

**Autism Spectrum Disorders:
Understand Characteristics to Maximize
Academic, Social and Behavioral Outcomes**

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Learning Objectives

Personalized Interventions

to maximize outcomes for students with ASD

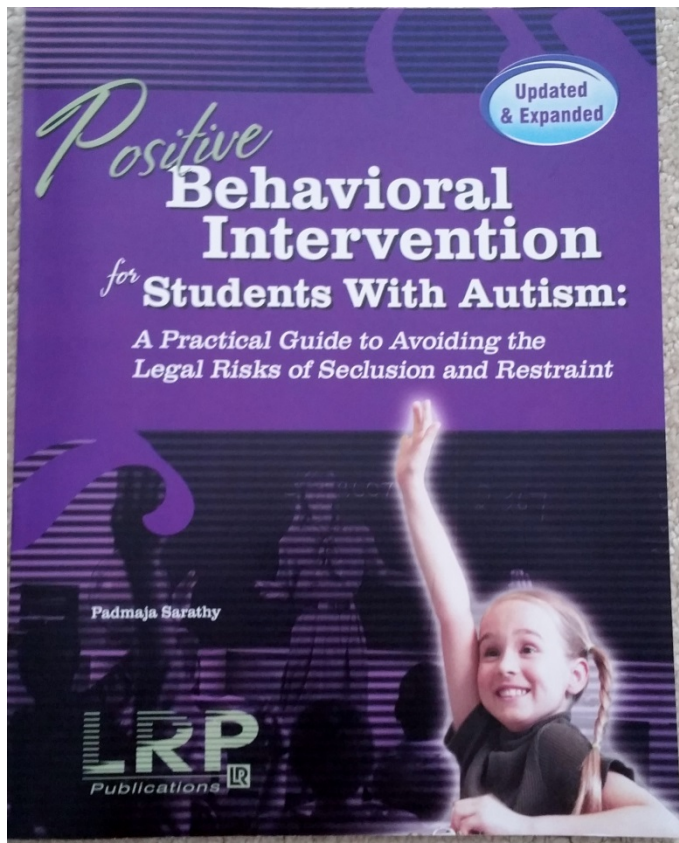
- ▶ Increase your understanding of the distinctive and complex characteristics of the students.
- ▶ Learn how to analyze adult reactions and responses to student behaviors to lessen the challenges for both the adults and children.
- ▶ Gain skills in enabling students with ASD to attain desirable academic, behavioral and social outcomes.



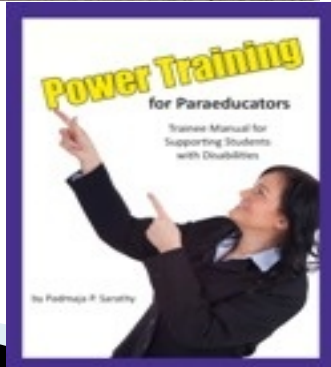
Meet Padmaja Sarathy – Author and Consultant

- ▶ Author of multiple books and products (Website: www.infinitepossibilities-sped.com)
 - Books – Autism Spectrum Disorders, Significant Disabilities, Severe and Multiple Disabilities, Paraeducator Training DVD and Early Childhood Education and Transition
 - Magical Musical Transitions (a Music CD) and curriculum toolkits
- ▶ International presenter and educational consultant
- ▶ Founder and President of a Nonprofit Organization –Parent Engagement for Active Child Enrichment (PEACE) to enhance family–child engagement
- ▶ Recipient of ‘Promising Practice’ & grant awards.

Autism Book



Paraeducator Training Guide



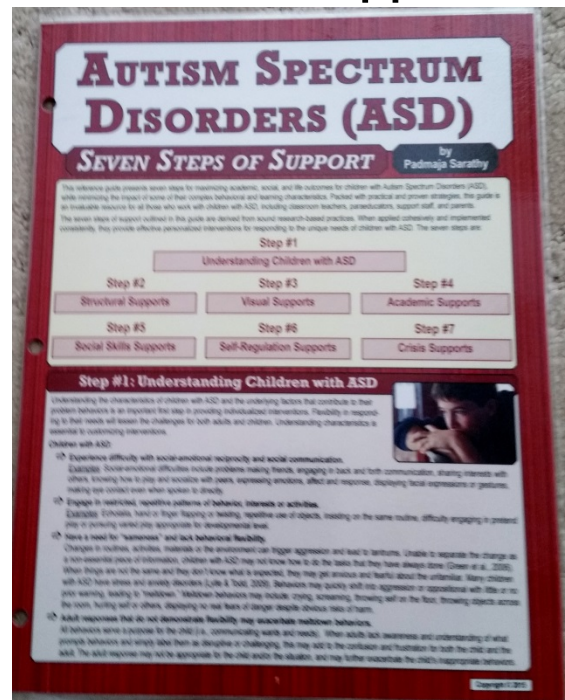
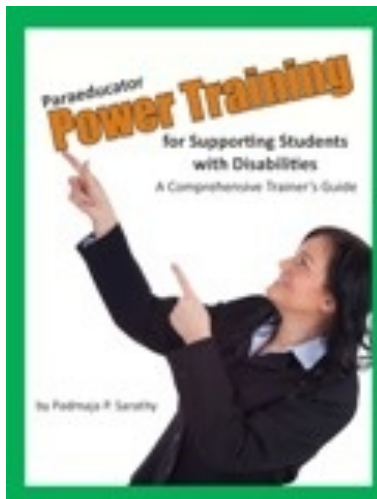
Autism Support Tools



Music CD

ASD: Seven Steps of Support

Training DVD



Best Practices: Serving Students with ASD

To Provide Personalized Supports Consistently and Cohesively

1. Understanding the Characteristics and Needs

2. Providing Environmental/Structural Support

3. Providing Visual Support

4. Offering Academic Support

Instructional Flexibility

Paraeducator Support

Technology Use/Support

5. Delivering Social Support

6. Guiding and Teaching Self-regulation Skills

7. Ensuring Support During a Crisis

(Sarathy, 2015)

- ▶ Watch the video: **Bumblebees**
- ▶ <https://vimeo.com/125451000>

Perceptions



Expectations



Dreams and Desires

Accomplishments



Characteristics of Children with ASD

- ▶ Experience difficulty with social–emotional reciprocity and social communication.
- ▶ Engage in restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities.
- ▶ Have a need for “sameness” and lack behavioral flexibility – may not know how to do the tasks that they have always done (Green et al., 2006).
- ▶ Adult responses that do not demonstrate flexibility may exacerbate their problem behaviors (Sarathy, 2015).
- ▶ Many children with ASD have stress and anxiety disorders (Lytle & Todd, 2009).

*(Adapted from Sarathy – Autism book – 2014;
ASD: 7 Steps of Support Laminated Guide, 2015)*

Understanding Children with ASD

- Difficulties in understanding verbal directives or explanations that a teacher (or a parent)provides may cause some of the problem behaviors.
- Terminating visual strategies and activity schedules as soon as the student becomes familiar with routines and transitions may aggravate the problem.
- Frequent verbal repetitions and reminders do not work well.
- Adult responses may exacerbate the problem behaviors .

*(Adapted from Sarathy – Autism book – 2014;
ASD: 7 Steps of Support Laminated Guide, 2015)*

Children with ASD and their Complex Characteristics

1. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological developmental disorder. **True? False?**
2. Academic skills are easier to teach than social skills. **True? False?**
3. They are loners by choice. They do not like to have friends. **True? False?**
4. They intentionally engage in problem behaviors because they have a bad attitude by nature. **True? False?**
5. Understanding the thoughts, feelings, perspectives of others does not come naturally, is not easy for them. **True? False?**
6. Their need for “sameness” enables them to adjust easily to different environments and changes. **True? False?**

*(Adapted from Sarathy – Autism book – 2014;
ASD: 7 Steps of Support Laminated Guide, 2015)*

Disturbing Incidents

Why customized intervention is vital...

- ▶ A 2nd grader with ASD was upset and screaming at an afterschool program – his teacher held him by his legs and shook him over a trash can. (Atlanta Journal – 6/26/2015)
- ▶ An 8–year old girl with ASD held down and confined to a storage closet for 3 hours for not finishing her work. (NDRN, 2009)
- ▶ A 9–year child with ASD restrained in a duffel bag (NDRN, 2012)
- ▶ A 13–year old boy committed suicide when secluded – secluded in the same room on 15 occasions. (GAO, 2009)
- ▶ A nine year old with autism was placed in a closet with a small window on seventy–eight occasions when he did not comply with the teacher’s directions. (NDRN, 2009)

Rumble

The beginning stage of the meltdown when preventive strategies can be most effective.



RAGE

At this stage, the student may become totally out of control.



RAGING STAGE

(Sarathy, 2012)

The Meltdown

Followed by a Recovery



(Sarathy, 2012)

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Environmental Support

- ▶ Provide a structured environment with predictability and consistency of routines. It should reduce stress and anxiety which triggers tantrums.
 - Prepare in advance or try to avoid noisy or visually over-stimulating environments.
 - Have clearly designated work areas
 - Create a “safe space” for the student to take a break and calm down when agitated.
- ▶ Use pre-planned supports to ensure transitions are calm, smooth and predictable. (Sarathy, 2015)

(Adapted from Sarathy – ASD: 7 Steps of Support Laminated Guide, 2015)

Visual Support

- ▶ Evidence suggests that children with ASD have strengths in visual learning.
- ▶ Visual supports make auditory information visual.
 - Offer visual supports to promote independence, reduce frustration caused by communication difficulties, and provide a sense of order and control.
 - ▶ Have Visual Schedules, Calendars, Rule Charts, etc.
 - ▶ Have visual boundaries to designate spaces as and when appropriate and needed.



Cognitive and Learning Characteristics

Learning Characteristics Impact Academic Outcomes

- Students with ASD may experience problems in:
 - Attention and organization, impacting learning and behavior, and, as a result, school success.
 - Sequencing information and recognizing relationships between steps of an activity.
 - Seeing only the facts instead of the total picture with the inter-related parts.
 - Understanding cause-and-effect relationships.
 - Imitating others.

(Adapted from Sarathy : 2012, 2014 and 2015)

Academic Supports – Instructional Flexibility

- To accommodate the social, communication and academic needs of students with ASD and to increase active participation:
 - Adapt instructional delivery, task demands and rigor to match the student’s strengths and needs.
 - Simplify a complex task. Break down tasks into component parts.
 - Provide a visual organizer displaying the various steps to be completed within the task.
 - Use “Work Systems” (Carnahan, 2008) to maintain attention to tasks, reduce adult dependence and promote independence.
 - Allow for timed breaks.

(Sarathy, 2015)

Academic Supports

- ▶ **Provide communication supports** with the aid of picture symbols/objects and assistive technology.
 - ▶ Take advantage of technology – both regular and assistive technology (AT).
- ▶ **Apply prompting procedures** that are most relevant and appropriate for the student when teaching new skills.
- ▶ **Make use of video modeling** to teach new skills, promote independent performance, and minimize the need for adult prompting.
- ▶ **Weave student interests into the activity.** Infuse student interests and preferred activities into the day to sustain motivation and increase attention.

(Sarathy, 2015)

Flexibility Is Winning, Not Losing

▶ Offer a “First/Then option

- Example: The student is showing signs of frustration in completing a worksheet with 30 addition problems. Provide the option that if the student first completes the 10 problems in the first column, then she can go work on the computer or feed the fish.

▶ Provide choices. Collaborate with the student.

- Example: Complete part of the task now, and have the student complete the rest of it after a brief break.

(Sarathy, 2012, 2014)



First... (Math) Work



Then ... Computer or Feed Fish

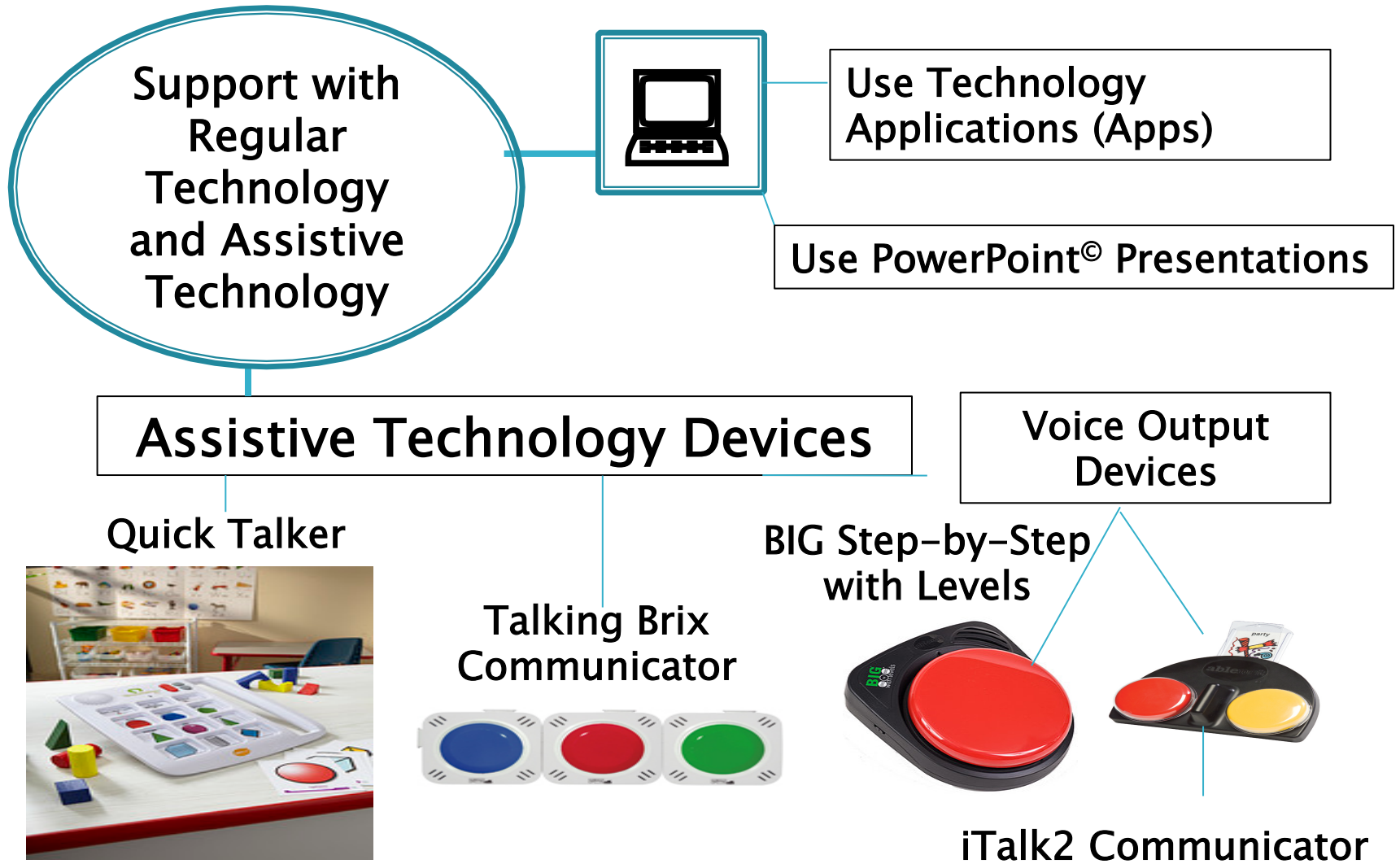


Incorporating Technology Support

- ▶ Both regular and assistive technology plays to the strengths and interests of students with ASD: visual strengths, interest in technology and exposure to multisensory (visual, auditory and tactile) input.
- ▶ Technology can be used with children with ASD to increase or improve their:
 - Overall understanding of their environment
 - Communication skills
 - Social interaction skills
 - Organization skills
 - Academic skills
 - Self help skills
 - Independent functioning skills

(Sarathy, 2012)

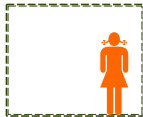
Mainstream Technology and Assistive Technology Support



Downloaded photos used by permission from AbleNet
(www.ablenetinc.com/Assistive-Technology)

(Sarathy, 2012)

Case Scenario 1

- ▶ Amina grabs items from her peers seated near her. When the teacher tries to stop her, she tries to bite.
- Teach Amina how to maintain “Personal Space” – two feet between her and the adult who is working with her peers or nearby.
- Draw a boundary around her desk with duct tape or masking tape to show how to stay within her personal space and not touch/grab items outside the boundary.
- **Visual Boundary:** 
- Take a photo of personal space – with arms outstretched in front and clasped together. Show her the photo.
- Model it with gestures to train Amina to use personal space.

(Sarathy, 2015)

Classroom Scenario 2

Abandoning Routine Escalates Problem Behaviors!

There were six students with autism in the self-contained class. On this Friday, the teacher was absent. The substitute teacher and the two paraeducators decided to have a “Fun Friday” with showing videos and no routine activities.

The scene in the classroom as the visitor walked in was one of mayhem: one student under a desk; two pacing around the room; one in a rocking chair flapping his arms; another engaged in self-injurious behavior (hitting his head). One of the students was being escorted by the paraeducator to the office for aggressive behavior. None were watching the intended “Fun Friday” activity – the movie!

(Adapted from Training DVD, Sarathy, 2012)

A Case Scenario 3: Academic Challenges

Mrs. Rodriguez was working with a small group of students practicing vocabulary words. As she was going over the words, flashing them one by one, Alex, a student with ASD was repeatedly falling off the chair and not really paying any attention. The teacher reprimanded him many times to “sit still” and threatened him with consequences, but to no avail.

- **How could the vocabulary words be delivered to engage and involve Alex in the learning process?**

Is there personalized academic support for Alex?

Is there sufficient instructional flexibility?

Is there any modification in the task characteristics to accommodate for academic and behavioral needs?

Case Scenario 4: Over-stimulation?

Troubled by an over-stimulating environment...

- ▶ Cedric *finds noisy and crowded environments (Gym, Lunchroom, School Assembly, etc.) overwhelming.*
 - *Causes severe sensory overload , increasing his anxiety*
 - *Exhibits more of stereotypy behaviors.*
 - *Difficulty complying with rules.*
 - *Gets into arguments with peers and adults.*
 - *Pushes people around him and throws objects.*

“Whenever we take Cedric to the gym for a special assembly, he gets all agitated, starts pushing people around him and ends up having almost a meltdown. We usually end up bringing him back to the classroom.”

(Sarathy, 2014)

- What preventive strategies need to be in place?
- What new skills should Cedric be taught?

Case Scenario 5: Injury to Staff

▶ Severe tantrums causing injury to staff

Jose, a student with ASD, communicates mostly through gestures. He pinches and scratches staff when they try to work one-on-one with him.

- *Adults response, usually, is: “Stop it right now!”*
- *Sometimes, they move him and his desk to a corner of the room.*
- *It is not reducing or eliminating the behavior.*

- Can Jose be taught to use ‘personal space’?
- Could ‘Social Narratives’ be used with physical and social cues to teach Jose new skills (Wraggle, 2011; NPDC on ASD, 2010)?

(Adapted from Sarathy, 2014)

Supports for Students with ASD In Place? Implemented Consistently?

Questions to reflect on and provide needed interventions...

- ❑ *Is the physical environment in your classroom designed to prevent a sensory overload?*
- ❑ *Do you prepare your students in advance for transitions?*
- ❑ *Do you have a safe space in your classroom for your student to take a break for stress relief?*
- ❑ *Is there a lot of visual clutter around the room? Do you have a lot of posters and displays on the wall and crowded shelves?*
- ❑ *Do you provide and consistently use an Activity Schedule?*
- ❑ *Do you offer sufficient task flexibility to accommodate to your student's (with ASD) needs?*

(Sarathy, 2014)

Social Skills Training and Support

- ▶ Understand that children with ASD may face difficulties with:
 - Reading body language and facial expression.
 - Following rules of conversation.
 - Understanding and interpreting hidden meaning of words and sarcasm.
- ▶ **Teach social skills consciously and methodically.**
 - Promote Peer Interactions. Teach neuro-typical peers how to engage in social interactions and play with children with ASD. Keep target children near competent peers.
 - Use social stories™ to teach and practice specific social skills.
 - Involve paraeducators in facilitating peer relationships and in initiating communication and social interaction.

(Sarathy, 2014,

2015)

Crisis Situation and Support

- Intervene before a meltdown occurs. Have proactive measures in place.
- Prepare a step-by-step action plan for what to do prior to, during, and after a crisis/ meltdown.
- Avoid responding to a behavioral crisis in a reactive mode!
- Have a step-by-step action plan ready to go.
- Don't take it personally or react in a state of frustration.
- Avoid getting into a confrontation or discuss the meltdown behaviors with the student.
- Get help and avoid trying to physically restrain the student.
- Document each incident immediately following the crisis.
- Once the student has recovered, support the student with relaxation and calming techniques.

(Adapted from Autism book, Sarathy, 2014 and ASD Laminated Guide, 2015)

Concluding Thoughts

- ▶ Working with students with ASD can be both challenging and rewarding due to the complexity of their characteristics and needs.
- ▶ The more you learn about children with ASD, the more you will understand their needs and how to support them ... and the more positive and richer your relationship with them will become.
- ▶ Let us Pursue Preventives, Positives and Flexibility. A Win–Win for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders!

Thanks.

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Resources

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Resources

- National Professional Development Center (NPDC) on ASD, 2010. Evidence-based Practice: Social Narratives.
<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/social-narratives>
- Rao & Geigy, TEC – 2006; Rao, S.M., & Gagie, B., (2006). Learning Through Seeing and Doing: Visual supports for Children with Autism. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(6), 26–33.
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- Sarathy, P. (2014, Updated edition). Positive Behavioral Intervention for Students With Autism: A Practical Guide to Avoiding the Legal Risks of Seclusion and Restraint. LRP Publications. (www.shoplrp.com)

Resources

- Sarathy, P., (2014, Second Edition) *Serving Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities*). A Guide to Strategies for Successful Learning. Horsham, PA: LRP Publications. (www.shoplrp.com).
- Sarathy, P. (2012). *Paraeducator Power Training for Supporting Students with Disabilities: (DVD)*). Austin, TX: Education 311. <http://www.ed311.com/paraeducator-power-training-for-supporting-students-with-disabilities/>
- Wragge, A. (2011). *Social narratives: Autism Internet Modules*, www.autisminternetmodules.org. Columbus, OH: OCALI.

Helpful web resources focusing on Autism Spectrum Disorders:

- www.autisminternetmodules.org. Autism Internet Modules: Columbus, OH: OCALI.
- www.autisable.com
- www.aacap.org/cs/autism_resource_center/faqs_on_autism

Thank You.

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The Next Webinar

**Topic: Transition Techniques for Children with
Autism Spectrum Disorders: Transform Meltdown to
Calm-down**

Date: September 30th

From 10:00–11:00 AM (CDT)