Hello from Linda Hodgdon
M.Ed., CCC-SLP

• Speech-Language Pathologist
• Consultant for Autism Spectrum Disorders
• Best-Selling Author
  – Visual Strategies for Improving Communication
  – Solving Behavior Problems in Autism
  – Plus . . .

I have a passion for VISUAL STRATEGIES

You will learn. . . .
• Common misunderstandings about Autism Spectrum Disorders
• The most important thing to recognize about the communication strengths and challenges of individuals with ASD
• How to use visual tools to engineer the library environment
• Considerations for ASD, teachers, caregivers and employees
• Plus LOTS more . . . including my 12 Essentials

Who are you serving?
• Individuals on the Autism Spectrum or with other special learning needs?
• Educators
• Caregivers
• Employees
• Age level?

Problem #1
In one ear and out the other . . .

Most educators and parents identify the problem . . . or do they?

Problem #2: Troubling situations

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UseVisualStrategies.com
Who can benefit?
Learning what works for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders helps us know what works for many other students with communication challenges.

What we need to understand about autism

Aphasia, Communication Disorders, ADD, Behavior Disorders, Learning Disabilities, Language Delay, Auditory Processing Disorders, Hearing Impairment, Emotional Impairment, TBI, Mental Impairment, Down Syndrome, Bilingual . . . . . . and more

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What do special needs look like?

The SPECTRUM
Temple Grandin
Susan Boyle

WIDE RANGE OF STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES & PREFERENCES & INTERESTS
- Severe challenges
- Moderate challenges
- Average
- Above average
- Gifted

This can be a lifelong discovery process

What do special needs look like?

You may have individuals with ASD in your libraries and you don’t even know it.

Those with Asperger’s don’t automatically know everything

A primary part of the autism spectrum:

- Difficulty with social/communication skills
  - Difficulty with expressive communication (DO THEY TALK?)

  Difficulty Understanding
  - Just because they talk doesn’t mean they understand everything

COMMUNICATION includes a lot of other skills

- When to go
- What to do
- Where to go
- How to do it
- What can I do
- What can’t I do
- What comes next
- What are my choices
Communication Involves:
- Establishing or shifting attention
- Following rapidly changing stimuli
- Taking in information
- Processing information
- Storing information
- Retrieving past information
- Sending information

It’s not just expressive communication problem
The whole system needs help and support

AUTISM-Behaviors
- Range from annoying to non-compliant to aggressive to self-abusive
- Frequent difficulty with:
  - Beginning or ending activities
  - Transitions
  - Change
- Those “TROUBLING SITUATIONS” frequently related to communication

To Summarize Communication Skills in Autism
- Difficulty with expressive communication
- Difficulty understanding verbal communication
- Skill taking in VISUAL information compared to auditory information

“He understands EVERYTHING I say”
1. Routine language
2. Gestures
3. Communication supports
4. Learned routines
5. Environmental cues

Auditory Problems
- Students with autism typically have difficulty processing auditory information.
- It may not be every student and it may not be all the time. But the difficulty with auditory processing is common and pervasive in this population.
- This is not an auditory acuity problem. They can hear sound. It is an auditory processing problem. When the sound goes into the brain, the student is not able to make meaning from it.
- Or perhaps it has to do with speed. He can’t process the information quickly enough. Imagine driving a go-kart on a freeway. The go-kart runs fine, but it can’t keep up with the faster vehicles.

Research says: People with ASD process information in their brain differently than other people.
Here’s one child’s explanation:

“You know, Dad,” he said recently, “when you talk I see your mouth move, but I don’t hear the words just yet. Then the sound comes to me and I kind of swish it around in there trying to sort it out.”

Assess the Communication Partner

- The student is only 1/2 of the communication interaction.
- How effective is the communication partner?

What FORMS do you use most?

- Speech, vocalization
- Sign language
- Pointing
- Gestures
- Body language
- Pictures
- Objects
- Written language
- Etc.
- Behaviors

Here’s the problem. . .

BRAIN RULES:
12 Principles for Surviving & Thriving at Work, Home, & School

www.brainrules.net

Vision trumps all other senses

We learn and remember best through pictures, not through written or spoken words.
We learn and remember best through **pictures**, not through written or spoken words

John Medina
Brain Rules

The majority of students with autism are Visual Learners

They benefit from using VISUAL STRATEGIES to support communication, understanding, giving information, teaching routines & more...

What are visual strategies?

1. It’s really pretty simple
2. You probably already use some
3. Most people don’t really understand the “WHY”
4. Few people identify ALL the possibilities

LOW TECH (Classics) vs HI TECH (New Toys)

It can be a sign on the wall or a text message on a device

Must consider skill level & degree of autism

- How does that affect visual strategies?
  - What kinds of visuals to use
  - What should they look like?
  - How should they be used?
- The concept of using visual strategies will be consistent
- The implementation will reflect differences to match the individual’s needs and abilities
  - Size
  - Appearance of visual representation (picture, photo, written language, object, etc.)
  - Purpose of visual tool
  - Method of using it
  - Needs of the environment
  - Low tech or high tech

Two Goals

1. Set up environments to accommodate for what they need
2. Develop communication style to become better communication partners
Considering what we know about ASD

Here’s my list of 12 ESSENTIALS to engineer environments for the autism community

You’ll see VISUAL STRATEGIES everywhere

#1 Camera

Take pictures of everything
• Use them in the phone or print the pictures as needed.
• Conversation starters
• Demonstration tools (step-by-step)
• Reminders (i.e., Remember what to bring tomorrow)
• Give information
• Plus lots more . . .

We have a lot of options available

Laundry: Which picture is best?

Important purpose for using Visual Tools is to Give Information

#2 Schedule

• The daily schedule has finally become one of the most used visual tools.

Schedules prepare individuals for transitions

Examine transitions

• How does each individual know where to go?
• How does the student know what to do when he goes to an area?
• How does person know when the activity is finished?
• How does he know what will happen next?
• How does he know where to go next?
Examine transitions

- What difficulties is he likely to encounter during each transition time?
- Are some transitions more difficult than others?
  - Why are some transitions more difficult?
- What extra supports or cues are necessary during the more challenging transitions?
- Will the daily schedule give students enough information to transition successfully, or will any student need additional information?

#3 Calendar

- Essential tool to orient to flow of life
  - Posted on a wall
  - Written in a notebook
  - Accessed on a smart phone

  - What is happening
  - What is NOT happening

#4 Predictable Routines

- Predictable does not mean rigid.
- When students know what to expect
  - Will learn & follow routines
  - Demonstrate less stress
  - Exhibit better behavior when they know what to expect.

- Cameras, calendars & schedules are useful tools when something expected is changing or when something new is going to occur.

- Rigid means nothing ever changes. Predictable means giving enough information so students know what to expect.

How to have a clean desk (Executive Functioning)

1. Take everything out
2. Throw away trash
3. XXX
4. XXX
5. XXX
6. XXX

Assumed information “Swiss Cheese” holes

You need to TEACH what you need done

#5 Quiet Spot (Not Punishment)

- Sometimes things get too fast, too noisy or just plain too much
- Goal to use a “quiet spot” which is a designated location to help regroup
- Quiet spot can have special name
- May be equipped with items to promote relaxation
- Not used for punishment
- It’s an opportunity for calming
**Quiet Spot**  
Give options to opt out

- **When it is too noisy**
  - Sit at the usual table
  - Listen to music
  - Go for a walk

**Use something visual to help get them there**
- Teacher initiates
- Student initiates
  - Ask permission
  - Independent
- Provide choices

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**#6 Visual tools**

Pictures, objects, written language & anything else VISUAL is used to support communication. The calendar and schedule are just two visual tools.

A supportive environment will provide a variety of other visual supports to assist students in multiple ways for successful participation.

**Think of tools to give information**

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**#8 Proper work environments**

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**Making choices**

**Address sensory** and motor needs

- Headphones
- Go for a walk

**Give visual choices**
#9 Organized spaces

This is what libraries are really good at.

Make sure organization is obvious to consumers.

Grandaughter finding “girls” books.

#10 Rules

Starting, stopping, transitions, behavior, independence

Don’t assume

Timers

- Visual cue
- Provides structure
- Informs – how much time left
- Helps students focus attention
- Keeps students engaged
- When to start
- When to stop
- Assists independence
- Guides transitions

PSYCHOLOGY: People usually think that a timer tells you when to STOP. Here’s a variation. Think of the timer telling you it is time to go to another activity. That may help some students who have difficulty transitioning from favorite activities.

#11 Timers

#12 Effective communication partners

Use FORMS of communication that your communication partners understand quickly and easily.

What the person said in my workshop: . . .

Slows it down.
Sometimes we don’t communicate as clearly as we think we do

Or sometimes we don’t give enough information

Just a little bit more. . .

Materials in the library
What the individual needs

- Topics for individuals (unusual interests)
- Mature topics (sensitive) presented in simple way
  - Social age appropriate
- Jobs in the library system
  - For many individuals it’s a perfect match
  - Supervisors remember the essentials in this program

Materials in the library
What family, staff, teachers need

- Topics re: Autism
  - Some “older” books are still the best resources
  - Books that tell what to do
  - Lots of first person out there. . .but. . .
    (everyone wants to tell their story)

More materials

- Other media
  - DVD, CD
  - Digital books
  - Membership
- Other
  - Picture resources
  - Lamination, velcro, etc
  - Teacher workshop

P.S. Many small publishers
- How to get materials into libraries

Linda’s Resources

Like me on Facebook: LindaHodgdon.autism
(Be sure to visit my AUTISM page)

www.UseVisualStrategies.com