

Autism is a Burrito



Ben Springer, Ph.D., NCSP
2014 Southern Utah Conference on Autism

Allow me to Explain...

- School Psychologist
- Director of Special Education
- Treatment of Autism in School Settings
- Social Skills Research
- Expert Training on high-incidence behavioral & emotional disorders
- Family man



The Next 60 minutes...

- Review the definition of autism.
- Challenge the definition of autism.
- Start a revolution.
- Calm down. Be practical.
- Build on strengths, accept weaknesses.
- Get access to cool stuff...

Autism as We Know It

- Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorder
- Hallmark features of impaired social interaction/reciprocity
- Attention, memory, communication, cognitive patterns, behavioral impairments.
- Is that it? A puzzle?

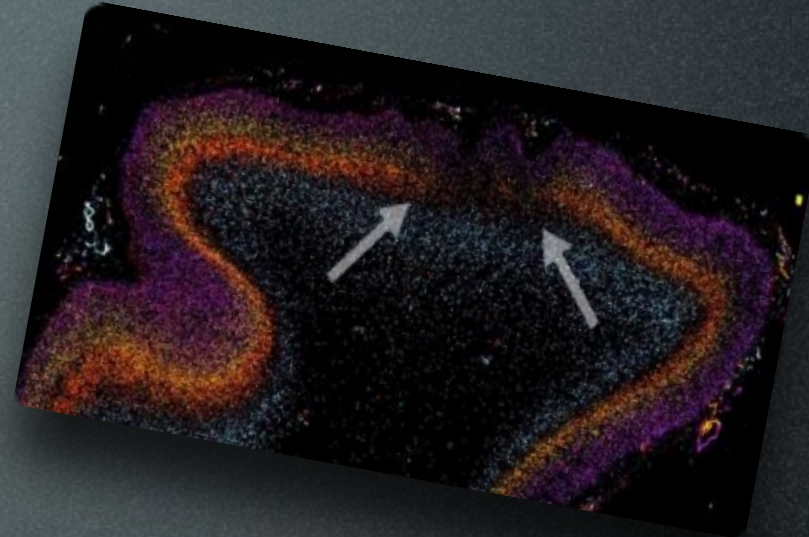


Are We Satisfied with the Puzzle?

- We need to know more about autism.
- We need to respect it's complexity.
- We know that families and children seem fragmented and alone.
- We don't need to worship the puzzle.

Hot out of the oven...

Current Research in Autism



- Focal “patches” in cortex development during pregnancy.

Rich Stoner, Maggie L. Chow, Maureen P. Boyle, Susan M. Sunkin, et al., 2014

- Daytime activities for post-high school indicator of successful independence.

Taylor & Seltzer, 2012

One single approach is simply not enough.

- 25% of individuals with ASD have co-occurring depression (including major depressive episodes).
- Anxiety occurs at such a high rate, it is considered by most to be “part of autism.”
- 44% of individuals with ASD have co-occurring, specific phobias.
- 12% of individuals with ASD have separation anxiety.
- 37% of individuals with ASD have co-occurring OCD.
- 7% of individuals with ASD have co-occurring ODD.
- Low rates of psychotic disorders, panic disorders, and/or schizophrenic symptoms.

Take a Stand



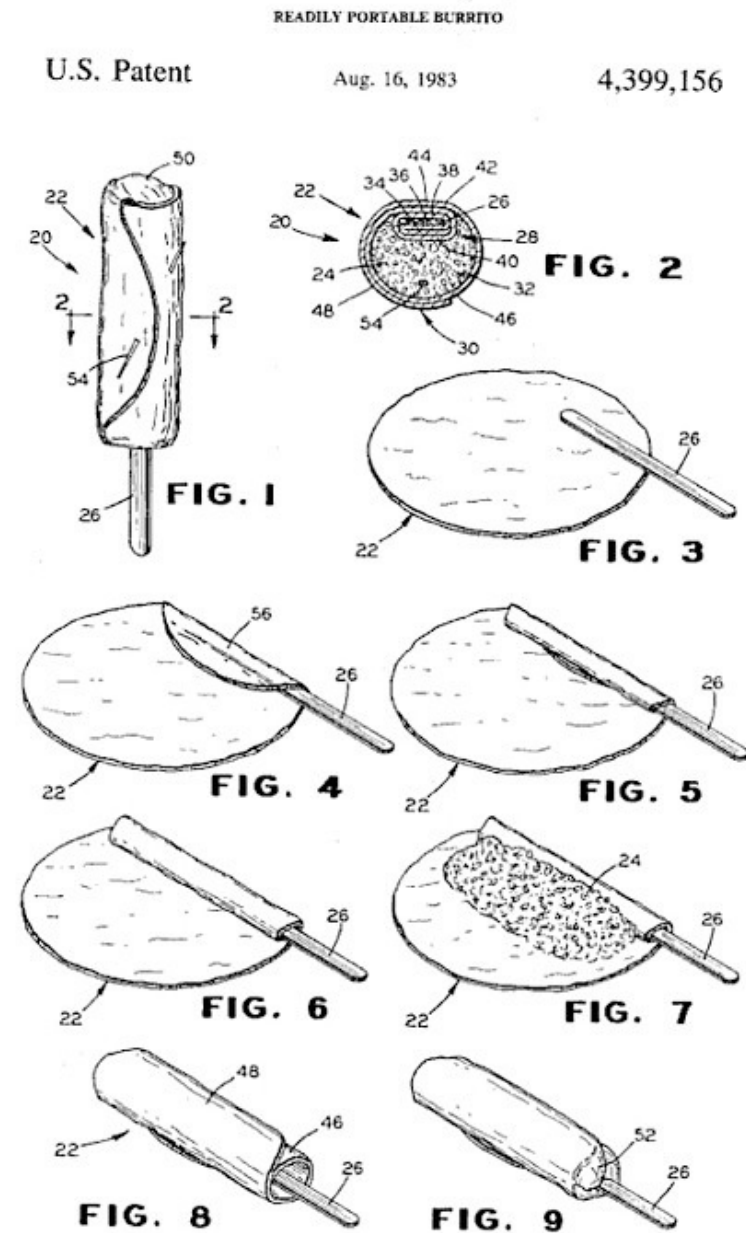
Got Layers?

- Autism has layers.
- Autism is heavy.
- Autism is common.
- Autism can cause hot air.



Dig In...

- The tortilla
- The sauce
- The fixings
- The meat



“Never judge a burrito by it’s tortilla.”

- No apparent, physiological markers of autism.
- At face value, autism confuses everyday folks. (Bad start).
- At face value, impairments are harder to accept. Acceptance is necessary for growth.
- Even the “label” of autism is problematic.

The Sauce



- Temperament (The Nine)
- “Hot” Aggressive, boisterous?
- “Medium” Adventurous, curious?
- “Mild” Sensitive, introverted?
- Affects treatment approaches

The Nine: Categories of Human Temperament



As parents, you probably already knew that you were NOT handed a “tabula rasa” or “blank slate” of an infant child. Your little packages were already a bit pre-programmed with something referred to as “temperament” before you even laid eyes on them.

Does this “pre-programming” mean that their future is already laid out for them? Not at all. But it does potentially give you a head start once you know what you’re dealing with...

1. **Rhythmicity (Regularity):** Predictability of biological functions like appetite and sleep.
2. **Approach or Withdrawal:** Sort of the “extrovert” and “introvert” tendencies when presented with strangers, or novel acquaintances. Is the child eager or “slow-to-warm-up” to new people, places, and things?
3. **Adaptability:** Related to how well the child can “shift” and/or “adapt” to transitions and changes in their environment.
4. **Intensity of Reaction:** The level of excitement/boredom presented by the child with a new stimulus.
5. **Sensory Threshold:** Mostly related to the child’s reaction to physical stimuli (e.g., sight, touch, smell, taste). Are they picky? Low threshold for pain and or sensory discomfort.
6. **Quality of Mood:** This is sort of the “optimist” and “pessimist” traits children carry with them. Sort of the “glass half empty vs. half full” trait in perception.
7. **Distractibility:** Level of interest displayed when the child is not necessarily interested in the activity at hand.
8. **Attention Span and Persistence:** This pertains to the child’s ability to stick to a task when presented with obstacles. High persistence = capable of reaching goals. Low persistence = stronger social skills to rely on help of others.
9. **Activity Level:** This is the child’s speed at “idle.” The general activity level of the child

The Fixings

- Personality (The Big 5)
- How does personality impact your life?
- What are the strengths of certain personalities? Weaknesses?
- Identify and Communicate personality characteristics.



The Five: Personality Characteristics



1. **Open:** Open to experience, inventive and curious. Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, and a variety of experience.
2. **Conscientious:** Efficient, organized with a tendency to self-discipline. Acts dutifully, and aims for achievement. Very planned rather than spontaneous.
3. **Extroverted:** Outgoing, energetic, and positive. A tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others.
4. **Agreeable:** Friendly and compassionate. A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative. Non-confrontational.
5. **Neurotic:** Sensitive and nervous. A tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily such as anger, anxiety, depression or vulnerability.

The Meat

- Elevated Anxiety
- Communication
- Social Interaction
- Restricted Interests
- Atypical Sensory Experience



All rolled into one.

- Temperament
- Personality
- Anxiety
- Communication
- Social Interaction
- Sensory Experience
- Restricted Interests
- Cognitive Patterns

What does that look like?

- Highly disruptive?
- Self absorbed?
- Anxious?
- Inattentive?
- Overactive?
- School Placement?
- Impulse Control?
- Depressed?
- IQ?



parents



teachers



speech therapists

Go Team!



behavior specialists



occupational therapists



peer group

Parent Platter

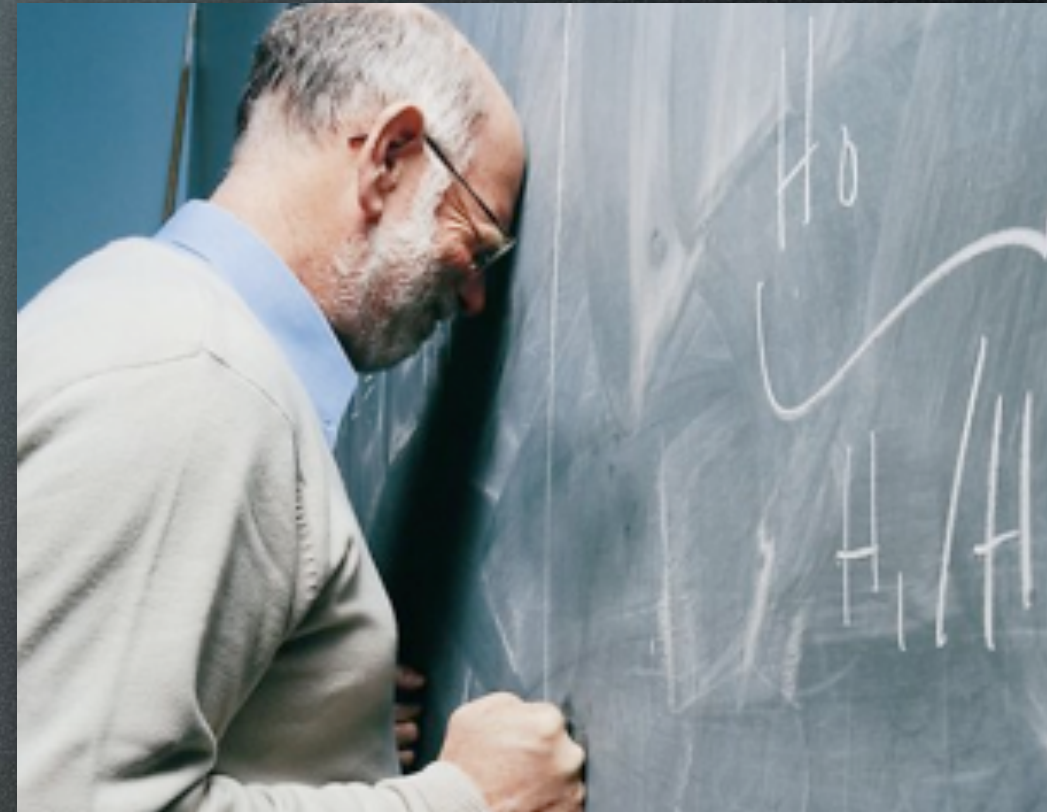
- Stress?
- Support?
- Strategies?
- Siblings?



Maughn, 2008

Teacher Platter

- Class/Caseload Size?
- Experience?
- Pay?
- Special Ed. Rules & Regs
- Administrative Support?



Peer Group Platter

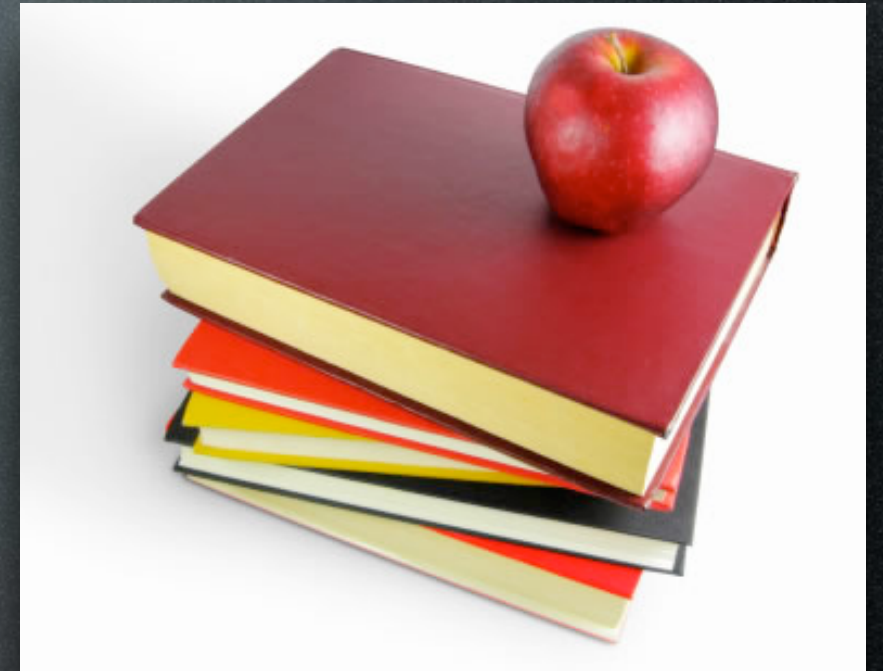
- Anti-stigma campaigns?
- Bullying Prevention & Intervention?
- Social motivation?
- Meaningful?



Collaborate = Fascinate

- Designate a **team leader** (ideally, someone who understands the “burrito.”)
- Focus on:
 - Attending & Compliance
 - Language & Communication
 - Social & Self-Help Skills

What about academics?



- Build on strengths.
- Accommodate weaknesses.
- Modify aspects that are unimportant.
- Establish a “Burrito Perspective”
- Plan for the future: “3-year chunks”

Let's get busy.

- Autism Essentials
- The Behavior Packet
- Superheroes Social Skills
- Smart but Scattered Series



Autism Spectrum Essentials



POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH ASD

Ben Springer, Ph.D., NCSP

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Autism affects about 1 in 88 children in the U.S. Chances are, you will come across this student population in education. Here are some “essentials” to help ASD students succeed.

HIGH STRUCTURE:

1. Use a visual schedule, enlist it daily.
2. Use a consistent reinforcement schedule rewarding good behavior.
3. Use a consistent consequence for poor behavior.
4. Use firm and direct commands, (i.e., precision commands, etc.)
5. Establish routines for both small and large tasks.
A “small” task may include the steps to starting an assignment, and a “large” task may span the entire day or activity.

Students with ASD typically exhibit unusually high levels of anxiety. This occurs for a variety of reasons, (i.e., atypical neurological development, learned responses to environment, temperament, etc.)

High structure and routine help alleviate the symptoms of anxiety (i.e., easily frustrated, agitated,

REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULES

1. Enlist a timed interval, (fixed or intermittent) where the target student is identified as having adaptive and appropriate behavior at a high rate.
2. Use beep tapes and/or “beeper-like” devices to prompt staff to consistently identify and reinforce positive behavior.

Students with ASD may exhibit a wide variety of maladaptive or inappropriate behaviors at high rates. Typically, they hear more “bad” than “good” because of their behaviors.

It's our job to help them hear more “good” than “bad” to help decrease negative behaviors and increase positive ones.

VISUAL SCHEDULES

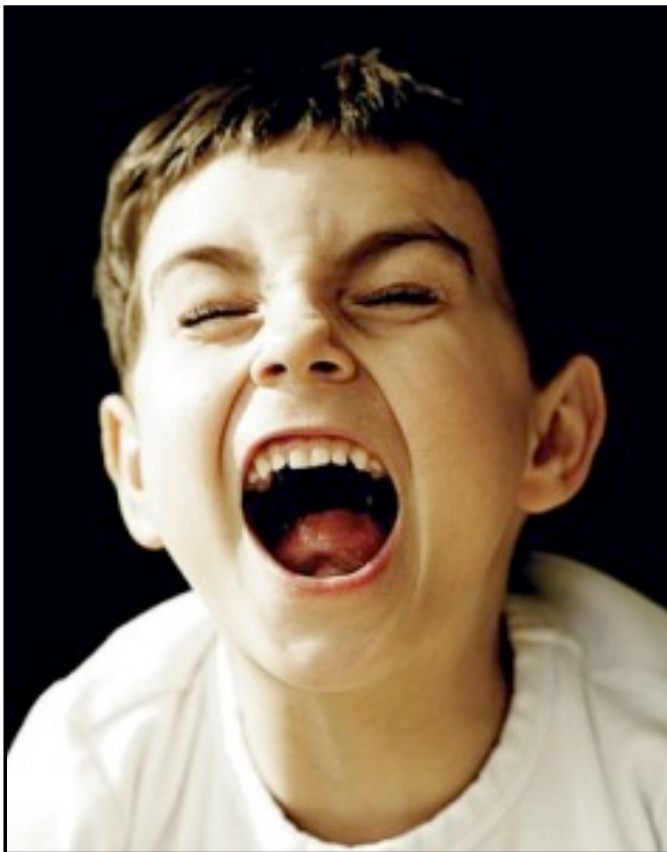
1. Use meaningful images to the student.
2. Review frequently

THE BEHAVIOR PACKET

Ben Springer, M. S. School Psychologist

Got Behaviors?

The Following Packet of Information is designed to help GRADE LEVEL TEAMS receive the support they need when behavioral problems occur in the classroom.



What you'll find in this packet:

- 1) A brief review of the 3-tiered approach to school-based behavioral interventions.
- 2) Evidence-based behavioral strategies and interventions for educators focusing on "tier 2 behavior problems."
- 3) Behavioral Data Collection Sheets/Materials
- 4) A plan.



As with so many aspects of school leadership, effective classroom management starts with effective leadership from the building administration. The goal of positive behavior supports is not "perfect children," rather, the goal should be the perfect environment for enhancing their growth.

Helping grade level teams understand the principles behind positive behavior supports is the primary objective. Positive behavior supports monitor the following two areas:

1). Student Behavior:

- a) Actively engaged? b) Respectful? c) Compliant?

2). Teacher Behavior:

- a) Actively observing? b) Using praise effectively? c) Correcting misbehavior consistently/fluently?



GROUP Rules

- 1. Get Ready.**
- 2. Follow Directions.**
- 3. Be Cool!**
- 4. Participate.**



GROUP RULES POSTER

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoBIKKDGnLk>



Specific NW Publishing

The Revolutionary
"Executive Skills" Approach to Helping Kids
Reach Their Potential

SMART *but* SCATTERED

Boost Any Child's Ability to:

- ✓ Get Organized
- ✓ Resist Impulses
- ✓ Stay Focused
- ✓ Use Time Wisely
- ✓ Plan Ahead
- ✓ Follow Through on Tasks
- ✓ Learn from Mistakes
- ✓ Stay in Control of Emotions
- ✓ Solve Problems Independently
- ✓ Be Resourceful

Peg Dawson, EdD, and Richard Guare, PhD

Thank you.

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