

PRESENTATION NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

Understanding Autism
Professional Development Curriculum:

Characteristics and Practices for Challenging Behavior



These facilitator notes are intended to support your presentation of the material. You, as the facilitator, can use it to the degree you find helpful. You may wish to use it word for word or expand upon it with your own examples.

Session Information:

This session should take about 1½ hours to present.

Facilitator:

Facilitators should have knowledge of autism and experience with students on the spectrum. Facilitators should be comfortable presenting information in groups and tailor delivery based on the knowledge base and experience of participants. Pairs of facilitators can present a session together. Potential facilitators include: district/school autism consultants, special educators, school administrators, and other knowledgeable professionals.

Facilitator Preparation:

Preparation prior to delivery of this training could take up to one hour. Facilitators should perform these steps a few days prior to the training:

- Read through PowerPoint Notes
- Prepare your own examples of key points
- Check each video clip to make sure it is working
- Make copies of the participant handout (double-sided)
- Make copies of Handouts – Notes Pages & At My School
- Learn about your participants – roles, experience, etc.

Group Activities:

- Complete group/individual activities based on the energy and knowledge needs of participants. Reduce number or include all as relevant to the group.
- Assist groups actively in completing activities.
- After completing activities, provide opportunities to share out with large group. For example, “share one idea you and your partner came up with.”

Suggested Breakdown of the Session:

0:00 – 0:03	Introduction
0:04 – 0:06	Objectives
0:07 – 0:12	Learning Activity – “A Person with ASD you Know”
0:13 – 0:15	Video – General Characteristics
0:16 – 0:21	Intro to Social Skills/Communication
0:22 – 0:24	Video – The Hidden Curriculum
0:25 – 0:35	Learning Activity – “My School’s Hidden Curriculum”
0:36 – 0:40	Intro to Behavior & Video - Repetitive Behaviors and Restricted Interests
0:41 – 0:45	Intro and Video – Strengths/ Tips
0:46 – 0:51	Learning Activity – “Stop/Continue/ Start”
0:52 – 0:55	Handling Challenging Behavior – Objectives and Intro
0:56 – 1:00	Rumbling Stage
1:00 – 1:05	Learning Activity – Rumbling Stage
1:06 – 1:10	Meltdown Stage
1:11 – 1:16	Learning Activity – Meltdown Stage
1:17 – 1:20	Recovery Stage
1:21 – 1:25	Learning Activity - Recovery Stage
1:25 – 1:30	Learning Activity – At My School
1:30 – 1:31	Conclusion / Resources

Video Clips:

If you experience problems accessing video clips or have other technology-related questions, please refer to the “ReadMe” (.txt) document.

SLIDE 1

These facilitator notes are intended to support your presentation of the material. You, as the facilitator, can use it to the degree you find helpful. You may wish to use it word for word or expand upon it with your own examples. Welcome participants. Introduce yourself if you are new to the participant group. Ask participants to introduce themselves (name/role) to you and each other as appropriate.

Say: This presentation was developed in partnership between the Organization for Autism Research (OAR) and The Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (CSESA). The purpose of this presentation is to describe characteristics of middle and high school students who have ASD. We will also focus on how to support students who exhibit challenging behavior in the classroom. The other presentation in the series focuses on classroom supports for students with ASD and supports available to general education teachers. The presentation has been adapted to meet the needs of our school team.

SLIDE 2

Say: Let's start with a discussion of the characteristics of ASD.

SLIDE 3

Ask the group: "Who knows someone, personally or professionally, who has Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD for short?"

The purpose of this question is to show that many of us are touched by ASD in some way.

Say: As the prevalence of ASD increases (now 1 in 88 according to recent CDC estimates) many of us have been or will be touched by ASD. Right now there are more students with ASD than ever before learning in our middle and high schools. We need to work together to understand the needs of students with ASD and support their education so that they can have the best outcomes possible.

SLIDE 4

Read: ASD is a developmental disorder that impacts the way a person perceives and communicates, often resulting in challenges with social interactions and processing information.

In this session, we will talk about how these characteristics impact middle and high school students with ASD.

SLIDE 5

Say: More specifically, this is the definition of ASD in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This is the criteria psychologists and psychiatrists use when evaluating individuals for ASD.

Summarize criteria.

SLIDE 6

Say: People with autism have been our friends, neighbors, co-workers throughout the years. There is speculation whether or not some famous people had ASD, we often see people with autism portrayed in the media as having Autism, Asperger Syndrome, or ASD. These have been used to describe people who have some of the characteristics and behaviors we will be talking about today.

Images:

Miss Montana 2013 (Alexis Wineman was diagnosed with autism at age 11)

Temple Grandin (professor in animal science, author who has autism)

John Elder Robison (author who has Asperger Syndrome)

Darryl Hannah (self-identified as having Asperger Syndrome)

“Max” on TV show Parenthood has Asperger Syndrome (portrayed by Max Burkholder)

Rain Man (portrayed by Dustin Hoffman)

Mozart (speculated)

Andy Warhol (speculated)

Albert Einstein (speculated)

SLIDE 7

Review the objectives with the group.

Say: Today we will talk about typical characteristics of students with ASD and talk about how to maximize the strengths of students with ASD. We will also spend time talking about challenging behavior. We know that while students with ASD have various needs, when they exhibit challenging behavior we as teachers and school administrators feel particularly stressed trying to support them. We will talk about what to do at each stage of the challenging behavior.

SLIDE 8

Say: It's very important to remember that although there are some common characteristics, no two individuals with ASD are exactly alike. ASD is a spectrum disorder that affects each person to a varying degree, ranging from mild to severe. It is important to understand how the characteristics of ASD that we'll review affect each student you are working with.

SLIDE 9

Say: Before we describe the characteristics of ASD, think about a person you know with ASD. If you do not know someone personally, think about a person you've heard of or a media depiction. (If group needs ideas, suggest: Temple Grandin, the boy on the TV show "Parenthood", Sheldon on the TV show "Big Bang Theory").

- Write down 3 ways that their ASD is apparent to you or 3 things that you know about ASD in general.
- Allow about 2 to 3 minutes of individual work
- Bring the group back together.
- Ask for participants to volunteer some of the characteristics.
- Option – write down responses on flipchart paper.

Say: Again, let's remember that while these are all characters of people with ASD or behaviors associated with characteristics, they will look different from person to person. Not all characteristics are representative of the entire population of individuals with autism.

SLIDE 10

Clip 2:15 – 3:04

Use video that is entitled "Segment One: Characteristics"

Say: This video clip describes general characteristics of students with ASD. Focus on ways in which these characteristics show up in the students you know that have ASD.

SLIDE 11

Discuss the challenges listed, with examples (see below).

Say: Students with ASD often have difficulty in social situations.

They may have difficulty understanding the back and forth, or reciprocity, of conversation or friendship. A student may not understand that peers may not always want to engage in conversations around his topic of interest (e.g. freshwater fish, computer games).

A student may have difficulty sharing attention on an object or event with his teacher. For example, if a student has a question about a math problem on the board, he may not realize the importance of bringing the teacher's attention to the board to help assist him as he talks about the issue with the math problem.

A student with ASD may have difficulty with pragmatics, which is the social use of language. A student may not understand that you should talk differently with a teacher in class than with a group of peers in the cafeteria. He may have difficulty knowing how close to stand to someone he is speaking to or how to effectively end a conversation without making the other person feel uncomfortable.

Students with ASD may have difficulty developing and sharing in leisure activities with friends. Some may wish to have friends but have difficulty developing these relationships.

SLIDE 12

Say: Middle and high school students with ASD may also have difficulties related to communication. They may have difficulty processing what you are saying, or difficulty being understood by others. A student with ASD may focus on the details of a conversation that are not central to the meaning the speaker is trying to convey. A student may have difficulty understanding subtleties of sarcasm, which can be especially troublesome in secondary school hallways.

Other critical aspects of communication may also be challenging to students with ASD.

A student may have rhythm, pitch, inflection or volume that is not typical or regarded as unacceptable for a particular social situation. This may make their communication difficult to understand or may be off-putting to other students.

A student may have difficulty understanding others' body language or facial expressions. For example, a student may not understand that when you or another student cross your arms, raise your eyebrows, and begin to back away slowly that you may be indicating that you did not agree with them and wish to end the conversation.

Finally, students with ASD tend to think concretely. They can be very literal thinkers and may have difficulty with the expressions that most of us use in daily conversation such as this example from *The Big Bang Theory*. Imagine the challenges a student who thinks concretely would have reading Shakespeare or participating in conversations in the hallway.

SLIDE 13

Say: The concrete thinking commonly associated with students with ASD can make it difficult for students to understand meaning we or their fellow students intend to convey. Students with ASD may have difficulties with comprehension, casual conversation skills, and understanding the subtleties of language (e.g. jokes, sarcasm, idioms, clichés). As teachers, we should try to be attuned to students' language difficulties. We can do this by helping other students and staff know how to convey information clearly. We may also need to directly teach students with ASD how to make meaning of our subtle communication.

SLIDE 14

Clip 10:02- 11:24

Use video entitled "Segment One: Characteristics"

Say: The characteristics of autism make navigating middle and high school very challenging, due in part to the influence of the Hidden Curriculum. The Hidden Curriculum, as described by Brenda Smith Myles, refers to the unwritten rules and codes of social interactions that most people just naturally know. These rules and codes become increasingly important for students in middle and high school. The following clip describes the Hidden Curriculum. After the video we will talk about the rules and codes that exist at this/your school.

SLIDE 15

Introduce the above activity to the participants.

Allow up to 5 minutes for discussion.

Allow up to 5 minutes for large group discussion.

Optional – gather the large group's thoughts on a flip chart for: How could you and others help your students to learn these rules?

SLIDE 16

Say: We have talked about challenges students with ASD may have with social interactions and communication. They also tend to exhibit restrictive and/or repetitive behaviors. These behaviors can look very different from student to student. Some may display self-stimulatory behavior, which is behavior that may help them to calm down or help them be more alert. Examples might be pulling on hair, rocking back and forth, rubbing finger tips together, twisting in their seats, tapping their feet, and so on.

Another behavior may be a perseveration on topics of conversation. A student with ASD may tend to steer all conversations back to their specific interest areas. Whether this interest is video games, trains, or freshwater fish (which is the example you'll hear in the next video), this perseveration can be frustrating to peers and educators alike.

A student with ASD may have routines or rituals that they feel they have to accomplish. He or she may walk the halls of school in specific routes or become anxious when his teacher changes when topics will be covered from what is described in the syllabus.

Students who have ASD also have an increased tendency to experience anxiety and depression. Knowing the supports that decrease anxiety can help minimize the impact on a student's ability to learn and participate in your classroom. For example, one student may experience anxiety when there are unannounced changes to the school routine. Spending a few minutes reviewing the changes to your class' time during an early dismissal day may help a student better attend to your teaching.

These and other challenges with behavior may result in tantrums or meltdowns when a student's coping mechanisms aren't enough to handle frustration, anxiety, anger and other difficult emotions.

We will discuss how to handle these meltdowns shortly.

SLIDE 17

Clip 7:30 -8:33 Repetitive Behaviors and Restricted Interests

Use video entitled "Segment One: Characteristics"

Say: The following video describes repetitive behaviors and restricted interests.

SLIDE 18

Say: We know that students with ASD experience challenges and that teaching students with ASD can be challenging. Let's not forget that students with ASD regularly demonstrate clear strengths, talents, and interests. When working with a student who has ASD, consider ways to utilize that students' strengths to support their learning, help them stay engaged while in your classroom, and increase their independence.

To identify a student's strengths consider reading their Present Levels of Performance on their IEP, give a student interest questionnaires, ask parents, make notes of your informal observations, talk to previous teachers, and so on.

The following video provides ideas for how to help students with ASD capitalize on their strengths.

SLIDE 19

Clip 15:21- 17:23

Use video entitled "Segment One: Characteristics"

Say: This clip demonstrates the importance of focusing on strengths.

After the video, ask: For those of you currently working with a student with ASD, what are some of the student's strengths and how have you been able to capitalize on these to help the student be successful?

SLIDE 20

Say: We've reviewed the general characteristics of ASD and how they may impact students in middle and high school. The following are some tips for supporting learning of students with ASD. Consider how you might use these in your work.

Some examples of these tips are:

- Organize work expectations –by writing them down
- Provide step-by-step instructions – for homework, assignments, agenda for your class period
- Give visuals to make information clear – put boxes around critical information, use highlighters to underscore important information
- Be as concrete as you can
- Be consistent and predictable with your classroom structure – check homework at the same time, outline the agenda for the period at the beginning of each period, summarize what you've covered at the end
- Give as much information as a student can process – know when your student is giving signs that he's reached his limit

To help your students with ASD, you can actively teach them:

- How to effectively interact with their peers
- How to organize and plan their work
- How to ask you, their other teachers, and their peers for help

These strategies can be beneficial to all students with and without disabilities.

Which of these tips have been embedded into today's PowerPoint presentation (allow for replies)? Some examples:

- Visual supports on the video slides to clarify that a video will be played
- Slides with yellow paper indicate that you will be asked to do complete an activity

SLIDE 21

Say: In addition to these tips, the National Professional Development Center on ASD has identified other evidence-based practices. These links will bring you to websites with detailed descriptions of these evidence-based practices and learning resources to help you implement each of the practices.

SLIDE 22

Say: Based on our discussion so far, take a few minutes to consider what you and your team can stop doing, continue doing, and start doing to support students with ASD.

Allow up to 3 minutes for self-reflection.

If time allows, ask for some ideas of what participants wish to start doing.

Optional – record these ideas on flipchart paper.

Say: Next, we will expand on our discussion of behavior and talk about what to do if a student has a meltdown.

SLIDE 23

Say: We've reviewed the characteristics of students with ASD which have associated teaching challenges such as supporting social skills, communication, and attention. Some information related to these is available in the second presentation of this series and on the resources slide of this presentation. See in particular the evidence-based practices available on the CESA and National Professional Development on ASD websites list on the previous slide.

We know that challenging behavior is one of the most stressful issues faced by parents, teachers, and school administrators. These challenging behaviors put our students at risk for social isolation and exclusion from school, community and family activities. It is very important that we address what we know helps when a student has challenging behavior. We will get into that discussion now.

SLIDE 24

Review session objectives.

Say: We will talk about three stages of challenging behavior and consider various strategies for support students through the stages.

SLIDE 25

Say: So what are challenging behaviors? This list includes many common examples. How many of you have seen someone with ASD exhibiting these types of behavior? What did the behavior look like (allow time for responses)?

SLIDE 26

Say: When a student is stressed or anxious, they may not be able to effectively communicate their needs for information, sameness, a specific thing, or to lower stimulation in their environment. They may also not be able to communicate their frustration with their inability to meet your, their, or others' expectations.

For example, a student disruptively banging his feet could be triggered by a change in the school schedule in order to accommodate an assembly. Another student might withdraw from participating in class when he doesn't have enough information or the skills to effectively ask for help.

Challenging behavior is due to different things for different students. The more we can learn what a student's triggers are, the more likely we can help them to avoid engaging in challenging behavior. The most important thing to remember is that for students with ASD, challenging or disruptive behaviors are rarely intentional.

SLIDE 27

Say: Now we will review the three stages of challenging behavior: rumbling, meltdown, and recovery. Each stage impacts the next stage. For example, if you are able to recognize a student's rumbling behavior you are more likely to successfully help the student from getting to meltdown stage. Also, if you are able to manage the meltdown stage in a way that is understanding of the student's experience you are more likely to have a successful recovery stage and thus lessen the impact of the challenging behavior on all people concerned.

SLIDE 28

Clip 5:11 – 6:11

Use video entitled "Segment Three: Practices for Challenging Behavior"

Say: This video describes the rumbling stage. All students are capable of moments of frustration, anxiety, and anger. Think about the rumbling behaviors of the students that you work with – those with and without ASD.

SLIDE 29

Clip 6:11 – 8:51

Use video entitled "Segment Three: Practices for Challenging Behavior"

Say: This segment describes what to do during the rumbling stage.

SLIDE 30

Say: Before we talk about students you are working with and their challenging behavior, let's review some of the strategies teachers can employ during the rumbling stage.

Review slide information and expand based on participants' shared experiences.

Triggers example – The sound of a chair moving against the floor bothers the student

Modifying – Ask all students in the class to pick up their chairs when rearranging them

Allow for an "antiseptic bounce" – separate student from stressful environment by inconspicuously asking the student to leave (e.g. deliver note/tissues to another person/class/support staff which allows student time and space to calm down)

Provide a home base or cool zone – send student to a safe, comforting place to decompress (e.g. speech/language office, school counselor)

SLIDE 31

Review the activity.

Say: Let's talk about a student that you know or work actively with who exhibits challenging behavior. Take a few minutes to reflect on what his rumbling signs are. What have you done when these rumbling signs happen? What else might you consider doing during this stage.

Think about that for a few minutes and then share with a neighbor.

If participants are not working with a student with ASD suggest that they consider any student they work with who has challenging behavior (e.g., clowning inappropriately, talking constantly, explosions, expressed frustration)

Optional – Return to the large group. Ask each pair to share a rumbling behavior they noticed and how they help the student when this behavior begins.

Allow up to 5 minutes.

SLIDE 32

Clip 8:52 – 10:14

Use video entitled "Segment Three: Practices for Challenging Behavior"

Say: This segment describes the meltdown stage of challenging behavior.

SLIDE 33

Clip 10:14 – 11:55

Use video entitled "Segment Three: Practices for Challenging Behavior"

Say: This segment describes what to do during the meltdown stage. Think about other strategies you've used or have seen used successfully with students who have challenging behavior.

SLIDE 34

Say: Before we talk about students you are working with and the meltdown stage, let's review what to do during this stage. What are some of the other strategies you thought about while watching the clip?

Review slide information and expand based on participants' shared experiences.

SLIDE 35

Review the activity.

Say: Let's think back to your student with challenging behavior. What happens when their challenging behavior is at its peak. What is the current plan? What would you like to change about the plan, if anything. Take a few minutes to reflect on this and share with your partner.

Optional – When back in large group. Ask: So tell me about strategies you talked about for managing challenging behavior in the moment that were not discussed in the video.

Allow about 5 minutes.

SLIDE 36

Clip 11:57 – 12:41

Use video entitled "Segment Three: Practices for Challenging Behavior"

Say: This segment describes the recovery stage and what to do. The recovery stage can be overlooked. How we support students with ASD during this stage can lower the likelihood of future challenging behaviors.

SLIDE 37

Say: Let's review what to do during the recovery stage before talking about your student. Taking time for the recovery stage will help the student ease back into the classroom environment and prepare him to return to learning.

Review slide information and expand based on participants' shared experiences.

SLIDE 38

Review the activity.

Say: Take a moment to think about the last stage of challenging behavior, the recovery stage, related to your student. What is the current plan? What would you like to change about this plan, if anything?

Allow about 5 minutes.

SLIDE 39

Say: The time after a meltdown is important for recovery and for gathering important information in order to best prevent future occurrences.

Spend time after the meltdown figuring out the cause. Talk with those that were involved to get multiple perspectives on the situation. Talk to the student if appropriate.

Talk with others about how you handled the situation. Talk about what worked and what didn't, and what should be done if student exhibits challenging behaviors in the future.

Connect with the student's parents or guardian. You are both committed to the student's success. Being on the same team and developing an effective plan is an important step in realizing that plan. Consistency between school and home can make a big difference.

Consider what is important to teach your student and who else could be involved in teaching them:

- How to recognize triggers
- How to ask for help when needed
- How to better communicate their needs
- And how to engage in calming routines

SLIDE 40

Say: Most importantly, know the warning signs and have a plan ahead of time!

SLIDE 41

Say: We've reviewed the three stages of challenging behavior. Let's take a few minutes to talk about the process for working with students with challenging behavior in this/your school.

Please take out your "At My School" sheet. Focus on the first section in this worksheet. This handout will help us gather information specific to your school.

Take a few minutes to answer the questions:

"When I have concerns about a student's behavior I get support from whom?" and "Reflect on the process in place for addressing challenging behavior of students with ASD."

The rest of this worksheet is used during the other Understanding Autism presentation. (Optional- if the second part of the series is not provided for this group give time at the end to facilitate the remainder of the questions in the "At My School" worksheet)

Optional: This can be a whole group, small group, or individual activity depending on how many schools your participants represent.

Allow about 5-10 minutes.

SLIDE 42

Say: Thank you for your time and participation.

Today, we talked about the characteristics of middle and high school students with ASD. These can be difficulties with communication, social interactions with peers and adults, and behavior. We discussed focusing on strengths and directly teaching those skills that your students find most difficult. We also talked about the three stages of challenging behavior (rumbling, meltdown, recovery). The most important things to remember are: know the warning signs and have a plan.

If you have specific questions related to a student you are working with, or have ideas you'd like help implementing based on the information we've discussed today, please remember to contact (DISTRICT and/or SCHOOL AUTISM SUPPORT PERSON).

Thank the group for their participation.

If Understanding Autism Professional Development Curriculum: Strategies for Classroom Success and Effective Use of Teacher Supports will be presented - remind group when the next session will occur.

SLIDE 43

Say: You can use these resources to review or share some of the information we've talked about today. These links also include information on the second part of the *Understanding Autism Professional Development Curriculum: Strategies for Classroom Success and Effective Use of Teacher Supports*.

SLIDE 44

These resources were created by a team comprised of these individuals with funding provided by the Institute of Education Sciences and from the Organization for Autism Research.