

**PRACTICAL TIPS TO  
HELP CHILDREN  
WITH AUTISM  
NAVIGATE THE  
HIDDEN  
CURRICULUM**

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# GENERAL INFORMATION

- You can view and share this video and materials from this session at [www.mountunion.edu/spectrum](http://www.mountunion.edu/spectrum) by going to the 'Past Event Recordings'
- If you would like to be included in future communication about events and programs, please sign up here <https://www.mountunion.edu/spectrum-rfi>
- If you can use this session towards CEU credits, send me an email and I will let your school know that you attended
- Please interact via chat or voice throughout the session
- 30 minutes of presentation and then open discussion

# THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

- The hidden curriculum includes social information that is not directly taught but is assumed that everybody knows (e.g., don't stand too close to the person you are speaking with)
- Often times, the social information includes body language and imitation which are challenging for children with autism to discern
- The world can be a confusing place, if social cues are misunderstood

How does this relate to autism?



# CORE TRIAD OF SYMPTOMS

- Poor social interaction
- Impairments in communication
- Restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities

People on the autism spectrum have a difficult time noticing and incorporating elusive and changing information in the environment. This leads to problems in social situations.

# LET'S THINK OF SOME EXAMPLES...

- Physical distance in public spaces
- Hold the door for someone, and or pass it to the next person

More subtle and nuanced

- Always hand a person money, don't set it on counter
- Replace the empty roll of toilet paper

Some new rules

- Don't look at your phone in the midst of a conversation
- If a person shows you a picture on their phone, don't continue to look through their photo album without invitation

Rules related to Covid?

# UNWRITTEN RULES

- The hidden curriculum is a set of unwritten rules that no one has been directly taught, but everyone knows
  - ▶ Impact:
    - ▶ School
    - ▶ Community
    - ▶ Vocation
    - ▶ Home
  - ▶ Differs across:
    - ▶ Age
    - ▶ Who you are with
    - ▶ Gender
    - ▶ Culture

# DOES HE/SHE GET IT?

- I shouldn't have to tell you but...
- It should be obvious that...
- Everyone knows that...
- Common sense tells us...
- No one ever...

## Outcome

- ▶ Violations of the rules can lead to a person becoming a social outcast or social misfit
- ▶ Child may be shunned by peers
- ▶ May be viewed as gullible or considered a troublemaker

# SOME COMMON 'VIOLATIONS'



Respond “out loud” when you shouldn’t



Make odd noises with fingers, feet, mouth



Ask for the information you have already given



Cannot walk “normally” in the hallway



Never follow your directions

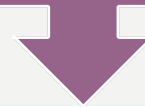


Have more trouble than others remembering things or completing tasks



# TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Instruction is the key to helping individuals with social-cognitive challenges understand the hidden curriculum



Practice, practice, practice

Safe Person

Direct Instruction

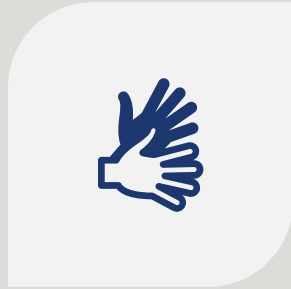


Utilize strengths

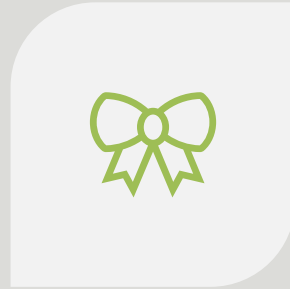
Visual-spatial and manipulative

Rote memory

Musical and other special talents



SAY GREETINGS,  
INTRODUCTIONS AND  
GOODBYES.



POLITELY OFFER AND  
RECEIVE COMPLIMENTS.



BE ABLE TO START AND  
FINISH  
CONVERSATIONS.



EXAMPLE

# MEET AND GREET POLITELY

# TAKE TURNS TALKING



LISTEN WHEN OTHERS  
ARE SPEAKING AND  
LOOK THEM IN THE EYE.



DON'T INTERRUPT.



RESPOND  
APPROPRIATELY AND AT  
THE RIGHT TIME.



EXAMPLE

# THINK ABOUT OTHERS BEFORE ACTING



DON'T TOUCH  
WITHOUT ASKING.



DON'T CUT IN LINE.



WAIT YOUR TURN.



STAND A  
COMFORTABLE  
DISTANCE AWAY WHEN  
TALKING.



EXAMPLE

# COOPERATE WITH OTHERS

Follow directions when you're asked to.

Ask for help when you need it.

Apologize when necessary.

Be flexible and open to new ideas.

[Example](#)

# SUMMARY

- ▶ Advocate for our friends with autism— the world is often not a friendly place to them. Areas in which the rest of us move with comfort & ease offer them an endless variety of threatening missteps
- ▶ Collaborate with other professionals to create a safe environment for those dealing with these challenges to their own peace of mind
- ▶ Listen to them – with kindness & patience. Listen to their parents/caregivers, even if you do not agree on all points. Recognize that their circumstances are challenging 24/7, & are not of their choosing

# RESOURCES

- <https://autism-society.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/hidden-curriculum.pdf>
- [https://www.ocali.org/project/hidden\\_curriculum\\_month](https://www.ocali.org/project/hidden_curriculum_month)
- <https://autismclassroomresources.com/the-hidden-curriculum-what-is-it/>
- <https://www.learninglinks.org.au/hidden-curriculum-asd/>

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