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Linda Hodgdon's Newsletter

*Another View: Effective Solutions for
Autism, Asperger's & More. . .*



May 2010 : Volume VI, Issue 5

For as much as we would like to pretend that it isn't going to happen, puberty arrives. All children grow up. Our students with special needs have a lot to learn. Social interaction, communication and academic skills are all important. But so are self care skills. And that leads to dealing with all the body and emotional changes related to puberty.

This month I am writing about what our students need to learn that is the same as other students and what might need to be a little different. It's an important topic to think about, even if you think the students you work with are too young. It's important to plan ahead and prepare. Be sure to check out the resources page after the article.

Read on . . .

Linda

P.S. Don't miss the *F*R*E*E* webinar on May 27. I'll be interviewing Marianne Bryant about some thoughtful and creative ways to use visual strategies.

This program is guaranteed to give you some more ways to use visual tools for student success. Be sure to sign up, even if you can't attend on the day of the program.

I know most of you are working during the day. That's why I'll send an email after the program to everyone who



***F*R*E*E* Webinar**

**8 Tips for Creating
Success with Visual
Strategies**

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signs up. The email will have a link to view the program on your own time schedule. But you have to sign up to receive the email with the link. What an easy way to get more ideas that will help you with your students.

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Delicate Topics: Puberty and Students on the Autism Spectrum

Yes, children grow up. They have bodies that get more mature. It doesn't matter what their social skills are like and it doesn't matter what their intellectual level is. Their bodies continue to mature physically and they go through puberty.



Somehow, it seems that their physical maturity occurs far sooner than their social or emotional development.

It's important to prepare

Remember, our students learn and they will learn about their bodies in the same way they learn about other things. It will take teaching, repetition, explanations, visual strategies, step-by-step instruction . . . all those "best practices" that we use for teaching other topics and other life skills.

Where do you start?

It's helpful to have good tools to use when teaching topics related to body changes and the social, emotional and sexual issues that arise for teens. There are many books on the market to help. Most of them are the same books that parents and educators use when teaching typically developing students.

What's the same?



Much of the information that our students

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with ASD need to learn is the same as the information that other students learn. Understanding physical body changes. What to do about it. How to handle the hygiene issues that arise. How to manage the feminine and masculine development changes.

What's different?

Here's where a lot of judgment is necessary. Beyond the specific physical changes in their bodies, there emerges a whole plethora of other topics about emotions, relationships, appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, personal or family values and lots more. It all becomes so abstract. This is where it starts to get unclear because our students with ASD demonstrate a wide range of capability, interest and social understanding . . . it's that spectrum thing.

So what to do?

Here are a few things to consider.

1. Determine the right amount of information

It's essential to assess the "need to know." What information is important for that student? Consider cognitive ability and level of social understanding when deciding what to teach.

2. Clearly define family values



It's important for families and educators to communicate about how the family wants to handle situations and what information is necessary related to personal topics.

When everyone has a common understanding about how to proceed, the student will benefit.

3. Edit teaching materials

There are some excellent books available to help teach about personal topics. Although some are written for students with special needs, most are intended for the general population of pre-teens and teens. Most have useful art (visual strategies!) and "student level" vocabulary.

But because of that "spectrum" of our students, some topics in books may be inappropriate either because of "need to know" or family values. So . . . get out your scissors. Just because it's in the book, it doesn't have to stay there. Buy two copies of the book if you need, so you can eliminate pages of un-needed or inappropriate material. Then you can create a personal book that will be perfect for that individual student's needs.

4. Start teaching early enough

Remember that the learning curve for



students with special needs may be slower than for other students. It is usually better to teach a little bit at a time over a long time span than to try to do too much all at once. Being proactive will produce better long term results than “emergency” teaching that is the result of being too late.

With a little preparation, delicate topics can be handled effectively. They can be taught matter-of-factly so students have just the right amount of information to meet their needs at just the right time.



Visual Strategies to Help Teach Delicate Topics

It's often much easier to teach some topics to our visual learners with pictures and with picture books. Finding the right art and the right books to help teach the right information may not always be easy. Here are some resources that may help. Please keep in mind that you need to decide what is appropriate for your child or the students you are working with. And don't be afraid to edit. A resource can become perfect for your needs when you remember to use your scissors once in a while.

[Click Here for Resources](#)

AFO Members Only



I will be interviewing Dr. Tom Buggie in a webinar on Thursday, May 20 about using video modeling for students with ASD. He has done some fascinating research to help us know what works and what doesn't work when using video for teaching. We'll be talking about some of the “how to” info to get started using effective video. I am excited because this will be a really interesting and informative program.

This webinar is *FR*EE* for members of AutismFamilyOnline.com We will be sending an email that has all the details to all AFO members. Watch your email.

Not a member?

Go to AutismFamilyOnline.com to check it out.



Don't Miss Upcoming *F*R*E*E Webinar

Everyone is invited! I co-authored a book with Marianne Bryant titled **Practical Communication Tools for Autism: Using Visual Strategies for Lifelong Success**. She is the Mom of a daughter with ASD. I have known Marianne for a lot of years and I am always impressed at how she has learned to use visual strategies for all the "little things" that have created a "big difference" so her daughter has been able to achieve success. Join us for this webinar as we talk about how to use visual supports easily, but effectively, to help students become successful.

Thursday, May 27 @ 12:00 noon EDT. Be sure to sign up even if you can't attend at the time of the event. We'll send you a link so you can attend on your own time schedule.

[Check out the details](#)

New Book Full of Visual Samples

I love "practical." I love "simple." And I love things that work. That's why I'm so excited about a new book. It is all about the nitty-gritty of visual strategies. Get your copy of **Practical Communication Tools for Autism: Using Visual Strategies for Lifelong Success**.



This is a unique story because it creates a longitudinal view that follows one child from preschool to high school. It's packed with a wonderful sampling of the visual tools that helped Caity become successful and the situations that created the need for them.

[Click here for information on the NEW book](#)

Things of Interest



Curiosity's Call

Its synonyms include wondering, questioning, searching, examining. It's at the heart of inquiring minds, and the motivation for those with an

intense desire to know and understand. A person without it is labeled a "fysigunkus."

Ah *curiosity* – that insatiable thirst to learn, explore, investigate, and study. If you are to be successful living with or working with individuals on the autism spectrum, your quest quotient must be passionate and powerful.

Ignite your curiosity. How? Start with reading articles in the multiple award-winning magazine, the **Autism Asperger's Digest** - a magazine designed to satisfy the curious in you in a positive, practical, and proactive way. Articles address traditional, alternative and emerging thought, written by parents, teachers, noted experts in the field and of course, people with ASD.

Be curious! Subscribe today!

Gold Winner, *2009 Mom's Choice® Awards*

4-time Gold Winner,

2010 NAPPA Parenting Resources Award

Click here for more information: AutismDigest.com

About Linda

Linda Hodgdon, M.Ed., CCC-SLP is a Speech-Language Pathologist and a Consultant for Autism Spectrum Disorders. She is the author of the bestseller, **Visual Strategies for Improving Communication**, one of the most recommended books in the field of autism.



Internationally recognized as a powerful and informative speaker and consultant, Linda has presented her insightful and dynamic workshops to audiences of educators and parents worldwide.

Click here for more information about [Linda's programs](#)

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Tidbits ...

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****Do YOU have a success story from using visual strategies?**
Some of the best teaching results come from sharing ideas. Please send your story to office@usevisualstrategies.com with the subject line "my story". I will share some of these ideas in upcoming issues.

To ensure that you receive Linda Hodgdon's newsletter in your inbox (not bulk or junk folders) add office@usevisualstrategies.com to your address book.

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