

 **Center for Autism
and Related Disabilities**
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Understanding and Supporting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Today's Road Map

- What is CARD?
- Common Misconceptions
- Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Early Signs & Common Challenges
- Prevalence & Possible Causes
- Behavioral Supports



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CARD: OUR MISSION

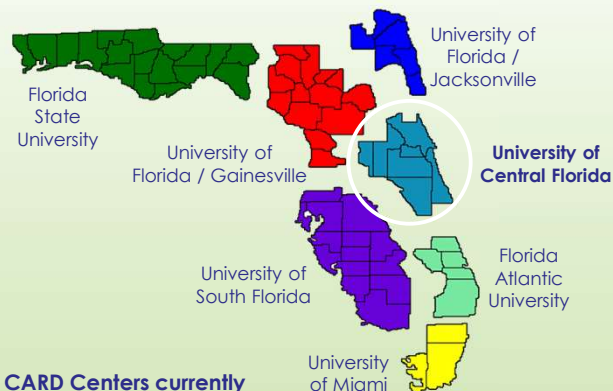
CARD seeks to provide consultative support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism, dual sensory impairment, and related disabilities.

All seven Florida Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities share this mission.

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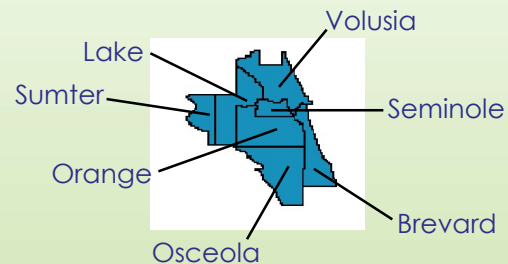
CENTER FOR AUTISM & RELATED DISABILITIES

SUPPORT AVAILABLE STATEWIDE



CARD Centers currently provide support to over 60,000 individuals statewide.

UCF CARD SERVES OVER 17,000 INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES



CARD Service Regions

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WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT AUTISM?



- Autism is a **relatively new conceptualization**
- Term **first coined in 1908**
- Did not enter **diagnostic code until 1980**
- **Understanding is still evolving**

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The Rising Prevalence of Autism

Identified prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) per 1,000 children in the U.S.



Source: Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network via CDC



statista

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AUTISM OCCURS ACROSS A SPECTRUM - NO TWO CHILDREN ARE ALIKE



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AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

LEVEL I

Requires
Supports

LEVEL II

Requires
Substantial
Supports

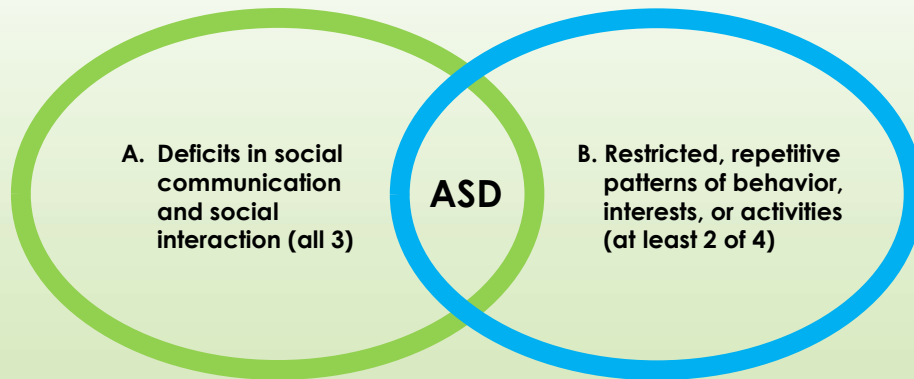
LEVEL III

Requires
Very
Substantial
Supports

Source: **DSM-5**

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CORE FEATURES OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



A total of 5 or more items from A and B, with all 3 from A and at least 2 from B

Source: **DSM-5**

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DSM - 5: SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION (ALL 3)

1. Deficits in **social-emotional reciprocity**
2. Deficits in **nonverbal communicative behaviors** used for social interaction
3. Deficits in **developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships**

Source: **DSM-5**

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DSM - 5: RESTRICTED, REPETITIVE PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR, INTERESTS, OR ACTIVITIES (AT LEAST 2)

1. Stereotyped or **repetitive motor movements**, use of **objects**, **echolalia**, **idiosyncratic phrases**
2. Insistence on **sameness**, inflexible **adherence to routines**, or **ritualized patterns** of verbal or nonverbal behavior
3. Highly **restricted**, **fixated interests** that are **abnormal in intensity or focus**
4. **Hyper - or hypo - reactivity to sensory input** or **unusual interest in sensory aspects** of the environment

Source: **DSM-5**

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NO ONE SYMPTOM CAN RULE OUT AUTISM - OR PROVE AN INDIVIDUAL HAS IT



- Defined by a **cluster of behaviors** in the core areas
- Must be a **combination of symptoms**

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THE LANGUAGE WE USE...

Person-First Language

Puts the person before the disability by recognizing them as a person instead of a condition.

Source: Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

Identity-First Language

Emphasizes that the disability plays a role in who the person is. In the autism community, some self-advocates and allies prefer “autistic” because they see autism as an inherent part of an individual’s identity.

Source: Association of University Centers on Disabilities

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LABELS



- “Functioning” labels do not accurately describe a person’s abilities or challenges
- Focus on the level of support needed

Image Credit: mohamed_hassan and modified by author

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COMMUNICATION VARIABILITY



- Individuals with Autism have a **range of communication skills and abilities.**
- Communication skills **directly relate to behavior and social skills**, but may not be reflection of cognitive skills

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ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS

- Theory of mind - **difficulty with perspective taking**
- Emotional regulation- **high rates of anxiety**; seemingly **big reactions to small problems**
- Challenging behaviors – **meltdowns, aggression, or self-injury**
- Potential for **wandering**
- Attention and engagement - **may not respond** to name being called
- May **avoid or resist physical contact**
- **Co-occurring conditions**

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MOST COMMON CHALLENGES IN THE CLASSROOM

- Excessive anxiety
- Inflexibility; Difficulty with change & transitions
- May understand language very literally
- Difficulty with inference-making abilities
- Over-focus on details and overlooking “big picture”
- Weak listening and reading comprehension and written expression

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COMMON CLASSROOM CHALLENGES CONTINUED

- May exhibit unusual motor mannerisms
- May have strong reactions to small things; Might overreact to sensory stimuli
- May not understand a conflict
- May not correctly predict intentions, reactions, or behaviors of others
- May not appear to be responsible, independent, or organized

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“WHEN YOU’VE MET ONE CHILD WITH ASD, YOU’VE MET ONE CHILD WITH ASD”

- Every case is unique
- What works for one may not work for another
- CARD provides individualized consultation and technical support – If you feel like we might be of use to a family, please share our contact info!

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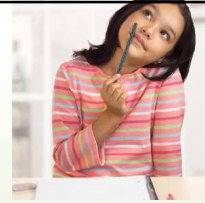
Understanding Behavior



- Behavior is ADAPTIVE
- Behavior is COMMUNICATIVE
- Behavior is FUNCTIONAL
- We use behavior that has a history of success
- All behavior occurs for a reason

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Understanding Behavior



- Desired and Undesired behaviors occur because they have been reinforced
- The same behavior can occur for multiple reasons or to serve multiple purposes
- Your perspective on the behavior will impact your intervention or resolution
- Must go beyond the idea of eliminating or reducing challenging behaviors

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The 4 Cs of Prevention

- Catch 'em being good
 - Praise appropriate behavior
 - Lots of attention for behavior you want to increase
- Clarity
 - Don't ask a question when you want follow through
 - K.I.S.S. (keep it simple, silly!)

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The 4 Cs of Prevention (cont'd.)

- Choices
 - Offer choices, especially when enforcing a limit
 - Choose your battles!
- Communication
 - Teach skills that help the child communicate
 - Feelings, needs, etc.

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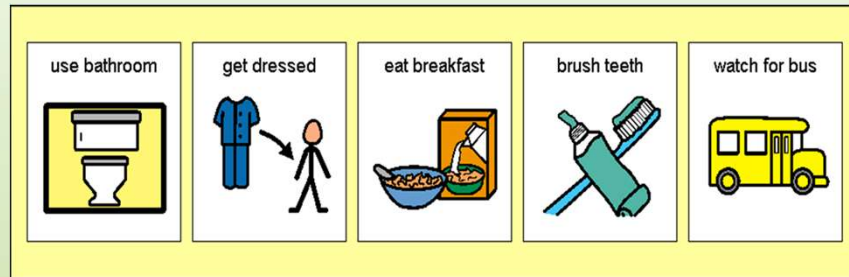
Prevention Techniques (Antecedent Control Measures)

- Use your 4 C's
- Environmental Arrangement
 - Modify task, furniture, toys
 - Visual Supports
 - First-Then Card, Timers, picture cues, schedules, signals, etc.
- Redirection
 - Surface Management Techniques (diffuse/redirect)
 - Differential Reinforcement of alternative behavior
 - Increase the Fun Factor
- Promote engagement

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- Visual Schedules

<https://youtu.be/xFrdcfBgag0>



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Visual Schedule Examples



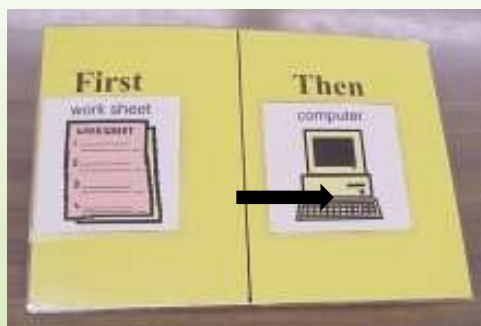
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Visual Schedule Examples



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First Then Card



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First/Then Boards:



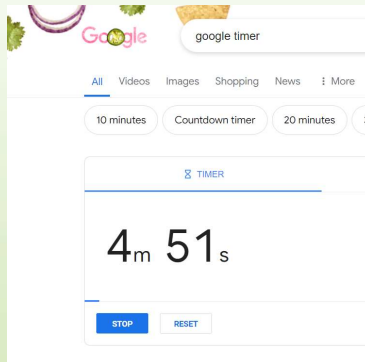
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Choice Boards



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Timers



www.timetimer.com



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Environments: What Works

- Eliminate temptations
- Eliminate potentials for hiding/stimming
- Increase text/visual supports
- Increase predictability
 - Use your schedules
 - Use Physical Structure/Structured Teaching

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How can you promote engagement?

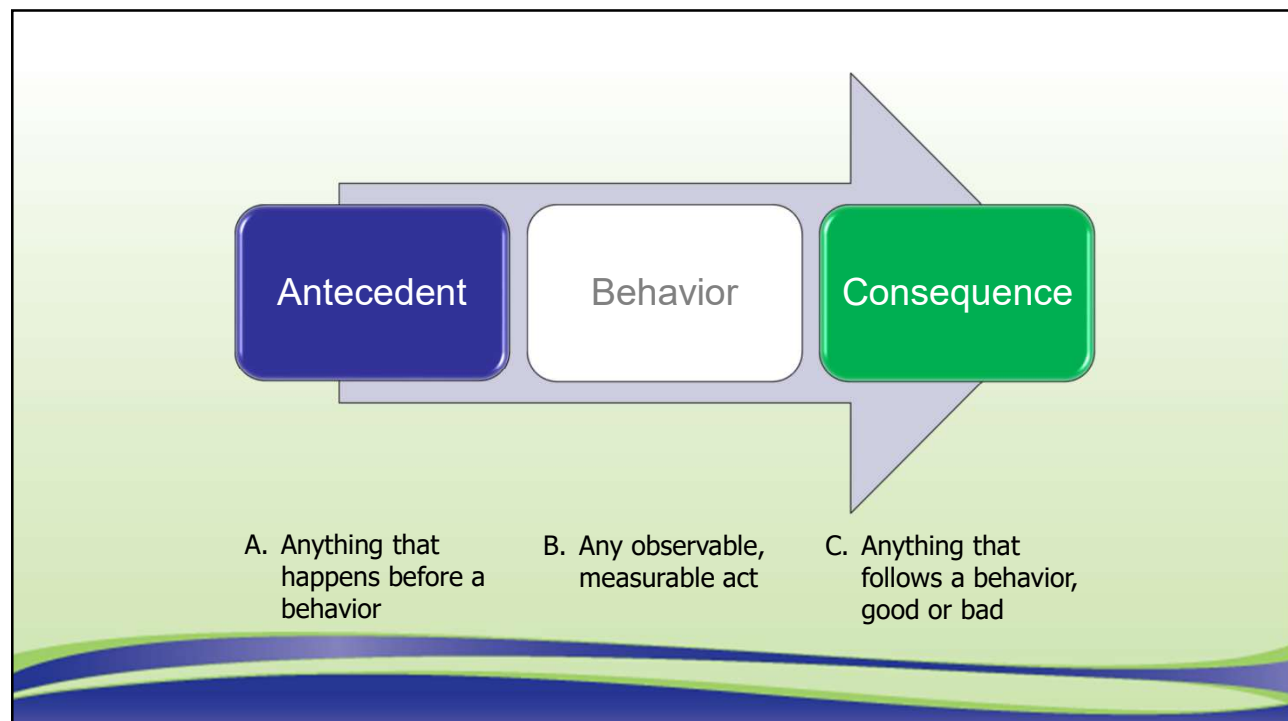
- Use preferred materials and activities
- Provide preferred materials within choice times
- Teach play and leisure skills (hobbies)
- Contact children frequently when they are doing what you want them to be doing
- Increase novelty and sensory avenues in materials/toy displays
- Have a back-up plan (interest boxes)
- Provide reinforcement for engagement

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Terms of Applied Behavior Analysis

- Behavior
- Stimulus- a change in the environment that can affect behavior
- Antecedent
- Consequence
- Contingencies
- Functional Relationship
 - Will talk about this at end

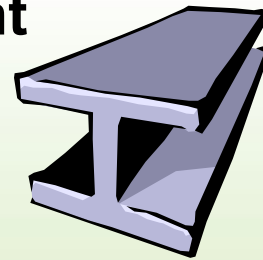
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Reinforcement

- Reinforcement
 - Strengthens behavior
 - Think: “reinforced concrete”
 - Increases the probability of a behavior being repeated
 - Occurs after the behavior occurs



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Reinforcement



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Types of Positive Reinforcers

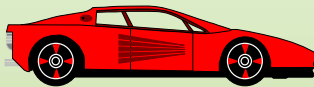
- Edible



- Activity



- Tangible



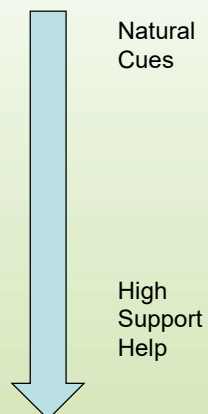
- Social



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Prompt Hierarchy

- Natural Environment
- Visual
 - Movement, spatial, pictorial
- Indirect Verbal Model
- Direct Verbal
- Direct Verbal + Model/Gesture
- Partial Physical
- Full Physical



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Least to Most Prompting

- Start at the most natural level
- Only give more as needed
- Assumes Independence/Competence
- May produce less prompt dependency
- Less intrusive
- May take longer to achieve competence because it allows for errors

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WAIT-ASK-SAY-DO

- Praise children exhibiting desired behavior. WAIT for child to demonstrate desired behavior. (5 sec)
- ASK child what s/he needs to do. Praise child if s/he demonstrates behavior or tells you what s/he needs to do. (5 sec)
- SAY what the child needs to do. Praise for completions. (5 sec)
- DO desired behavior for child with physical assistance. Praise for completion.

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In order for Prompts to Work

- They must gain the attention of the child
 - Consider background noise
 - Consider sensory channel of prompt
- They must be understood by the child
 - Consider vocabulary, wording of prompt
 - Support with visual, movement, etc.

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Strategies to Avoid with Autism

- “Talking it out”
- Perspective taking – counseling (How would you like it....how do you think he feels...)
- Threats
- Questions (Do you want to go to time out?)
- Coercion (If you don’t...I’m going to)

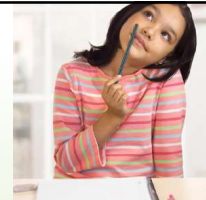
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The 5 Cs of Responding

1. Consistency
Between people, Between situations
2. Contingencies
Identifying the ABCs of the behavior
What is the function of the behavior
3. Consequences
Natural, Proportionate, and related to the behavior
4. Calm
Neutral Tone, Respite and Adult Time Out
5. Catch Them Being Good

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Understanding Behavior



- Desired and Undesired behaviors occur because they have been reinforced
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- Your perspective on the behavior will impact your intervention or resolution
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What is Functional Assessment?

- A way of looking at problems from a functional standpoint
- Does not focus on underlying feelings or psychopathology
- Requires gathering data (A-B-C's) and coming up with ideas about the function of the problem behavior
- Can be done by many different people

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Functions of Behavior Simplified:

- ESCAPE: Getting out of a demand, activity, situation.
- MAKE DEMAND: Trying to get something desired.
- GET ATTENTION: Trying to secure attention from adults or peers.
- SELF STIMULATION: Just for the fun of it (would go on if everyone left the room).
- Think about the problem behaviors you encounter. Can you identify the function of these behaviors?

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Possible Functions (Expanded)

- To Get Something
- Engagement / Initiate
- Sense of Control
- Desirable Items / Activity
- Sensory Input / Regulation
- To Get Help
- To Avoid Something
- Difficult tasks
- Social interaction
- Environmental stimuli

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What Function? Let's look at some behavior



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Let's look at some more behaviors



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Try this one



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What about this one?



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What do I do after I think I know the function?

- There is no cookbook answer, but these are some general guidelines
 - Manipulate the environment to prevent that function from being achieved or needed
 - Change your own behavior to make that function unnecessary
 - Teach alternative forms for function

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When the behavior serves a function of getting Attention:

- Ignore bad behavior (that is not dangerous) and give lots of praise for good behavior, and other children who are behaving
- Quietly and unemotionally redirect dangerous behavior and arrange for prevention while attending to other behavior.

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Putting it “On Extinction” (works best when dealing w/ Attention/Make Demand Functions)

- Planned ignoring
- No facial, verbal feedback
- The behavior never happened
- Increases behavior at first
- Then results in rapid drop off
- Still need to teach alternative behavior

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If Function is to Avoid/Escape

- Must continue to have child participate in activity **THIS TIME**
 - Follow through with demand, praise completion or attempt
- Examine demand and adapt in the future to prevent the problem behavior



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If Function is to Avoid/Escape

- Then, make adjustments/accommodations:
 - Fewer materials in front of the child
 - Smaller/Larger work space
 - Adjust the stimulation level
 - Let child stand instead of sit
 - Make task easier, shorter
 - Remove offending stimulus
 - Use First-Then card, Timer
 - Build up Tolerance of the non-preferred activity
- Teach Alternative way to request “out”

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If Function is to get Sensory Input (Self-Stimulation)

- Increase visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory input
- Identify age-appropriate and socially appropriate outlets for student to obtain sensory input
- Create requirements that promote social and communication goals to obtain preferred sensory input
- Shape the behavior into something more acceptable

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If the Function is Sensory Input/Self-Stimulation

- Teach play and leisure skills
 - Target skills that mimic that sensory experience can you think of examples for these “problem” self-stims?
 - Rocking
 - Playing with spit
 - Banging on table
 - Increase other fun options

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When the behavior serves the function of Making a Demand

- Teach alternative way of communicating that demand
- Do not allow child access to the items after exhibiting inappropriate behavior
- Indicate how/when the child can get the specific items
- Allow access to the items for exhibiting desirable behavior (or approximation)
- Redirect (choices) if not possible to honor demand



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Logical Consequences

- Removal of materials used inappropriately
- Loss of privileges, access to preferred item (response cost)
- Restricted access
- Loss of adult/teacher/parent praise/attention

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(WARNING!) about using “Time Outs”

- Time out means time out FROM REINFORCEMENT
- Many kids with ASD “stim out” in time out
- Self stimulation is reinforcing for many kids with ASD
- Therefore, time out is not time out for these kids
- Therefore, TIME OUT RARELY WORKS FOR THESE KIDS
- If the behavior doesn’t decrease, it isn’t working!

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The Mighty

- “It’s hard as a (parent) mostly because there’s a fine line between trying to help facilitate the kind of growth that will better prepare him for this world and how and when to let him soar and just be him. I think many parents of children on the autism spectrum struggle trying to find exactly where that line is in a life full of therapists and interventions.”

-Jessica Scurto

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**STAY
CONNECTED**

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WWW.UCF-CARD.ORG



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THANK YOU!

- Questions?

Contact:



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407-823-6011

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