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ONLINE CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR CAREER

Helping Adolescents with ASD
Access the Curriculum Using Social
Thinking Strategies

Sharon Baum, MA, CCC-SLP

Moderated by:
Amy Natho, MS, CCC-SLP, CEU Administrator, SpeechPathology.com

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How to earn CEUs

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Helping Adolescents with ASD Access the Curriculum Using Social Thinking Strategies

Presented by:
Sharon Baum, MA, CCC-SLP

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What you will hear today:

A. What is "gaining access to the curriculum?
B. What are social thinking challenges" that impacting academic success??
      1. Theory of Mind
      2. Executive Functioning
C. Common social thinking strategies used by SLPs in the therapy room
D. Evidence of social thinking challenges in the classroom
E. Carryover of therapeutic strategies to situations in the classroom
F. Anxiety and Problem Solving impacting social thinking
G. Working towards being able to self advocate for curriculum needs with a case study
H. Summary

continued

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Identify 5 barriers that make it difficult for individuals with ASD to access the school curriculum.

- Describe 3 strategies that SLPs can use to help students experience academic success.

- Identify 3 ways that SLPs can collaborate with teachers to help students with ASD overcome learning obstacles.

continued

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What Are The Core Challenges of Adolescents With ASD?

- I have been part of the NEST Program for 7 years

- They have developed Social Development Intervention (SDI)

- The main core challenges center around difficulties with theory of mind

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What is "Gaining Access To The Curriculum?"

- A lack of access is what determines qualifications for services: IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act)

- Our role as SLPs in the school setting is to help all students gain this access to the general education curriculum (Hutchins, S., 2017)

- Students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education based on individual needs

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What is "Gaining Access To The Curriculum?"

- Making sure we provide the **least restrictive environment** while supporting inclusion

- This means that we need to **collaborate** with all educators who work with our ASD students

- We have to **modify instruction** based on differentiated struggles: IEP

CONTINUED

Core Social Thinking Challenges:

Social learning and social executive functioning issues tied together (Winner, 2015)

So…

1. Theory of Mind

          +

2. Executive functioning

                  =

Difficulty navigating the academic curriculum/social learning challenges

CONTINUED

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Core Social Thinking Challenges:
Theory of Mind

<u>Overarching weakness:</u>

<u>ToM (Theory of Mind):</u>

"The ability to understand the desires, intentions and beliefs of other"

⇩

This impacts a student with ASD's interactions in the therapy, classroom, and any other natural setting

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Core Social Thinking Challenges:
What falls under Theory of Mind?

PERSPECTIVE TAKING   **COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY**

SELF AWARENESS   **APPRAISAL**

EXPERIENCE SHARING   **NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION**

EPISODIC MEMORY

                         CONTEXT

continu**eD**

continu**ed**

Core Social Thinking Challenges: Executive Functioning

Difficulty With:

⬇

- **Organizing** information----social + academic

- Self regulating, making decisions, prioritizing and sequencing actions, evaluating risks, and coping with novel situations

- Initiating academic tasks, prioritizing completing components of tasks, and problems solving

continu**ed**

Strategies used by SLPs: Strengths and Interests

- Interest Inventories in the beginning of the year

- Develop lessons that incorporate shared interests (ie. art, Legos, Pokémon, comedy, cartoons etc..)

- Intangible interests are interests too! (ie. peer mentoring, delivering presentations etc.)

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Visual # 1A: One way to rank interests

Topic	Least liked Most liked
	_____
	_____
	_____
	_____
	_____

continu ed

Strategies Used By SLPs: Strengths and Interests

- Model "new" social concepts

- Use a story related to characters and places from their interest (i.e., Pokémon's response to changing context)

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Visual #1B :Example of Incorporating Interests

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Taking Interest Inventories

Some of our students aren't always fully aware of their "likes" or "interests," so one way to get a better understanding would be to take an interest inventory.

ie. https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip - This website maps interests to potential careers and personalities (students I've used it with enjoyed it).

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Strategies Used by SLPs: Video Modeling

- Pick a difficult to understand social concept

- Allows students to make observations: stop throughout the video clip to allow for associations connected prior experiences

- Problem solving through interests or shows they connect with (ie. super bowl commercial, Pokémon clips, favorite video or tv show clips)

CONTINUED

Strategies used by SLPs:
Comic Strip Conversations- created by Carol Gray

- PICK THE COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

- REQUIRES SPEAKING BUBBLE AND THINKING BUBBLE

- STUDENT REVIEW THE COMIC STRIP ----- "TROUBLESHOOT"

- WAIT FOR A CALM STATE….DON'T WAIT TOO LONG

- PLAY WITH COLORS TO REPRESENT DIFFERENT EMOTIONS:
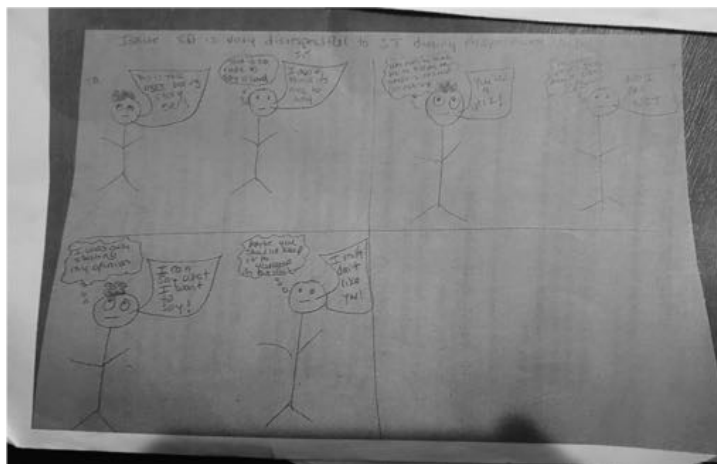 https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx

CONTINUED

Visual #2: Example of Comic Strip Conversation

Visual #3:Example of Comic Strip Conversation:
ST is frustrated that SD doesn't want to listen to his "boring" stories.

CONTINUᴇᴅ

Visual #4: Strategies used by SLPs: Story Grammar Marker

Story Grammar Marker and the Critical Thinking Triangle for Conflict Resolution

https://mindwingconcepts.com/blogs/news/reinforcing-the-critical-thinking-triangle

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Strategies Used By SLPs: Story Grammar Marker

Adapted from the Story Grammar Marker (Maryellen Moreau):

- Based on social situation (real time) or social story

- Multisensory cue that allows student to think about the problem, reflect on the solutions taken, and modify for a different outcome

- Critical Thinking Triangle - helps connect emotions to the trigger event

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Strategies Used by SLPs: Power Card

- Prioritize a reoccurring challenging social "misstep" in the classroom

- Students choose their "hero"

- Two Sides:
  1. Picture of the "hero" + explanation of how they exhibited the social behavior in question
  2. Sequential steps on the other side of what the "hero" can do to receive positive reactions

  portable so can be taken around

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Strategies Used by SLPs: Power Card Video and Example

In this video, we demonstrate how to craft a power card. Mishel is a neurotypical actress.

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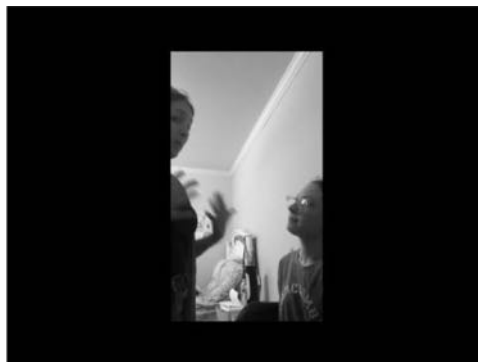
FRONT SIDE

Picture of Arianna Grande should be placed next to the paragraph. Student can draw the visual or upload from the computer.

Arianna Grande loves to perform for her fans. She needs to make sure her fans feel comfortable so they keep coming back to watch her perform. If Arianna Grande gets off the stage and gets very close to her fans to perform in their faces, they may feel uncomfortable, try to walk away, or even leave the concert. They may end up demanding a refund and be reluctant to come to future concert.

OTHER SIDE

In the future when trying to speak with you peers:

1. Make sure not to get too close to peers – this will make them uncomfortable

2. When trying to speak to peers, try to talk about something you both can relate to

3. Avoid interrupting them when they are in the middle of a conversation

Example of Power Card * (Gagnon, 2004), in order to help Mishel how to interact with her peers during the lunchroom to avoid making them uncomfortable, and as a result her feeling frustrated about school

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continu[ed]

Other commonly used strategies by SLPs

- Social Stories (Carol Gray) - https://www.pbisworld.com/tier-2/social-stories/ for more information and examples
- Problem Solving Maps
- Using a therapy dogs
- 5 point scales
  - (voice + stress)
- Role Playing

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Other commonly used strategies by SLPs:
5 point scale for behavior

A great resource for teaching our students about how violating rules can get them into BIG trouble, even if their perspective doesn't align with the perspective of the authority figure that is reprimanding them or issuing them a consequence:

A 5 Is Against the Law! Social Boundaries

By: Kari Dunn Buron

continu**ed**

Visual #5: Other commonly used strategies by SLPs: Example of a **5 point scale for feelings/emotions (can use visuals). NEEDS TO BE INDIVIDUALIZED.**

	EMOTION	WHAT CAN I DO?
5	**FEEL LIKE I WILL EXPLODE**	Go take a walk, or to the break area
4	**GETTING ANGRY**	
3	**IRRITATED**	Squeeze a stress ball
2	**CALM**	
1	**HAPPY**	Take 3 deep breaths

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Visual #5:Additional SLP strategies: Don't Underestimate Man's Best Friend

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Evidence of Social Thinking Challenges in the Classroom: Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension Challenges

- Making inferences based on prior knowledge (episodic memory)
- Synthesizing information from text: "gestalt"
- Understanding the perspectives of different characters antecedent events emotions
- Understanding figurative language

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Bridging Social Thinking Strategies from Therapy Room to Classroom: Reading Comprehension

- Cueing prior knowledge and scenarios by recalling similar episodes
- Using their attention to detail as a way to prioritize the most important information
- Graphic organizers/visuals (example on the next page)
- Students create their own gradient of emotions page
- Incorporate a memory wall to connect text-to-life

continuED

Reading Comprehension: Perspective Taking

Great resource for graphic organizers that focus on perspective taking:

- Helps connect characteristics, events, and emotions
- Incorporates thought bubbles

https://www.risd.k12.nm.us/assessment_evaluation/Character%20Analysis.pdf

continuED

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Visual #7: Example of Gradient of Emotions Wheel

continuⒺⒹ

Evidence of Social Thinking Challenges in the Classroom: Writing

"Individuals with ASD often experience academic problems as well as organizational difficulties, inflexibility, and literal thinking styles, which could impact their written language ability" (Delano, 2007a).

- Students often don't want to initiate the writing process (i.e., executive functioning)
- Students don't understand why they have to write for the teacher (i.e., hidden rule)
- Particular difficulties with organizing writing - prioritizing key information, revising, and formulating complex sentences

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Bridging Social Thinking Strategies from Therapy Room to Classroom: Writing

- Positive Writing Climate is crucial
    - Reinforce "writing for the readers"
    - Writing templates - outlines, organizers and/or sentence starters
    - Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) (Baker et al., 2009)

    - Discuss "hidden rules" of classroom writing expectations
    - Beware of technology based on student, may be useful but could be distracting

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POW TREE Writing - A Self-Regulated Strategy

PICK MY IDEA
ORGANIZE MY NOTES
WRITE AND SAY MORE

TOPIC SENTENCE - WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?
REASONS -3 OR MORE - WHY DO I AND WHY SHOULD MY READERS BELIEVE IN MY IDEAS?
ENDING - WRAP IT UP
EXAMINE - REFLECT- DID I INCLUDE EVERYTHING

Inspired by: http://effectiveinstructionalstrategies.weebly.com/cues-questions-and-advance-organizers.html
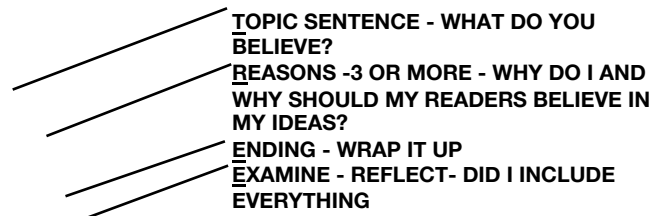
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Visual #8: Teacher-Student Relationships
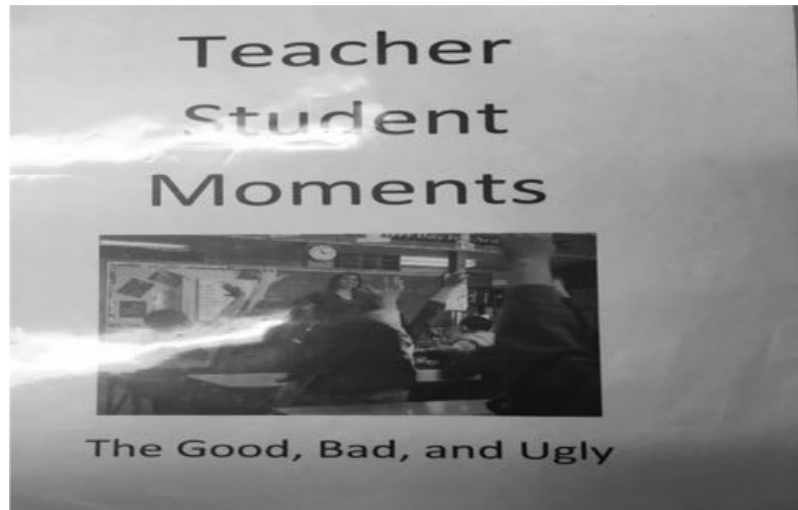
continueD

Evidence of Social Thinking Challenges in the Classroom: Teacher-Student Dynamic

- Confronting the teacher about a rule they don't like can be due to difficulty understanding the specific roles in school

- Correcting the teacher in the middle of class

- Understanding the collective "you" as "them"

continueD

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Evidence of Social Thinking Challenges in the Classroom: Teacher-Student Dynamic

- Telling the teacher about how to speak to another student or how to handle a specific situation

- Some of these statements are viewed as disrespectful… sometimes it's a lack of understanding of roles in the classroom

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Bridging Social Thinking Strategies from Therapy Room to Classroom: Teacher-Student Dynamic

- Comic strips and power cards

- Reviewing the hidden rules that change across contexts (design student-specific list)

- Review perspective taking and emotions - visuals

- Break down reasons for specific choices made by teacher in order to provide a more positive view

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Visual #9: Example of a "Teacher Hidden Rules" for the Teacher-Student Dynamic
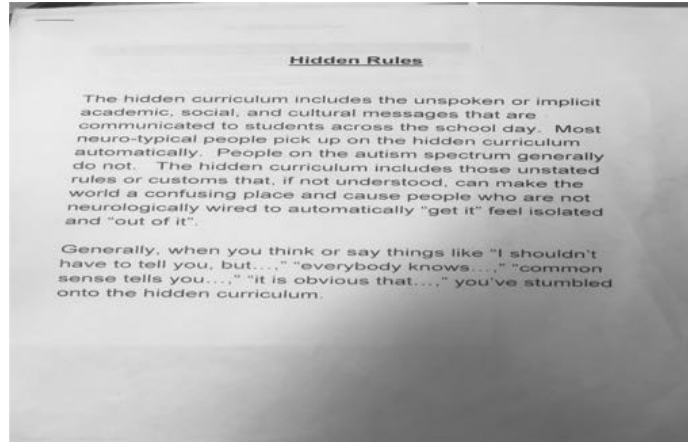Adapted from "The Hidden Curriculum"
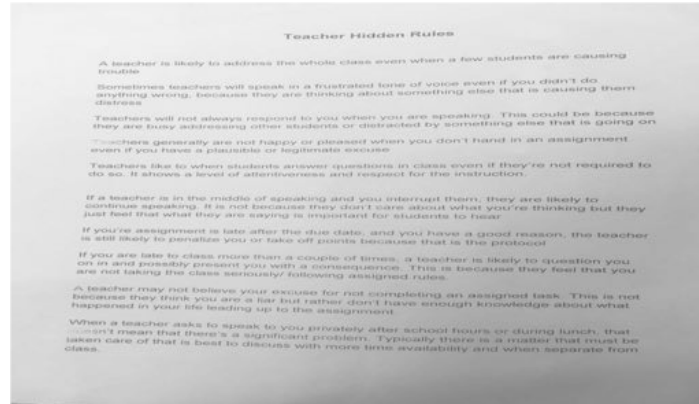
continu**ED**

Visual #10: Hidden Rules Plus Flexibility
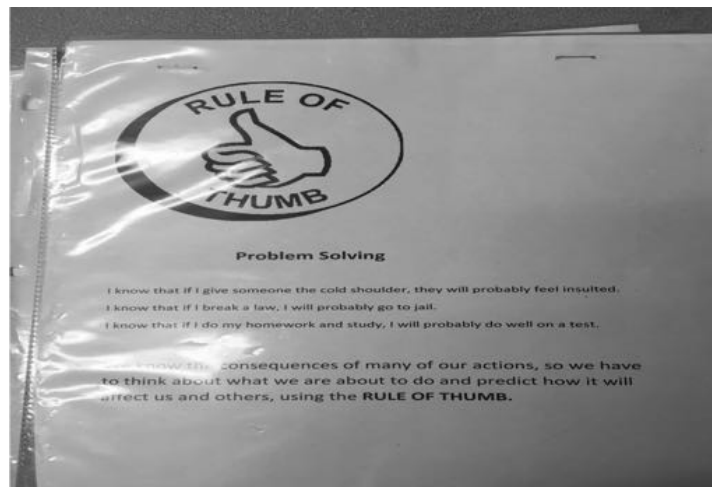
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Visual #11: So What Exactly Are Those Hidden Rules?

Recommended: *The Hidden Curriculum* **By: Brenda Smith Myles**

CONTINUED

Evidence of Social Thinking Challenges in the Classroom: Peer Interactions

- Group work can be especially difficult - may over or under initiate
- Conflict resolution
- Miscommunication/breakdowns are common; can disrupt the entire class
- This difficulty with social engagement can lead to a lack of motivation for school (i.e., not having a study partner or homework partner)
- Conflicts sometimes escalate in the middle of class, the cafeteria etc.   isolation
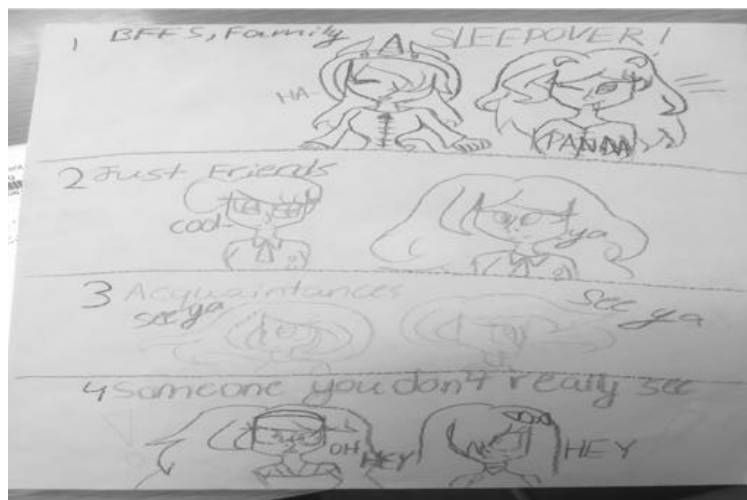
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Bridging Social Thinking Strategies from Therapy Room to Classroom: Peer Interactions

- Using role card visuals to support knowledge of "what they are supposed to do"
- Group thinking vs. individual thinking - separate
- Use of perspective taking models
- Friendship visuals + game for different levels
- Video models or clips that match the situation
- Hidden rules list to explain expectations in a group work setting
- Peer Mentoring - dual learning and relatable model (Baum, 2018)

continued

Visual #12: Example of Friendship Visual Created by Student

Visual #13: Learning About Different Types of Peer Interactions

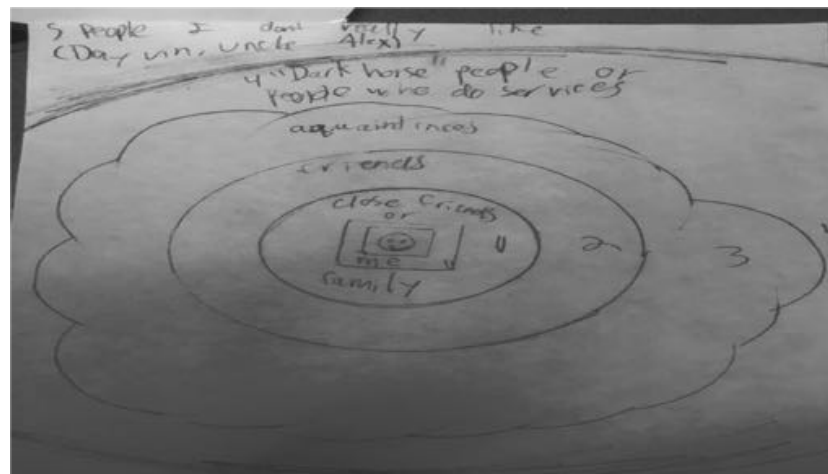Visual #14: Created by Student to Help Differentiate People and Relationships

continuED

Example of Role Playing Card for Group Activities:

In the following image, you see 4 role play cards. Make sure role play cards are specific to the group based on their social understanding and interests. Adolescents don't necessarily want simplistic roles - they want to feel like they are important, so be creative.
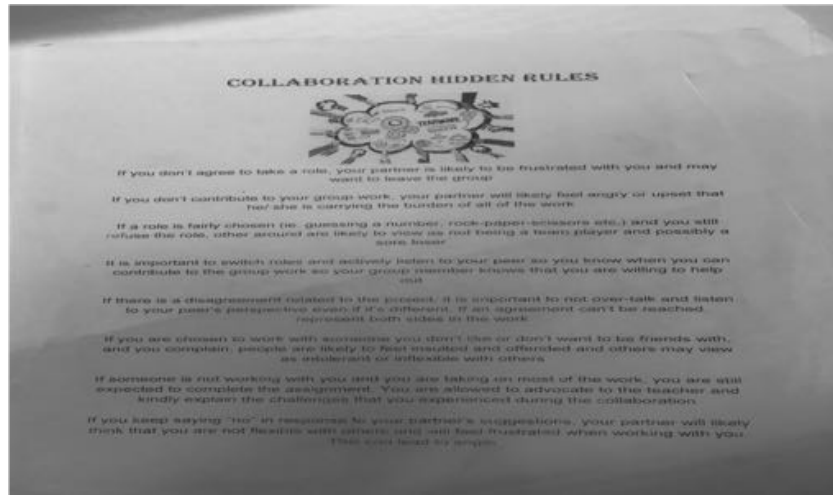
continuED

Visual #15: Example of Role Playing Card

This group had a few students who had a scientific interest...

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR	RECORDER
• You will lead the thinking • Gather the information and share your ideas with the group • Ask group members to share their ideas • Come up with a shared final product	• You are the eyes and ears • Make sure you take good notes • All of the notes should capture the most important information
SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR	**EDITOR**
• Work directly with the primary investigator • Let the primary investigator initiate ideas with you • Make sure to "piggyback" on primary investigator's ideas	• Review the work of the others in the group • Make changes based on any mistakes that you observe • Share modifications with the group before final data of the group investigation is "released"

continuED

Visual #16: Example of Hidden Rule List to Enhance Collaboration

Visual #17: Collaborating Together: Strengthening Peer Interactions

CONTINUED

Evidence of Social Thinking Challenges in the Classroom: Monitoring Anxiety and Problem Solving

Even though we are not mental health professionals- we help students develop self awareness of emotions:

- Students often cope with anxiety when dealing with challenging assignments in different ways
- Can affect student's ability to continue or even start an assignment
- Can cause a student to be aggressive towards peers and/or teachers
- Often the student has difficulty identifying triggers, making it difficult to problem solve

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Bridging Social Thinking Strategies from Therapy Room to Classroom: Monitoring Anxiety and Problem Solving

- Fitbits or other technological physiological monitors; our study based on Tony Attwood:
  http://www.autismspectrumelearning.com

We want to strengthen **episodic memory:**

- Review former situations that led to the same feeling of anxiety before
  A) Try to think of more effective solutions together
  B) Collaborate with social worker and outside therapists

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Bridging Social Thinking Strategies from Therapy Room to Classroom: Monitoring Anxiety and Problem Solving

- Beginning of year survey

- Meditation: i.e., headspace as needed

- Break area and adapted seating

- Learning to recognize the "positives" in spite of challenges

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Bean Bags and Meditation:

Reduced Anxiety= Reduced Agitation=Increased ability to attend to academic tasks with less resistance

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Visual #21:
Positivity:
Recognizing each
other's strengths

This is an example of
student's recognizing each
other's strengths by
choosing positive
characteristics and giving
them awards based on their
positive attributes. This
helps self awareness and
builds a positive climate in
the group that can be
transferred into small
groups in the classroom

In order to gain access, we must work towards advocacy

- This takes a long time, and self awareness must be established first
- Allows the individual with ASD to speak up for what they need:
1. Identify the problem
2. Evaluate the problem and potential solutions
3. Choose an effective solution

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Case Study

Harold is a 14 year old in an ICT class in 8th grade. Whenever he works in a group in ELA, he gets frustrated and students often ask not to work with him because his agitation causes him to yell at students and tell them they are wrong. This is because he struggles with cognitive flexibility, and group work has lately been focused on taking positions about character's responses based on prior readings in class and explaining your group position. How can we support this student advocating for themselves?

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Case Study Response

It is important for the student to know that he/she is allowed to advocate on behalf of their opinions in the group. It is also important for the student to understand the different roles, so he/she knows if they are serving their role efficiently in the group context. Use student-specific strategies that help the individual student better understand that it is ok to have an opinion and explain it while validating the opinions of others that very often will differ based on different experiences.

 "I understand what you're saying, but I am thinking something else"

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Measuring Success

Collaborate with the other professionals in the school building (OT, school psychologist, social worker, and teachers) **to monitor progress**:

- Use IEP goals and strategies mentioned to determine what is working
- Use SLP groups to determine if strategies are working on a small scale - allow time for generalization of skills
- Progress isn't linear
- Be aware of "new" developments (new exposures)

CONTINUED

Measuring Success Cont'd

Example of Questions to ask the Teacher

1. Is the student displaying more awareness of peer's emotions by adjusting statements or actions based on how peers previously reacted?
2. Is the student initiating with increased frequency in the classroom?
3. Is the student displaying an increased ability to monitor frustration, instead of disrupting the class with noises, outbursts, etc.?
4. Is the student displaying an increased ability to work with peers by contributing to group work with less conflict?
5. Can the student more independently switch roles (ie. speaker to listener) in the group?
6. Is the student able to code switch more effectively with the teacher and peers/self-correct statements that could be perceived as offensive or not context-appropriate?
7. Is the student writing more and responding to graphic organizers/outlines (initiating, focusing on the central theme/ being less tangential etc.)
8. Has the student been able to make more inferences about characters when reading, using visual supports?
9. Has the student reduced frequency of "correcting" the teacher in front of the class when he/she believes that an error has been made
10. Is the student staying attentive to a designated task for longer periods of time?

   **** LAST but not LEAST- How is the student doing on academic task and tests? Which classes has he /she improved in and which continue to be a work- in-progress?

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Summary, Q & A

- It is our job as SLPs to help students with ASD access the curriculum
- Many of our students' academic challenges are directly related to difficulty with social thinking
- We have many different ways to support our students using different visuals and activities
- Many of these strategies can be carried over into the classroom, so collaboration with teachers is key

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Summary, Q & A, Cont'd

- This may affect academic subjects AND interactions (including: reading comprehension, teacher-student dynamic, peer interactions, writing, monitoring anxiety and problem solving)
- While we help our students access the curriculum, our goal is to help them learn how to advocate for what supports they need(ie. in high school and beyond)

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continued

Summary, Q & A Cont'd

- We have to monitor the success of these students for progress, but also must be vigilant of any "new" developments in social thinking that could be impacting their academics (based on new situations)
- Progress isn't linear, so always monitor reports and speak with members of the team consistently

continued

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Thanks for listening!

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