



Social Narrative Examples

Always include pictures for young children.

When I feel angry I like to scream



1. When I feel angry I want to scream .



2. When I feel like screaming I will stop.



3. I will take 3 deep breaths. This helps me stay calm.



4. If I still want to scream I will get help from a teacher

Running

I like to run. It is fun to go fast.

It's okay to run when I am playing outside.

I can run when I am on the playground.

Sometimes I feel like running, but it is dangerous to run when I am inside.

Running inside could hurt me or other people.

When people are inside, they walk.

Walking inside is safe.

I will try to walk inside and only run when I am outside on the playground.

My teachers and parents like it when I remember to walk inside.

**Add visual for real life application*



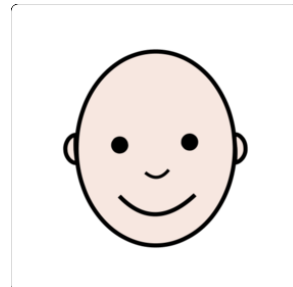
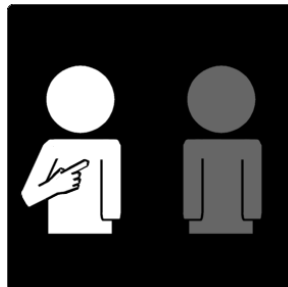
Social Narrative Examples

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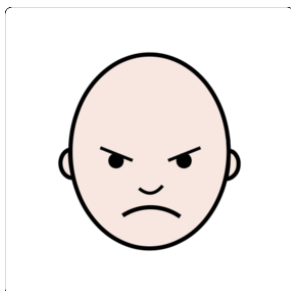
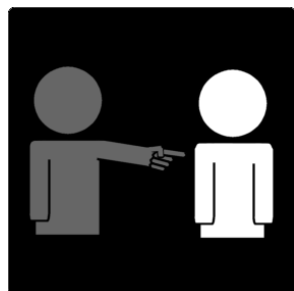
Everybody Has a Way!!



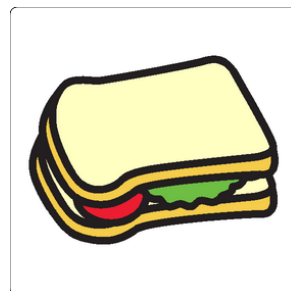
Sometimes things are done my way. Then I am happy.



Sometimes things are not done my way. It frustrates me. I need to remember, it will be okay if it is not my way.



I like to eat sandwiches with the crust cut off. Mommy cuts them off for me, but she eats the crust on her own sandwiches. That frustrates me! But Mommy can eat her sandwiches her way. That makes her happy.



I need to remember, it will be okay if it is not my way. I can say, "Everybody has a way!"



Sometimes my sister plays with my trains, and she does not play my way. I get upset and frustrated. But playing trains her way makes my sister happy.



I need to remember, it will be okay if it is not my way. I can say, "Everybody has a way!"



The End



Special Play Time

PRIDE Play: Ignore the minor things-Everyday for 5 minutes (Praise, Reflect, Imitate, Describe, Enjoyment)

WEEK OF	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
What Went Well?							
What Needs Work?							



Kentuckycchc.org "Connect the Dots"



Kentucky Public Health
PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.



ASD and Communication Styles

1. Respond to ALL of positive attempts to communicate.
2. Expand and teach more complex communication.
3. Create more opportunities to communicate.

Types of Communication	Check which the child uses and when he/she uses it most
Using words	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Gesturing	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Using Signs	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Using Pictures	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Making Sounds	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Pointing	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Leading by hand	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> _____



ASD and Communication Styles

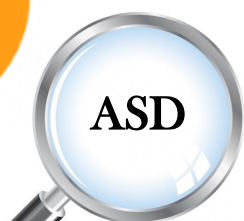
Techniques You Can Use to Teach Communication

Type of Technique	When could you use this?
In sight but out of reach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place items that the child wants or needs out of the child's reach, but where the child can still see it. 	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Playful obstruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playfully block a child's access to a desired item 	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Silly situations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do something unexpected with a materials (such as coloring with the wrong side of a marker) 	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use toys (like balloons) that require adult assistance to use 	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Inadequate Portions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide desired items a little at a time (such as giving the child one Lego at a time) 	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Sabotage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide desired items with a necessary part missing (such as wheels on a car) 	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Interruption/delay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop in the middle of a behavior (such as mid-push on a swing) 	<input type="checkbox"/> _____



Orange Dot: Emphasize Positive Discipline:

By teaching appropriate behaviors to meet the child's needs.



- Less language, more visuals, and keep short and simple
- Repetition is key
- Allow the child extended time to process and comply

What to Connect...	Why it works...
Use visual cues to provide choices (<i>Could be in the form of a Social Narrative</i>)	It's especially challenging for children with ASD to keep track of choices. A visual cue for "How to make a request" might help a child who interrupts or yells when they have a question. Likewise, using a picture of two choices can help a child remember the positive choices. For example, make a picture story of two appropriate options for "What to do when you want a turn."
Use visual cues to remind about expectations/ rule reminders	It's especially challenging for children with ASD to remember the expectations for each new experience. Visual reminders cue the child for what is expected while the child is still learning these expectations. For example, adding a picture of how to sit at the dinner table is a gentle visual reminder or what it means to "have good table manners."
Provide wait time when giving choices. Allow the child extended time to process options and comply.	Wait, be patient and allow extended time to process. What might be perceived as manipulation or defiance could really be the child taking time to process the options. Coupling with visual cues can help. Give the child a space to think about his/her choice if possible. For example: "It is time for bed. You may choose one stuffed animal from the box. I am setting the timer for three minutes to make your choice. When you have made your choice join me on the rocking chair for story time." Coupling choices with labeled praises (PRIDE skills) and visual timers increases the child's ability to be independent when making choices.
Teach new skills before challenging behavior occurs or after the incident is over, when the child has calmed down	If the environment is too chaotic, it may be in the child's best interest to talk through feelings and behaviors later. Consider how escalated the child and adult are in the moment. For example, if the child has a meltdown at the grocery store, you would wait until everyone was home and calm to talk through better choices.
Practice active ignoring with teaching a replacement behavior	Be aware children engage in challenging behavior because they lack the appropriate skills to get their needs met. The child might require prompting from an adult about a more appropriate choice. For example, if a child is pulling on your shirt to get your attention, you would first show the child how to get your attention <u>and then</u> ignore the tugging. You may need to repeat the reminder or give visual cues few times.
Celebrate each step- Don't wait for perfection	When choosing a discipline strategy, be aware of any progress in the right direction and praise yourself and the child! Behavior change is difficult, and any forward step should be recognized. For example, if you are working on sharing and the child allows another child to hold his/her toy (even, if only for a second!)- CELEBRATE! If you wait for perfection, you will burn out quickly and your child will not know s/he is moving in the right direction!

Strategies for Emphasizing Positive Discipline

Set Clear Expectations

- Be direct and specific
- State expectations in a positive way
- Give one command at a time
- Give age appropriate expectations
- Be polite and use a neutral tone

Example: "Please walk."

Model Appropriate Behaviors

- Always model appropriate behaviors and reactions for the child to observe
- Be a patient, calm, and respectful teacher
- Be ready with a plan BEFORE behavior strikes

Example Questions to Ask Yourself:
Am I being respectful? Am I calm? Am I acting how I want the child to act?

Redirect:

If you see undesirable behavior coming, head it off before it begins and praise appropriate behavior as soon as possible

Example: If a child is about to throw a block, say, "How high can you build a tower?" Once the child is playing appropriately, praise with, "Great job playing nicely with the blocks!"

Use the FLIP-IT® Technique

- Feelings - Help the child identify his/her feelings
- Limits - Remind the child of the positive limits and expectations
- Inquiries - Encourage finding positive solutions to challenges, allow time for child to think
- Prompts - Provide cues, clues, and suggestions

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Example: I see you feel mad, but we can't hit. How else could we get our mad out? (wait) What if we stomp our feet?

Allow Choices

- Gives the child a sense of control
- Keep it simple with 2 choices
- Couple choices with clear expectations
- Use a different technique if the child really has no choice
- Allow the child time to select a choice and comply
- Give choices when transitioning from one activity to another

Example: It's time to sit down for lunch. Which chair would you like to sit in?

Give Logical Consequences

- Use when/then statements
- Use when emotions are high
- Make sure you can follow through
- Consequence should fit naturally
- Use a calm and matter-of-fact tone

Example: When you throw the toy, then you are all done playing with it until after naptime.

Actively Ignore©

Inappropriate Behaviors

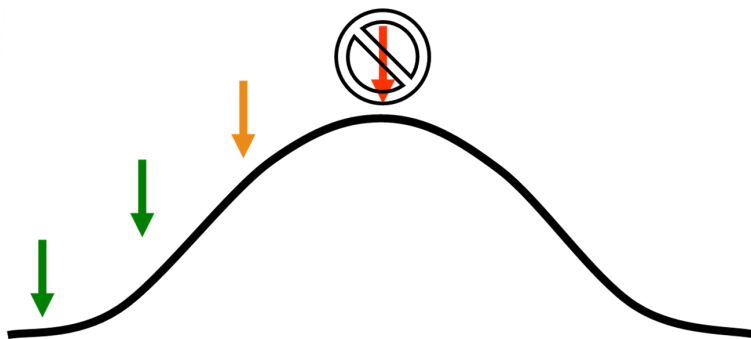
- Often, if you ignore inappropriate behaviors, they will disappear faster than if you correct them
- Give full attention to the child ONLY when appropriate behavior begins
- Only ignore minor and irritating behaviors (not harmful or dangerous behaviors)
- Remember: You are ignoring the behavior, NOT the child
- Be ready for the first opportunity to give praise

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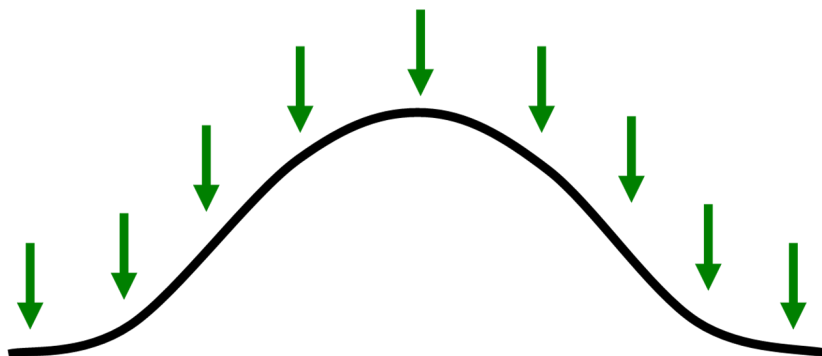
Example: If a child is playing appropriately with toys but whines while doing so, say, "I like how creative you are" to point out and praise the positive behavior. Give no attention to the whining.



When to Teach



When to use visuals



1.) This is something the child is frequently telling me through challenging behaviors:

2.) Here's how I can help him/her communicate better:

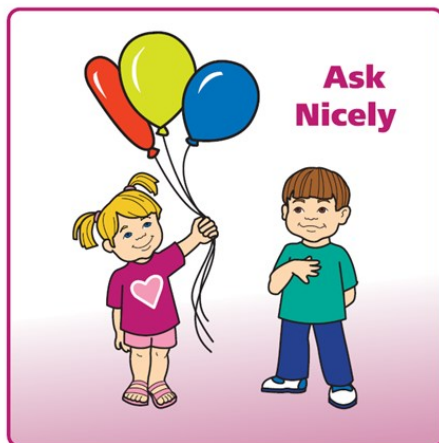
3.) Here is how I can help prevent this situation:



Solution Cue Cards

Ideas for use:

- Practice a few solutions at a time. When a situation arises, show two solutions and ask which they would like to use.
- Find stories that illustrate these solutions. Have the child identify which solution the characters chose.
- Print and hole punch all cards. Place on a binder ring. Practice selecting a solution for different situations.
- Paste choices on a wall. When a situation arises, go to the wall and help the child choose a solution.



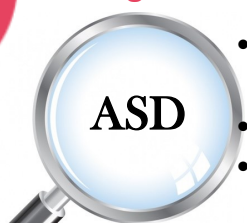
Source: Center for social and Emotional Foundation of Early Learning: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>

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Pink Dot: Embrace Unique Strengths:

Through nurturing individual differences and natural temperament



- Nurture yourself as the primary caregiver- Self-care is not selfish
- Embrace your child's unique interest and skill area
- Is your child trying to tell you they are under/over stimulated?

What to Connect...	Why it works...
Practice self-care and embrace YOUR Character Strengths	You are a better parent when you take time to reflect on your unique strengths and invest in your personal self-care. Be aware of your top strengths and pull on these during stressful times. Discover where you flourish naturally and how you can bring these traits into your parenting style. Self-care is not selfish—it's essential to strong parenting.
Know and embrace your child's unique character strengths	When we concentrate on what we don't do well, it's discouraging. For children on the spectrum, there will be particular tasks and skills that might be a lifelong challenge, such as tying his/her shoes or initiating play with a peer. Try not to fixate on a child's weakest area, but rather build on the child's strongest traits, skills, and "personal bests". When we shift focus to areas where we are gifted naturally, our weaknesses become less cumbersome.
Embrace your child's unique interests	Children on the spectrum often have concentrated areas of interest. Use these areas of interests to help the child grow in other areas. For example, if your child is extremely interested in animals, you can read books about animals as a connection point for growing your relationship, find animal plates for meal time, use animal counters for learning math skills, and find social stories about animals for building social and emotional awareness. Use your child's interest area.
Identify how the child is using particular behaviors to communicate feelings and needs	All young children use behavior to communicate needs; however, children on the spectrum often use behavior as a primary communication tool. Learning how your child has adapted certain behaviors to communicate particular needs is essential to reducing challenging behaviors. For example, if you interpret hitting as being "angry and mean," how might you respond? What if the child was trying to communicate he/she is overstimulated—would that change your response?
Overstimulation/Under-stimulation	Children with ASD sometimes seek additional stimulation or try to avoid stimulation. Take time to think about what is happening in the moment that might be contributing to this challenging behavior. You may not feel overstimulated or under-stimulated, but the child might be interpreting the situation very differently. When taking a step back and "Connecting the Dots" for Environment (dot 1), Connection (dot 2), and Discipline (dot 3), be sure to consider how the child feeling over/under stimulated plays a huge role.



Resources

Get connected and learn more about ASD

Kentucky Advisory Council on Autism:

- ♦ kyaca.org

Kentucky Autism Training Center– University of Louisville:

- ♦ kyautism.org

Connect the Dots Homepage:

- ♦ kentuckycchc.org, Click “Connect the Dots”

Other Local Resources:

- ♦
- ♦
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