

Effective Communication & Strategies for Working with Individuals on the Autism Spectrum

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Learning Objectives

- Attendees will identify characteristics that may impact equine-assisted therapy.
- Attendees will match and select possible intervention strategies to support communication and behavior with the equine-assisted activities and therapies program participants.
- Attendees will be able to outline potential interventions and accommodations for their programs that set clear expectations and promote success for the participants.

About Me~

- SLP for 26 years
- Specialty areas: Pediatrics, ASD, Challenging behaviors, Complex Communication Needs
- Assistant Professor/Clinical Supervisor
- Advocate
- Wife
- Mom of 4
- Grandma of 2 😊



My guy~

- Diagnosed with Epilepsy at 2 mos.
- Diagnosed with ASD at 4 years
- Therapy started at 14 mos.
- Multiple therapies
- Involvement in Horse therapy for 11 years




Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Social Communication

- 3 areas
 - Social Emotional Reciprocity
 - Non-verbal behavior
 - Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships, appropriate to developmental level

Restricted Interests and Repetitive Behaviors

- 4 listed~ need 2 of the 4
 - Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects
 - Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change
 - Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
 - Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment



Characteristics That can impact Therapy:

- **Sensory**
 - Need to prepare and make necessary provisions for helmets, animals, smells indoor vs. outdoor, etc.
- **Repetitive Behaviors**
 - What may that child need to do to move forward with therapy... how many times can I do it, when can I do it, etc.
- **Rigidity**
 - Changes may cause anxiety, so how can we decrease anxiety: visuals, pre-teaching, social stories, clear beginning and ending, duration maps, etc.?

Characteristics That can impact Therapy:

- Communication deficits
 - How can we make sure our communication is at the appropriate level for success: visuals, voice output, sign language, short/simple directives, positive language, etc.
- Social Skills Deficits
 - Helping to build appropriate social interactions for the environment and between therapists, volunteers and other riders.

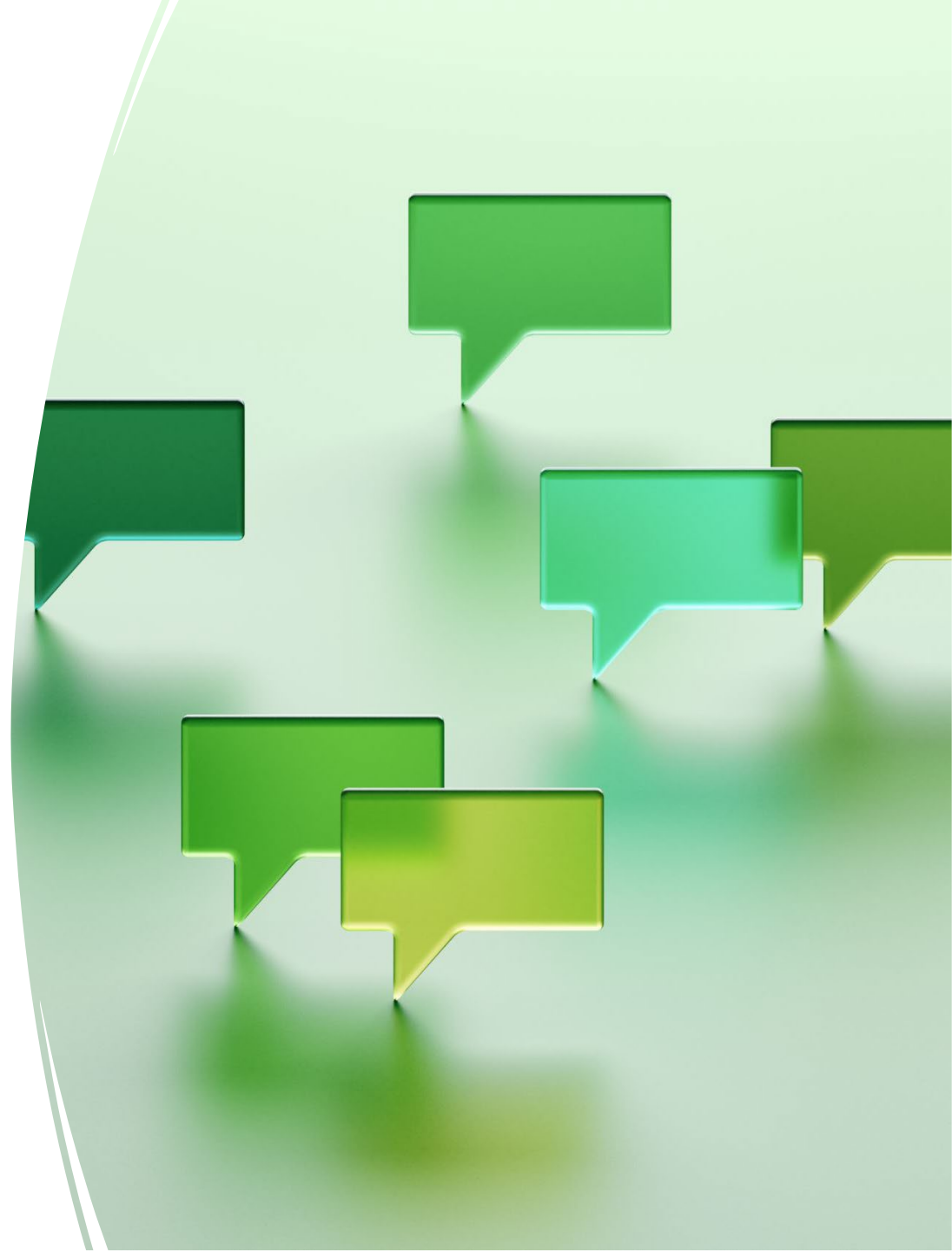


Communication Characteristics

- non-verbal to highly verbal (little Professor)
- Prosody and intonation patterns can differ
- Lack of/Use of gestural communication
- One-sided communication (not reciprocal)
- Unusual phrase/vocabulary use
- Echolalia (present in approx. 75% of individuals diagnosed with ASD)
- Gestalt Language
- Scripting
- Hand Leading

Communication Characteristics

- Processing differences~
 - Need to finish processing the whole thought
- Literal language vs. figurative
- Attention to speech
- Literate vs. nonliterate



Communication
Characteristics of
Communication
Partner

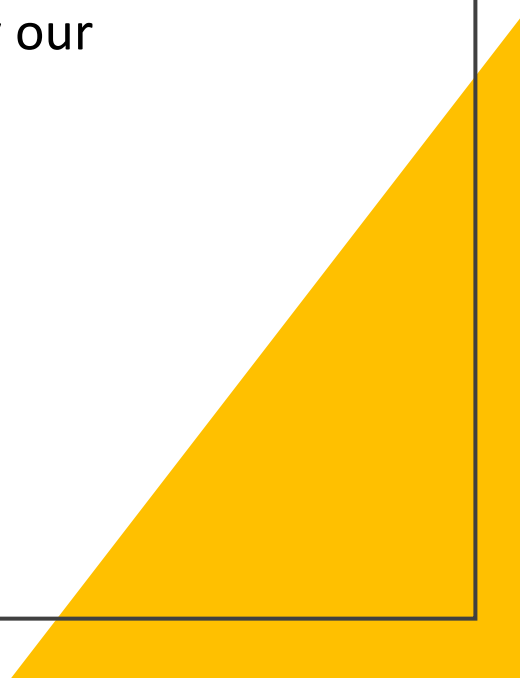
- Short Directives
- Increased Processing time
- Concrete Directives
- Positive Directives~ what do you want to happen?
- Multi-modalities
- Incorporate Universal Design within the environment (*helps everyone at every level be successful within the environment)



About You?

- What is your attitude?
- What attitude are you projecting?
- How do you give directives?
- How are you presenting materials?
- What ways are you offering for receptive and expressive language?
- How are you transitioning?
- What feedback are you giving?

Clear Expectations & Boundaries

- Thinking about what we know about individuals we serve with various disorders; how can we clarify our expectations and create clear boundaries?
 - We must try to think like the individuals we are serving
 - We need to empathize with the “need” areas
- 
- A large yellow triangle is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.

Ask these
Questions
from the
rider's
POV

- Where am I supposed to be?
- What materials/toys can I use?
- What & when can I do something?
- Who am I doing "X" with?
- How long do I have to?
- How do I stay calm/cope?
- When am I done/how do I go to the next thing?













Where am I Supposed to Be?

- Before I get on the horse.
- When I am on the horse.
 - Myself
 - Me & My horse
- When I am getting off the horse.
- After I am finished riding or while I am waiting.




Possible Interventions:




- Visual Supports
- Social Stories
 - *can be real pictures and text
 - *can be a video
- Instructions
- Video Modeling
- Consistency!








		Helmet On Belt on
		Walk to Horse
		 Pet Horse Brush Horse
		Ride Horse
		Feed Horse Treat
		Walk to Mom

 My mom  will watch  me ride my horse. I 

 will get to play games and ride with friends while  




 I am on Molly! I need to talk  to my friends 


 when I am riding Molly.  When I am done, I get

   to make a treat for Molly. It will be so much








fun!

 I can tell  my horse lots of things to do. I

 tap her with my hand and use  words to talk 

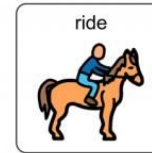
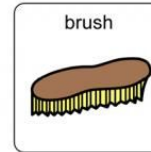
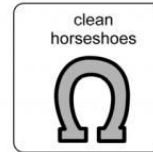
 to her. These are the things I can tell my

 horse.

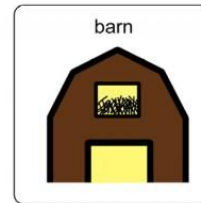
<p>walk on</p> 	<p>whoa</p> 	<p>1-2-3 trot</p> 
<p>circle</p> 	<p>weave</p> 	<p>back</p> 



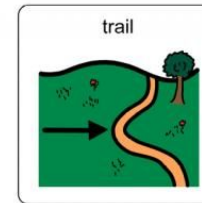
My Riding Choices



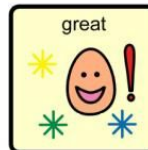
Ride inside



Ride outside



I feel














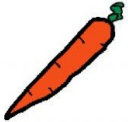


What Materials?

- Vocabulary: Make it clear to riders and volunteers & be consistent
- Organized storage
- Follow the use and clean-up procedures



Possible Interventions:

- Label with Pictures/Words
- Picture Communication when needed
- Use modeling during therapy & video
- Social Stories
- Organized and consistent storage

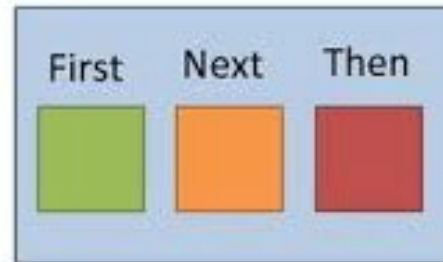
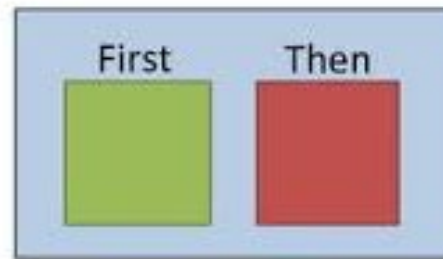
horseback riding 	helmet 	saddle 
pet 		mane 
brush 		stirrups 
carrot 	apple 	pretzel 





What & When Can I do Something?

- Making it clear when and what is to happen links closely to each rider's preferences.
- How is the rider interpreting the expectation?
 - Excited, scared, drawn towards something else, special interest, etc.

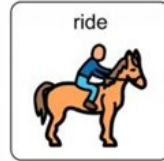
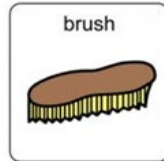


Possible Interventions:

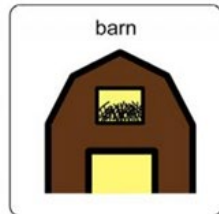
- Visual schedule
- Choices when able
- First Then
- Duration Map
- Timer



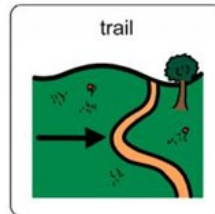
My Riding Choices



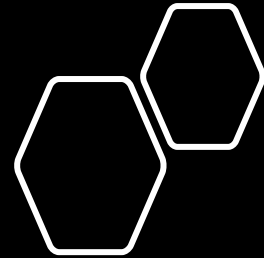
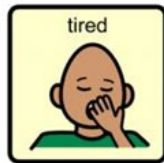
Ride inside



Ride outside



I feel



Who am I
doing “X”
with?

- Which horse?
- Who is leading?
- Who will be my side walkers if I have them?
- Who do I listen to?
 - Will someone prompt or cue me?

Possible Interventions:

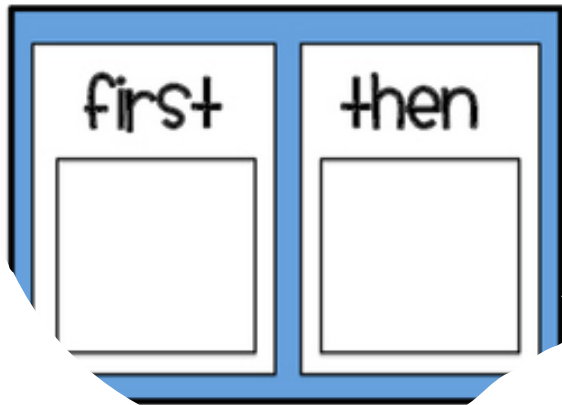
- Pictures /Labels for People
- Pictures/Labels for Horses
- Layer the Information
- Nametags/lanyards
- Have Staff Trained in the following:
 - Useful techniques
 - Procedures
 - Rules
 - Consistent Vocabulary





How long?

- How long can I do something I like?
 - “I want trot please?”
- How long do I have to do something I don’t like?
 - Be concrete & honor your words!
 - Avoid “in a sec/minute/little bit.”
- How long is my lesson?
- How long do I have to wait?



Possible Interventions:

- Timer
- Duration Map
- Schedule
- First-Then

How Do I stay Calm/Cope?



Plan for creating calming space



Plan how you are going to help handle changes
& the unexpected

Angry
I've lost control. I'm not listening anymore. I could hit, kick, or bite. I need a quiet place to calm down.

Overwhelmed
Everything is too hard. I'm losing control and need to leave the environment I'm in. Give me space.

Frustrated
I'm not getting it. I'm showing signs of stress. I should take a break now.

Anxious
Trying to stay focused, but having a hard time staying on task. Use calming strategies now.

Happy
Ready and willing to work.

What zone am I in?

REST AREA GO SLOW STOP

sad	tired	calm	I'm ready to work	silly or wiggly	upset	frustrated
sick	bored	happy	I'm okay	hyper	confused	yelling

Use tools to get in the green zone

rink of water	count	deep breaths	squeeze and release	wall push ups	use fidgets	draw	write this
take a break	self talk	take a walk	stretch	volcano breath	lift something heavy	ask for a snack	think of a calm place

Take a break!

Take a break!

Take a break!

Take a break!

breathes in

breathes out

count

count

Break Card
I am feeling angry
I need a break.

Break Card
I am feeling out of control
I need a break.

Break Card
I am feeling confused
I need a break.

Break Card
I am feeling bothered
I need a break.

Possible Interventions:

- 5-point Scale
- Zones of Regulation
- Break Cards
- Breathing technique with visuals
*pre-taught
- Calming routine with visuals
*pre-taught

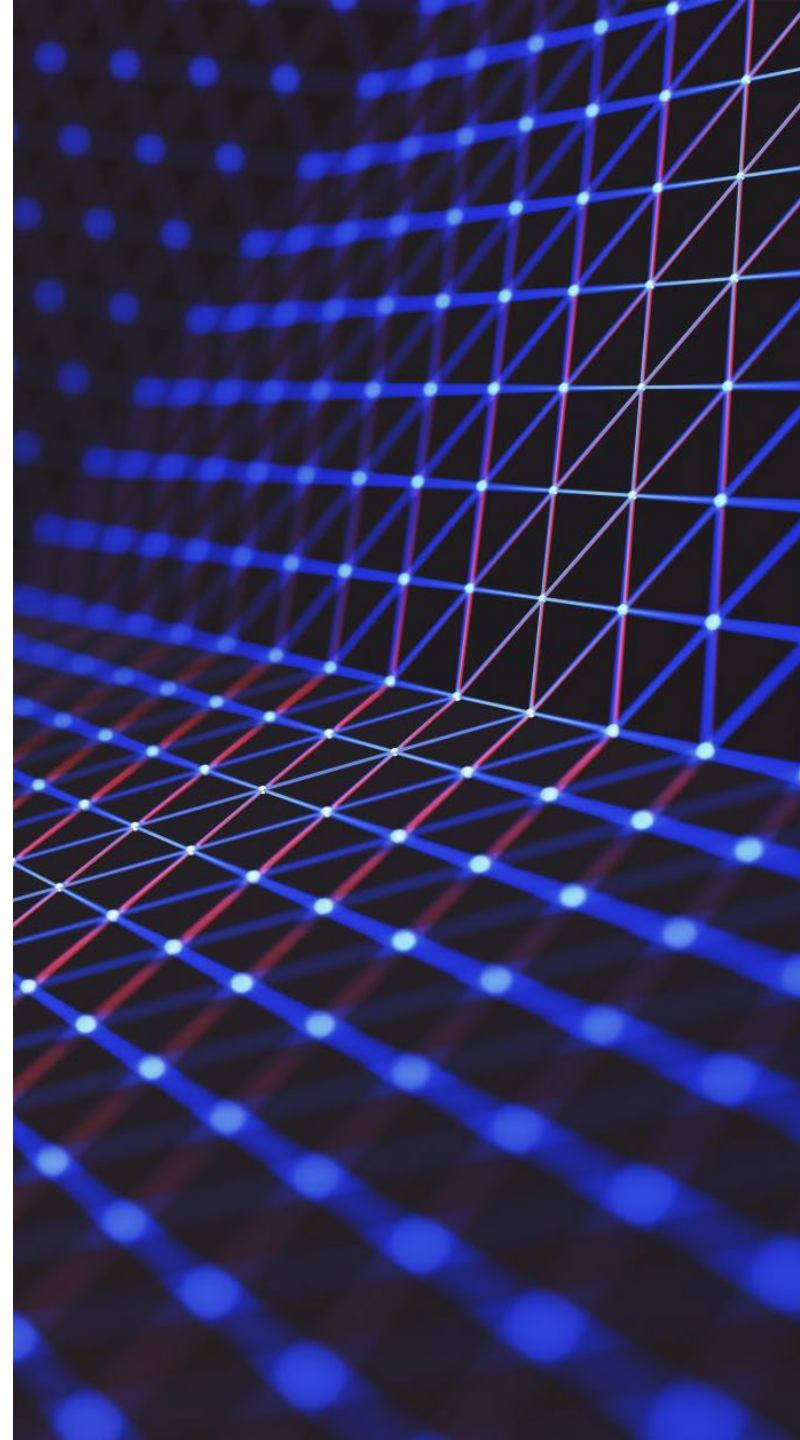
When am I Done?

- When is the individual done?
- If challenging behaviors are present, what happens?
- What do I do when I am done?
- What are my responsibilities?
 - Consistent expectations for transitions/cleaning up/ finishing in each space



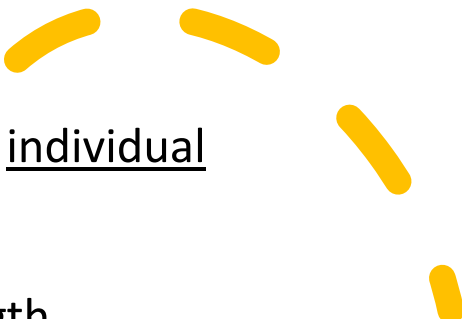
Sensory is Important!

Listen	Listen to the Individual, parents/caregivers, and your observations regarding the sensory needs of your riders.
Consult	Consult an OT that knows about sensory interventions.
Have	Have sensory supports available at your site.





Additional Thoughts:

- 
- Be aware of each rider's individual strengths/needs
 - Maximize sensory strength
 - Ex: If a child cannot see, utilize touch, auditory, etc.
 - Familiarize yourself with each rider's disability
 - Use “*Special Interest*” as a motivator
 - Use “person-first” language unless the individual's preference is “Autistic.”
 - Ex: S/He has autism vs. ‘autistic.’

Challenges & Brainstorming:



References & Resources:

- Gray, C. (2010). *The new social story book* (10th anniversary ed.). Arlington, Tex.: Future Horizons. 5 Point Scale
- Gray, C. (1994). *Comic strip conversations: Illustrated interactions that teach conversation skills to students with autism and related disorders* (Rev. and updated. ed.). Arlington, Tex.: Future Horizons.
- Kuypers, L., & Winner, M. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control*. San Jose, CA: Think Social Pub. Boardmaker Software
- Buron, K., & Curtis, M. (2012). *The incredible 5-point scale: Assisting students in understanding social interactions and controlling their emotional responses* (Significantly improved and expanded 2nd ed.). Shawnee Mission, Kan.: AAPC Pub.

References & Resources:

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- Kwon S, Sung IY, Ko EJ, Kim HS. Effects of Therapeutic Horseback Riding on Cognition and Language in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder or Intellectual Disability: A Preliminary Study. *Ann Rehabil Med*. 2019 Jun;43(3):279-288. doi: 10.5535/arm.2019.43.3.279. Epub 2019 Jun 28. PMID: 31311249; PMCID: PMC6637059.

References & Resources:

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- <http://www.timetimer.com/>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/vistimer/id434108079?mt=8>
- Social Stories: <http://kidsandream.webs.com/page12>.
- <http://www.machkovich.com/Cory/AutismRecovery/SocialStories/index.htm>
- <http://www.autisminspiration.com/public/department47.cfm>
- <http://www.speakingofspeech.com/>
- <http://teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com/2008/02/free-boardmaker-boards-and-activities.html>
- http://www.cmcgc.com/media/handouts/101103/210_Brenda_Smith_Myles.pdf

References & Resources:

- Pinterest
- Google Images
- Boardmaker: <https://goboardmaker.com/pages/boardmaker-online>