

AUTISM DEFINED & SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

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AUTISM DEFINED

- DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) sets the diagnostic spectrum
 - Spectrum has been revised, released in May of 2013
 - Includes the following
 - Social (Pragmatic) Communication Disorder
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/diagnosis/dsm-5-diagnostic-criteria>
 - Wraparound therapy? Is available in PA☺ Respite care is hard to obtain.

WHAT AUTISM MEANS FOR FAMILIES

- What can we learn and how families feel
 - “Autism and the God Connection”
 - Special gifts like Temple Grandin’s
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/temple-grandin-understanding-autism/>
 - “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time”
 - Autism (genetic or not?) *National Geographic January 2012
 - Autism (caused by vaccines?)
 - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science-news/new-meta-analysis-confirms-no-association-between-vaccines-and-autism>
- Autism (is it punishment?) – experiences of mine from the field
 - Brothers with differing symptoms
 - A need for belonging
 - Missing Church
 - Community outings, field trips, and everyday life = complicated

YOU WANT TO HELP MAKE YOUR SERVICES DOABLE FOR THOSE WITH ASD.... HOW CAN IT BE DONE?

- Ten Strategies “Autism and Your Church” and what I’ve seen in homes, communities, and church
- Express a desire to make church an enjoyable experience by
 - 1) Gathering information
 - Foods, interests, needs, fears, likes, dislikes, aversions, things that work at home or in therapy, BSC, TSS, etc.
 - Incorporate this information – don’t let it collect dust
 - 2) Sharing key information (just because you know it doesn’t mean all teachers in the Beaver room do)
 - Share successes, learned information, things that work, and things that did not (ie: Bubble Machine)
 - Be sure you have parent support to do so
 - Maintain a confidential nature

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- 3) Monitor Sensory Input
 - Toys with batteries, lights on/off/dim, music (must it be that loud?),
 - Flickering lights and rooms that echo
 - Needs for sensory input (sand, water, rocking chairs, exercise balls, bean bag chairs, stress balls, rubber wedges for chairs, chairs with tennis balls, trampoline
 - Too much on the walls, Break time, Avoid touch?
- 4) Think Alongside those with ASD
 - When a problem or success arises, try to figure out why by collecting data (also known as ABA or applied behavior analysis)
 - Before the event, the event, and after
 - Get a buddy system if necessary

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- 5) Routines (and how to communicate them)
 - Routines are NEEDED!!!!!!
 - Verbal, visual, and clear – do them ALL
 - Pictures are great tools (picture schedule)
 - Time Timer <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/store/apps/visual-timers/9wzdncrdfcjp>
 - <http://www.timetimer.com/>
- 6) Advance Warnings
 - If the schedule needs to change for a fire drill, special speaker, sick teacher, etc. communicate it in concrete terms (not soon, in a while, etc.)

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- 7) Communication (make it better)
 - “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus” “Give your heart to Jesus” – a translation will likely be needed
 - NIV, NIV, and New Living translate into more literal meanings
 - Communication devices and/or signing
- 8) The need for Visual
 - Classroom management (marble jar),
 - pictures of desired behavior,
 - organized materials, make prayer visual, be sure visuals are accurate with as little detail as possible (ie. 10:00 end time but church ran over, or so in so can't come to worship because they aren't in the picture used)

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- 9) Stories for new situations (social stories)
 - Helps show desired behavior
 - Can help adapt to a new situation (new classroom)
 - Example:
 - https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/going_to_church_0.pdf
 - http://www.pathfindersforautism.org/articles/view/social_story_for_going_to_worship
- 10) Teach it (don't react to it)
 - Example: "Susie's mean" "Johnny's fat" – teachable moments

OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Will there be a need for shorter services for those with disabilities?
- Are the restroom/changing facilities adequate?
- Are you offering and including those with special needs in your special celebration programs?
- Do your student helpers know how to show God's love and compassion to your special needs members?
- Consider a ministry for parents' time out while church offers childcare.
- Sensory room? Or Sensory boxes?
- Adapted games and crafts for physical challenges?

RESOURCES/QUESTIONS

- Book and online resources with information:
 - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/your-religious-community>
 - “Autism and Your Church” by Barbara Newman (newer version is 2011) <http://www.amazon.com/Autism-Your-Church-Nurturing-Spiritual/dp/1592555721>
- Questions/Comments?