

Understanding Autism

Professional Development Curriculum:

Characteristics and Practices for Challenging Behavior

What is ASD?

- ▶ ASD is a developmental disorder that impacts the way individuals **communicate** and **interpret** their environment, often resulting in challenges with **social interactions** and **processing information**.



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Challenges with Behavior

- ▶ Self-stimulation
 - E.g. Rubbing fingers, pulling hair, rocking
- ▶ Perseverative topics of conversation
- ▶ Limited/obsessive range of interests
- ▶ Non-functional routines or rituals
 - E.g. Having to have books in specific order
- ▶ Anxiety/depression
- ▶ Tantrums/meltdowns

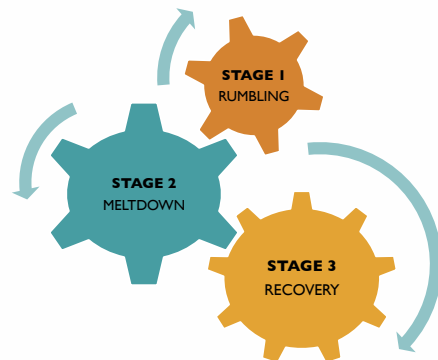
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What Can Cause Challenging Behavior?

- ▶ Can result from stress and anxiety
- ▶ When needs for the following can not be met:
 - For information
 - For sameness
 - For a tangible item
 - Due to expectations (of self, others, environment) not met
 - To lower stimulation in the environment
- ▶ Appears differently in every student
- ▶ Remember: Limited communication skills can impact student's ability to express needs

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3 Stages of Challenging Behaviors



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Stage 1 – Rumbling – What Can You Do?

Out of the ordinary minor behaviors
Tell-tale signs that the student is stressed

- ▶ Identify student triggers
- ▶ Modify the classroom environment
- ▶ Provide choice, feedback, and praise
- ▶ Provide strong reinforcement
- ▶ Allow for an “antiseptic bounce” – separate student from stressful environment
- ▶ Provide a “home base” or “cool zone”

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Stage 2 – Meltdown – What Can You Do?

Student loses control
Externalized and/or internalized behavior

- ▶ Demonstrate empathy
- ▶ Provide space
- ▶ Provide assurances
- ▶ Maintain calm
- ▶ Maintain safety
- ▶ Implement emergency plan
- ▶ Remove others as needed

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Stage 3 – Recovery – What Can You Do?

Not yet ready to learn
Needs help easing back in

- ▶ Direct student to a highly motivating task
- ▶ Reintegrate student into a normal routine
- ▶ Provide strong reinforcement
- ▶ Communicate support
- ▶ Build on successes

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After the Meltdown...

- ▶ Figure out the root cause
- ▶ Talk with others about how to deal with the student's behavior in the future
- ▶ Develop a partnership with parents/guardian
- ▶ Teach the student:
 - To recognize his own triggers
 - To ask for help
 - How to properly communicate immediate needs
 - To initiate calming routines or ask for someone to assist

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