

Strategies for Working with Individuals on the Autism Spectrum

Rachel Stotts, M.S., CCC-SLP
2019 PATH Intl Region 6 Conference



Learning Objective

- Attendees will come away with communication strategies and general treatment strategies they can implement into their equine-assisted activities and therapies program that set clear expectations and empower participants.



About Me~

- SLP for 22 years
- Specialty areas: Pediatrics, ASD, Challenging behaviors, Complex Communication Needs
- Assistant Professor/Clinical Supervisor
- Advocate
- Wife
- Mom of 4
- Grandma of 1 😊



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- Social Communication
 - 3 areas
 - Social Emotional Reciprocity
 - Non-verbal behavior
 - Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships, appropriate to developmental level
- Restricted Interests and Repetitive Behaviors
 - 4 listed~ need 2 of the 4
 - Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects
 - Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change
 - Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
 - Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment



Characteristics That can impact Therapy:

- Sensory
 - Need to prepare and make necessary provisions for: helmet, animals, smells indoor vs out door, etc.
- Repetitive Behaviors
 - What may that child need to do to move forward with therapy... how many times can I do it, when can I do it, etc.
- Rigidity
 - Changes may cause anxiety so how can we decrease anxiety: visuals, pre-teaching, social stories, clear beginning and ending, duration maps, etc.
-



Characteristics That can impact Therapy:

- Communication deficits
 - How can we make sure our communication is at the appropriate level for success: visuals, voice output, sign language, short/simple directives, positive language, etc.
- Social Skills Deficits
 - Helping to build appropriate social interactions for the environment and between therapists, volunteers and other riders.



Communication Characteristics

- non-verbal to highly verbal (little Professor)
- Prosody and intonation patterns can differ
- Lack of/Use of gestural communication
- One-sided communication (not reciprocal)
- Unusual phrase/vocabulary use
- Echolalia (present in approx. 75% of individuals diagnosed with ASD)
- Scripting
- Hand Leading



Communication Characteristics

- Processing differences~
 - Need to finish processing the whole thought
- Literal language vs. figurative
- Attention to speech
- Literate vs. nonliterate



Communication Characteristics of Communication Partner

- Short Directives
- Increased Processing time
- Concrete Directives
- Positive Directives ~ what do you want to happen?
- Multi-modalities
- Incorporate Universal Design within the environment (*helps everyone at every level be successful within the environment)



About You?

- What is your attitude?
- What attitude are you projecting?
- How do you give directives?
- How are you presenting materials?
- What ways are you offering for receptive and expressive language?
- How are you transitioning?
- What feedback are you giving?



Clear Expectations & Boundaries

- So taking what we know about individuals we are serving with a variety of disorders, how can we clarify our expectations and create clear boundaries?
- We have to try think like the individuals we are serving
- We need to empathize with the need areas



Ask these Questions from the rider's POV

- Where am I supposed to be?
- What materials/toys can I use?
- What & when can I do something?
- Who am I doing "X" with?
- How long do I have to?
- How do I stay calm/cope?
- When am I done/how do I go to the next thing?



Where I am Supposed to Be?

- Before I get on the horse.
- When I am on the horse.
 - Myself
 - Me & My horse
- When I am getting off the horse.
- After I am finished riding or while I am waiting.



Possible Interventions:

Visual Supports

Social Stories

*can be real pictures and text

*can be video

Instructions

Video Modeling

Consistency!







Mason's Horse Schedule




	Helmet On Belt on
	Walk to Horse
	Pet Horse Brush Horse
	Ride Horse
	Feed Horse Treat
	Walk to Mom Helmet Off

My Prize Today is: _____








 My mom will watch me ride my horse. I




 will get to play games and ride with friends while


 I am on Molly! I need to talk to my friends



 when I am riding Molly. When I am done, I get




 to make a treat for Molly. It will be so much




 fun!


 I can tell my horse lots of things to do. I







 tap her with my hand and use words to talk



 to her. These are the things I can tell my



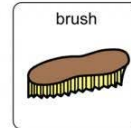
 horse.

<p>walk on</p> 	<p>whoa</p> 	<p>1-2-3 trot</p> 
<p>circle</p> 	<p>weave</p> 	<p>back</p> 

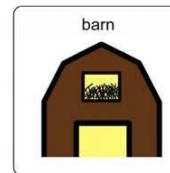




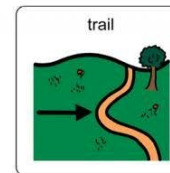
My Riding Choices



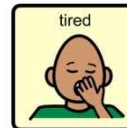
Ride inside



Ride outside



I feel



The Picture Communication Symbols © 1981-2009 Mayer-Johnson, Inc. Used with permission. Design © 2009 GivingGreetings.com.



What Materials?

- Vocabulary: Make it clear to riders and volunteers & be consistent
- Organized storage and follow use and clean up procedures



Possible Interventions:

Label with Pictures/Words












Picture Communication when needed

Use modeling during therapy & video

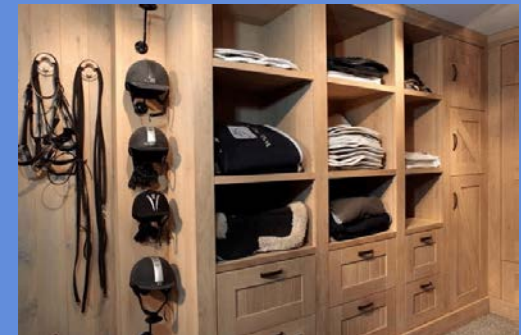
Social Stories

Organized and consistent storage



horseback riding 	helmet 	saddle 
pot 		mane 
brush 		stirrups 
carrot 	apple 	pretzel 

PDF created with pdfFactory trial version www.pdffactory.com



What & When Can I do Something?

- Making it clear when and what is to happen links closely to preferences of each rider.
- How is the rider interpreting the expectation?
 - Excited, scared, drawn towards something else, special interest, etc.



Possible Interventions:

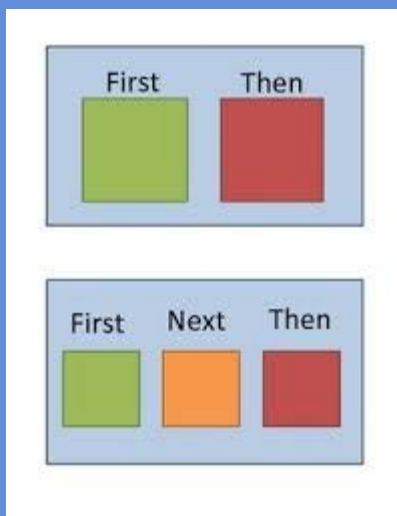
Visual schedule

Choices when able

First Then

Duration Map

Timer





My Riding Choices

I want to



clean horseshoes



brush



pat the horse



help with saddle



put on helmet



ride



Ride inside

barn



Ride outside

trail



I feel

great



bored



tired



cold



The Picture Communication Symbols © 1981-2009 Mayer-Johnson, Inc. Used with permission. Design © 2009 GivingGreetings.com.



Who am I doing “X” with?

- Which horse?
- Who is leading?
- Who will be my side walkers if I have them?
- Who do I listen to?
 - Will someone prompt me?



Possible Interventions:

Pictures /Labels for People

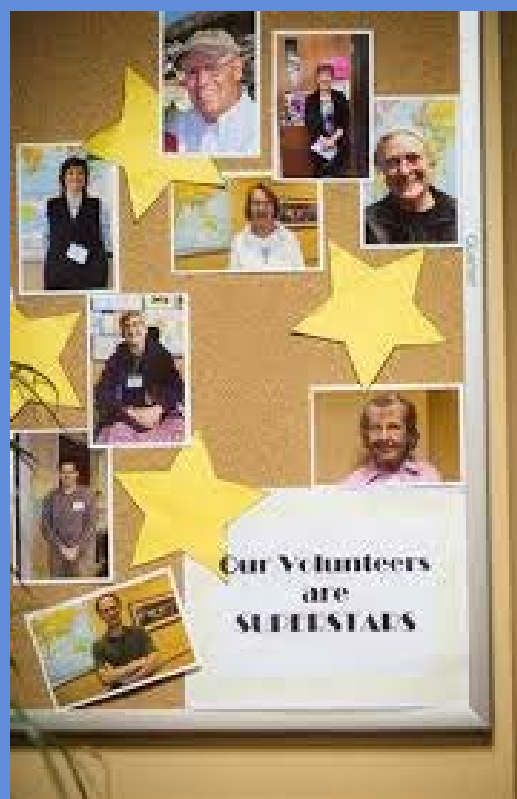
Pictures/Labels for Horses

Layer the Information

Nametags/lanyards

Have Staff Trained in:

- Useful techniques
- Procedures
- Rules
- Consistent Vocabulary



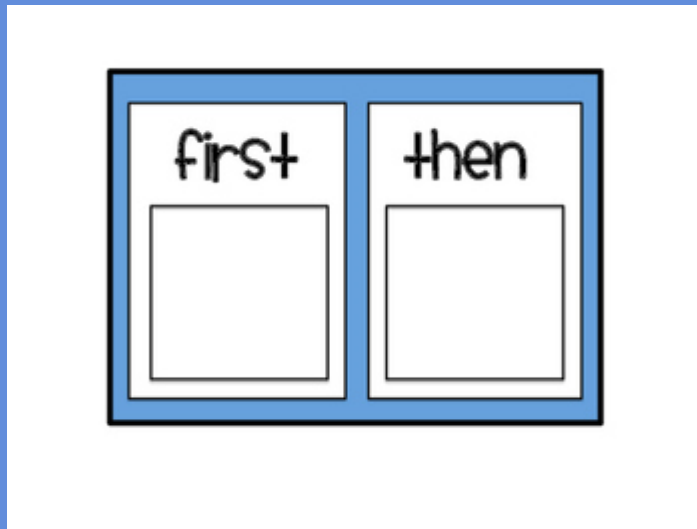
How long?

- How long can I do something I like?
 - “I want trot please?”
- How long do I have to do something I don't like?
 - Be concrete & honor your words!
 - Avoid “in a sec/minute/little bit”
- How long is my lesson?
- How long do I have to wait?



Possible Interventions:

Timer
Duration Map
Schedule
First-Then



How Do I stay Calm/Cope?

- Plan ahead for creating calming space
- Plan how you are going to help handle changes & the unexpected



Possible Interventions:

5 point Scale

Zones of Regulation

Break Cards

Breathing technique with visuals
pretaught

Calming routine with visuals
pretaught

5		Angry I've lost control. I'm not listening anymore. I could hit, kick or bite. I need a quiet place to calm down.
4		Overwhelmed Everything is too hard. I'm losing control and need to leave the environment I'm in. Give me space.
3		Frustrated I'm not getting it. I'm showing signs of stress. I should take a break now.
2		Anxious Trying to stay focused, but having a hard time staying on task. Use calming strategies now.
1		Happy Ready and willing to Work.



















What zone am I in?

REST AREA
→



















GO

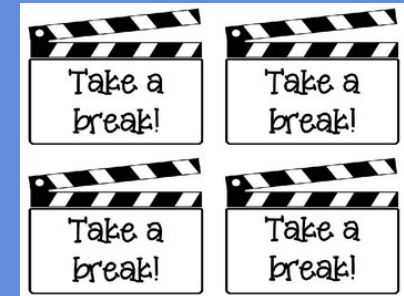
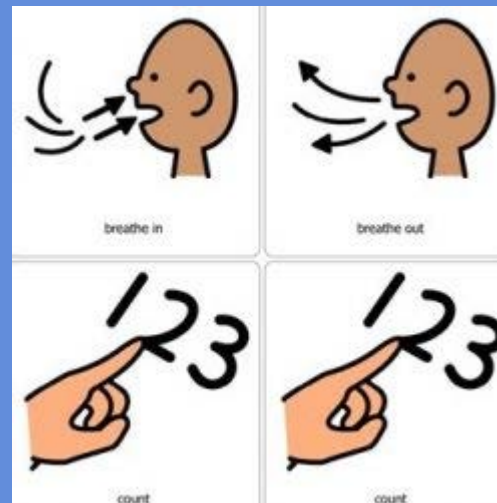
SLOW

STOP

 sad	 tired	 calm	 I'm ready to work	 silly or wiggly	 upset	 frustrated	 mad
 sick	 bored	 happy	 I'm okay	 hyper	 confused	 yelling	 hitting

Use tools to get in the green zone

 drink of water	 count	 deep breaths	 squeeze and release	 wall push ups	 use fidgets	 draw	 write this	 talk with adults
 take a break	 self talk	 take a walk	 stretch	 volcano breath	 lift something heavy	 ask for a snack	 think of a calm place	 listen to music



When am I Done?

- When is the individual done?
- If challenging behaviors are present what happens?
- What do I do when I am done?
- What are my responsibilities?
 - Consistent expectatins for transitions/cleaning up/ finishing in each space



Sensory is Important!

- Listen to the Individual, parents/caregivers, and your observations regarding the sensory needs of your riders.
- Consult an OT that knows about sensory interventions.
- Have sensory supports available at your site.



Additional Thoughts:

- Be aware of each rider's individual strengths/needs
- Maximize sensory strength
 - Ex: If child is unable to see, utilize touch, auditory, etc.
- Familiarize self with each rider's disability
- Use "*Special Interest*" as a motivator
- Use "person first" language
 - Ex: S/He has autism vs. 'autistic'



Challenges & Brainstorming:



References & Resources:

- Gray, C. (2010). *The new social story book* (10th anniversary ed.). Arlington, Tex.: Future Horizons. 5 Point Scale
- Gray, C. (1994). *Comic strip conversations: Illustrated interactions that teach conversation skills to students with autism and related disorders* (Rev. and updated. ed.). Arlington, Tex.: Future Horizons.
- Kuypers, L., & Winner, M. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control*. San Jose, CA: Think Social Pub. Boardmaker Software
- Buron, K., & Curtis, M. (2012). *The incredible 5-point scale: Assisting students in understanding social interactions and controlling their emotional responses* (Significantly improved and expanded 2nd ed.). Shawnee Mission, Kan.: AAPC Pub.



References & Resources:

- <http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies-and-approaches/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations/what-is-a-comic-strip-conversation.aspx>
- <http://teacch.com/about-us/what-is-teacch>
- <http://www.timetimer.com/>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/vistimer/id434108079?mt=8>
- Social Stories: <http://kidscandream.webs.com/page12.htm>
- <http://www.machkovich.com/Cory/AutismRecovery/SocialStories/index.htm>
- <http://www.autisminspiration.com/public/department47.cfm>
- <http://www.speakingofspeech.com/>
- <http://teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com/2008/02/free-boardmaker-boards-and-activities.html>
- http://www.cmcgc.com/media/handouts/101103/210_Brenda_Smith_Myles.pdf



References & Resources:

- Pinterest
- Google Images
- Boardmaker:
<https://goboardmaker.com/pages/boardmaker-online>

