

Buddy – Player Interactions

APPROACH: get on eye level with the child when speaking. Offer to shake hand but don't force. Introduce self to parents. Ask if there is anything in particular they want you to know about their child.

INTRODUCTIONS:

What's your name? Have you ever played ball before? What grade/school?
I am _____, in _____grade and go to _____school. I hope we have fun!

NON-VERBAL CHILD:

Get on their level, try to get eye contact, wave, pantomime swinging a bat. SMILE A LOT. It is ok to talk, minimal words are best. Eye contact before trying to get a message across. Use the communication board. Put a hand on their shoulder to get attention and say "Look at Me."

ECHOLALIA (they repeat/parrot what you say)

The Judevine® Center for Autism recommends using the following procedure when a person with autism engages in echolalia: Treatment for echolalia involves responding to the person literally. If the person echoes, "Do you want juice?" (after you have asked the question), say: "No thank you. Follow this with: "I think you want to tell me something though." Then use sign language or another prompt to get the person to say, "I want some juice."

A good technique is to use a "starter sentence" like: "I want some -----," and let them fill in the blank (show him the juice). Similarly, if you ask the person, "Do you want a cookie? Yes or no," and the person echoes your last word ("no"), accept this response. Say, "You said 'no', that's okay, I will eat the cookie myself." If it looks like the person does indeed want a cookie, say, "It looks like you changed your mind, if you want a cookie, say, 'yes!'" Prompt for a "yes" and reinforce a correct response

SELF STIMMING BEHAVIOR ("stimming")

Self-stimming refers to the act of doing repetitive behaviors such as rocking, hand flapping, finger flicking, humming, toe walking, jumping, using echolalia, and even self-injury. There are many more possible behaviors that a child on the Autism spectrum might present with. 'Stimming' is often a way for a child (or an adult) to deal with a stressful situation, to deal with sensory dysfunction, or simply a way to retreat into one's self.

Of course, the goal is to keep bringing your child into your world to communicate, to learn, to connect—but we also have to remember their world and their priorities aren't always the same as ours. Their ability to transition is not as adaptable as ours.

Unless the child is hurting him/herself, it is probably best to let them be, and hopefully, when they feel more integrated or comfortable in the setting, they will decrease the stim and be more receptive to you.

Redirect – don't comment – positive reinforcement in the absence of stim.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS IN TEACHING LOW-FUNCTIONING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

For students who may have greater difficulty learning, the following suggestions may be helpful to consider:

Work closely with parents so that skills practiced in the school setting can be practiced in the community with family members.

Take time to teach each skill. Students may need repeated opportunities to learn and to practice a skill. Even when a skill seems mastered, students need to practice from time to time. It is also important that significantly more emphasis is placed on what a student is to do, rather than on what he/she is not to do. Accentuate the positive; remember that success begets success. A focus on failure reaps futility and future avoidance.

If a student **needs visual cues** to learn a task, he/she may always need visual cues associated with the task. If the students need a visual sequence board for the activity, do not take it away once the activity is mastered.

It may be difficult to engage students for prolonged periods of time. Be prepared to shift activities, and to provide both easy and difficult tasks so that the student will be challenged while experiencing success. A typical day should include significantly more opportunities to perform easy tasks which promote security, than to engage in new and challenging tasks.

Provide students with clear information about the beginning and ending times of an activity, and about the expectations of the task

If a student is engaging in difficult behavior, conduct a thorough assessment to determine why the behavior is occurring. **Utilize positive behavior support** approaches which focus on teaching students alternative ways of responding to difficult situations. **“I like it when you sit with your hands in your lap”**.

Take time to teach essential skills in places and at times when skills are needed. For example, take time to teach students to put their coats on when it is time to go outside. Have them learn to take out and put away during natural activity sequences. Avoid the tendency to do essential life tasks for students while rushing to get to less essential tasks. **Generally, avoid doing for the student what he/she can be taught to do for him/herself.**

Special Needs Kids often do not behave like “neurotypical” kids. They and their families have to put up with stares and comments and outbursts and failures every day. ML is an opportunity and a challenge for the kids. Different environment – new faces, new sounds, new smells (perfume, popcorn) lots of noise and people, no closed in spaces.

ML expectations are minimal, so long as they are not hurting themselves or anyone else, and hopefully having fun. We will celebrate any little success, even sitting on the bench for 1 minute. We will support them as they take in the new environment and not force anything onto them. We celebrate this league because we accept atypical behaviors and hope they enjoy a new experience and gain a new skill. We commit to being attentive, observant and communicative in order to provide a positive experience for player, family, buddy