Autism and ADHD
Supporting Guardian Ad Litem Interactions

Deitra A. Kuester, Ph.D.
dkuester@fsmail.bradley.edu

Quentin M. Wherfel, Ph.D.
qwherfel@fsmail.bradley.edu

Introductions

Deitra A. Kuester, Ph.D.
➢ Associate Professor of Education at Bradley University
➢ From Indiana; Doctorate from Purdue University
➢ Teaching experience includes over 20 years in K-12 and higher education in working with individuals with special needs

Quentin M. Wherfel, Ph.D.
➢ Assistant Professor of Education at Bradley University
➢ From Illinois; Doctorate from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
➢ Teaching experience includes over 9 years in secondary and higher education in working with individuals with special needs
Session Agenda

- Introductions
- Modes of language: Foundation of successful communication
- Diagnosis, development and characteristics (challenges) of:
  a. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
  b. Attention Deficit with or without Hyperactivity / Impulsivity (ADHD)
- Strategies for successful communication
- Q & A

OBJECTIVES

1. Understand differences between receptive and expressive communication.

2. Know major characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit with/Hyperactivity and Impulsivity (ADHD), and overlap of behavior between these disabilities.

3. Strategies to help you successfully work with children with these challenges.
Modes of Language: The Foundation of Successful Communication

**Receptive**
Comprehension of language; receives the message (i.e., listening & reading)

**Expressive**
Use of language; sends the message (i.e., speaking & writing)

Adapted from: Lerner & Johns, 2012
Why Autism and ADHD?

**Prevalence of Autism and ADHD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autism</th>
<th>ADHD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15% of US children</td>
<td>9.4% Age 2-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:37 boys 1:151 girls</td>
<td>63.8% have co-occurring diagnosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Overlap of Symptoms of Autism and ADHD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTISM</th>
<th>ADHD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-80%</td>
<td>20-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also have symptoms of ADHD</td>
<td>Also have symptoms of Autism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FINDINGS
- ADHD can occur with or without symptoms of Autism
- Autism always occurs with symptoms of ADHD (or other conditions)

### SO WHAT?
- Similar characteristics
- Similar challenges
- Similar success strategies

---

CDC, 2018; Leitner (2014); Mayes, Calhoun, Mayes, & Molitoris (2012); Sikora, Vora, Coury, & Rosenberg (2012).
Diagnosis, Development & Characteristics:
Autism Spectrum Disorder

Diagnosis:

• Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition: DSM-5
• Eliminated ‘labels’ of Asperger Syndrome and PDD-NOS
• Autism is a ‘spectrum’ disorder (levels of need and functioning vary)
• Disorder is based on levels of severity:
  ✓ Level 1 (least needs; formerly known as Asperger Syndrome)
  ✓ Level 2 (moderate needs)
  ✓ Level 3 (severe needs)

American Psychiatric Association, 2017

Diagnosis, Development & Characteristics:
Autism Spectrum Disorder

Diagnosis:

• Neurological disorder
• Impairments in 3 key areas
  ✓ communication
  ✓ social interaction
  ✓ restricted interests and repetitive behavior
• Manifests in early childhood

Autism Society of America, 2018
**Developmental delays** (in brain development and how information is processed):

- Communication (*both receptive & expressive*)
- Fine/gross motor skills
- Social & emotional skills

**List of primary characteristics hindering communication** (partial list):

1. Adjusting to change & unfamiliar people/places
2. Anxiety
3. Communication
4. Emotions
5. Eye contact
6. Literal, concrete, honest thinkers
7. Sensory processing
8. Stimming & other repetitive behaviors
Characteristics hindering communication:

1. Adjusting to change & unfamiliar people/places
2. Anxiety (unfamiliar places, people & routine changes)
3. Communication (verbal & nonverbal)

Strategies that Support Successful Communication

What to do:

Anxiety, changes & coping with unfamiliar:

✓ Tell child name of person they’ll be meeting, day, time & place
✓ Give child opportunity to visit place prior to meeting
✓ Create a social story (visual tool to aid child’s safety)

(See list of resources for sample stories.)
## Strategies that Support Successful Communication

### What to do:

**Communication:**

- ✓ Build trust, be respectful, be positive, use positive praise
- ✓ Speak to child as if s/he can hear/understand you
- ✓ Use communication aids

See list of resources for examples of communication aids.

---

### Diagnosis, Development & Characteristics: Autism Spectrum Disorder

**Characteristics hindering communication, continued:**

4. Emotions (interpreting, gauging, responding to)

5. Eye contact (poor to none)

6. Literal, concrete, honest thinkers (Theory of Mind)

American Psychiatric Association, 2017; Autism Society of America, 2018
Strategies that Support Successful Communication

**What to do:**

Emotion, eye contact, & concrete thinking:

- ✓ Lack of eye contact – overlook it
- ✓ Reading emotions, describing feelings
- ✓ Literal thinking – Visualize & Verbalize

See list of resources for examples and free downloads of cards.

Diagnosis, Development & Characteristics:

**Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Characteristics hindering communication, continued:

7. Sensory processing

8. Stimming & other repetitive behaviors
Strategies that Support Successful Communication

What to do:

Sensory, focus, attention & stimulation:

• Give sensory breaks often
  ❖ Tell them exactly what to expect
  ❖ Provide short breaks every XX min
  ❖ Use a visual timer
  • Ask 3 questions, restate # left, break 1 min, repeat

Sensory, focus, attention, stimulation, continued:

• If stimming, let them

• Provide fidget tool
Diagnosis, Development & Characteristics: Attention Deficit Disorder

Diagnosis:

- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition: DSM-5
- Continuum of frequency & intensity of symptoms
- Estimated 7.8%-9.5% school age children (4-17) (CDC 2017)
- Based on 3 key areas, lasting for longer than 6 months:
  - Inattention
  - Hyperactivity
  - Impulsivity

Diagnosis, Development & Characteristics: Attention Deficit Disorder

Diagnosis:
• Criteria also requires that symptoms:
  ✓ Be present prior to age 12
  ✓ Be present in more than 2 settings
  ✓ Interfere with (or reduce) quality of social, school, or work
  ✓ Are not better explained by mental disorder

• ADHD is not:
  ✓ An attention-seeking behavior but rather stimulation-seeking
  ✓ A learning disability

Symptoms of Hyperactivity:
✓ Fidgets with hands/feet
✓ Leaves seat while expected to remain seated
✓ Runs & climbs excessively
✓ Talks excessively
✓ Cannot sit still

Symptoms of Impulsivity:
✓ Blurts out answers before question is asked
✓ Has difficulty waiting
✓ Interrupts & intrudes on others

Symptoms of Inattention:

- Fails to give close attention to detail
- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not seem to listen
- Avoids tasks of sustained effort
- Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli

Diagnosis, Development & Characteristics:

Attention Deficit Disorder


What to do:

- Establish trust
- Be positive, use “I” statements, reinforce interaction with positive praise
- Use both visual & auditory input
- Provide drawing materials to support expressive language
- Write things out & read it
- Use pictures
- Use visual organizers

Strategies that Support Successful Communication

See list of resources for examples of communication aids.

Kuester (2004); Zentall (2006); Kuester & Zentall (2012); Zentall, Kuester & Craig (2011);
Strategies that Support Successful Communication

What to do:

- Talk with child away from noisy & distracting location (e.g., windows)
- Alert the child to key phrases such as, “This is important”
- Provide breaks during your interview
- Alert the child to key phrases such as, “This is important”, “Are you ready?”
- Have them repeat the question you’re asking in their own words

See list of resources for examples of communication aids.

Strategies that Support Successful Communication

How do I manage impulsivity & hyperactivity during the interview?

- Reduce length of questions
- Allow wait time for the child to process each question
- Provide the child opportunity to move around or stand
- Give the child breaks during the interview
- Provide fidget / sensory tools to redirect energy

See list of resources for examples for visualizing & verbalizing structure words and visual organizers; source for how to talk to children with ADHD.

Kuester (2004); Zentall (2006); Kuester & Zentall (2012); Zentall, Kuester & Craig (2011); Lerner & Johns (2012)
Child development resources

Developmental milestones (CDC, 2018)
https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html

2 mo – 5 yrs Developmental Milestones Checklist:

Birth – 5 yrs Developmental Checklist:

Parent's Guide to Developmental Milestones:
https://childmind.org/guide/developmental-milestones/
Sensory Processing Challenges (Autism, ADHD)

- Swaying / rocking, leery of elevation changes (stairs), or fascinated with moving objects (spinning wheel)
- Speaks loudly, likes loud noises, handles things ‘roughly’ so they make loud noises (throwing), fascinated with rushing/gushing water (flushing toilet), vibrating toys
- “Stimming” (head-butting –banging, biting, pinching, deep pressure), bumping into things, wants tight/textured clothing, unaware of pain or hot/cold
- Over–interested in smelling/sniffing, eat unusual things (dirt, coins, soap), lack sensitivity to foul odors (urine, feces)
- Eat everything or nothing, may eat nonfood items or unusual taste combinations (pickles with ice cream)
- Particular behavior of self or others may be amusing & difficult to control ‘reactions’ (laughing, giggling)

Adapted from: https://www.siparent.com/explaining-sensory-processing-disorder/
Sensory Processing Challenges (Autism, ADHD)

Under-sensory stimulation (Do this.)

- **Visual**
  - Use objects that spin or move (spinning top, buttons on string)

- **Auditory**
  - Use objects that make noise, talk (dried beans or colored beads in water bottle, dried beans taped inside of paper towel roll), use visual cue to “use inside voice”

- **Tactile**
  - Use weighted vest, cover with blanket & tightly wrap, use large rubber ball for deep pressure

- **Olfactory**
  - Use chew toy/ring, scented objects (scratch–n–sniff)

- **Gustatory**
  - Use chew toy/ring, crunchy or chewy foods (be aware of dietary & allergy issues)

- **Entertainment**
  - Use visual cues to redirect (universal sign for ‘no’ over picture of talking for ‘quiet’ cue)

Sample Visuals Aids to Support Successful Communication

**Visualizing & Verbalizing Structure Words**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRUCTURE WORDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>PALABRAS DE ESTRUCTURA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT</td>
<td>¿Qué?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIZE</td>
<td>¿Cuántas personas hay en el cuento/álbum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLOR</td>
<td>¿Cómo son las personas en el cuento/álbum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER</td>
<td>123456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAPE</td>
<td>¿Cuántas personas hay en el cuento/álbum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHERE</td>
<td>¿Dónde está el personaje?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVEMENT</td>
<td>¿Cómo se mueve el personaje?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTION</td>
<td>¿Qué hace el personaje?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>¿Qué está pasando en el cuento/álbum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>¿Cómo ves al personaje?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN</td>
<td>¿Cuándo se mueve el personaje?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUND</td>
<td>¿Qué escuchas en el cuento/álbum?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emotion Card**

Use for self-expression or Describing perceived emotion of others

Adapted from Pinterest and Teachers Pay Teachers
Sample Visual Aids to Support Successful Communication

Visual organizers and count-down examples *(Engage student in helping cross-off or move pointer.)*

Visual organizers of what we’re doing now and what comes next?

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sit</th>
<th>Listen</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sit</th>
<th>Listen</th>
<th>Answer ?s</th>
<th>Break</th>
<th>Sit</th>
<th>Listen</th>
<th>Answer ?s</th>
<th>Anything else to do?</th>
<th>No – done!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
```

```
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Next</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

```

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```
Countdown #s w/velcro
```

Don’t Say… | Do Say…
---|---
It’s not that hard. | Would you like to go to a quiet space to work?
You know better than that. | Right now you are not in control over your body. Let’s try…
Quit being ‘bad’. | I understand it is hard for you to…
Go away. | If you need…you can go here to do it.
Calm down. | Would you like me to give you some space? I’ll be right over here when you’re ready.
Why did you do that? | I notice(d) that…
It’s not that big of a deal. | I am trying to understand what you are frustrated about; can you show me?
Quit being a baby. | This seems to be frustrating you; what if we try…
What’s wrong with you? | How can I help your body get what it needs?
Why don’t you just… | Maybe you would like to…

Language to Help Avoid Conflict

Adapted from Lemon Lime Adventures
## Overlap of Behavior

**Is it ADHD or Autism – Level I (formerly Asperger Syndrome)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADD w/H</th>
<th>Autism (LEVEL I)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Poor attention in almost all situations</td>
<td>1) Poor attention, short attention span; perseverate/obsessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Low tolerance for persistence w/o immediate consequence</td>
<td>2) Low tolerance for persistence w/o immediate reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Impulsive</td>
<td>3) Impulsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Unable to regulate or inhibit social behavior</td>
<td>4) Inability to relate socially – inability of perspective-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) More active</td>
<td>5) More active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Difficulty adhering to rules/regulations</td>
<td>6) Difficulty adhering to changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Poor peer relations resulting from behavior</td>
<td>7) Poor peer relations resulting from behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Resources: Autism Spectrum Disorder

### Communication boards & cards, pictures, line drawings

NOTE: You may have to register, but resources are free.

* Pinterest also has several samples as free downloads.

Communication boards (may be used to help identify abusive situations):

- [http://www.noodlenook.net/free-communication-boards-autism/](http://www.noodlenook.net/free-communication-boards-autism/)

Picture cards:

- Emotions cards & blank cards: [https://www.prekinders.com/emotion-word-cards/](https://www.prekinders.com/emotion-word-cards/)

### iPad / iPhone APPS

NOTE: Look for ‘Communication’ category.

List of apps for various purposes via Autism Speaks Organization: [https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps](https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps)
**SOCIAL STORIES**

NOTE: These may need to be adapted for your State, City and or County.

Social story explanation & samples:  

Sample social stories:  
https://fasdtoolkit.weebly.com/social-stories.html

Going to court (activity book children about having to go to court, what happens, and expectations):  

CHINS (social story to help explain what’s happening and what they need to do):  

Divorce and custody social story:  

---

**Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wish You Knew**

1. I am first and foremost a child.
2. My sensory perceptions are disordered.
3. Please remember to distinguish between won’t (I choose not to) and can’t (I am not able to).
4. I am a concrete thinker. This means I interpret language very literally.
5. Please be patient with my limited vocabulary.
6. Because language is so difficult for me, I am very visually-oriented.
7. Please focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can’t do.
8. Please help me with social interactions.
9. Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns.
10. Love me unconditionally.

Copy available at: https://handsinautism.iupui.edu/pdf/tenthingschild.pdf
Resources: ADHD

ADHD, ODD & CD

Definition by American Psychiatric Association
https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/adhd/what-is-adhd

Fact sheet
http://www.chadd.org/Portals/0/Content/CHADD/NRC/Factsheets/aboutADHD.pdf

How to talk to children with ADHD
https://www.additudemag.com/how-to-talk-to-adhd-students/

Resources: ADHD

Statistics for ADHD
https://www.additudemag.com/the-statistics-of-adhd/

Understanding ADHD
http://www.chadd.org/understanding-adhd/about-adhd/fact-sheets-on-adhd.aspx

What it looks like at the high school level
Comparison chart for previous criteria to current relating to mental disorders

Fact sheet for state of IL
https://www.isbe.net/Documents/emotional-disturbance.pdf

Fact sheet about different mental disorders, including emotional disturbance
https://www.parentcenterhub.org/emotionaldisturbance/

Social skill development for middle, high school and on the job
https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf

Resources: Emotional (Behavioral) Disturbance
Thank you!