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Humber College
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Running ASD Support Groups at College

Menu

- Goal of ASD Groups
- Who attends
- How I've been planning it
- Some things I've tried already
- Some things I might try
- My concerns
- Your experiences?

What's the goal?

- Help develop social skills that students are not confident in
- Reduce isolation and facilitate friendships
- Safe, supportive, relaxed, visual, structured and interactive manner



Who attends?

Students with:

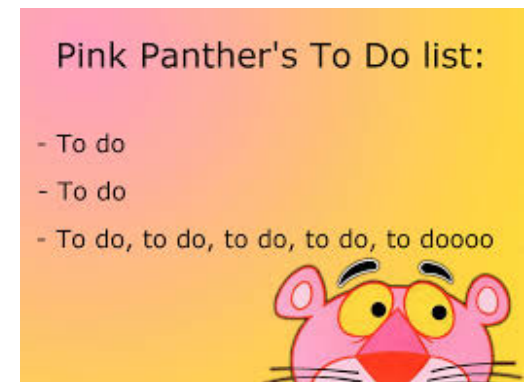
- Asperger's
- ASD
- PDD-NOS
- LD affecting expressive language
- Some degree of social anxiety

5-10 students each session



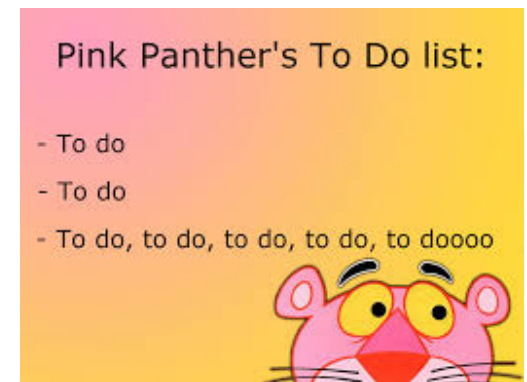
How I've been planning it

- 1 period each week
(plus time for planning and debrief)
- Keep an email contact list of ASD students
- Interrogate all students' schedules to find common available time
- Book room



How I've been planning it

- Advertise via emails, posters, website, during intakes, at TP
- Email reminders each week once group starts

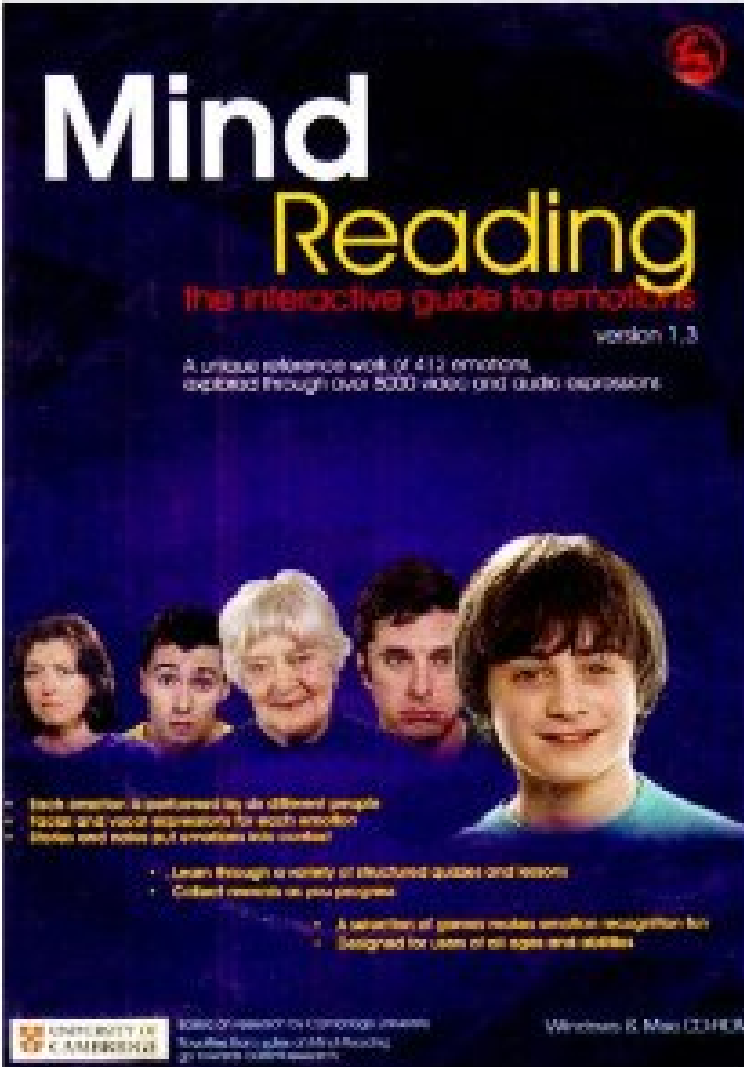


How I've been planning it

- First session – survey
- Last session- reflection and food
- Each session – start with icebreaker and recap



Some things I've tried...



Mind Reading
The interactive guide to emotions
version 1.3

A unique reference work of 412 emotions, explored through over 8000 video and audio expressions.

- Each emotion is performed by six different people
- Facial and vocal expressions for each emotion
- Stories and notes put emotions into context
- Learn through a variety of structured guides and lessons
- Collect rewards as you progress
- A selection of games makes emotion recognition fun
- Designed for users of all ages and abilities

community of CAMBRIDGE
Board of readers for Cambridge University
Specialised from the Mind of Reading
go to www.cambridge.org

Winchester, UK, May 2014

▶ delighted emotion

← 9 of 33 →

definition : very happy about something good that has happened

simple definition : when you feel very good about something.

similar emotions : **gleeful**

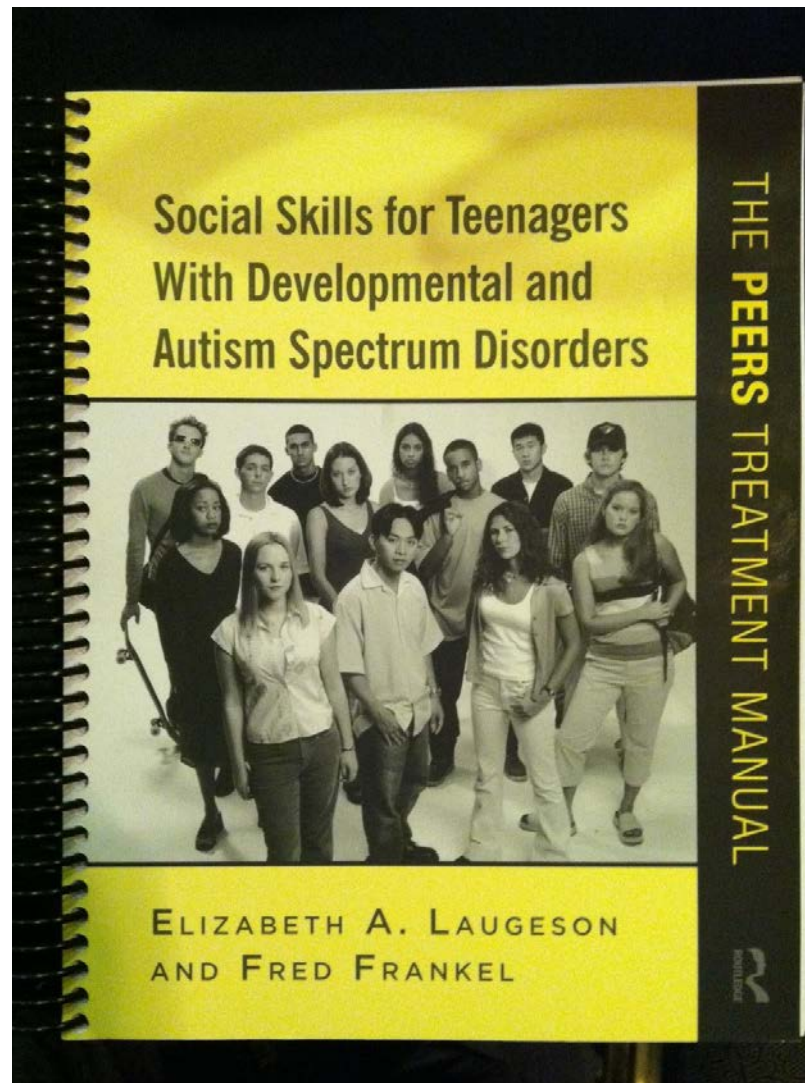


images | stories | voices | info | notes



www.human-emotions.com

Some things I've tried...



Sample video - PEERS

Slipping into a conversation

- Appropriate
- Inappropriate

Some things I've tried...

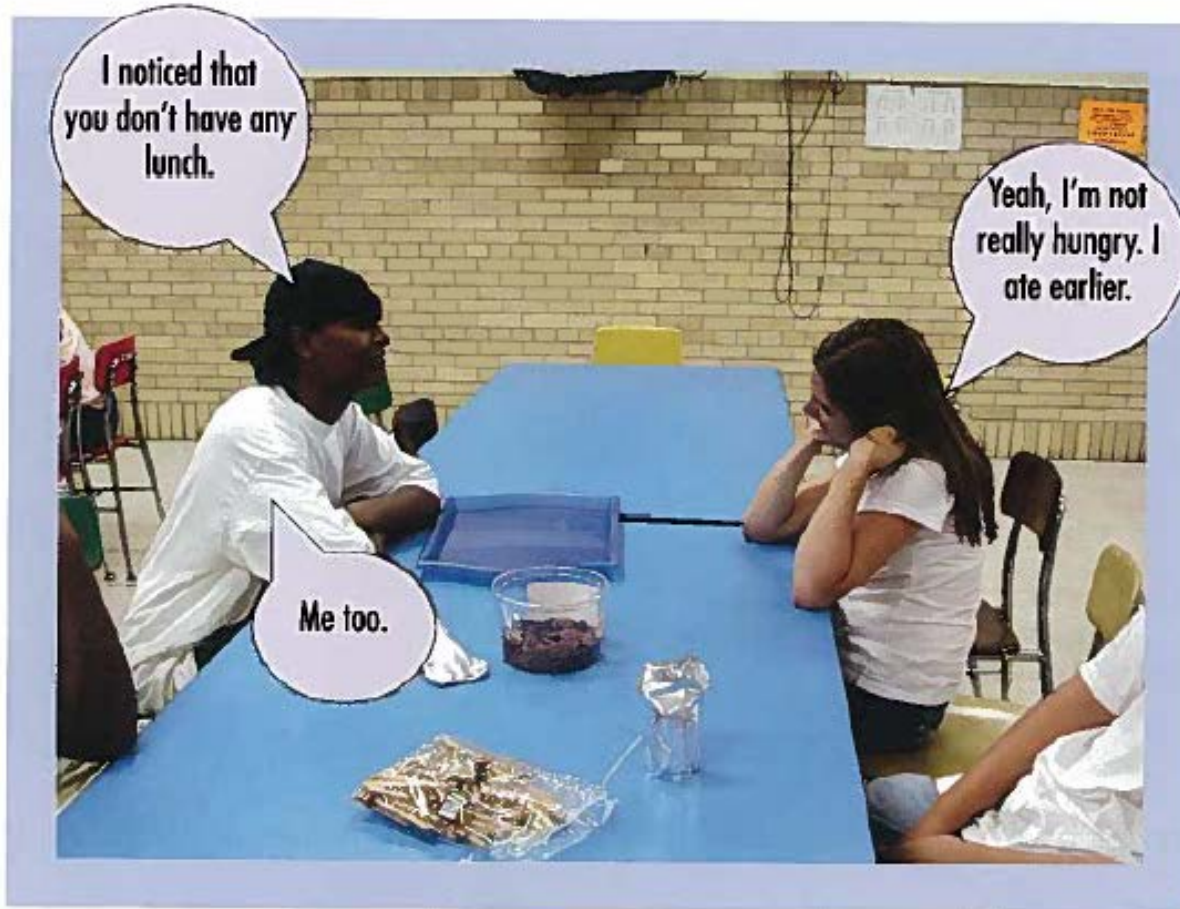


THE SOCIAL SKILLS PICTURE BOOK for High School and Beyond

Dr. Jed Baker



■ Start the conversation about something you have in common.



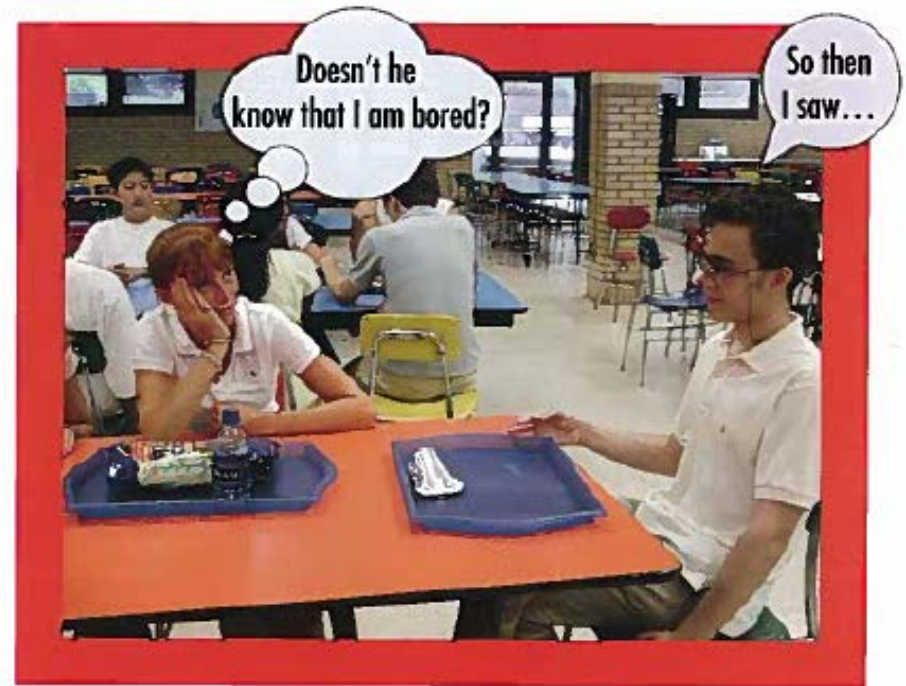
The young man notices that the young woman has no food for lunch, just like him. That is something they have in common.

■ If someone looks bored, ask if they want to hear more.



Right Way

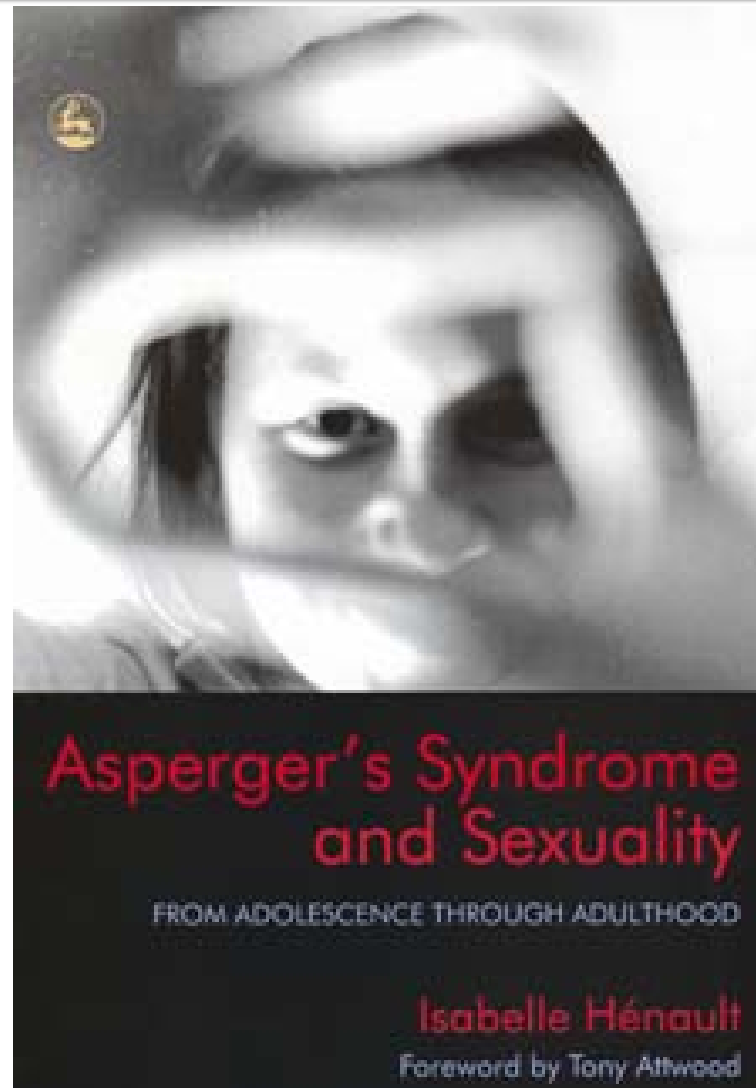
The young man sees that she looks bored, so he asks her if she wants to hear more.



Wrong Way

The young man does not see that she looks bored, so he continues to talk.

Some things I've tried...



Sexual relations and other sexual behaviours

(90 minutes)

General goals

To lead each participant to describe what a sexual relation is to him/her, name different kinds of sexual behaviour, and identify reasons for having sexual relations.

1. Fears: the goal is to allow the participants to express the fears that they may have about sexual relations (see 5.1, "Information for the group leader"). Participants should fill in Worksheet 5.2 and have a group discussion (25 minutes).
2. A sexual encounter: the goal of the next exercise is to think about what could make a sexual encounter agreeable and pleasant. Participants should fill in Worksheet 5.3 and have a group discussion (25 minutes).
3. The five senses: hyposensitivity, hypersensitivity, acceptable or normal sensitivity – what impact can these have on sexuality? What are the possible means by which this impact can be decreased? Test the participants' different senses using the methods explained under "The five senses related to sexuality" (p.137) and listed on Worksheet 5.4. Discuss tips to help deal with participants' sensitivities (40 minutes).

5.1 Information for the group leader

This worksheet provides the group leader with the necessary information to help lead this topic. However, it should be noted that the group leader is by far the most important factor in enabling the goals of this topic to be met. Inevitably, as group leader, you will be asked personal questions. It is important to be prepared for these and to refuse all questions that you judge to be too personal.

You, like the participants, may at times feel uncomfortable talking about sexual relations, since this is indeed an intimidating topic. We suggest that you share your discomfort with the young people, which will help to decrease any tension. A touch of humour will often help too... we also ask that the group leader respect the choice of certain adolescents who might prefer to remain silent.

Nonetheless, you should establish a candid dialogue on sexuality and avoid making value judgements. It is likely that questions will be asked to which you will not know the answer. You can take advantage of such a situation by inviting participants to find out extra information and remind them that learning about sexuality is a lifelong process.

Important factors must be considered throughout these activities, such as the age of the adolescents, their maturity and sexual history. In addition, cultural and ethnic factors should be addressed. It should be noted that cultural differences exist with respect to premarital sex, and these should be considered when discussing such topics as virginity or rupture of the hymen (an intact hymen can be viewed as a symbol of virginity). Circumcision is also frequently performed a few days after birth within certain religious contexts.

The information provided and the vocabulary and means used to convey it must be adjusted according to the characteristics of the group. You should note that some adolescents in the group may not be sexually active while others may be. The interests, concerns, and questions raised may therefore be quite different within the same group. Regardless of whether they are sexually active or not, discussing this topic will allow the participants to become better prepared to experience their first or next sexual relation.

Throughout the activities, the group leader must be sensitive to fact that adolescents commonly have several fears about romantic and sexual relationships. The topic may induce feelings of guilt in some adolescents. To prepare yourself to discuss this topic, consider these common questions and fears that preoccupy young people:

- Will he find me attractive?
- Who makes the first moves?
- Is my penis big enough?
- How do I know if the other person likes it?
- Will it hurt me?

- Will I be disappointed?
- Can you tell if it's someone's first time?
- Will everyone notice?
- Will I ejaculate too quickly?
- Will I be able to get a "hard-on"?
- Will I have an orgasm?
- Do I have enough/too much hair?
- How am I going to suggest using a condom? Will he accept?
- I'm afraid of getting pregnant...
- I'm afraid that I won't live up to it...
- I'm afraid of catching some disease...
- I'm afraid that he/she will leave me afterwards...
- I'm afraid to disappoint...
- Will my parents notice?
- How will I go about it?
- Will he/she tell his/her friends all about it?

All of these concerns are frequently encountered. Adolescents need to be reassured and to have some of their fears reduced to realistic proportions. It is helpful for them to know that the level of satisfaction in first sexual relations is rarely high. Sexuality is learned by trial and error and is tied into a process of discovering one's self and partner.

The five senses related to sexuality

The information outlined in this section is background to Worksheet 5.4.

To the author's knowledge no studies to date have examined the link between sensory states and sexuality in AS. Given the intimate link between sexuality and the senses, this omission is certainly puzzling, especially in light of the fact that individuals with AS can experience hyper- or hyposensitivity.

Hypersensitivity can be defined as extreme sensitivity experienced in one or more of the five senses. Auditory and tactile hypersensitivity are common in AS and may be associated with neurological disorders. For example, light background music played at a low volume can be perceived as loud and shrill. Similarly, a slight brushing up against the skin can provoke the same intensity of pain as would be caused by a sharp object. Various forms of sexual stimulation can therefore cause discomfort or even pain for individuals with AS, reinforcing avoidance behaviours and hindering the development of intimate relationships.

In contrast, hyposensitivity can be defined as weak sensory responses to modest forms of stimulation. In this case, multiple exposures to stimuli are necessary to experience the sensation as a whole.

The five senses activity described in Worksheet 5.4 was devised in order to explore sensory responses to various experiences so that individuals with AS will be better equipped to identify and avoid stimulations that could lead to sensory confusion. The goal of the exercise is to test each of the five senses and tick the appropriate box to determine the level of sensitivity experienced. For example, what is the individual's reaction to soft music or to a loud noise? This can be tested by placing headphones over his or her ears and playing soft and loud music through them (i.e. classical music and hard rock), or whispering in his/her ear and slamming a door. The sensory reaction is usually quite marked. In order to test the sense of touch, the forearm can be caressed with a plush fabric or fur. The exercise should then be repeated using sandpaper. Examples are provided for each sense that needs to be tested. This experiment will allow the participant to express what he or she feels and to realize that what is perceived by his or her senses has an impact on behaviour. The second part of the activity examines the impact of sensory responses on sexuality. These questions can be useful starting points in addressing the subject of sexual behaviours.

Goals of this workshop

The goal of this workshop is for the participants to know and understand some of the different aspects related to sexual relations.

- Allow participants to describe what the term "sexual relations" means to them, and how important sexual relations are for them.
- Have them talk about the different forms that sexual relations can take.
- Allow them to identify factors which motivate individuals to engage in sexual relations.
- Enrich their understanding of various aspects of sexual relations, e.g. emotional aspects, physical aspects, etc.
- Allow them to identify the different types of pleasure related to sexual relations.
- Identify myths about sexual relations.
- Have them identify and name the conditions that are necessary for an enriching sexual experience.

5.2 Fears

Here is a list of common fears about romantic relationships and sexual relations. Circle the letter corresponding to any fears that you have had.

- | | | | |
|----------|---|--------------|---|
| A | Fear of not being liked | M | Fear of regretting it |
| B | Fear of being compared | N | Fear that it will hurt |
| C | Fear of being disappointed | O | Fear of getting naked in front of someone |
| D | Fear of not knowing what to say or do | P | Fear of catching a disease |
| E | Fear of being turned down | Q | Fear of pregnancy |
| F | Fear of showing my lack of experience | R | Fear of not getting a "hard-on" |
| G | Fear of disappointing | S | Fear of ejaculating too quickly |
| H | Fear of looking "easy" | T | Fear that my body is not nice enough (legs, stomach, penis, breasts, hair, muscles) |
| I | Fear of it being too intimate | U | Fear of not having an orgasm |
| J | Fear of what others will think | V | Fear of being left afterwards |
| K | Fear of being provocative | W | Fear that the other person will tell everything |
| L | Fear that the other person only wants sex | X Y Z | Other fears (give examples) |

you circled ten or more fears, you're in the norm. Don't stay alone with your fears. Talk about them: they'll be less scary.

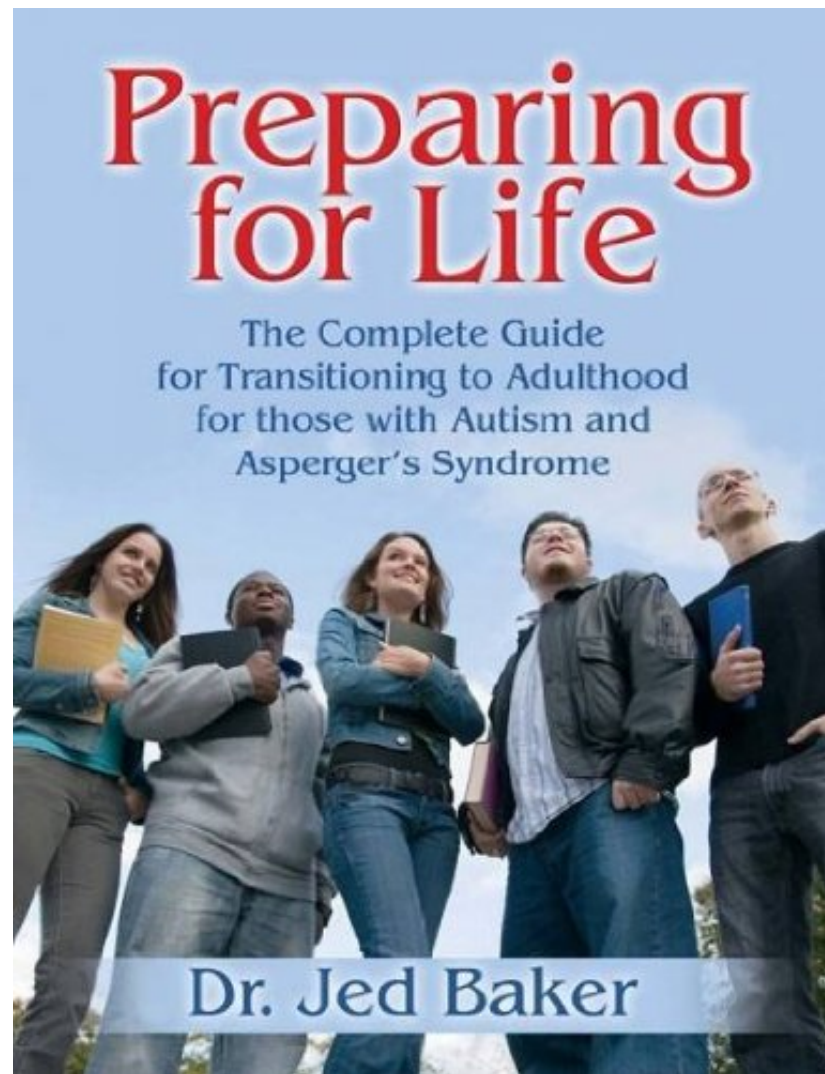
5.4 The five senses

	Hyposensitive Under-sensitive	Sensitive Acceptable	Hypersensitive Over-sensitive
1. Hearing (soft music/loud noise)			
2. Smell (perfume/alcohol)			
3. Touch (soft fabric/sandpaper)			
4. Sight (bright colours/blurry images)			
5. Taste (lemon/honey or chocolate)			

What impact does your level of sensitivity have on your sexuality?

Can you think of possible ways and means of tackling under-/over- sensitivity?

Some things I've tried...



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Interview skills (and whether to disclose a disability)

Rationale

Employers often consider a face-to-face or phone interview as critical to hiring someone. A face-to-face interaction provides some information about what it will be like to interact with that person on an ongoing basis. Thus it is crucial to develop a plan for having a successful interview.

Should you disclose information about a disability?

Many adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) indicate great difficulty with interviews because of their difficulties with social interaction.

- **If social difficulties are readily apparent** during an interview (e.g., difficulties with eye contact, flow of conversation, or idiosyncratic movements) it is often helpful to disclose to the employer that you have a disability while explaining that although it may be challenging, it will not in any way interfere with performing the duties of the job. In fact, you may want to point out how many aspects of autism spectrum disorders make someone an effective employee (e.g., the desire for rules and consistency often make ASD individuals more honest, hardworking and reliable than those without autistic disorders). See “**Telling the truth: A disability worksheet.**”
- **If your disability will interfere with the job duties** (e.g., social skills are key to the job positions), then the job position may not be right for you.
- **If your disability is not at all noticeable** and will not interfere with your job duties, there may be no need to disclose information about a disability.

Preparing for the interview

- **Research the position** to find out exactly what the job duties are, what skills are required, and what the company does. This way you can prepare answers to the questions that the employer is looking for. Study the job posting to find out more about the position. To find out more about the company try one of the following websites: www.interbiznet.com/hunt/, www.joboptions.com, wetfeet.com, corptech.com (then insert company name). Companiesonline.com, pnewswire.com, [\[vault.com\]\(http://vault.com\) \(this contains an employee message board of what employees say about their company\).](http://hoover

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- **Create a portfolio of your work** to show the employer. This might include: Samples of writing, drawings, music, pictures of projects you completed, machines you have maintained, crafts, computer programs, or lists of satisfied clients.
- **Rehearse a 1-minute commercial** about yourself (see “Tell me about yourself worksheet”).
- Rehearse what you might say, if anything, **about a disability** (See “**Disclosing a disability worksheet**”).
- **Rehearse answers to common interview questions**, questions for you to ask them, and how to close the interview (see “**Answers to Common Interview Questions**”).
- **Rehearse how to get to the interview** (take a trial run of your travel plans).

Dressing for the interview

For men and women: Dress one step above what might be expected dress code for the job.

- **Men:** Shaved, hair groomed neatly, pressed suit or dress pants and dress shirt, shoes with dark socks (no white socks), matching belt and shoes, clean looking brief case.
- **Women:** Business dress suit or outfit, nothing too revealing, shoes not sandals, hair is neat (no “big” hair or elaborate styles), not too much make-up, neat portfolio or briefcase.

Nonverbal skills during the interview

Nonverbal skills are crucial, although any information you provide about a disability (see above) may help offset any difficulties here. But it still makes sense to try to present yourself as well as possible. Use the **Nonverbal Behavior Checklist** as a guide for how to conduct yourself in the interview.

After the interview is over

- Write a thank you note (see sample thank you note).
- Call to check on the progress of their search for an employee. Say, “This is _____ calling for _____. He or she interviewed me for the position of _____ (job position) last _____ (day of interview). I was calling to thank him or her and to check on the progress of their search for an appropriate candidate. I would like to express my continued interest in the job and any opportunity to work with him/her. If he/she has any questions, I can be reached at _____ (phone number and email). Thanks again.”

Social Skill Menu

Name: _____ Date: _____

Circle those items that may be a challenge for the student.

• Nonverbal cues/Body language

1. Expressing and reading welcoming versus unwelcoming social cues
2. Interest versus boredom social cues
3. Sarcasm versus genuine expressions
4. Attending to others
5. Respecting personal space and belongings
6. Personal hygiene
7. Dealing with odd motor mannerisms

• Dealing with anger/frustration

8. Understanding your anger
9. Identifying triggers to your anger
10. Altering or avoiding the triggers to your anger
11. Better ways to think about and deal with the triggers to your anger
12. Calming yourself when angry
13. Talking versus acting out your feelings
14. Using the Daily Anger Record

• Dealing with anxiety

15. Dealing with anxiety and fear—understanding the alarm reaction
16. Dealing with unpleasant, intrusive thoughts and compulsive behaviors
17. Dealing with social fears

18. Dealing with new feared situations

• Conversation

19. Saying hello's and goodbye's
20. Introductions
21. Politely interrupting
22. Maintaining and joining a conversation
23. Starting conversations with people you know
24. Getting to know someone new
25. POSTER: Summary of Starting and Maintaining Conversations
26. Conversation repair strategies
27. Politely changing topics
28. Being sensitive to the listener's interests
29. Politely ending conversations
30. Answering the telephone and taking messages
31. Calling friends on the telephone

• Building and maintaining friendships (and dealing with roommates)

32. Where to find friends
33. Don't try too hard too soon
34. Sharing friends
35. Avoiding touchy subjects and insults
36. Complimenting
37. Respecting others' views
38. Don't impose rules on others (minding your own business)
39. Avoid bragging
40. Dealing with peer pressure and avoiding setups

41. Empathic listening
42. Showing caring for others' feelings through supportive statements
43. Deepening relationships—sharing personal information
44. Conflict resolution/Assertiveness
45. Dealing with teasing
46. Showing good sportsmanship
47. Getting attention in positive ways

• **Dating**

48. Where to find a date and how and when to ask someone on a date
49. Asking someone out on a date
50. Reading the signals—when to pursue a romantic relationship
51. Sexual harassment
52. Do's and Don'ts on a date
53. Communicating clearly to meet each other's needs

• **Dealing with school and family demands**

54. Asking for reasonable modifications
55. Dealing with frustrating work
56. Accepting no or waiting for what you want
57. Asking nicely for what you want
58. Working cooperatively in groups
59. Dealing with mistakes and correction
60. How to respectfully disagree with teachers, parents, or supervisors
61. Dealing with stressful living situations

• **Employment skills**

62. Choosing job/career directions

63. Conducting a job search
64. Writing a resume and cover letters
65. Scripts for networking with friends, relatives, and potential employers
66. Interview skills (and whether to disclose a disability)
67. Handling rejection
68. Do's and Don'ts to maintain a job
69. Responding to criticism, accusations or complaints on the job
70. Exiting a job

• **Money Matters**

71. Managing money

• **Preparing for Emergencies**

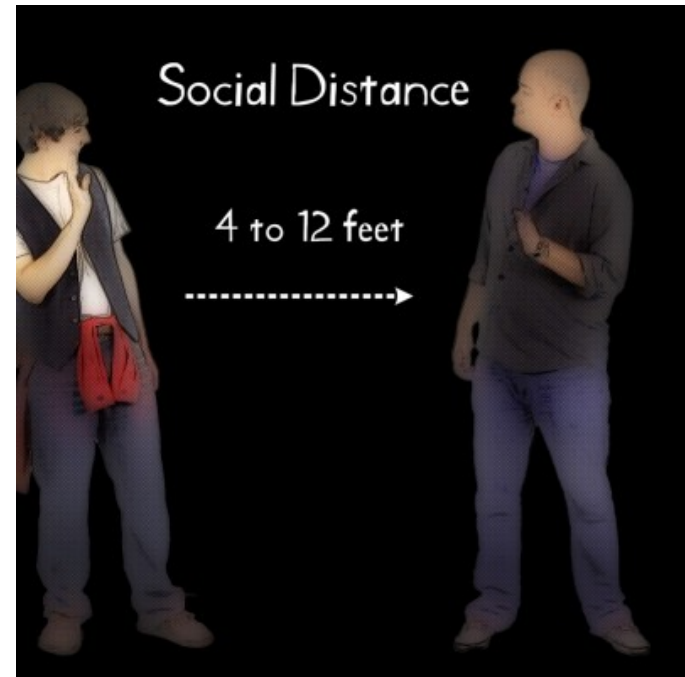
72. Dealing with emergencies and emergency workers (such as police or hospital workers)

• **Transportation**

73. Negotiating transportation

Other things I might try...

Learning To Be Social – Hawkins Institute



HSF Student Club – the A-Team



Some Concerns

- Scheduling and availability
- Should it be skilled based?
- Should it be informal social time?
- How to transfer learning to other contexts



What Are Your Experiences?

