

10 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM

The following is a brief summary of some useful tips in making the classroom a more successful place for the student with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

1. *Use concrete language*

Even students with good language abilities may have difficulty with language processing. Keeping language concrete and to the point will assist with comprehension.

2. *Be careful with metaphors, irony, sarcasm, etc.*

Students having ASDs often have a very literal understanding of language. Some students may misunderstand expressions and idioms and may be very confused by teasing and sarcasm.

3. *Use visual supports for communication whenever possible*

Visual strategies support students having ASDs in processing information and assist in comprehension. Visual strategies include (tailored to the child's level of skills) symbols, photographs, written instructions, timetables and highlighting text to emphasize meaning or what is expected of the student.

4. *Allow extra processing time*

Some students having ASDs often take longer than other students to process verbal instructions. Allow extra time before you repeat the instruction. Repeating an instruction too soon can interrupt the processing of the person's response. Also remember that verbal directives are *transient* (disappear after they are spoken) and so key concepts/classroom rules/etc are best paired with visual cues (which can be easily revisited time and time again).

5. *Don't demand eye contact*

Some people having ASDs cannot process visual and auditory input simultaneously. They can look at you OR they can understand what you are saying. The fact that the student is not looking at you does not necessarily mean that they are not listening or attending.

6. *Be rewarding*

We are all more likely to work well in an environment where we can succeed and where our efforts are appreciated. Students having ASDs are no different. The more opportunities the person having an ASD has for success in the work they are

given, the more likely they are to find the classroom a rewarding place. Also, the more we show our pleasure through rewarding the person in ways that are meaningful for them, the more likely they are to strive to succeed.

7. *Keep your eye on the "big picture"*

Do not make everything an important issue. It may be much more effective to ignore minor problematic issues where to do otherwise will result in head on clashes. Alternatively, redirect or compromise, where possible.

8. *Use a team approach*

Parents and school staff are all experts in their own areas and they all want what is best for the child. Keep communication open and positive between home and school. Achieving success is much easier under these conditions.

9. *Don't take it personally*

Students having ASDs have a deficit in social understanding and at times they may appear to be rude or self centered. This does not spring from a desire to cause difficulties, but simply from a lack of social understanding. Students having ASDs will often need to be taught explicitly what other students simply know from being in social situations. It is important not to assume that the student understands how they "should" behave. Very often they do not.

10. *Be aware of the sensory environment*

Many people having ASDs often have difficulty with the sensory environment eg noise, busy visual environments, distractions etc. Be aware of environments that may cause distress or lack of attention and take action. For example, if a student finds it difficult to complete written work because he is seated next to a window where there is outside activity, change his seating. Telling him to pay attention will not work. In other words, be aware of the impact of the sensory environment on the person's behavior and make the necessary adjustments.