Social Communication 101: Identification and Evaluation

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Introduction

• Going to Camp
• My Mother
• More Craziness!!

"If you know one person with Asperger’s (AS) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) ...you know one person with AS/ASD."

Although an individual’s relationship to ASD or Asperger’s Syndrome is unique, it is helpful to be aware of common characteristics.

When I said “Asperger’s” who did you think of?

#BIGBANGTHEORY

SHERLOCK
Did anyone think of...

- Someone in your circle of friends, their families, or even your own?
- A student?

The Big Picture

- Asperger’s Syndrome (AS) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are disabilities that affect interactions.

  - Difficulties with Perspectives—both another individual’s (including, mood and intentions) and the collective Social Expectations

  - These misunderstandings, can lead to anxiety, isolation, and depression.

What to do?

- Teach Perspectives

  - Translate the Neuro Typical World to the individual with AS/ASD and the individual to the NT World.

- Decrease Anxiety

- Facilitate Success.

Some Statistics:

- 1 in 68
- 5 to 1
- 70-90%
- Approximately 85%
- 110%
It’s Like other Communication Disabilities:

- Language Impairment
- Articulation
- Stuttering
- Auditory Processing Disorder

• Difficulties with main idea, purpose, implied meanings
• Generalization and unawareness
• Emotions, Avoidance, underlying misunderstanding
• Lack of Neuro Network to process information

Quintessential
Communication Disability

Pragmatics/Social Communication

Often a component
- Stuttering
- Deaf Hard of Hearing
- Voice
- Others

Feature
- ASD
- AS

Objectives

Participants will:
- Identify social communication needs in students with Asperger’s Syndrome, High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder or other Social Communication Disabilities.
- Be able to describe Executive Function and its impact on students.
- Obtain and interpret the presenter’s social communication data collection tool.
- Gain understanding regarding the evaluation process for Pragmatic Language.

It’s Different...

- Thinking
- Communication

Thinking

“I think that Autistic brains tend to be specialized brains. Autistic people tend to be less social. It takes a ton of processor space in the brain to have all the social circuits.”

Temple Grandin
Thinking Differences

Neuro Typical
- Wired towards Social
- Global thinker
- Collaboration
- Generalist

AS/ASD
- Wired towards Things
- Detail oriented
- Solitary
- Specialist

You may notice:
- Ridged thought patterns, difficulty with exceptions to the rule, perfectionism, or unrealistic expectations.
- Strict adherence to schedules and routines, difficulty with change, new personnel, or situations.
- Unusual or all engrossing interests.
- But also unique, unexpected, and outside of the box solutions!

Interests
- Sally expects perfection
- Hallway meltdown
- "I’ll huff and puff, and punch and kick your door down!"

- Legos, Dinosaurs, Tanks, Telephone poles, Staircases, Horses, Cars, Air Traffic Control Towers, Passenger Airliners
- Poke’mon, Anime’, Minecraft, GTO, Halo, World of Warfare, Cooking Shows
- Horror Movies, “A Clockwork Orange,” Feet, Guns

Obvious #1:

"Those with Asperger’s/ Autism Spectrum Disorder... Thinking is Different!"

Communication

“When people talk to each other, they never say what they mean. They say something else and you’re expected to just know what they mean.”

- Alan Turing

The Imitation Game
Communication Differences

**Neuro Typical**
- Multi Sensory Visual-Auditory
- Nonverbal 70-90% of message
  - eye, face, body language
tone, rate, volume
- Figurative interpretation

**AS/AD**
- Single Input-Auditory
- Nonverbal missed or misread
- Literal interpretation

You may notice:
- Bluntness, lacking tact, giving unsolicited opinion, or having no filter.
- Problems with conversational turn taking, monologues about specific interest, answering rhetorical questions, overuse of emphatic statements or not participating at all.
- Misunderstanding humor or sarcasm.
- Failure to use communication to solve problems.
- But also refreshingly straight forward and direct!

The Revisionist

- Lost in the Translation
- “Sorry...but I'm busy.”

Obvious #2:

“They're Communication... is Different!”

Interacting

“Life is collaboration.”

- Rich Mullins

What are those????!!!
Neuro Networks for Interactions

Super Highways for Social Processing

- Neuro Typical brains develop these intuitively
- AS/ASD underdeveloped or delayed
- Experience creates these!

You may notice:

- Failure to meet social expectations, regulate emotions, or make adjustments.
- Difficulties seeing another’s perspective, emotional state, or intentions.
- Often naive or just don’t “get it.”
- Failure to make or keep friends, work with groups, or collaborate.

Obvious #3:

“*Their Interaction... is Different!*”

Dynamic factors to be mindful of:
Sensory

Hyper/-Hypo Senses
Auditory: Noise
Visual: Clutter, Lights
Tactile: Clothes, Food
Smells: Odors, Stinks
People: Hallways, Cafeteria, Assemblies, Problematic

Emotions

Over/Under Responses
Anxiety
Intensity: Explosive
Affect: Hard to Read
Inability to meet Expected Levels
Failure to See Affect on Others

Social Communication

Expectations
Perspectives
Intentions/Motives
Figurative and Non-literal
Nonverbal Communication
Emotional Regulation

Theory of Mind

"Before Asperger’s Syndrome, I thought everyone thought like me."
- My Student

• The False Belief Test
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hLubgpY2_w

• The Sally Anne Test
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjkTQtggLH4

Executive Function

• Frontal Lobe as Conductor of the brain
• Organization, planning, attention, impulse control, time management, problem solving
• 32-36 building block skills
• Initiate, Maintain, Stop, Inhibit, Shift, and More!

Executive Function at School

Executive Function refers to skills of organization, problem solving, planning, initiating, staying on task, making adjustments, and changing plans. Consider the expectations of a High School student. They have 6-7 classes and as many teachers. Add tests, projects, and activities, all with little thought to possible conflicts. Executive Function is extremely important for school success, and these competencies are assumed.

John’s difficulties
Clay Marzo
Professional Surfer

Evaluation of Pragmatics

Private Client

- Documentation of Medical Diagnosis of Asperger’s Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or other related diagnosis.
- Social Communication Worksheet(s) along with consultation with parent including history, current functioning, and targets for intervention.

School Based Evaluation

- Diagnosis of Asperger’s or Autism Spectrum Disorder
- No Diagnosis “A Person of Interest”

What is required for an Evaluation addressing Pragmatics?

- This will include standardized tests, data collection, and observations.
- Obtaining information from parents, and teachers will be essential.

What is unique about a Pragmatics Evaluation?

- Pragmatics Evaluation requires a multifaceted and dynamic approach.
- Do not expect a number produced by a standardized test to give you the final answer.
- Data collection and observation will weigh heavily.
What if their Standardized Measure doesn't show significant problems?

- Often Semantics, Syntax, Phonology, and Morphology competencies will be within normal limits.
- Pragmatic competencies will require further investigation.

Guiding Questions for Pragmatics

Does the student...

- Interact like their peers?
- Meet social expectations?
- See another’s perspective?
- Regulate emotions?
- Require management by adults?

Collect Data from Multiple Sources

- Social Communication Worksheets
  www.captainslpman.com
- Follow up with interviews.
- Gather anecdotal information.

Focused Observations

- At least two observations, in the natural environment, Classroom setting
  Less structured, more social setting
- Watch for how the student
  Interacts with peers and teacher (or doesn’t)
  Needs facilitation beyond what peers require
- Notice how peers interact with each other

What about a Pragmatics Measure?

- Standardized Tests
  Traditional “in the box” tool
  Limited usefulness
- Questionnaires/Checklists
  Measure a wide scope of competencies
  SLP completes with assistance

Ready to present to the team?

- Collect your information
- Write a report
- Professional judgment
Perform and Function

- Academics
- Testing
- Behavior
- Interaction
- Communication

The student is found eligible for Language Services...now what?

- “Are you in the Zone?” by Tim Kowalski
  www.socialpragmatics.com
- A 5 Point Anxiety Scale by Kari Dunn Buron
  www.5pointscale.com
- Emotional control, Perspectives, Social Understanding, and Executive Function.

Most Importantly...

- It is essential to address real situations!
- Gather intelligence from collaboration with parents, teachers, ESE personnel, and administrators.
- Use concepts and vocabulary previously taught to address the difficulty.

Quiz

1. 3 Differences between NT and those with AS/ASD
2. Statistics: 1 in 68, 5 to 1, 70-90%, Approximately 85%, 110%
3. 3 Dynamic Factors to Consider
4. One More and describe it’s affects
5. Beyond a test, what are 3 things to do for Evaluation?

The Big Picture

- Those with Asperger’s Syndrome (AS) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have significant disabilities affecting interactions.
- Difficulties with Perspectives—both the individual’s including, mood, intention, and context and the collective Social Expectations
- These miscues, offenses and communication failures, lead to penalties, increasing anxiety and further impair functioning.
- These can lead to withdrawal, isolation, depression, and worse.

What to do?

- Explain the Neuro Typical world to the individual with AS/ASD and explain the Individual to the NT world.
- Teach Perspectives
- Translate Communication
- Decrease Anxiety
- Facilitate Success
More?
Never fear!!! www.captainslpman.com

Thank you for inviting me to speak today!