

Chicago, Illinois
Autism Society of America

40th National Convention
and Expedition

July 22nd—25th, 2009

Hosted by:
Pheasant Run Resorts
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The Update

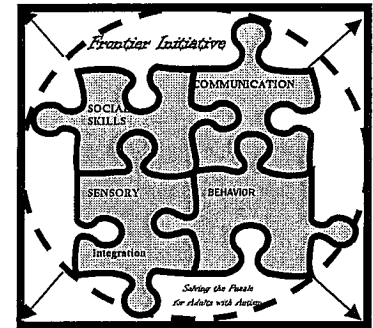
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Autism Improves in Adulthood

Autism Symptoms get less severe with age, but Disability Remains

By Daniel J. DeNoon WebMD Health News Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD

Most teens and adults with autism have less severe symptoms and behaviors as they get older, a groundbreaking study shows.

Not every adult with autism gets better. Some -- especially those with mental retardation -- may get worse. Many remain stable. But even with severe autism, most teens and adults see improvement over time, find Paul T. Shattuck, PhD, Marsha Mailick Seltzer, PhD, and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin.

Shattuck, Seltzer, and colleagues followed 241 adolescents and adults, ranging in age from 10 to 52, for nearly five years. They used standardized tests to measure their autistic symptoms and maladaptive behaviors.

"For any individual symptom, and there are three dozen or so we looked at, there is always a very small group of people who got worse, a modest group in the middle who were stable, and a majority who showed improvement," Shattuck tells WebMD. "Generally speaking, people who are improving in one area are improving across the board."

Those most likely to improve were those without mental retardation with some degree of language competence.

Autism Services Still Needed in Adulthood

The improvement did not mean that autism went away, or that patients recovered from disabling impairments.

"Pretty much everyone in our study continues to need significant support," says Shattuck, now an assistant professor at the Washington University School of Social Work in St. Louis. "They are profoundly disabled. They are not going out and getting jobs and getting married. They will need significant support for the rest of their lives."

The results, Shattuck argues, show that adults with autism can continue to improve throughout their lives. That's an important fact, as

current federal support for people with autism ends after they reach the age of 21.

"This is the time of life when we are pulling the chair out from under people with autism," Shattuck says. "You would expect them to get worse. There is this idea that people with disabilities are frozen in development, so why waste money on them? But if anything, this is a time when we should be providing support and services, because they can change and improve."

Shattuck and Seltzer's work is a breath of fresh air to Caroline I. Magyar, PhD, associate professor at the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of Rochester, N.Y. Magyar's specialty is treating teens and adults with autism -- a field often overlooked as research attention has focused on early-childhood autism.

"Based on my experience working with adults with autism, they continue to benefit from many of the same environmental accommodations and supports they had as children," Magyar tells WebMD. "They still require quite a bit of assistance. But many are quite successful when given that support."

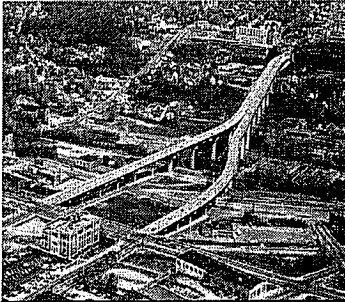
Shattuck says that most of the adults in the study grew up at a time when symptoms had to be very severe to get a diagnosis of autism.

Magyar notes that the older individuals in the Shattuck/Seltzer study probably did not receive the early diagnosis and early, intensive treatment available to children with autism in many states.

"You wonder whether their improvement would have been even better if they had that kind of support," Magyar says.

Shattuck, Seltzer, and colleagues report their findings in the October issue of the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

Please feel free
to copy and
distribute the
Update newsletter
as needed.



Bridging adults with Autism
Within the Community

*With appropriate
support, every
individual can work
in a community-
based setting.*

**The Greater Akron Chapter
Of the
Autism Society of America**

If you are interested in belonging to the Akron Chapter
please call:

President: Lisa Weaver
Vice President: Michelle Cahoon
Secretary: Kelly Shaw
Treasurer: Laura Higgins

Phone: (330) 543-3955
E-mail at asagreaterakron@sbcglobe.net

Meeting for the Greater Akron Chapter are held on the 3rd
Tuesday of every other month starting August 15th, 2006 at
Akron Children Hospital. All meetings begin at 7:00pm

GUIDE FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM PART 5

This article is a continuation from The Guide for Employment for Persons with Autism from last month's Update. This employment guide was made possible with the collaborated efforts from the following organizations: Ardmore Inc., Blick Clinic, County of Summit Board of MRDD and parents of adults with autism

The Job Developer

The job developer is the person who is responsible for finding employment for persons who desire work in the community. The job developer works closely with the person who is referred to him/her for job development and also works closely with agencies and businesses in the community. The next page describes who a job developer is and what the job developer does.

II. The Job Developer

A. Is a good communicator:

Shares contact information and results on a regular basis with service coordinator and/or team members

Informs/prepares employer about generalities of disability

Provides employer with information concerning rights and responsibilities of employee

Identifies and communicates role/relationship of individual to employer and co-workers

Communicates to job coach his/her role at place of employment

Provides contact information to employer

Check Name, address, telephone, e-mail, fax of agency job support person.

B. Knows the person and behavior:

Can match an individual's skills, needs, and interests to a work environment

Can identify needed supports/accommodations to enable successful employment

Plans substitute coverage for job coach if needed

Is knowledgeable about resources:

Area employers

Employment locations

Tax incentives available to employers:

Work Opportunity Tax Credit

Disabled Access Credit

Architectural and Transportation Barrier Removal Tax Credit

Training Reimbursement

Employee Support Services

Low-interest Loan Advice

Transportation:

Assessment

Options

Agency restrictions

Another important figure in the employment picture of a person with autism is the assigned individual who is actually a job coach and may or may not have the title of *Job Coach*.

Assessing an Environment For Individuals with Autism

The Environmental Assessment was developed to serve as an **inventory of environmental considerations** when addressing quality of life issues for individuals within the autism spectrum. Rarely will all sections of the assessment apply to every individual.

Part Sixteen: Sensory Issues within the Bedroom

By Mike Noe

The principle's of Feng Shui are different the principles that govern the Snoezelen room also known as the sensory integration room. A Feng Shui bedroom is a habitat that must be in harmony with the person who is quartered there catering to the likes and dislikes of that person, where as a Snoezelen room is an escape out side of their room. Making everyone's room a Snoezelen room will encourage seclusion from other household members or staff.

Both rooms have parallel philosophies for sensory integration making Feng Shui and Snoezelen rooms that encourage sensory harmony. Some of the similarities include painting the walls with colors that are calming and add a couple of the favorite sensory items the client likes in the room.

Items added or removed from the bedroom should be the client's choice. If you dictate what the client have in their room, then the individual with autism may become agitated and lose respect in the caregiver. Mutual respect is important to any relationship with an individual with autism.

What is the bedroom size?

If possible, it is always better to find largest bedroom in the home that allows a client to move freely about the room. Not too many times can or do you have an extra room to do this. An ideal switch of rooms would be to switch the supported living manager's office if larger with the current bedroom of the individual with autism. This switch can only happen if it is agreed upon by the client. It is not good to infringe on the other client's space in the home if they choose not to move. If the switch is agreed upon, then long term planning must happen and gradual integration is suggested.

Common rooms in the home should not be exchanged for bedrooms. These common rooms include great rooms/ family rooms, kitchens, and dining room etc. or other client's bedrooms without permission. If this is done dissention may occur among clients and staff. If the client's room must remain then it is good to adopt Feng Shui in the room achieving harmony within that realm of the room.

Very few organizations have the monetary interest to change the size of the bedroom. If the client is suffering from insomnia or sleep deprivation then something in the room may be triggering this reaction. It could be many things to excessive clutter or room size. The room can be made appear to be larger then it actually is without tearing down walls.

The first thing to focus on in a room is clutter. Two ways of working with the established clutter to make a room appear larger is by either removing the clutter or organizing it. Which ever option is chosen, it will make the client more comfortable. Many individuals with autism favor open space then confinement. Confinement leads to anxiety.

If the bed is large and prevents easy access to other things in the room, it will prevent flow; an option may be to purchase a smaller bed that is similar to the bed in the room. *It must be repeated*

that these suggestions should only be tried with planning and permission from the individual occupying the room.

If the room is cluttered with furniture, it may be advisable to help the individual with autism determine what furniture is prudent for the room and help eliminate the furniture that is not functional. *The comfort zone for someone traveling around a home is between 6 to 8 square feet (E.T. Hall 1960's).*

Knowing that six to eight square feet is the comfort level, the pathway around the room must be based square footage with the individual being the midpoint of the path. How does one determine this? Calculate the squared of six to eight feet to find the midpoint of the area. In this case the measurements are 2' 6" to 3'. Draw an imaginary circle around your self. The radius should be 2' 6" to 3' from the where an individual is standing. The place where that person is standing will be designated the midpoint.

Every section of the corridor a person walks in a room, should be based on the square footage of 2'6" to 3' as the midpoint and one should be able to navigate freely with this amount of space. If it is impossible to structure a room within these parameters and the client is having a difficult time coping then an alternative plan must be developed. The option may be to construct a larger room. The goal is to make a room functional, individualized and private. By working with the client and/ or guardian to make the room more harmonious it is possible.

Give a description of the bedroom and describe all objects that are in the bedroom?

By describing the items in the bedroom, it will allow the opportunities for seeing what items are harmonists with the environment in the room. It is good to have furniture or accessories that are not damaged and coordinate with other furniture. This consistency will be part of a bedroom which will help instill harmony and will eventually lead to a relaxing environment for the individual with autism.

To achieve a sense uniformity and tranquility, the style and color of furniture must be considered. In order to maintain tranquility, the furniture must remain in good repair. If any piece of furniture is broken, must be repaired immediately.

Think about the last time a dresser drawer had to be opened when it was broken and it was full of clothes. The track on the drawer may have been broken and the drawer may be falling apart. The drawer could only be opened so far before it falls apart. Opening a drawer like this can be stressful. People without a disability can cope with a broken drawer. Individuals who are mentally challenged must struggle to think through change. This change is stressful for one with autism.

One of the daily goals for direct care staff is help an individual with autism to begin the day with least amount of anxiety. This can be done by preventing obstructions from inhibiting an individual with autism morning routine and doing everything possible to make sure flow continues as they migrate through their daily rituals and schedule.

**The National Association of Residential Providers
for Adults with Autism E-class courses are now
online**

E-class is a course developed by the National Association of Residential Providers for Adults with Autism (NARPAA). The E-class is focused on developing those skills and competencies required to achieve the best outcomes for a person with autism and their support networks.

The E-class is a comprehensive opportunity for direct support professionals to enhance their skills and understanding as well as their practice.

NARPAA has set up a browser at their website to view the modules.

Go to the NARPAA website to access pricing or to sign up for courses at www.NARPAA.org/courses.html.

**Environmental Assessment Tool
On sale now**

A product produced in conjunction with the Frontier Initiative

The Ardmore Inc. Center for Autism has made available The Environmental Assessment Tool. The packet is designed to assess and create a supportive environment for individuals with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders.

The packet contains both a CD as well as the spiral bound paper assessment forms.

The Environmental Assessment Tool is available for \$15.00. Please call Ardmore Inc. at (330) 535-2601 extension 3307. Packets can be purchased by credit card (Visa/ Master card) or check made out to the Ardmore Foundation.

In the NEWS

The following articles are summaries of news over the past months. The references for the articles are listed within the article themselves. All articles are intentionally located on the internet so they are easy accessible for you.

—Continued from page 3 “sensory issues in the bedroom”

If the dresser drawer is top heavy while pulling out drawer, the dresser can tumble. Not only must the staff worry about the functionality of a drawer but also the organization, so the danger of a dresser tumbling doesn't occur. As minor as these details seem, these details play a big role in the life of an individual with autism.

Some preventatives one may consider to prevent the above situations from occurring will be:

1. With the individual with autism's or guardians consent sort through the drawers remove clothing that has not been worn in a long time.
2. Organize the drawers so that the dresser is user friendly, meaning that everything has a place such as underwear, dress shirts, sweaters and pants.
3. Place light weight items on the top drawer and heavier clothson the bottom drawers.

Remember if it is broke, repair it quickly. Maintaining items that need repaired is a sign of dignity for the client and shows the client the care givers respect the client. It is obvious the client cannot repair broken furniture themselves and most won't verbally tell someone when something is broken. Daily or weekly maintenance check off list must be made so the client's not place in an uncompromising position.

If inappropriate behaviors are occurring in the morning or at night time then the client may be nonverbally telling of anxiety. These behaviors may not be known in the bed room, the antecedent to the negative behaviors could be happen at breakfast, work or during parts of the day.

Some relatives of individuals with autism are very giving people who may care deeply and want to always be giving gifts to their nieces, cousins, brothers or sisters etc...etc. As explained previously clutter may add to the frustration of an individual with autism life.

When a gift is given to a client, it is another object in that person's life. If someone gives a gift to the client, it should be determined if the client wants the gift. The individual with autism may not look at the gift as a loving memento. The idea is to eliminate those objects in the room that are clutter up the room. The client must agree if he/she doesn't want the object. One must make the room well-balanced.

Plan the holidays to make them the clutter free as possible, rooms have a tendency to be cluttered with decorations and gifts. Chart out a schedule with the client after the holidays to normalize the bedroom. *Most importantly, if the client doesn't decorations in their room, then do not decorate.* Do not let empty boxes clutter up the room. Place decoration away with the client to show closure if they wish too.

If the client doesn't want decorations in the room, do not place them in the room. This may be another way the client is stating he/she does not want miscellaneous items in their room.

If you have any questions on how any environment may effect an individual with autism you work with or live with, please do not hesitate to contact me at mnoe@ardmoreinc.org.

You may want to visit our web site at www.ardmoreinc.org

Ardmore Inc.**Center for Autism**

Providing information about autism locally, statewide and nationally since June 2002

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*The Greater Akron
Autism Society's*

An Update from the Autism Society of Ohio

By *Barb Yavorcik, President*

ASA-Autism Society of Ohio Forming Advocacy Network – Make your voice heard!

Autism Insurance Parity, HB170, is currently under consideration by the Ohio House Insurance Committee. Beginning early next year, it will be time to address next biennial budget for Ohio. Additionally, issues regularly come before the state legislature that impact individuals with autism, their families and those who work them throughout Ohio. And because of this, the **Autism Society of America-Autism Society of Ohio Chapter needs your help!**

We are assembling an **autism advocacy network that has constituents in each of the districts of the members of the Ohio General Assembly**, both the House and Senate. We are looking for advocates all around the state to help us with this effort.

If you are willing and/or able to:

- meet with your Representative and/or Senator to discuss autism related issues, either in Columbus or your local area
- write letters to your Representative and/or Senator
- write letters to your local newspapers
- organize meetings for your legislators with constituents in your area
- have a positive attitude and work cooperatively with legislators

Then we need your help!

You can volunteer to participate in two ways:

Team Leader: Each Ohio district will have an assigned team leader who is responsible for carrying the key ASA-ASO/autism messages when meeting with the legislator (Representatives and Senators), coordinating testimony or letter writing for hearings, and for organizing the team members of their district, etc.

Team Member: Each Ohio district will have several team members that are available to share their own personal ASA-ASO/autism story, to write letters when needed, and to ask for help from their neighbors/families/friends. Team members may choose specialize on certain topics – ie. autism insurance parity topic, special education funding, etc.

ASA-ASO is also developing a **Legislative Advocacy Manual** and will provide **local training** to constituent volunteer advocates.

If you are interested in participating in this effort, please send your Name, address, city, zip+4, phone, email address, House District Number and Senate District number and whether you are interested in being a "Team Leader" or a "Team Member" to askASO@autismohio.org. Please put AUTISM ADVOCACY NETWORK in the subject line. To find your district numbers, visit www.legislature.state.oh.us and follow the directions under "Locating Legislators".