

# Personalized Behavior Supports for Preschool Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Webinar  
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# April is Autism Awareness Month.

**Let us work to enhance the quality of life for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders by personalizing supports.**

**Let us name strengths, honor preferences, and celebrate achievements — big or small.**

# Focus of Session

- ❖ This session will demonstrate how to address the challenging behaviors of young children with autism spectrum disorders illustrated with child-specific and context-specific scenarios.
- ❖ You will gain skills in how to:
  - ❖ Use preventive strategies and provide personalized interventions for young children experiencing problem behaviors
  - ❖ Structure the environment and to use a variety of supports to decrease the probability of problem behaviors.



## Author & Educational Consultant

Author of multiple books and products (Website: [www.infinitepossibilities-sped.com](http://www.infinitepossibilities-sped.com))

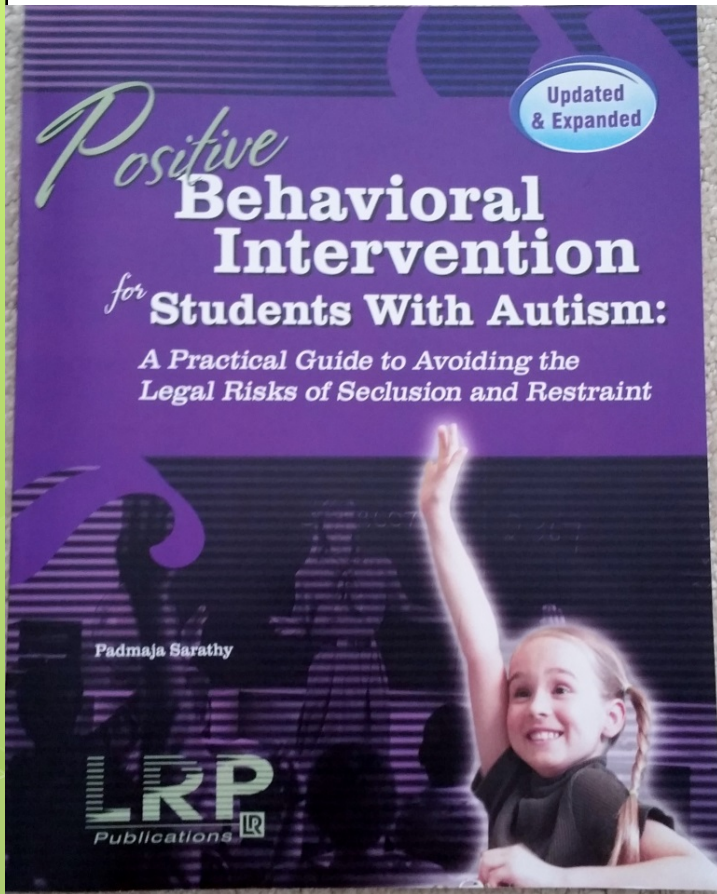
- **Positive Behavior Strategies for Students with ASD:**  
A Practical Guide to Avoiding the Legal Risks of Aversives. Publisher: LRP Publications, ([www.shoplrp.com](http://www.shoplrp.com))
- **Autism Spectrum Disorders: Seven Steps of Support**  
(A quick reference guide) Publisher: National Professional Resources, Inc. ([www.nprinc.com](http://www.nprinc.com))
- **Magical Musical Transitions** – A Music CD for assisting children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Marketed by [www.nprinc.com](http://www.nprinc.com))
- **Paraeducator Training DVD and Trainee Manual**
  - Includes a training unit on autism spectrum disorders  
Publisher: Legal Digest ([www.ed311.com](http://www.ed311.com))

## Books and Products

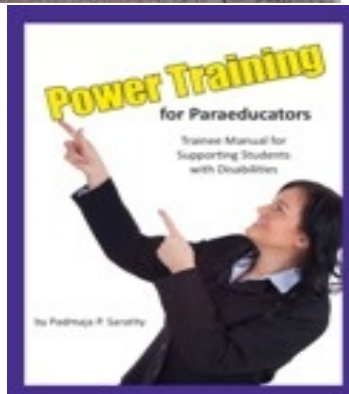
- ***Serving Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities***: A Guide to Strategies for Successful Learning (Publisher: LRP Publications, [www.shoplrp.com](http://www.shoplrp.com))
- ***From Early Intervention... to Preschool Program... and School-Age Services: A Parent's Guide*** (Publisher: LRP Publications, [www.shoplrp.com](http://www.shoplrp.com))
- ***Together We Succeed: Building a Better System for Transitioning Preschoolers with Disabilities*** (Publisher: LRP Publications, [www.shoplrp.com](http://www.shoplrp.com))
- Current project: *Significant Disabilities and IDEA and ESSA* - (Publisher: LRP Publications, [www.shoplrp.com](http://www.shoplrp.com))

# Autism Support Tools

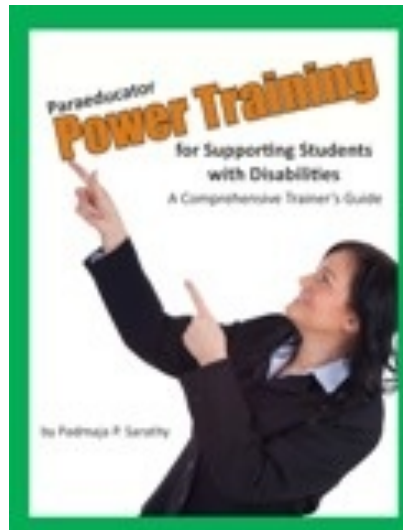
## Autism Book



## Paraeducator Guide



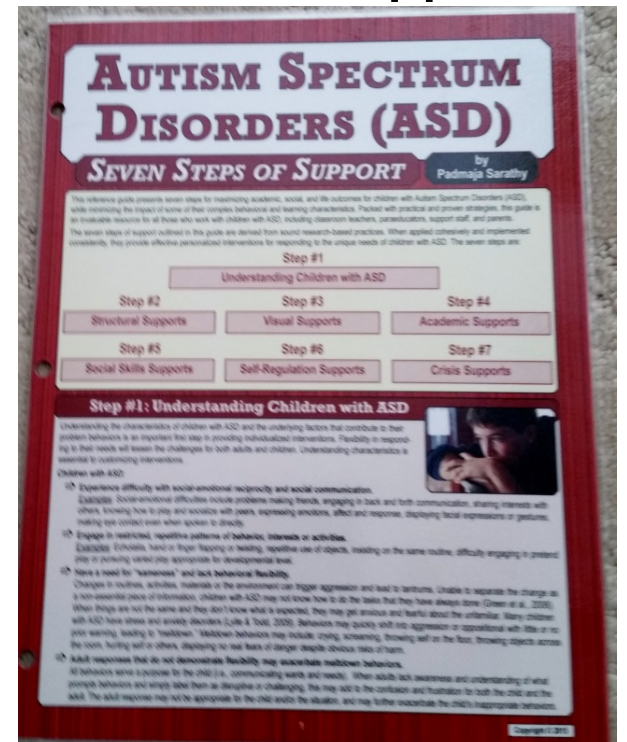
## Training DVD



## Music CD



## ASD: Seven Steps of Support



# Autism Spectrum Disorders

## IDEA Definition

**Autism spectrum disorder** (ASD) is defined by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act as a developmental disability. The disability...

- Is generally evident before age three.
- Significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction.
- Adversely affects a student's educational performance.
- Children with ASD engage in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements (hand-flapping, covering ears, etc.)
- Show resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines
- Exhibit unusual responses to sensory experiences.

34 C.F.R. §300.8[c][1][i]

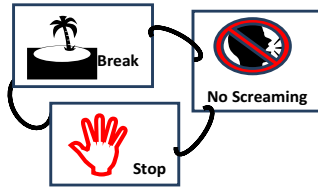
# Problem Behaviors

- The problem behaviors, especially frequent meltdowns, are the most frequently cited cause for concern for children with ASD.
- **What may be contributing to the problem behaviors?**
  - Child's response to autism, and the need to cope with it in a demanding world
  - Need for "sameness"; resistance to change and lack of behavioral flexibility
  - Fear and anxiety about the unfamiliar
  - Absence of an interaction style and a learning environment that matches the unique needs of the child with ASD



# Transition-related Issues

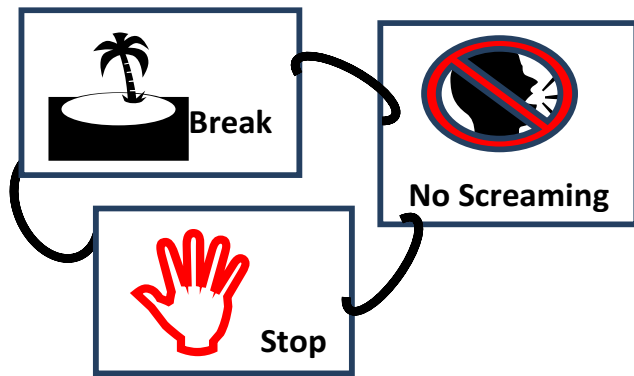
- **Transition from one activity to another, from one location to another, or from one person to another may cause anxiety and stress to the child with ASD.**
  - Introduces ambiguity and reduces predictability.
  - Require ending an activity in which the child may be fully engaged.
  - Require refocusing in another activity (Klein, Cook, and Richardson-Gibbs, 2001).
- **A visual schedule may not be available or used.**
- **Too-long a wait time between ending an activity and beginning another**
- **Child may not have been prepared ahead of time providing the personalized supports to handle the changes in the routine, settings or personnel.**



- A variety of supports in place as preventives to reduce/eliminate problem behaviors?
- Advance preparation to prevent meltdowns
- Adult responses to behaviors
- Teaching new skills to child



# Visual & Structural Supports



Use individual cue cards of rules placed on a key ring to assist child with learning the rules (walking inside the classroom, sitting in own seat, stopping when he/she sees the stop sign, etc.).



Arrange the furniture in the classroom strategically to avoid large open spaces. It will prevent children running across the room.

# Use Pictured Rules



Pair pictured rules with voice output support.

## Class Rules

**Quiet mouth while working**



**Keep hands to self.**

**Walk inside class. Walk in the hallways.**



**Take care of materials.**

## Need for Predictability

**Mark is a high functioning six-year-old kindergartner with ASD. His favorite activity is reading. He was particularly fascinated with reading space exploration books.**

Mark had a major **meltown** when the furniture in his classroom was (suddenly) rearranged. It was different from when he left school the previous afternoon. His favorite area, the book center, had been moved. Mark got so agitated that he started throwing books, blocks and even knocked down the chairs. From Mark's perspective, his world had changed, he was confused and did not know what to expect. He was anxious about what will happen next.

# Advance Preparation

**Immediate consequence: Mark was sent to the office to be disciplined. Other consequences followed.**

**How to manage the situation with preventives and positives?**

## **Preventive Strategies:**

Mark should have been primed for the changes by showing him the new locations for the book center and the other furniture in the classroom a week or two in advance, preferably aided with photos.

## **Personalized Solutions:**

A better understanding of Mark's needs based on his ASD: Advance preparation for the change that was to come

# Use Music as a Calming Tool

- Music, when consistently used, is effective in helping children with autism (Kaplan and Steel, 2005) in rendering multiple benefits (Zimmerman, 2006).
- Some of the positive academic, social and behavioral outcomes noted are:
  - Brings predictability to the routines. Increases ability to independently complete routine.
  - Helps to lower anxiety and frustration.
  - Increases focus and helps them engage in play.
  - increases interactions with peers.

# Magical Musical Transitions



- **Use music to transform transition tantrums to calm-down** (Magical Musical Transitions by Law and Sarathy, 2009):
  - Songs (mini-songs) provide guidance and directions musically to assist children during transitions.
  - Designed with the application of principles of ‘Music Therapy’.
  - These songlets are short, piggybacked songs with lyrics (key words) specific to different transitions.
    - Time for ‘Center-Time’ song (from Law & Sarathy, 2009) to invite children to center activities.
    - Insert your own words: Names or Actions (Open Track)
    - Make up your own songlets. (Law and Sarathy, 2009)





# Behavioral Problem & Potential Solutions

- “When we walk into the classroom every morning from the bus, Alan screams all the way and refuses to settle down.”



## Preventive strategies:

- Use music to assist the child to make the transition from bus to class (“Welcome to school today.” from law & Sarathy, 2009) or meet him on the bus handing him his favorite toy.

## Personalized interventions:

- Provide visual cues: Give him his name card with his photo to match (where he hangs his backpack and/or the location he has to go to on the mat.

## Support Tools:

- *Voice output device (Assistive technology tool) programmed with a welcome song, student name card, mat with student’s name on it, rule cue cards.*

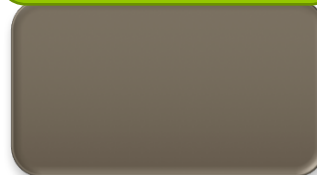
# Student-specific Support

- Provide Visual Cue to assist the child to make the transition from bus to class.
- Provide a mat with the child's name on it. Guide him to sit on the mat if others are on the mat.
- Give a matching photo card with his name if unable to identify name on mat.

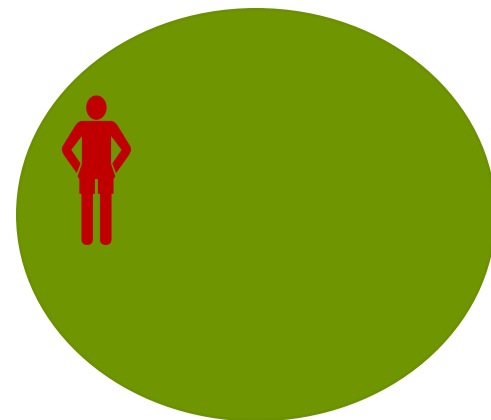
## Voice Output Devices



Alan's name is on the back of the mat.



Alan



## A Visual Cue/Reminder



*Brian, a five-year-old in a preschool classroom, runs out of the classroom whenever the class has Center Activities.*

- Post a “Stop” sign at the door. Use the sign to teach Brian from running out of the classroom.
- When Brian is calm, teach him what he should do and how to ask for help when he feels the urge to escape ‘Center Activities’ and run out of the classroom.
- Teach him to stop when he sees the big red “Stop” sign on the door; to turn around and get help.
- Individual cue cards of classroom rules on a key ring will assist him in learning the rules.

# Behavioral Problem & Potential Solutions

**“When Jose sees an open space, he starts running around or falls on the floor and starts rolling”.**

## Preventive strategies:

- Arrange the furniture to avoid large open spaces.
- Monitor child for precursor behaviors (exhibits fidgetiness, restlessness, stereotypical behavior, lack of interest or difficulty with the assigned center or activity)

## Personalized interventions

- When child is calm, teach what he/she should do and how to ask for help when he feels the urge to escape an activity and run out of the classroom.
- Use visual supports (picture cue cards) to remind child about staying in seat or request a break

**Support Tools:** Visual supports, Break cards to request break

# Behavioral Problem & Potential Solutions


**“Whenever we have to come back to the classroom from recess or assembly, Sara throws a fit. She refuses to follow directions and starts pinching and scratching us.”**

## Preventive Strategies

- Give Sara an advance warning a few minutes before the end of recess: (e.g., “5 minutes to line up”).
- Use visual schedule paired with a timer during recess to show upcoming fun activities.
- Have Sara carry a preferred item back to class.
- Praise her as soon as he stops crying even briefly.
- Get additional help if Sara has a severe meltdown and becomes aggressive in the playground.

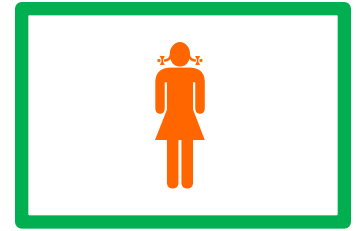
*(Adapted from Sarathy, 2013)*

# Personalized interventions

- Play a musical instrument (e.g., may be a Stir-xylophone) to signal all the students to line up at the end of recess.
- Try to get Sara's attention to the sound of the musical instrument by positioning yourself close to her. She could hold the instrument and bring it back to the classroom.
- Make a musical transition with a "recess is over" song. Use a songlet to assist with transition (Law and Sarathy, 2013).
  - **Advance Cue and recess is over** ("*Recess is over, line up now*" from Law & Sarathy, 2009) 
- Use scripted stories/social narrative.

# Visual Boundary

**Amina reaches across and touches other children and (occasionally scratches them). The other children get scared.**



## Preventive strategies:

- Teach Amina how to use 'Personal Space' using and respecting a visual boundary.
- Provide Amina with a special space with her own mat labeled with her name & photo attached.

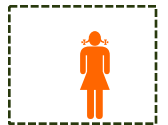
## Personalized interventions

- Use a **scripted story**/social narrative for her to learn how the other children feel –frightened- when she reaches across and touches them. The story should guide her to understand and learn why she needs to stay in her space and keep her hands to herself.

# Personal Space



- Sophia grabs toys/blocks from her peers seated near her. When the paraeducator tries to stop her, she tries to pinch/bite.
- Teach Sophia 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 in personal space.
- Take a photo of personal space – with arms outstretched in front and clasped together. Show her the photo.
- Model it with gestures to train Sophia to use personal space.





# Scripted Stories

## Personalized interventions for both Amina and Sophia

- Use scripted stories/social narrative to teach Amina and Sophie - about how other children feel when they touch or grab items or scratch them.
- Teaching about feelings of others –frightened, scared, hurt, sad- paired with visuals
- The story should guide target child to understand and learn why she needs to stay in her space and keep her hands to herself.

Sources for Scripted Stories and Social Narratives:

Scripted Stories for social situations -

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

Social Narratives - [www.autisminternetmodules.org](http://www.autisminternetmodules.org).

(Autism Internet Modules: Columbus, OH: OCALL.

# Behavioral Problem & Potential Solutions

- Parent concerns regarding child's tantrums and meltdowns while at the grocery store or mall or restaurant, etc."

## Preventive strategies:

- Choose times that are usually quieter and less crowded to go to these places.
- Provide advance warning with visuals (use of photos to show child where you will be going and in what order if going to multiple places).
- Walk out of the store/mall if child has a tantrum. Help child to calm down in the car seat.
- Avoid making threats (that you cannot carry out).

## Support Tools:

- A mini photo album with photos of places that you usually visit.

# Problem Behaviors and Positive Strategies

- **What is currently happening?**

*“Crying, screaming, hitting, kicking, biting, etc. when transitioning from preferred to non-preferred activity”.*

- What are some **preventives** you can use?

- 1) Structure

- 2) Predictability

- 3) Advance preparation to prevent meltdowns

- 4) Watching for rumbling behaviors and responding to child's needs

- 5) Changes in how adults respond to problem behaviors

# Problem Behaviors and Positive Strategies

- What **personalized interventions** can you provide?
  - Visual schedules, cues and supports
  - Flexibility with task completion/selection
  - Offer structured breaks
  - Use music to assist transitions between activities
  - Provide a safe space to take a break and to calm down
  - Use scripted social stories
  - Teach new skills - replacement behaviors
  - Teach problem-solving skills
- **Support Tools:**
  - Take advantage of both regular and assistive technology (AT); Communication supports with AT

## **The Next Two Webinars:**

**June 16, 2016 (11 AM to 11:45 – CDT)**

**Topic: Delivering Effective Paraeducator Support to Students with Disabilities: A Delicate Dance**

**June 21, 2016 (11 AM to 11:45 – CDT)**

**Build the Brain When it Counts: Nurture Social-emotional Domain with Positive Behavioral Approaches**



**Thank You Everyone!**  
**A special thanks to AbleNet University**  
**for hosting the webinar.**

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