

- [Facilitator] And then I'm gonna hand it over to our speaker, Padmaja.

- Hello everyone, welcome to this session on "Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Understanding and Responding to the Communication, Behavioral and Social Characteristics" of these children.

Welcome again, I look forward to presenting and thank you for joining us.

So this webinar is actually a three part series.

Today, in this webinar session, we are going to be focusing much more on understanding what are these characteristics of children with autism, what are their cognitive, communication, behavioral and social characteristics?

Because it is these characteristics that are the underlying factors that are usually contributing to some of the behavior issues that you see.

Because one of the challenges that I have observed as a educational consultant is the challenging behaviors of these students impact their social, impact their academic and learning success, and finally school success.

So that's why we have to begin with understanding what their characteristics are, what is distinctive about them that impacts their classroom behavior, and how do we provide individualized personalized supports and very carefully crafted proactive interventions so that we can maximize their academic, social and behavioral outcomes.

In the webinars that follow, webinar in February and then one in March, we are going to focus on much more of the student specific and situation specific, context specific, environmental, instructional and social supports so that we can decrease these tantrum behaviors.

And then the final session will focus on, specifically, transition related tantrums and how to help these children make smooth transitions.

And one of the things is, it does require a kind of a team approach, including the para-educators, therapists, and the family.

How can we bring all of them together to help the child with autism?

So this is kind of an overview of what I'm going to be doing in these webinars and I would like to always find out who are the participants in this webinar.

So let me go ahead and see who are the people who are joining us today.

If you are an administrator or an assistive technology specialist, occupational therapist, paraprofessional, parent, physical therapist, or a special education teacher, looks like we do have a mix of people, even though we do have a large number of occupational therapists, that's wonderful.

And assistive technology specialists, that's...

And there are some parents joining us and some special education teachers and administrators. Okay, thank you.

So you may like to know a little bit about who I am.

I'm an educational consultant, as I said, I am also an author of number of books and these pictures that you see, are the books that I have written and these are the books from which...

Books and mini guides from which I draw a lot of the information for today's webinar.

And one of the books, this book here, "Positive Behavior Interventions for Students with Autism" came out last February and it focuses a lot on what are some students specific

supports you can provide and context specific supports you can provide for students who are experiencing severe problem.

And this one is a behavior guide that addresses more broadly behavior challenges of all students.

And this one is "Seven Steps of Support for Students with Autism".

And this is a mindfulness guide, and this one is for students with severe and multiple disabilities, focusing on their educational outcome and how best to achieve it.

And I just finished updating the book, it just came out in December.

So, let's begin with looking at what are some cognitive and learning characteristics of students with autism.

First and foremost, we know that autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder and what kinds of problems they may experience.

I do want to mention here right at the outset, just because one child with autism exhibits certain characteristics, it does not necessarily mean all students with autism will have exactly identical characteristics.

"When you see one child with autism," as you have heard the famous saying, "you see one child with autism" One of the issues that you may have noticed is attention issues.

They may have difficulty filtering out the distraction, and focusing attention.

And similarly, they may have organizational issues as well.

And these together impact their learning and behavior and as a result their school success.

They may have issues with sequencing, putting together information and how these fit together, the recognizing the relationship between steps of an activity.

They may only see the fact that they may not see what is, if they see a picture, they see just the picture.

What is it about?

How does that picture come about?

What are some related information?

They don't look through the picture, they just look at the picture, they don't see the interrelated parts.

So we have to understand some of these things, and then they don't see when they do something how does it cause the result in some kind of approach or some kind of a fear anxiety in the others.

Let's say when they engage in a tantrum, when they drop themselves to the floor, that behavior, how does it impact others?

So, cause and effect, they don't see that relationship.

And another problem they have is imitating others.

Let's imagine everybody has, you know, the teacher says we are going to have circle time.

Now let's say in a kindergarten classroom, and everybody, if they have mats or little chairs, they take that and they go join the group.

But your student with autism may be just looking as though he may have heard that, or she may have heard it almost daily but may not make that move, just watching others and imitating others.

And it's just one example.

There are many more examples that we can look at.

And then they may not look at objects when another person is drawing attention to that, or showing it something, that when they're outside in the playground and somebody is pointing out, they may not necessarily show interest, or it will not draw or grab their attention.

They may not know how to do the task that they have always, always done.

If something's changes in that, let's say you take a certain route to go to the playground every day, but today because there is science fair, and they have the things are set up, and you have to take a different route to get to the playground, that itself will cause certain kind of anxiety and fear and they may not accept it calmly.

So these are all things that we need to consider as we plan our actions and preventive steps.

Students with autism, they also have difficulty in comprehending language and using language, they may not be able to express their needs in typical words, gestures, you know, if they have...

Let's say, I remember a young child, five year old, he had an itch on his neck.

He had seemed what seemed like a rash, maybe it was eczema, I don't know.

But he was in a lot of discomfort, but he could not bring himself, even though he was a high functioning child, he was not able to communicate that "I am having some discomfort.

It is itching or it is painful." So they find it difficult to use typical words or gestures or pointing, even pointing to his neck where he was experiencing all the discomfort.

And they have difficulty responding to verbal instruction.

They may repeat words when we ask a question, they may repeat that question and not comprehending that it was a question posed to them and they're supposed to respond.

And you may also find there is a certain literal quality to their communication and that often causes misinterpretation and it may even lead to certain arguments.

And when verbal directions are given to them or explanations are provided to them, either by the parent or by the teacher or any other person in the school, they don't necessarily fully grasp what is told and that causes also missteps in their behavior and in their action.

They may have good hearing, but still they may not have comprehended.

I'm going to share with you...

In order to bring all of these things that I mentioned, I'm going to share with you an example of a student, so that we can understand the distinctive characteristics that these children do bring so that when we are working with these students, and when we are trying to maximize their attention and reduce any problem behaviors so that we can promote their academic success, it is important as I said, to understand these students present distinctive characteristics.

A five-year-old, Darian, he's in a preschool classroom, he has autism, he's a child with very significant cognitive strengths.

He demonstrates very advanced reading skills for a child of five, and similarly he's able to get on the computer and be able to access and play a favorite vocabulary game on the computer.

And this shows strengths beyond his age.

Similarly, he also shows exceptional imagination and creativity through some very sophisticated drawings that he did.

And there was a lot of detail in the drawing.

In one of the drawings that I happen to see, it was that of a ski scene.

I think his parents must have gone on a trip.

And when someone inquired about the little circles that were there about the hills, there were hills and there were skiers going down the hill and then there was some kind of circles about

the hills and when someone questioned what was it, the circles were, on top of the hills and the ski slopes, he answered immediately "snow".

But he didn't raise his head, he didn't look at the person asking the question, he didn't make any kind of connection with that person, but he answered, so he had a clear idea, of what he was drawing and this seemed beyond his age.

This drawing was just exemplary.

But at the same time, this is a child who exhibited very limited verbal communication.

His teacher informed that he hardly ever speaks in sentences, uses single words to most questions, and does not initiate communication, like other children in that classroom there.

And he prefers to play by himself.

Engages minimally in social interaction with his peers.

He would prefer to work with blocks, or he preferred to draw or he preferred to work on the computer.

He could spend a lot of time, he had tremendous attention span, when it came to activities that he liked to do.

So, that is also important in understanding that children do defer, just because this one child with autism had such extraordinary strength, does not mean all children with autism will have such.

There is wide range of abilities and strengths.

And what are some problems that he experienced?

Any time there was a transition from one activity to another, mostly a preferred activity to a non-preferred, it triggered problem, it triggered tantrum.

Moving, when he was working on block, playing with blocks, and the teacher asked him to join the circle time, that was a challenge.

When they had to, when he was working on the computer and then everybody had to line up to go to the playground for recess.

That triggered a tantrum.

And transition when the teacher said, "we are all going to the restroom, line up." So, stopping what he was doing, what he was engaged in was difficult for him.

And the sad thing is his preschool teacher was most concerned if how he would manage, in an inclusive kindergarten setting.

So we need to think about those things too.

How do we address these behaviors so that we are thinking of an opportunity for inclusive education for these children.

In this particular case, I'm just sharing these characteristics in order for you to be thinking about what are the distinctive characteristics.

In a future session, I will also address transition related tantrums, but I am going to share with you some specific case examples and how to address with preventive strategies.

Then we looked at the cognitive and the learning characteristics, and also we looked at Darian, exhibiting high level of cognitive strengths.

What are some social, emotional characteristics that these children present?

They do have difficulty in relating to people, relating to events and objects, initiating social contact.

Let's say there are a group of people and they're all sitting in the cafeteria, and eating lunch and they're talking to each other.

That child with, the student with autism, may not always initiate social contact or communication with the others.

So we have to think in terms of what are we going to do about that.

They may make little or no eye contact and that really should not be a major problem.

Understanding how others feel.

And I'm going to give you a interesting example.

This child, Darian, the teacher was having a calendar activity and in that calendar activity it was another child's turn to put the day of the week in the place where it goes in the calendar, you know it, let's say it was Thursday and she had to put Thursday.

So what happened was there was choices from Monday to Friday and the child picked up Friday instead of Thursday.

Darian who could read, immediately got out of his chair, grabbed that Thursday from that child and grabbed the Friday from that child and pick the Thursday and put it there.

And that child who was standing there got terrified and started crying and what do you do?

So, not thinking about the other child's feeling, how he was hurting, and his focus was only it had to be right, it cannot be Friday because it is Thursday.

So these are all situations we have to plan around.

We have to take some proactive steps.

They may be interested in people sometimes, but they may not know how to talk or play with them or engage with them.

And grasping non-verbal communication, especially a lot of us teachers and adults, therapists, everybody, we all use facial expressions and gestures when we are socially interacting, do these children understand that?

Do they watch when the child whose turn it was, was trying to place that day card on that calendar chart, how did she feel?

Did Darian understand her feelings, her expression on her face and her shock?

So these are all social emotional reciprocity issues that they still have difficulty with.

Now I have another poll...

That is coming up.

Sorry.

Okay, this is the poll, and...

I apologize for...

why am I not getting the...

Hmmmm...

- [Facilitator] So sorry, Padmaja, it looks like those, the other polls are not in there.
I apologize.

- Oh it's not in there.

Oh okay, okay.

That's why I'm looking for that and I apologize that anyway, these are things that you can reflect on.

And what are some of the characteristics that you typically observe in your students with ASD?
Do you see that they exhibit fear and anxiety about the unfamiliar?

If something is not familiar to them, do they exhibit fear and anxiety?

For example, a fire drill, they may be familiar, but it is not something that goes on every day.

So it becomes kind of in the unfamiliar territory.

Do they need verbal directions paired with visual supports in order to respond appropriately?

When you give verbal instruction, does it work?

Or when you pair it with visual support, does it work better?

Are they highly verbal?

Have you seen any students who are highly verbal?

It may be that you have a few students, but majority happen to be very limited verbal communication.

Two you see students who have difficulty understanding other people's feelings, like we saw that example, or even talking about how they are feeling, as I said right at the beginning, about this Darian having that rash and then he couldn't even point to that and say it was hurting him.

And do they show strengths in organizing and completing an activity?

Often they have difficulty organizing and completing the tasks.

So these are all things you can think of in terms of some of the characteristic that they exhibit.

And you may have many other characteristics that you routinely see some of these students exhibiting.

So let us look at another child and her distinctive characteristics, quite a contrast from Darian.

She is a middle school student, she's diagnosed with autism spectrum and she has significant cognitive and communication impairment.

She has difficulty focusing on any task, unlike Darian who could focus on the task that he liked, that he enjoyed.

And many of them were highly cognitive tasks.

But in case of Selena, she was not able to pay attention to any task, she was throwing and tossing objects when they were placed in front of her.

She will stay in her seat for a group lesson only for a couple of minutes before she gets up, wanders around pacing around the classroom, throwing herself on the floor.

And when the teacher or the paraprofessional try to work with her on a one-on-one basis, she will drop to the floor, she will start pacing around the room, and it was very difficult to get her to settle down.

And in addition to that, she also engaged in aggressive behaviors, like pinching the adults.

As a contrast to Darian, he did not, he engaged in tantrum, yes, he threw himself on the floor and he did grab that card from the other child, but he did not engage in aggressive behaviors towards peers or adult.

So you do see that kind of contrast and differences in children with autism.

So, and there's some of the other characteristics that I'm sure you are all familiar with.

They may repeat certain behaviors, they may like certain objects and may become attached to them, and they may exhibit stereotyped behaviors like spinning objects or you know, some toys they may want to just hold onto, or they may become attached to certain things, like, for example, Selena liked a little piece of towel and she would often bite on it or hold it in her mouth or crush, and you know move that around kind of twirl it.

And one of the things they have difficulty with, is engaging in role play or pretend play at a younger age.

It may be in the housekeeping center, they may not like to play different roles there, or when you are having like a role playing different characters from a story or something like that, they may have difficulty engaging in that kind of role play.

And generally one of the things that many educators have observed and parents have observed is they do exhibit a lot of tantrums and have low frustration tolerance.

And what precipitates these tantrums, as we saw in the case of Darian, it is any change in the activity, change in the material, or change in the environment, or even change in a personnel. If you have a substitute teacher into the classroom and there is no advanced preparation for the child that a new teacher, somebody totally unfamiliar to the student, is going to be there, that can trigger tantrum, because it introduces certain level of ambiguity and reduces the predictability.

Or if there is a long wait time of transition between one activity and another, beginning another one, that can.

And if there is not enough preparation of the particular student for that transition.

And then one of the important thing, is they like, children with autism like sameness, they lack behavioral flexibility, the cognitive flexibility to adjust to changes, and that's why they engage in kind of aggressive or oppositional behavior, they get anxious, they get stressed when things are not the same, there is something different and they may not see even things that have happened before, they don't necessarily get familiar with that.

So we have to, at each stage, we have to prepare them in advance in order to avoid the meltdown behaviors.

And again, what are some other things that we need to know so that we make a point of it, to know that these are things that precipitates that behavior and the meltdown as to stop an activity and move to another activity or because it's unpredictability, strengths and anxiety increase.

One, they want to escape an activity if it is not engaging to them, they just want to escape.

They try to seek attention, making attention grabbing noises maybe.

Or they may grab and pinch.

They may find a task too difficult, and especially at a, let's say at the grade level, if they find the task too difficult, if you give them a paper with 20 math problems, and they look at it and they think it is impossible, "I'm not going to do it." They may just, you know, throw it, toss it in the trashcan or not do it at all, or have a tantrum.

Moving from a preferred to a non-preferred activity.

As I mentioned before, new personnel, new situation, new setting, all of this add anxiety and stress.

And reacting to an overstimulating environment.

I'll mention one situation, where on this particular day, the student in the middle school, there was a special gathering in the gym, a large assembly.

And when he saw that the gym, that he went there for physical activities, suddenly became like a meeting room and there was a big assembly and somebody was doing a special show there, he became totally out of control and he was not prepared in advance what was going to happen.

So he completely had a meltdown.

So that is something we have to prepare in advance.

Difficulty with communicating needs.

Because feeling overstimulated, and that can cause pain and discomfort which we may not perceive but they may be experiencing.

And as I said, one of the things that children with autism also experience is executive function difficulties, attention, difficulty in filtering out any distractions that's happening in the classroom or in another setting.

And that self-regulation, that impulse control inhibitor, inhibitory control, that's also something we need to focus on in training them, in preparing them.

So now let us look at some action plan.

How do we address the challenging behaviors?

With a student specific application, what preventive strategies can we take ahead of the meltdown?

If we know a student exhibit certain behaviors, what are some preventive strategies?

What are some new skills can we take to...

What are some new skills can we teach the student?

And how do adults reflect and respond?

One of the things we often do in response to tantrum behaviors or any kind of aggressive behavior, is we often send the child to time out or to isolation.

How do we react differently as adults, therapists, educators, families, we are gonna be looking at all that.

With some case example.

Ahmad, he's a second grader with autism.

He has limited communication and engagement during small group instruction.

He is in a classroom with just about eight students.

Even during that small group instruction, he's has difficulty sitting still.

He has a tendency to run around and sometimes when the door is open he runs out of the classroom and when he's running around, he kicks and hits adults.

So what are some preventive strategies can be adopt to help a child like him?

One of the first things is to have visual support to use with him in and out of the classroom setting.

Photos depicting activities of the day.

For example, I will show you something that this one with various activities of the day, or you can have it in a folder, various activities of the day and you break it down because he is in a second grade classroom, he's going to be there all day.

You break it down into morning activities and PM activities and each activity is paired with a photo and it's maybe a laminated visual schedule.

And he moves as he completes one activity, he moves it to the finished section when he complete.

That's one of the first things.

And then also for Ahmad, a personal space, designating a personal space, teaching him how to observe personal space, two feet of space all around him.

You can tape a boundary around his desk and you can add a photo with his name on his desk and teaching him maintaining personal space.

For the problem of running out the door when they're...

As soon as the door is open.

And this is something I observed in a student, as soon as they open the door to line up to go to recess, he will just run out and the teacher has to run after him.

So one of the things that you want to teach him, is how to stop, when he sees there is a stop sign posted on the door, stop, turn around and sit in chair.

Because he has to sit in and then when everybody has lined up, he can join.

And also let's say they are not going to recess, but the door is open because some another person, another educator or someone else, has walked into the classroom, and to prevent him, he has to learn to stop when he sees the stop sign at the door, turn around and train him on that.

And in addition to that, it is also helpful to use some key cards or cue cards and teach him various simple things.

Let's say he screams, no, sit in chair, and stops to observe the stop sign, use cue cards and this cue card's a set of cue cards, that are attached to a key ring and to maintain his personal space, hands-on lap, hands-on desk, all of these things you can have pictures and the words going with that, paired with the words and then put in a key ring and then you keep one set.

The teacher keeps a set, the paraeducator keeps a set, and then you carry it with you to remind the student of these rules in all settings because the pictures do help students with autism a great deal, just verbal direction is not enough.

So the set of cue cards, that's what you see here would help the student.

Some other things in terms of preventive strategy.

Before the group lesson begins, give him a role to play.

Something he does, he points to a picture, or he shows a book to everybody, or he shows a specific word or specific vocabulary associated with that lesson paired with pictures and he gets to show.

So, in other words, to increase his motivation to stay with the group and engage with the instruction.

He has a role to play.

And provide him lots of opportunities to make choices.

Because choice making is a very effective strategy in decreasing problem behavior.

So he feels he's part of the group, and he feels he makes some decisions.

So give him opportunities during the lesson for them to make choices and all students would benefit and certainly this particular student, as well.

And opportunity for him to communicate.

And one of the things you can use is assistive technology that adds a certain joy, certain sense of accomplishment.

And so he can make a choice, yes or no responses, using something as simple as that.

Or I talk to a communicator where you have three answers and he makes a choice of which is the answer.

Or if you don't have, you can have a choice board like this with two choices.

And students besides Ahmad, students with verbal...

Verbal communication difficulties, can also benefit from these kind of choice board.

And simple response tools, yes or no, happy, sad, like it don't, don't like it.

Do you like that part of the story?

Which part of the story did you like?

So any kind of choice board.

And then you can use a single message AT device for the student to request a break.

If the students is finding that he's getting agitated or fidgety, then maybe he can take a calming break.

So these are all some of the preventive strategies you can.

And then in addition to that, from the preventive strategies that you are taking, you also want to teach some new skills.

What are some new skills that Ahmad will benefit from?

An evidence-based strategy is video modeling, and you will find a lot more description on video modeling in the Autism Internet Module.

I have included that in the resource section of this webinar.

And you can use video modeling to teach how the student can make request, how to stay on task, how to get in touch with his feelings, how to take the perspectives of others, look at things from the perspective of others.

These are all things that you can use.

Video modeling, small clips, maybe four minutes, three minutes, how to initiate communication with peers and adults.

All these you can, mini videos you can create, and you can use either the adult can do it, and the student himself can be the one, or you can have a peer working to help with the videos.

One of the things that I would like to mention is, for example, this is a set of feelings, emotions card.

You can teach him how to gradually move from a stage of crabbiness to stage of coping and then calm and finally...

Coming down.

So, you can make a set of pictures.

I have shown them here on this, how to move from crabbiness, to cautious stage, to coping stage, to calm stage.

So you can teach the student to go from the stage of anger, I don't want to call it anger.

So kind of feeling crabby to feeling calm.

Strengthen the student's emotional competence and understanding.

And one of the things that would help is the social narratives.

That is what you may have heard, social stories, Carol Gray's social stories.

So, social narratives is another way of portraying and teaching the student how her actions or his action, Ahmad's actions, impact others.

So he has to learn that he cannot run around and kick adults and hit adults.

So appropriate behaviors or thought through the social narratives.

Again, you will find lot more detail in the Autism Internet Module and you may be familiar already with the social stories of Carol Gray.

As I mentioned before, build the student's emotional vocabulary, how to identify and get in touch with feelings.

And one of the things that I will go into greater detail, in one of the webinars coming up on this topic, is mindfulness based calming techniques.

I will illustrate it a little bit in the next steps of support.

And the other thing is a very simple thing, is what he can do, what Ahmad can do with his hands and feet.

Feet go within his personal space, and for his hands that are kicking, that are hitting, that are pinching.

And it will be something that will be suitable for Selena too, we saw earlier, fidget toys.

One of the things is the kush balls.

You may have seen it or something very similar.

This one is called a tangle toy, so that the student has this in his hands and he's reminded to use that when he reaches out to hurt others.

I already mentioned about how do we promote self-regulation and impulse control is to use the fidget toys and to at least use calming techniques.

And how does the adult respond to the challenging behavior?

One of the things that I already mentioned is, sometimes when we are faced with the tantrum behaviors or the problem behaviors, we respond with, immediately with a reactive approach, of sending the student to timeout and/or, if it is quite aggressive behavior, maybe isolation, seclusion.

But what happens, is the student is not learning any new skills.

Not only is he or she missing out on instruction, he's not learning any skills.

The behavior gets repeated, we don't see it because he or she is in timeout, but the behavior continues.

So, we do want to prevent these behaviors and reduce the occurrence of these behaviors and maybe gradually eliminate these behaviors.

So the adult response is very important.

So maximize the opportunities for that specific student.

Someone like Ahmad who engages frequently in challenging behavior so that he receives positive strokes.

Sometimes it's just incremental progress.

"I like the way you're staying at your desk" and it may be instead of staying there for two minutes or three minutes, now he is staying there with all the other things and being motivated to have a role to play.

He's staying for five minutes.

It doesn't matter what preventive strategies we put in place, but if he has extended his time to five minutes, that's great.

And immediately point out that, "you are learning to keep your arms and feet in your personal space.

Awesome!" So, give those positive strokes.

The other thing is expecting someone with Ahmad's type of characteristics to stay at his desk and be part of the group as long as 20 minutes or 30 minutes is too much to ask at the beginning.

You're gradually going to train him.

So, let's say after 10 minutes he has stayed in there.

He can take a three minute break in the safe space, not a timeout.

And then it is time, precisely, after the three minutes, he comes back and joins, and then maybe another three minute break after.

Yes it's going to be a lot of breaks in the beginning, but then you can expand the time that he stays in during group instruction, and gradually reduce the number of breaks.

But it is better than his hitting and pinching and not paying any attention to instruction.

And do document and monitor the progress to see if the strategies are working.

And unfortunately we cannot use this participant poll, but you, this is something for you, to reflect on what techniques that you routinely use.

Do you teach new skills to replace a problem behavior?

Because that is an important step.

Think about the skills that your student needs to learn and teach them systematically, consistently.

It's not going to happen overnight because it took the student a long time to learn the problem behavior and continue with it, so...

But be consistent, be systematic.

Coach students regularly to practice calming and stress reduction techniques.

All students will benefit from that.

Model how to reflect and respond when feeling agitated and frustrated.

Show them a series of pictures, photos, the various feelings that they are going through from crabbiness, cautious to coping to calming.

Offer a system of limited breaks as part of the daily activity schedule.

Prepare students in advance for this is absolutely critical.

Preparing students in advance for any changes to your routine and transitions.

I cannot forget and I will go into greater detail in one of the future webinar about the student's absolute meltdown when they had to have a tornado drill.

So, advanced preparation for such situations.

And I'll go into greater detail, as I said, in a future webinar.

So, let us look at another case example.

I want you to walk away thinking about all these preventive strategies, what new skills to teach and how do you respond to tantrums.

This, in this particular case, this is some middle school students, middle school student, and he communicates mainly through gestures.

He does not use words yet, but he's beginning to use a few pictures, symbols.

One of the issues is he engages in aggressive behaviors when he has to transition from an activity that he considers to be his preferred.

And there are very few preferred activities for him to small group reading lesson.

Again, he is in a classroom with just 10 students in a middle school classroom for students with severe and significant needs.

And what are some preventive strategies can you think of?

So, one of the things in because he's a middle school student, you want to have a personal folder with a visual activity schedule placed inside that folder, inside maybe a binder.

And this is on the front page, or is on the top of the binder, or maybe inside so that it is discreet, and he can be taught to use it himself.

And the other thing that you may want to consider, in his case, is a First/Then chart. You first join the group reading, and then you get to do your preferred activities, it may be computer, it may be drawing on a small whiteboard, all of that.

First the required activity and then the preferred.

And again, this will require a lot of practice in the beginning.

He may not be able to stay the entire time for the group reading lesson.

It may be somewhat shortened, and he may go to the preferred time a little early.

The other things that he will need is the picture cue cards to remind him of when he reaches out and touches somebody and engages in aggressive behavior.

Or touches, pinches or grab somebody, to stop that and to be able to not, you know, screen, and hands on his lap and feet in his personal space.

All that you may want to use the cue cards.

And these cue cards should be in all settings.

You carry that with you in all settings, whether you are in the gym, whether you are in the playground, you have one with you all the time, to remind the student of the behavior that he should be engaging in and a designated seating with a name card, increase engagement and make the activity exciting, enjoyable with quite a lot of photographs paired with the text and opportunities for him to respond so that he's not just sitting there listening, but he also has an opportunity for action and expression as the universal design for learning says.

And then he gets picture prompts, picture choices to select from, in order to respond to a question.

And then most importantly, he has to learn some calming and breathing techniques as part of a group.

And in addition to that, individually for him.

All of these things together would help Bruno, and some of the things that I shared with you for the other student, are just as applicable for Bruno as well.

What are some new skills he has to learn to use the visual schedule.

He has to gradually increase the time he's part of the group and engages in academic instruction.

He has to learn to request breaks and make the transition gradually using the break card request for the break.

And you may want to use one of these simple single device where the word "break" is programmed along with a picture and he uses that.

So single message device would be enough.

And then learn to go to safe space when he's feeling upset or frustrated.

And of course don't forget the positive strokes when he does exhibit even small amounts of changed behavior.

And one of the things that is attractive, as I mentioned before, is assistive technology devices, because it gives him a voice, and reinforce frequently when you are responding to his behavior and "oh, I like way..." even if it is a minuscule improvement, point it out and not just "good job". Good job does not specify what the student's behavior is.

So be precise, define it.

"Oh you are using calming breaths to calm down.

That's super!" So point out what the student is doing right?

So that the student repeats that behavior.

During a major meltdown, what would you do?

I will go into some of this major meltdown in the future webinar, but for this session I do want to mention that the adults have to be calm, non-confrontational and to protect the student from harming himself or hurting any others.

And you have to make sure that you have an arrangement with someone else in the school, in the administration with other teachers so that you move your students to a pre-determined location.

If there should be a major meltdown.

Try and see if you can deescalate the volatile situation, move the student from the stage of anger to a calm down stage.

And then, if the student is capable of understanding, when the student has calmed down, you may want to point out using pictures, how the student's behavior caused that major meltdown and how he can slowly learn to calm down.

One of the things that I do want to, I know I'm approaching that one hour timeframe, but I think I do want to emphasize something, especially at this time, when we are all facing a variety of challenges due to the pandemic.

And I greatly appreciate the extraordinary work the teachers, therapists, administrators and everyone in the school system are doing to help support children.

In order for these children to have sustained academic, social and behavior growth.

One of the things that I recommend, try to co-opt the family support in identifying what are the strengths, what are the preferences, what are the needs on an individual basis, so that you can create a kind of a resource kit with a variety of materials that the parents can work with at home.

You may want to have either a virtual meeting or a face-to-face meeting explaining what goes into this kit.

You may want to share some cue cards, some activity folders, math and science and reading activity folders, that the student has kind of almost mastered, but can use some more practice at home.

So some interactive books that you may have created and I will share some examples next time, of what are some interactive books I'm talking about, some AT tools, a mini magnetic board like this, a small white board and some fidget toys.

At least start with that.

And then you can gradually expand and guide families on what works and what doesn't, in addressing academic, social and behavior issues so that both of you can work together, partner together, collaborate together for the ultimate success and the growth of your student with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Share proactive steps that have been successful for you and that's become much more important this year and it'll be something that'll be valuable for the future as well.

One of the things is, as I mentioned, is the Autism Internet Module.

There are various other resources that have included that you will find valuable as you are preparing the materials, as you are addressing some of the behavior issues.

These are all the various things.

As I close, I want to say plan ahead, be proactive.

In your response to the children's behavior issues, be reflective.

Try to avoid being reactive.

Reflective rather than reactive.

Try to navigate out of the situation rather than escalate the situation by how you react.

Prevent rather than punish.

I wish you all the best as we bring this session to a close.

I know you are all facing challenges thanks to the pandemic, but I think of you and I wish you all the best and great success in working with students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

And there are two more webinars that are coming up, one in February on 22nd of February at the same time, and that would be "Setting and Student Specific Personalized Interventions and Supports".

And then the final one is on March 29th, and that would be focused specifically on transition related meltdowns and that will, we will talk about the seven support strategies for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

With that, I want to thank each and every one of you for joining this webinar and I am most grateful to AbleNet University for hosting this webinar.

Thank you very much.

Have a great day.

Have a great rest of the week, and the rest of this 2022.

Thank you.

- [Facilitator] All right, Padmaja, thank you so much for that wonderful presentation.

For those of you who are still with us, you will receive an email tomorrow to get access to that certificate of attendance.

Thank you for attending and everybody have a great day.

- Are there any questions?

There is one question and can you provide additional information or resources regarding personal space with an adult adolescent male who does not respect personal space?

My response to that would be it is a little bit difficult as they get older, to train them in these things.

Personal spaces, you tape a boundary around where they're sitting, if they are in the classroom setting.

But for an adult, one of the things that I would suggest is teach, hold your hand out in front of you, and say, go around, say "this is two feet of personal space." And so again and again when the student approaches you, or when this adolescent male approaches you, teach him, "oh, personal space." and show him a picture of two feet of space in front of you and all around you, that's one way to gradually train it.

For an older person or a adolescent male, it is not going to happen that quickly.

So, it has to be repeated practice.

Every time you work with that person, you meet that person, remind about the personal space, and if somebody could take a photograph of you, showing the two feet of space, and that photograph is shown along with your verbal direction, to the student gradually, that may help.

I hope that was helpful.

Another question is, can we get copy of today's slides?

The handout has already been sent out, and I think yes, you will get it.

Thank you very much.

And you will get a copy of the today's slides.

Yes, you will get a copy of today's slides.

I hope I have answered all the questions.

Thank you very much again, and thank you to AbleNet University.