

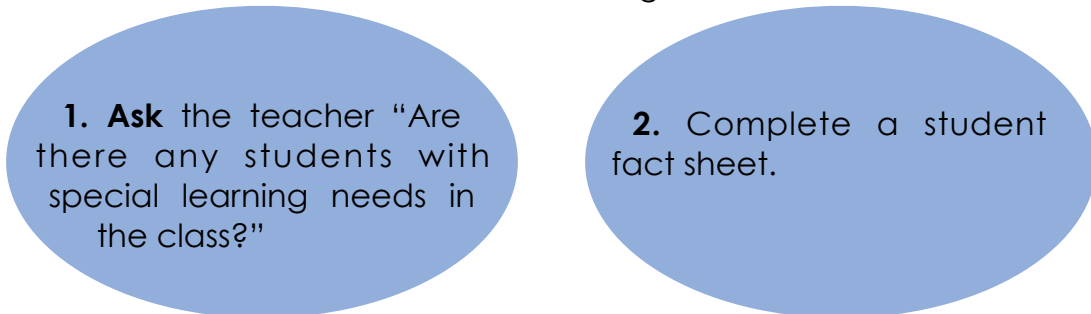
## TEN EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

### 1) Understand the underlying disability (or disabilities)

- Life long condition affects the way people communicate and interact
- 3 development delays affecting
  - Social interaction
  - Play and imagination
  - Communication

### 2) Get to know your students

#### Initial fact-finding



#### Fact Sheet example questions:

- What does the student like to be called?
- What are the students...
  - o Strengths and weaknesses
  - o Likes, special interests, challenges
  - o Things that may trigger a meltdown
  - o Behaviours exhibited before meltdown
  - o Best way to approach situation when meltdown occurs
  - o Important Sensory issues (e.g. highly sensitive to light, touch, noise etc)

Know the students peers and staff that have a positive or negative influence

### 3) Sensory issues

- Sensory Processing disorder is a neurological disorder that affects taking in, processing and responding to sensory information.
- It affects all senses
- Can be hypo reactive or hyper reactive
- It is real and can affect learning

## 4.) Organizational issues

### Visual

- Daily timetable
- Use photographs to illustrate timetable
- Lesson outline
- Use visual aides to support routines
- Write daily lesson plan on whiteboard
- Provide written instructions
- Break activities into small steps
- Color code activities

### Routines

- Support routines with visual aides
- Establish a clear routine for beginning and end of the day
- Pre-warning for transitions between classes and activities
- Avoid unstructured free time. Instead give a choice of activities e.g. lego or painting

### Supporting fine motor skills

- o Provide copies of written notes, minimise need for ASD students to copy from the board
- o Use large graph paper in Mathematics etc.
- o Encourage use of laptop for writing

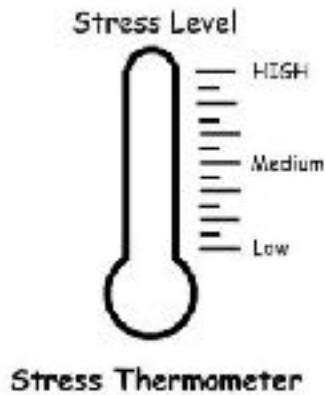
## 5.) Transitions

- The more structured the routine the better
- Use visuals for all transitions
- Pre warn about any change
- Use timers

## 6.) Communication

- Use concrete language; 'yes' or 'no' **avoid** 'maybe'. Be straightforward and direct.
- 'When' and 'then' e.g. when you finish writing two sentences, then you may go get a drink
- Avoid sarcasm, idiom, and metaphors. ASD students are very literal.
- Check for understanding. Say less
- Praise effort
- Don't require eye contact. Speak quietly and calmly
- Make sure you get the ASD student's attention when you want to tell them something, otherwise they may miss what you say
- Sometimes ASD students don't respond right away – they need more time to think about their answers
- Be patient and don't rush them

## 7.) Manage Stress and anxiety



- ASD children are easily over stimulated and slow to recover once they are over stimulated
- Behaviour problems are often a sign that the child is too stressed by sensory stimuli
- Use a stress thermometer to allow the ASD student to monitor his stress level in your class everyday
- Allow the ASD student to establish effective strategies to manage their own stress. Either a “home base” or by leaving class to get a drink or visit a trusted teacher.

• **Stress Thermometer** - This is a useful tool which can help the ASD student communicate his stress level to you.

## 8.) Success in the playground

- Promote understanding with all staff and students to increase empathy
- Have strategies that all staff can access ie yard duty cards
- Set up a 'safe place'
- Lunch time clubs!!!
- Make a schedule for each day of the week what the student will be doing at recess and lunch

## 9.) Rewards/motivators

- Time to spend on their favorite activity (often a computer based activity works well)
- Time devoted to special interests- time on their own
- Reward or Sticker chart/communication diary

## 10.) Make learning FUN!



- Focus on learning when the student is most relaxed and willing to learn
- Stop the activity before the student has had enough
- Quick activities then reward rather than long activity and reward is miles away

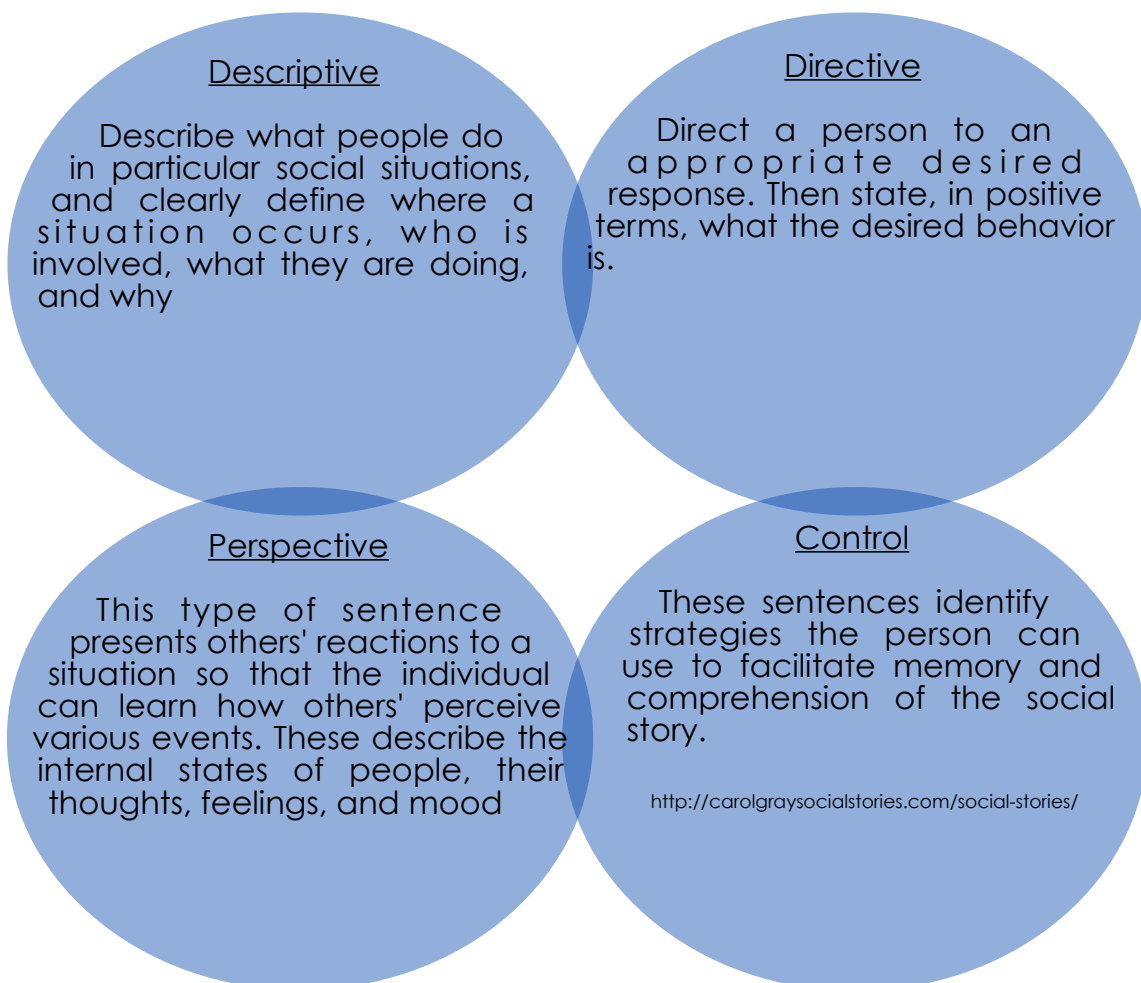
## THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS SOCIAL

### Teach peers how to communicate effectively with ASD student

#### Social Stories

- Used to support the ASD student and provide guidelines for appropriate behaviours
- Written with the student
- Stories are revisited regularly
- Stories enable the student to make good choices in stressful situations
- Stories may be shared with peers to increase empathy

#### Sentences:



## **Class-wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT)**

- Students working in small groups to complete a set task
- Keep activities short maximum 20 minutes
- Reward group work skills and effort not just product
- Support active listening skills
- Monitor each group in turn and track on task behaviours
- Provide feedback

## **Circle of Friends**

- A resource group for students who meet regularly to support the ASD student – ASD student, peers, teacher-facilitator
- The circle sets goals and develops strategies to support the student
- Group members volunteer to participate
- Regular meeting time
- Benefits all students as develops inter-personal skills

