

# Sensitivity Training

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## Introduction

*Over one half million people in the United States today have some form of autism. Its prevalence rate now places it as the third most common developmental disability – more common than Down Syndrome. Yet most of the public, including many professionals in the medical, educational, and vocational fields, are still unaware of how autism affects people and how to effectively work with individuals with autism.*<sup>1</sup>

This statement by the Autism Society of America (ASA) makes one acutely aware of the need for information on autism. It is indeed the most critical factor when integrating a person with autism into the mainstream setting. For typically, it is not that the person with autism cannot perform the job or follow the daily routine of an integrated educational environment, but rather the dilemma occurs when the people surrounding the person with autism do not understand the reason for the specific behaviors. They do not have the information to redirect or implement the systems to create the needed change for the person with autism.

Therefore, when integrating a person with autism, it is as much work to inform the mainstream person interacting with the person with autism as it is to develop the systems to effectively manage the person with autistic behaviors. This is a case where education and information delivered in a methodical, nurturing method is truly the key to developing appropriate integrated setting for people with autism.

The sensitivity training outlined in this book has been developed to fill this need. This information has been presented to over 500 general education students and staff in 15 diverse districts throughout Oakland County, Michigan. This sensitivity training was developed to deliver information about students with Autism/Aspergers to general education students and staff. However, it also is a vehicle for providing information to the public in general. While students and staff need information about the students with autism in their classroom in order to understand the unique nature of the disability, the same training could be used in hospitals and residential settings.

The important concept behind the sensitivity training is the simplicity in the delivery while offering complexity in content. The training manual provides systematic directions for delivering the training. This training allows a boundary to be broken and about the delivery of the patterns of autism. The instructor will actually highlight some of the sensory, communication, organizational and behavioral needs of a person with autism. This provides the mainstream people with a vehicle to begin to communicate what autism is and how it affects the daily interactions of a person who has autism. Ignoring the behaviors a person with autism/aspergers exhibits within a classroom is like ignoring someone in a wheelchair. The person in the wheelchair is going to need the support of the class to be successful within the general education setting. The person with autism/aspergers will likewise need the support of the class to be successful within the general education/mainstream setting. This support will be in the direction and guidance of same aged peers. The person with autism will also need the opportunity to follow an organized system to make changes in their behaviors. Moreover, understanding is needed from the people in the integrated setting that sometimes their behavior just cannot be helped because of environmental noises or societal expectations.

With the incidence rate of autism growing, it is the responsibility of the educational, medical, and vocational communities to assist in the awareness of autism. As stated earlier, in most situations where people with autism are integrated, it is not that they cannot perform the job/modified academic skills within the placement, it is because the mainstream people around them have not been educated about their unique needs.

It is no longer acceptable to hide people with autism. Some people with autism have gifted academic, vocational, and artistic talents. It is time to let the mainstream people supporting a person with autism in on the magic of what it takes for that person to be successful. It is time to educate the public.

## Sensitivity Training Session #1 – Communication

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Age of Students: Preschool through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Staff needed: A teacher/consultant knowledgeable in autism

General Education Population: Preschool students (3 & 4 yrs old) through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.  
Students who are aware of students with autism in the general education setting.

Materials needed: None

Time Allotment: Approximately 15-20 minutes

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### Important Issues:

- ◆ It is important to name the student who has autism in the classroom. This allows the students to focus in on the student and not try to guess which student it might be.
- ◆ General education students know there is something different about the student with autism. Trying to talk about autism without naming the student just adds to the mystery. Students are much more supportive of a student with autism once they have information about autism.

### Important Concepts:

1. An understanding of the unusual stereotypical behaviors of students with autism.
2. An understanding of how difficult it is to communicate without using words.
3. An understanding of the behavior of the students with autism within the classroom.
4. A sense of control for the general education students when they are around students with autism.

### Objectives:

- ◆ To give the general education students in the classroom awareness of autism.
- ◆ To provide the general education students an opportunity to develop empathy for students with autism.
- ◆ To allow general education students the opportunity to observe how student behavior changes when communication is impaired.
- ◆ To allow general education students to demonstrate frustration when they are not being understood nonverbally.

### Introducing the Activity:

1. General education students in the classroom can either sit at their desk or in a large group setting.
2. The teacher/teacher consultant knowledgeable of autism is introduced to the class.

3. The teacher informs the class he/she is there to help them understand a disability called autism.
4. The teacher then tells the class he/she would like to play a game while he/she is teaching the class about autism.

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### Activity

The teacher explains the rules of the game:

1. The students cannot talk or write any information.
2. The students must let the teacher know they must use the bathroom and it is an emergency.
3. The students must follow the teacher as he/she is speaking.
4. The students cannot exit the classroom while the teacher is speaking.
5. The students can use any method except talking and writing the information to help the teacher understand the need to use the bathroom.

The teacher begins to explain autism in very simplistic terms:

1. You cannot catch autism.
2. Autism is something you are born with.
3. Autism affects more boys than girls.
4. Autism does not have a cure.
5. You cannot die from autism.
6. Some people with autism communicate in different ways: letter boards, picture boards, sign language, augmentative devices, etc.
7. Some people with autism like to do things over and over again because it makes them feel better.

While the teacher is teaching about autism, students are trying to get the teacher's attention through gestures, movements, noises, pointing, etc. about the need to use the bathroom.

As the students try to gain the attention of the teacher, the teacher is negatively responding to the student behavior:

I.E.

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| “You need to sit down and listen.”               | “Please don't disrupt the class” |
| “Are you sick? Do you need to go to the office?” | “Do you need help”               |
| “You are not making any sense”                   | “Why are you acting like that”   |
| “I don't understand what you need”               |                                  |

As the teacher is teaching, the student's behavior continues to increase.

The teacher consultant continues to redirect the behavior of the students.

The teacher then tells the group the game is over.

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## **Application**

The students talk about the behavior of the other students in the room during the exercise. The teacher explains that sometimes people with autism need something but are not able to communicate to others what they need. This sometimes forces the students with autism to behave in ways that are not understandable to those around them (adults and students).

## **Follow Up**

The teacher should do the following:

- ◆ Explain to the students that you will come back to the classroom frequently to answer questions about autism.
- ◆ Give classroom teacher /aide information about autism so questions can be answered.
- ◆ Peer-to-peer interaction will allow for more specific questions about the students with autism to be answered.

## Sensitivity Training Session #2 – Sensory System

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Age of Students: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade through Middle School

Staff needed: A teacher/consultant knowledgeable in autism

General Education Population: Third grade through Middle School aged students who are aware of students with autism in the general education setting.

Materials needed: Masking Tape

Time Allotment: Approximately 15-20 minutes

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### Important Issues:

- ◆ It is important to name the student who has autism in the classroom. This allows the students to focus in on the student and not try to guess which student it might be.
- ◆ General education students know there is something different about the student with autism. Trying to talk about autism without naming the student just adds to the mystery. Students are much more supportive of a student with autism once they have information about autism.
- ◆ Students at this age will not understand the word sensory, so the teacher should use the word “feel” or “uncomfortable” when describing what the tape felt like.

### Important Concepts:

1. An understanding of the unusual stereotypical behaviors of students with autism.
2. An understanding of how difficult it is to communicate without using words.
3. An understanding of the behavior of the students with autism within the classroom.
4. A sense of control for the general education students when they are around students with autism.
5. An understanding of the sensory deficits of a student with autism.

### Objectives:

- ◆ To give the general education students in the classroom awareness of autism.
- ◆ To provide the general education students an opportunity to develop empathy for students with autism.
- ◆ To allow general education students the opportunity to observe how student behavior changes when communication is impaired.
- ◆ To allow general education students to demonstrate frustration when they are uncomfortable with their sensory system.



**Introducing the Activity:**

1. General education students in the classroom can either sit at their desk or in a large group setting.
  2. The teacher/teacher consultant knowledgeable of autism is introduced to the class.
  3. The teacher informs the class he/she is there to help them understand a disability called autism.
  4. The teacher then tells the class he/she would like to play a game while he/she is teaching the class about autism.
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**Activity**

The teacher explains the rules of the game:

1. The students need to take a piece of masking tape as it is being passed.
2. The students must place the piece of masking tape somewhere on their skin. (The students are not allowed to place the tape in their hair or on their eyes.)
3. Once the students have placed the piece of tape on their skin, the teacher explains to the students they are not allowed to remove the piece of tape until the teacher is finished speaking.
4. The students may ask questions throughout the presentation expect those students who have placed tape over their mouths. Those students will need to write the information down to help the teacher understand the question. (Do not explain this point until after the students have placed the tape and they understand they may not remove the tape until the end of the presentation.)

The teacher begins to explain autism in very simplistic terms:

1. You cannot catch autism.
2. Autism is something you are born with.
3. Autism affects more boys than girls.
4. Autism does not have a cure.
5. You cannot die from autism.
6. Some people with autism communicate in different ways: letter boards, picture boards, sign language, augmentative devices, etc.
7. Some people with autism like to do things over and over again because it makes them feel better.
8. Definition of autism.

While the teacher is teaching about autism, students are pulling at the tape and touching the tape because it is uncomfortable. Those students who have placed the tape over their mouths may be writing questions down on a piece of paper.

As the teacher is presenting information, he/she is ignoring the unusual student behavior. Students typically are itching the skin or trying to remove the tape.

As the teacher is teaching, the student's behavior continues to increase. The only information the teacher shares about the tape is a reminder that they must leave the tape on until the teacher is finished talking.

The teacher tells the group to remove the tape when she is finished presenting.

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Follow Up:

The teacher should do the following:

- ◆ Explain to the students that you will come back to the classroom frequently to answer questions about autism.
- ◆ Give classroom teacher /aide information about autism so questions can be answered.
- ◆ Peer-to-peer interaction will allow for more specific questions about the students with autism to be answered.
- ◆ General education students formulate their own reasons for behaviors of students with autism. It is important to follow up at least once a month to answer and give accurate information.

## Sensitivity Training Session #3 – Sensory Stimulation

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Age of Students: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade through Adults

Staff needed: A teacher/consultant knowledgeable in autism

General Education Population: Third grade through adults aware of or working with students with autism in the general education setting.

Materials needed: Fan

Radio

VCR

Roadside Assistance Light (preferably one that makes noise)

2 Laffy Taffy pieces per person (taffy that is hard to chew)

An additional person to flick the lights

A 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math test

The third grade math test has two different sentences on it, besides the 24 or so questions. The first sentence reads: You must change seats with someone else in the room. The second sentence is: You must do ten toe touches. The first sentence should be placed halfway down the page, the second sentence should be at the very end of the page.

3 noise-making battery operated toys

Piano (if available.)

Time Allotment: Approximately 25-45 minutes

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### Important Issues:

- ◆ It is important to name the student who has autism in the classroom. This allows the students to focus in on the student and not try to guess which student it might be.
- ◆ General education students know there is something different about the student with autism. Trying to talk about autism without naming the student just adds to the mystery. Students are much more supportive of a student with autism once they have information about autism.
- ◆ Sensory issues affect a student with autism. It is important to try to identify the sensory needs of the student within your classroom.
- ◆ People with autism are very purposeful with their actions although some of the actions of a person with autism may seem unusual to those around them.
- ◆ A person with autism is beginning to or is learning how to compensate for all of the sensory stimuli in the general education environment.
- ◆ An understanding of the purpose behind the unusual stereotypical behaviors of students with autism
- ◆ An understanding of the behavior of the students with autism in the classroom.

**Objectives:**

- ◆ To give the general education students in the classroom awareness of autism.
- ◆ To provide the general education students an opportunity to develop empathy for students with autism.
- ◆ To allow general education students the opportunity to observe how student behavior changes when communication is impaired.
- ◆ To allow general education students to demonstrate frustration when they are uncomfortable with their sensory system.

**Introducing the Activity:**

1. The teacher/teacher consultant organizes the room prior to students/staff arrival. Room organization includes:
  - a. Place a rotating fan in the middle of the room (unplugged)
  - b. Place a radio at the back of the room. This radio should be set at full volume between two very strong radio stations (unplugged).
  - c. Two pieces of taffy should be placed at each student location
  - d. The VCR should have a tape with the wrong tracking speed at full volume.
  - e. The roadside assistance light should be available to flick the lights or bang on the piano.
  - f. The three battery operated toys should be strategically placed throughout the room (usually one in each corner).
  - g. An extra staff person should be available to flick the lights or bang the wall.

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**Activity**

1. The 3rd grade math tests are passed out to the class face down.
2. The teacher explains this is a timed test, the students will have 15 minutes to complete the test. The teacher also explains that the students must eat the two pieces of candy and follow the directions on the test.
3. The teacher tells the students to begin the test.
4. Once the students turn over the test, the teacher turns on the fan, VCR/TV, roadside assistance light, the battery operated toys and the radio. The additional staff begins to flick the lights on and off and bang on the piano (if available).
5. Immediately the class will begin to react to the noise and confusion in the room. Some students may become distracted, some may laugh nervously, and some may turn over the test and refuse to take it under the conditions. It will be extremely hard to concentrate with all the commotion in the room.
6. The teacher will need to remind the class that they are taking a timed test and the class needs to pay attention to the test.
7. Some students will become discouraged and just give up on the test. The teacher should encourage the students to complete the test. With elementary and middle school students it may be important to offer a prize to the first student to complete the test with all the answers correct.
8. Throughout the test, students will be changing seats with each other and touching their toes. Students who have a more difficult time with the test will not understand the movement in the room. This will also cause frustration.
9. After 15 minutes the test is collected.

## **Application:**

The teacher allows the class to debrief from the testing situation. While the class is debriefing with each other, the teacher should be walking around the room, unplugging the props used during the testing situation. The teacher should be listening to the conversations in the room about the frustration with the test while he/she is shutting down the props.

After the teacher has created a quiet atmosphere in the room, he/she should begin a class discussion about the confusion and frustration while taking the test. Included in that discussion should be comments made by the students while he/she was unplugging the devices. The teacher should refer to these comments and direct questions to the student(s) who made the comments.

The teacher should not embarrass the student, but rather should try to gain insight from the student on the reason why they were feeling so out of control, frustrated, confused, etc.

The teacher should then explain the reason for the different pieces of equipment used during the testing situation:

1. Radio – The radio was placed between two different radio stations because many times people with autism are hypersensitive to noise. Many students with autism learn how to block out the noise, but it is still in the background just as the radio was in the background.
2. VCR/TV – The VCR/TV was utilized to again heighten the awareness of the acute hearing of some individuals with autism. A student with autism may be able to hear the VCR/TV from the adjoining room. This may interest a person with autism and cause him/her to be distracted from the lesson taught within the classroom.
3. Fan – A fan was placed in the center of the room because many times in classrooms, the heater/air conditioner is making noises and/or blowing air throughout the room. Some individuals with autism are more sensitive to the noise or the movement of materials in the room because of this.
4. Roadside assistance light – This piece of equipment is used because some individuals with autism may perseverate on the noise and action that ambulance, police or fire engine makes as it passes by the school. Although many other students in the class may be unaware of the vehicle passing, the student with autism may disrupt the general education class during these outside events. A student with autism may also perseverate on a fire drill, tornado drill, etc. This would give a perspective on how those drills must impact a student with autism.
5. Two pieces of candy (taffy) – Many students with autism have oral motor problems, which may interfere with the student's ability to remain in the general education setting without some type of material to address the oral motor problem, i.e., gum, rubber tubing, etc.
6. Lights flicking – Many students with autism have an aversion to fluorescent lighting. The student with autism may try to block out the light or may compensate for the lighting by squinting.

7. Battery operated toys – Many students with autism are keenly aware of the computer in the classroom. The battery-operated toys represent the noise a computer may make while the teacher is teaching the class.
8. Piano – While many students with autism are startled by sudden noises such as a book dropping on the floor or a desk drawer slamming shut. These noises are unpredictable just as the piano was unpredictable. Students with autism may perseverate on the noises within the classroom.
9. Toe touches/changing seats – Many students are impulsive and it is hard to determine the intent of their movement. Many times their behavior is often confused with a lack of direction. Students with autism typically have a purpose for their movement; it is just hard to determine the intent.
10. The teacher should explain that it is very unlikely the student with autism in their classroom has all of the sensory problems presented during the test. The reason for the amount of distractions was to present the different ways that autism could affect a person

The teacher should do the following:

- ◆ Explain to the students that you will come back to the classroom frequently to answer questions about autism.
- ◆ Give classroom teacher /aide information about autism so questions can be answered.
- ◆ Peer-to-peer interaction will allow for more specific questions about the students with autism to be answered.
- ◆ General education students formulate their own reasons for behaviors of students with autism. It is important to follow up at least once a month to answer and give accurate information.

## Sensitivity Training Session #4 – Same and Different

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Age of Students: Preschool through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Staff needed: A teacher/consultant knowledgeable in autism

General Education Population: Preschool students (3 & 4 yrs old) through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Students who are aware of students with autism in the general education setting.

Materials needed: Chalkboard or Whiteboard

Time Allotment: Approximately 15-20 minutes

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### Important Issues:

- ◆ It is important to name the student who has autism in the classroom. This allows the students to focus in on the student and not try to guess which student it might be.
- ◆ General education students know there is something different about the student with autism. Trying to talk about autism without naming the student just adds to the mystery. Students are much more supportive of a student with autism once they have information about autism.

### Important Concepts:

- ◆ All students with autism are good at some things and not so good at other things just like every other student.
- ◆ General education students can feel empowered to support the student with autism in many different settings.
- ◆ All people are alike and different at the same time.
- ◆ General education students will be able to understand why many students with autism have such a difficult time in situations they just take for granted (playground, free time, and lunchroom).
- ◆ General education students will begin to understand that it is not that the student with autism does not want to be a part of the game; it may be that they do not understand the game that is being played.

### Objectives:

- ◆ To give the general education students in the classroom awareness of autism.
- ◆ To provide the general education students an opportunity to develop empathy for students with autism.
- ◆ To allow general education students the opportunity to observe how student behavior changes when communication is impaired.
- ◆ To allow general education students to demonstrate frustration when they are uncomfortable with their sensory system.

**Introducing the Activity:**

1. General education students in the classroom can sit either at their desk or in a large group setting.
  2. The teacher/teacher consultant knowledgeable of autism is introduced to the class.
  3. The teacher informs the class he/she is there to help them understand a disability called autism.
  4. The teacher then tells the class he/she would like to play a game called “Same and Different”.
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**Activity****Part A – Same:**

1. All students are asked how they are the same as everyone else in the room.
2. As students are giving the similarities about everyone in the room, the teacher is writing them information on the board under the category titled “The Same”.
3. Expected answers are: “We all have eyes (hair, toes, shoes, clothes, etc.).”
4. The teacher continues to write the information on the board until the concept is exhausted.
5. If students are having a difficult time giving similarities, the teacher may jump-start the group by giving suggestions such as “Which students have eyes (ears, nose, etc.)?”

**Part B – Different:**

1. The students are asked how they are different from others in the room.
2. As the students are defining the differences of everyone in the room, the teacher is writing the information on the board under the category titled “Different.”
3. Expected answers are: “We all have different color of eyes,” “Some wear glasses,” “Some of us can read better than others,” “We all have different colored skin,” etc.
4. The teacher continues to write the information on the board until the concept is exhausted.
5. If students are having a difficult time giving similarities, the teacher consultant can ask a child up to the front of the room and ask the students, “What is a difference between the teacher and the student?” (Typically, the students say the teacher is taller, older, etc.)
6. The students having a difficult time seem to understand the game when a blatant example is given.

**Part C – Autism:**

1. The teacher explains that in many ways, everyone is the same and in many ways, everyone is different.
2. The teacher will point out specifics about how the students are the same and different such as “Kim and Michelle are both in Girl Scouts and that



makes them similar.” “Tim has glasses and Tom does not and that makes them different.”

3. The teacher then can ask the group, “Who can play the piano?” As the students raise their hands, the teacher can explain he/she is not able to play the piano. That makes him/her different from the students who can play the piano.
  4. The teacher then explains that all of us are good at some things and not good at other things. Everybody has strengths and weaknesses.
  5. The teacher then will explain when you have autism you are very good at certain things and sometimes not so good at other things, i.e., a student with autism may be an excellent reader but may have difficulty playing with other students on the playground.
  6. The teacher begins to explain autism in very simplistic terms. The terms are:
    - You CANNOT catch autism.
    - Autism is something you are born with.
    - Autism affects more boys than girls.
    - Autism does not have a cure.
    - You cannot die from autism.
    - Some people with autism communicate in different ways – letter boards, picture boards, sign language, augmentative devices, etc.
    - Some people with autism like to do things over and over again because it makes them feel better.
  7. While the teacher is teaching about autism, students are asked what they are good at and what they might have a difficult time with.
  8. As the students are giving answers, the teacher explains that everybody is good at certain things and may not be good at other things.
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### **Application:**

The teacher then asks what the students need if they have a difficult time with a certain subject area or activity. Typical student responses are: extra help, a peer buddy, a calculator, etc.

The teacher asks how the class could help someone who has a difficult time playing with other students on the playground or sharing. The student’s typical answers are: They could be a friend to the student on the playground, they could play a game that the student wants to play, they could be more patient and understanding, they could invite the student to play, etc.

The students will develop many of the solutions to the problem presented.

**Follow Up:**

The teacher should do the following:

- ◆ Explain to the students that you will come back to the classroom frequently to answer questions about autism.
- ◆ Give classroom teacher /aide information about autism so questions can be answered.
- ◆ Peer-to-peer interaction will allow for more specific questions about the students with autism to be answered.
- ◆ Setting up a schedule of which students will support the student with autism on the playground/lunch room/free time is very helpful.

## **Sensitivity Training Session #5 – Have you ever been really, really angry at your Parents/Teachers?**

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Age of Students: Third grade through Middle School

Staff needed: A teacher/consultant knowledgeable in autism

General Education Population: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through Middle School Aged students who are aware of students with autism in the general education setting.

Materials needed: Chalkboard or Whiteboard

Time Allotment: Approximately 15-20 minutes

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### **Important Issues:**

- ◆ It is important to name the student who has autism in the classroom. This allows the students to focus in on the student and not try to guess which student it might be.
- ◆ General education students know there is something different about the student with autism. Trying to talk about autism without naming the student just adds to the mystery. Students are much more supportive of a student with autism once they have information about autism.
- ◆ Students this age will understand the frustration associated with not being able to talk about the feelings the students are exhibiting. The teacher/teacher consultant should acknowledge the student's concerns. It is sometimes important to have a social worker at the training to assist the students dealing with their own issues.

### **Important Concepts:**

- ◆ An understanding of the aggressive behaviors of students with autism.
- ◆ An understanding of how frustrating it must be not to communicate with words to everyone around you.
- ◆ An understanding of the behavior of the students with autism within the classroom.
- ◆ A sense of control for the general education students when they are around students with autism. They will be given a crisis plan to follow. They will practice the plan and they will understand why a student with autism is acting the way they are acting in their classroom.
- ◆ An understanding they will be protected if they have a behaviorally involved student in their classroom.

### **Objectives:**

- ◆ To give the general education students in the classroom awareness of autism.
- ◆ To provide the general education students an opportunity to develop empathy for students with autism.
- ◆ To allow general education students the opportunity to observe how student behavior changes when communication is impaired.

- ◆ To allow general education students to demonstrate frustration when they are uncomfortable with their sensory system.

### **Introducing the Activity:**

1. General education students in the classroom can sit either at their desk or in a large group setting.
2. The teacher/teacher consultant knowledgeable of autism is introduced to the class.
3. The teacher informs the class he/she is there to help them understand a disability called autism.

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### **Activity**

1. The teacher tells the class he/she would like the students to think of a time when they were really angry at their mom, dad, teacher, sister, brother, etc.
2. The teacher asks the students to give specific examples of how the student handled their anger.
3. The students will be asked to explain situations in which they were very angry with someone. The teacher then should ask how the students handle their anger. The students will give varied answers. The teacher should write some of the situations on the board and how the students handled the situation.
4. The teacher then asks the individual students what they would have done if they were not able to talk and/or communicate about the situation that made them feel angry.
5. The teacher should write the responses to not being able to communicate on the board. The teacher should continue to prod the student if they say things like, "I don't know".
6. The teacher begins to explain that when you have autism it is very difficult to communicate how you feel when you are angry. It is as if you know what you want to say, but you cannot put it into words.
7. The teacher should explain sometimes students with autism might do some unusual things when they are angry or frustrated. Unusual behaviors may include:
  - Being disrespectful to the teacher
  - Hitting their hand on the desk
  - Aggressing towards another person in the room
  - Hitting their own self
  - Damaging materials
  - Damaging equipment in the room
8. The teacher should explain that students with autism typically give off warning signs if they are going to become dangerous or aggressive.
9. The students in the classroom are usually aware of the adult in the room who is assigned to the student with autism. The students should be told the staff member assigned to the student is implementing a behavioral system on the student and is monitoring the behavior of the student at all times.
10. The students should be told if the student leaves the classroom it is because the student is having a behavioral problem. The students should be told where the student goes when he is having a problem.
11. The students should also be given instructions about how to handle an aggressive situation in the classroom. There should be a classroom drill to exit the students from

the room in the event of an aggressive incident. Typically, there is a code word that all the general education students know and that means to exit the classroom as quickly, quietly and safely as possible.

12. The teacher should provide time for questions and answers. At the secondary level especially, the students will ask very detailed questions about the student in the room. Those questions usually include: “What are the warning signs?”, “How much training has the staff in the room had about the student with autism?”, “Has the student with autism ever hurt anyone before and if yes, who and when?” The person facilitating the meeting should be prepared for the questions.
  13. It is critical to give the most accurate information to the general education students. They will come up with their own answers if they do not hear accurate information.
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### **Application:**

Your district needs to develop a plan that exits students from a classroom in the event of a student’s aggressive behavioral outbursts. The students may never need to use the plan, but they need to practice the plan just in case of an aggressive situation. In the district I taught in, students practiced what is now referred to as a “Red Alert” drill. The students practice the drill once a week. The students exit the classroom when the teacher says the words “Red Alert.”

The general education students need to know they will be protected and safe. They also need to know that the student with autism will be protected also. The teacher needs to re-explain that the student with autism will probably never exhibit the behavior explained to them, but they want to make sure all the students are safe in the classroom.

Follow up:

The teacher should do the following:

- ◆ Explain to the students that you will come back to the classroom frequently to answer questions about autism.
- ◆ Give classroom teacher /aide information about autism so questions can be answered.
- ◆ Peer-to-peer interaction will allow for more specific questions about the students with autism to be answered.
- ◆ General education students formulate their own reasons for behavior of students with autism. It is important to follow up at least once a month to answer questions and give accurate information.