Creating Sensory-Friendly Experiences for Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Renee Grassi, Dakota County Library (MN)

Today’s Agenda

Autism Spectrum Disorder Overview
What does Sensory-Friendly mean?
Sensory-Friendly Library Programs
Strategies for Inclusive Programming Experiences
Break 2:20 - 2:30 pm
Sensory Storytime Overview & Demo
Community Engagement
Inclusive Marketing Strategies
Further Learning & Resources
Q/A
What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder*?

Complex neurodevelopmental disorder

Neuro = brain, central nervous system

Development = lifelong

Spectrum = broad range of differences

Not a disease or mental illness

*All research cited from Autism Society of Minnesota

Prevalence*

Autism affects an estimated 1 in 59 children in the United States.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (April, 2018)
Spectrum of Capabilities

Language & Communication
Social & Emotional
Intellectual Ability
Perception/Sensory/Motor Planning
Attention
Interest/Routines/Rituals

Autism and Co-Occurring Conditions

Epilepsy
Seizures
Gastrointestinal complications
Intellectual Disabilities
Sleep complications
Triad of Impairments

Socialization

Imagination

Communication

Lack of reciprocal social interaction skills

- Lack of “give and take” in conversation
- Unusual or inconsistent eye contact
- Lack of social expression, flat affect
- Facial expressions or body language that doesn’t reflect actual feelings
- Do not learn unwritten rules or social norms instinctively or by observation from peer group
Triad of Impairments

**Restricted and repetitive behaviors**
- Lack of imagination does not mean creativity
- Stereotyped behavior
- Highly structured directions

**Imagination**
- Strict adherence to routine
- Unusual focus or fascinations
- Needs self-stimulation for self-soothing
  - Rocking
  - Packing
  - Flapping
  - Tapping
  - Can be harmful

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**Triad of Impairments**

**Difficulty understanding nuances of communication (verbal and non-verbal)**
- Repetitive Speech
- Echolalia
- Scripting
- Reciprocity in conversation
- Expressive Language
- Receptive Language
- Literal vs. imaginative thinking
- Difficulty understanding and interpreting non-verbal cues
Theory of Mind

Ability to understand & identify thoughts, feelings & intentions of others

- Identifying fiction vs. fact
- Understanding how behavior impacts others
- Identifying and understanding the emotions of self and/or others
- Predicting or understanding others’ perspectives
- Inferring intentions

Executive Functioning

Set of mental processes that helps connect past experiences with present action

Foundation for cognitive and social skills

Executive Functioning Difficulties
- Estimating time it will take to complete a task
- Communicating details in sequence
- Memorizing and retrieving information
- Initiating activities or tasks
- Generating ideas independently
- Multitasking
Sensory Processing

Visual System: Sight
Auditory System: Sound
Gustatory System: Taste
Tactile System: Touch
Olfactory System: Smell

Vestibular System: Balance

Proprioceptive System: Body position

Interoception System: Internal response

Hypersensitive (too much) vs. Hypo-sensitive (not enough)

What is Sensory-Friendly?

- An environment that addresses a variety of auditory, visual and olfactory stimulation
- Offers visual supports to make the environment more predictable
- Addresses challenges with transitions and communication differences
- Explains guidelines for behavior
- Cultivates an atmosphere of inclusion and understanding where all abilities are intentionally welcomed and supported
Sensory-Friendly Programs: Play Groups

Drop-in play group for young children ages 3 - 8 with caregivers and siblings
Toys, play items, and sensory activities available on demand

Sensory-Friendly Programs: Films & Performances

Modeled after AMC Theatre & Autism Society’s partnership program

Accommodated setup allows for more inclusive participation and attendance

Lights turned up, sound turned down, captions on, and fidgets available

No registration required; all are welcome with an an invitation to get up, dance, walk, or shout

Smaller audiences to support sensory overload

For more info: https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2014/03/sensory-friendly-films-family-programming-for-autism-awareness-month/
Sensory-Friendly Programs: Social Groups

3rd-8th grade students partnered with 4th-12th grade friendship ambassadors

Local special education teachers & aides provide support for training and programs

Librarian-led and/or contract programs + social time

Sensory-Friendly Programs: Early Opens

Regular library service; no registration

All ages and all abilities

3D Printing demos and button making

Family crafts and brief storytime

ASL Interpretation available

Participate with local community organizations

For more information:
https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/libraries/Programs/Everyone/Pages/sensory-friendly-early-open.aspx
Sensory-Friendly Programs: Book Clubs

- Monthly book club for individuals with autism, other disabilities & neurotypical individuals ages 14+
- Facilitated by ISD 196 Special Education Reading Language Arts teacher
- Participants vote on monthly theme and can select any book at any level within that theme
- Themes include classic authors, mystery, adventure, fantasy and sports
- Librarian assists with book selection
- All reading levels and formats

2:20 - 3:30 PM

Take a break
Sensory-Friendly Programs: Storytime

Demonstration, Program Overview, and Program Elements

Inclusive Program Strategies: Visuals

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS): augmentative and alternative communication system for individuals with little or no verbal communication abilities

Boardmaker: collection of standardized picture symbols used for communication with students who are strong visual learners, including those with autism spectrum disorders, Down Syndrome, speech and language disorders, and behavioral disorders

For more info:
https://mayer-johnson.com/pages/what-is-boardmaker
Inclusive Program Strategies: Visuals

Behavior Support Lanyard

Visual Choice Boards

CHOICE BOARD

5 Point Scale: Emotional Regulation

Inclusive Program Strategies: Visuals

Program Schedules

Pizza and Board Game Night

6:00: Get to know you games:
1. Rock, paper, scissors
2. In a group of four, everyone plays a game where you name 5 different things:
   - 6 words
   - 6 things you put on pizza
   - 6 vegetables

6:15: Eat pizza and drink soda together

6:30: Board games
There will be different board games that you can play. Some of the games are:
- Connect 4
- Uno
- Chinese

7:00 p.m.: Time to say goodbye and go home.

Icons for Everything

FREE Online Tool: Noun Project

Create Group Schedules and Individual Schedules
Inclusive Program Strategies: Visuals

Visual Timers

This is My Library
The ______ Library

Librarian
When I need help, I ask a librarian.

The librarian at the desk can help me find the books and movies I like. If I get lost the librarian will help me find my grown-up. When I want to talk to the Librarian I say, “Please see me,” and ask my question. I wait for the answer, and after the Librarian helps me I say, “Thank you.”

www.librariesandautism.org

Inclusive Program Strategies: Sensory Exploration

Water Play
Rice Table
Open-ended Crafts
Inclusive Program Strategies: Sensory Supports

Noise-canceling Headphones  Scented Markers  Fidgets  Weighted Blanket

Inclusive Program Strategies: Movement Activities

songs and rhymes using American Sign Language  parachute play  acting out the stories
Inclusive Program Strategies: Multiple Formats

- Multiple Copies
- Touch and Feel Books
- Big Books
- Flannel Stories
- Sensory Story Boxes

Inclusive Program Strategies: Supports

- Single-use ear plugs
- Timers
- Window Reading Rulers
- Sunglasses
Inclusive Spaces: Seating

- Wedge Seat
- Wobble Stools
- Bilibo Chairs
- Balance Cushions
- Backpack Chair

Inclusive Spaces: Furniture

- Adjustable Height Tables
- Walkers
- Educubes
- Wheelchair
Inclusive Spaces: Accessibility Kits

Tools, adapted school supplies, and small equipment to support in-library use

Available first come, first served basis at the service desk

Does not require library card or ID to use in the library

For all ages

Inclusive Spaces: Galaxie Library’s Calming Space

Key Elements
- Social Narrative
- User Guide
- Guidelines for Use
- Unlockable door with window

What’s inside?
- Comfortable seating
- Adjustable lighting
- Sound machine
- Marble wall feature
- Noise-reducing headphones
- Weighted pad & fidgets
- Visual timers
- 5 Point Scale
5 Be’s to Sustainable Partnerships

Be open
Be flexible
Be willing
Be understanding
Be realistic

Inclusive Marketing Strategies

Create an Accessibility Services webpage
Remove librarian jargon
Use buzz words
Consider all formats for promo material
Maximize social media channels
Join the conversation online
Leverage community partners
Find advocates
Inclusive Marketing Strategies

Sample Description

Join us for a sensory and autism-friendly storytime! Read a book, sing a song, dance or play along. Small groups, visual supports, sensory activities, fidgets and orientations will help us all have fun.

Children ages 3 to 8 and their families are welcome. Registration is strongly suggested as group size is limited to 12.

Inclusive Summer Reading Programs

Reconsider the name

Think beyond “reading”

Provide flexibility within program

Promote alternative formats

Offer options for prizes

Consider off-site or online sign-up

Leverage partnerships in promotion

Train teen volunteers and library staff
Further Learning

SNA|LS Special Needs and Inclusive Library Services Blog

ASGCLA Accessibility Tip Sheets

Libraries and Autism

Sensory Storytime: Preschool Programming That Makes Sense for Kids with Autism (ALSC archived webinar)

What’s After Storytime: Programming for Children and Tweens With Autism (ALSC archived webinar)

Programming for Children and Teens with Autism Spectrum

Resources

“Autism Welcome Here” Grant

ALSC/Candlewick Press “Light the Way” Grant

ALSC/Baker & Taylor “Summer Reading Program” Grant

Targeting Autism Forum, Illinois

Wisconsin’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

Autism Society of Wisconsin

South Central Library System (SCLS)
Ask a question

Goodbye

Renee Grassi, Dakota County Library (MN)
Email: renee.grassi@gmail.com
Twitter & Instagram: @MissReneeDomain
Website: www.reneegrassi.com