



AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

General Resources and Teaching Strategies.

“Autism is a disorder of social, communicative and repetitive behaviours. Because communication and social development challenges are defining characteristics of autism, assessing and teaching social and communicating skills should be a priority for children on the spectrum.”



“Meeting each child’s emotional needs ultimately drives the development of socialization and communication. Socialization and communication are the products of relationships.” (Quill and Brusnahan, 2017)

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF ASD:

- ASD presents differently in every single child.
- Children with ASD have a wide range of challenges as well as abilities.
- There is often a comorbidity with ASD including conditions such as anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder, clinical depression, down syndrome, fragile x syndrome gastrointestinal symptoms, intellectual disability and developmental delays, motor difficulties, obsessive compulsive disorder, seizures ad epilepsy, sleep problems, Tourette syndrome, tuberous sclerosis,
(<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/>)

SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS

Research suggests the following are important areas to focus on:

- Social skills including social perspective taking and friendship development
- Communication levels
- Response and initialising of joint attention
- Behavioural obstacles
- Restricted and repetitive behaviours
- Organisational skills for executive functioning and self-regulation
- Generalisation of skill development in structures, contrived and natural settings.

(Lord, 2010; Quill, 2000)

DEVELOP A PLANNING DOCUMENT WITH YOUR FAMILY

- Individualise your teaching strategies to the child. The planning document is a way to gather and record information about the characteristics and impact of autism, relevant to the child.
- It will be a “snapshot” of the child. Adapt and update your planning document with the family and key support workers to suit the development of the child.
- Can be used to support children needs by paediatricians and allied health professionals
- Can be used to support planning and transition
- Can be used to communicate the important information

Example of Planning Document

	Communication	Social Skills	Repetitive Behaviours and restricted interests	Sensory Processing	Information processing/Learning styles
Characteristics	Non verbal Uses gestures			Aversion to loud noises especially during large group time.	Responds to visual information more than auditory
Impacts	Becomes easily frustrated			Can become overstimulated and	Appears to not take in verbal information
Strategies	Develop visuals to support the child express common emotions or needs e.g.			Allow quiet time, provide headphones (STIHL buddies), use small group activities	Ask a question and wait longer than normal for a response; use visual cues and gestures

Intervention Approaches

Identify the
child's needs



Review
anticipated
outcomes



Examine
potential
risks



Steps to
selecting an
intervention

What are the child's specific needs based on information gathered from family and allied health support workers?

Adapt intervention approaches to suit the child:

- If the child learns best with highly structured one-on-one instruction, consider traditional behavioural approaches.
- If the child learns best when actively engaged and interacting with others, consider relationship-based approaches to teach skills.

Evidence based practices – adapted from National Professional Development Centre on Autism Spectrum Disorder

Skills Area	Core joint attention	Play	Social	Communication
Antecedent based intervention			✓	✓
Functional communication training		✓	✓	✓
Modelling	✓		✓	✓
Parent-implemented	✓	✓	✓	✓

Skills Area	Core joint attention	Play	Social	Communication
Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)			✓	✓
Peer-mediated instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prompting	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reinforcement	✓	✓	✓	✓
Response interruption/redirection (distractor)		✓	✓	✓
Scripting	✓	✓	✓	✓

Skills Area	Core joint attention	Play	Social	Communication
Social narratives		✓	✓	✓
Social skills training		✓	✓	✓
Technology assisted intervention			✓	✓
Time delay (wait for response)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Video modelling	✓	✓	✓	✓
Visual support		✓	✓	✓

(Quill & Brusnahan, 2017)

Examples in practice

Antecedent-based approaches- arrangement or modification of preceding events or environment to reduce challenging behaviour. If you know a child becomes frustrated before/during transition times, it may be due to the change in environment, the noise level, or the child feels unsure of what is happening. You could use visual prompts and reminders, provide a timer, and/or use a daily schedule to refer to with the child. The child may need to be reassured of where they will be sitting, they may need to get headphones to wear if they are noise sensitive.

Organise the environment and physical setting.

An organised environment provides structured support for the individual with autism. Any structural supports you put in place will enhance your teaching of all children.

Examples of organisational supports may include:

- Clear visual boundaries and physical arrangement of play areas, labels/pictures of how many children can play in an area, daily schedules. Use book shelves, partitions or tape on the floor to create activity areas to explain who, what, where, when and how.

Organisational supports:

- Make clear the expectations to all children
- Increase attention to relevant details
- Increase purposeful activity
- Increase independence
- Increase the ability to observe others
- Increase social interaction
- Enable children to anticipate changes and
- Make changes flexibly



(Quill & Brusnahan, 2017)

Using Visual Cued Instructions

Visual supports provide concrete information, are specific and relevant to the skill area, act as prompts and reminders and increase independence.

Types of visual cues:

- ♦ Activity schedules ♦ Cue cards ♦ Relaxation cues ♦ Self-regulation visuals
- ♦ Social-decision making strategies ♦ Social narratives and scripts
- ♦ Socio-behavioural displays ♦ Video modelling ♦ Visual imagery

Resources and References

- Autism Awareness- Australian based resource.

<https://www.autismawareness.com.au/could-it-be-autism/understanding-autism/>

- Autism Speaks- US based resource.

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism>

Resources for early stages and first concerns for families, tool kits, general resources.

- Lord, C. (2010). Autism: From research to practice. *American Psychologist*, 65(8), 815-886.
- Raising Children – Australian parenting website.

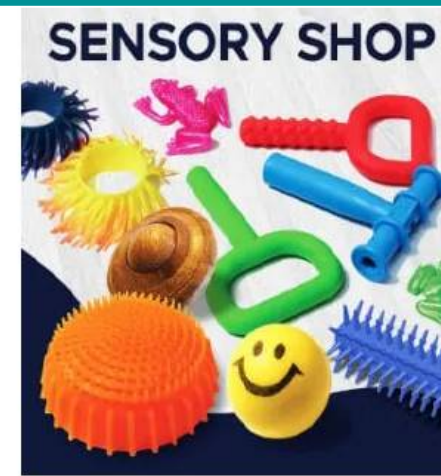
<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism>

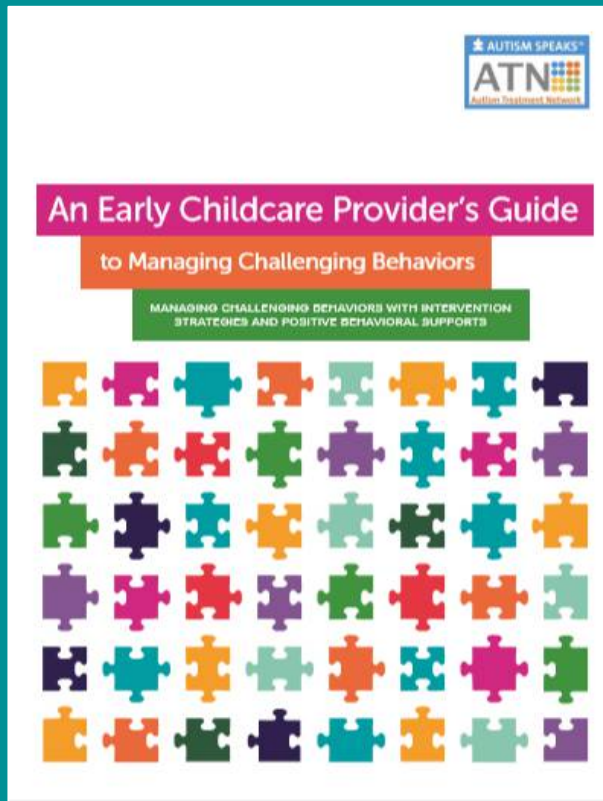
Huge amount of practical resources and information regarding behaviour, communicating and relationships, learning about ASD and more.

- Quill, K. & Brusnahan, L. (2000) *Do-watch-listen-say: Social and communication intervention for Autism Spectrum Disorder*. Baltimore, MD. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Sue Larkey <https://suelarkey.com.au/>

Australian resource, very comprehensive and up to date practical advice and resources for ASD. Free downloadable tip sheets, ebooks, podcasts, newsletters and Facebook presence with families for practical advice, shop and online courses.



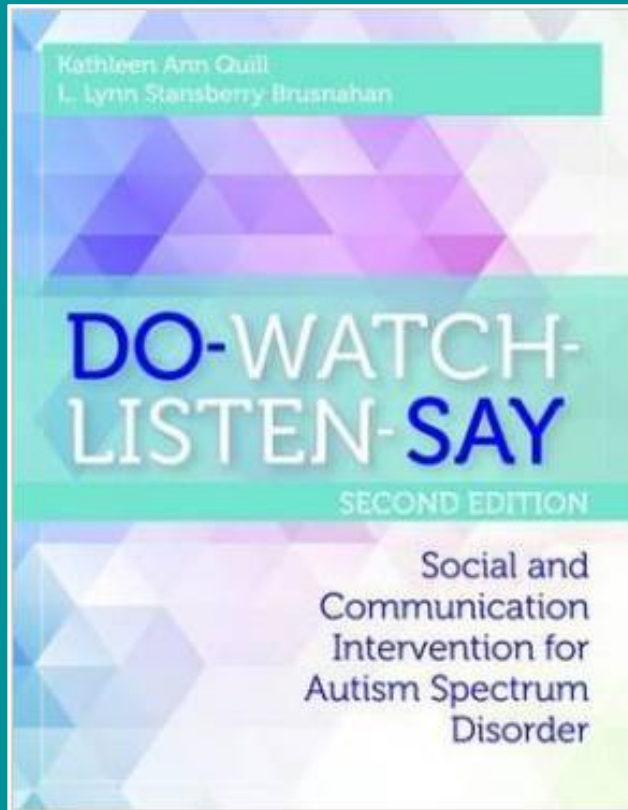


An Early Childcare Provider's Guide to Managing Challenging Behaviours. Managing challenging behaviours with intervention strategies and positive behavioural supports. Autism Treatment Network. Accessed <https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/early-childcare-providers-guide-managing-challenging-behaviors>

Includes intervention strategies and positive behavioural support ideas. This toolkit describes Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), basic developmental milestones, and potential developmental red flags to monitor.

Although the behaviour techniques discussed in this toolkit are suggested to be used for children with ASD, they can be used for ANY child.

Children with behaviour problems that are similar to ASD in some ways can benefit from these interventions — for example children with attention concerns, anxiety, intellectual disability, and social skills deficits can benefit from many of the strategies in this toolkit.



Quill, K. & Brusnahan, L. (2017) *Do-watch-listen-say: Social and communication intervention for Autism Spectrum Disorder (2nd ed.)*. Maryland, USA: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Intervention guide describing in great detail learning differences between neurotypical and ASD social and communication development. Includes evidence – based practices and how to design interventions.