Autism In Adolescents
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Help! Their Autism is getting worse

- Nope, they are just teenagers.
- If you have hang ups in talking about ANYTHING, this is the time to get over them 😊
Teenagers (Breen, 2013)

- Teenage behavior cannot be blamed on mercury, vaccinations, or the parents' genetics.
- Some teenagers care about smelling good. Or not.
- Some like orderliness. Or not.
- Teenagers do not learn good self-esteem by themselves.
- Teenagers like to make their own choices. They are not usually the same as yours.
- Teenagers do not develop good organizational skills through osmosis.
- Moodiness is a normal teenage state of mind.
- Raging hormones are part of being a teenager.
- Self regulation is an important life skill not practiced by teenagers.
- Teenagers are never hungry at the same time as the rest of the family.
- Masturbation is normal teenage activity.
- Discussing sex with your parents is not.
- They will grow out of it and become people again.
Activity

- Choose a situation
  - Going to a restaurant
  - having lunch
  - Going to school or work
  - Buying something at the store
  - Borrowing a library book

- Write down a short description of what that feels like for you.
- Discuss
A unique perspective

- Imagine walking into a large crowded room, you start breathing faster. Your hands go over your ears. You start rocking back and forth on the ground. It is too loud, too many people. You can't cope! You start counting and breathing faster. If you hadn't spent the last five years learning to control yourself you would be screaming, yelling, crying, and flailing around yourself because you can't control yourself. You try with all your might not to blow up and have a meltdown in front of 3,000 people. You have Autism.
From the mouth of a student

- Keep Calm both for yourself
- And for your student
- Meltdowns will happen have a plan
- You can't just hold us anymore we are too big
- Having to change for PE sucks!!
- All of the kids act like jerks
- Your child does care for you we just can't show it like other people.
Flexibility

- A word our students don’t like very much
- Needs to be directly taught
- The most important skill I teach
- Teach change
- Throw them a curve ball
- This is the time to do that.
- It is better to have a meltdown with me where I can support you than to have it in the middle of a situation that you are not prepared for.
- School is never consistent at this level, schedules work but have to have room for flexibility
- Meltdowns are learning experiences
  - Use them
Why is this age so tough?

- Can be so frustrating
- Attitudes
- Hormones
- No control over their own body
- Boys and girls
- Changing classrooms
- Classrooms have a lot more going on
- Many different environments
- Halls are SO busy
- Assemblies
- New people and a new school
- Social expectations increase
- Peer relationships become more complex
Modesty

- Teaching the idea of modesty starts with the relationships that familiar adults have with students
  
  This is where modeling is so important
- Asking permission before doing physical activity on/with a person
- Explaining appropriate and inappropriate touching
- Teach the concept of modesty at home
- Concept of privacy needs to be taught and reinforced in ALL environments
- PE is the biggest place this happens
Suggestions

- While we are teaching make sure to include clinical terms and slang terms
- Talk about it Talk about it Talk about it and LISTEN
- If student is lower cognitively or talking is too much for either of you, use pictures.
- Talk about it even if it is uncomfortable.
- Teach what is correct and what peers are doing
  - Student needs to be prepared for what they will face
  - It is always better to embarrassed with an adult instead of in the social situation
Hygiene

- This can be a big area where our kids get made fun of
- New changes to their body
- Sensory issues
- Overall clean appearance
- Favorite clothing
- So, Make it a rule
- Have a plan and a schedule
- Use pictures, rewards
- Make sure that when they leave the house they are not going to be made fun of for their appearance it will only make their lives harder.
Suggestions

- Ask what is going on at school and discuss it in a non-judgmental way
- Talk about everything
- Treat them as teenagers first, Autism second
- Give them as many planned social opportunities as possible
- Be consistent, once you have said it, it is a rule
- Don’t make promises you can’t keep
- Be very specific in directions
- If you tease and use sarcasm, EXPLAIN IT
- Use a peer
- Be honest and KIND with a student’s appearance. If someone is going to make fun of them for it…..talk about it first.
A Perspective

- This is how many of our students will experience puberty in school; left behind and alone and feeling steadily worse about it. People who had time to before, now don’t. That time is now shared with people who go around in groups of social pairs. There are rumors of social and even sexual activity that usually only serve to make our kids feel more left out. True, the people telling the stories are usually not nearly as active as they claim to be. Listening to a group of school boys in a locker rooms is like listening to a blind man teach defensive driving. But to the people totally left out, especially autistic boys who have little personal experience to compare with what they are hearing, it sounds true enough. – Jerry and Mary Newport, Autism-Asperger’s

- We can help them by preparing them and talking about EVERYTHING!
Questions?