

Autism Spectrum Disorder Training Pack

Resources for schools

let's play behaviour detective

part two - secondary



a case study - a secondary school student with an autism
spectrum disorder and challenging behaviours

James is a Year 9 student



James is a Yr 9 student with autism

- has 'borderline' Moderate Learning Difficulties - but is in a mainstream school
- mum is supportive and caring
- has a younger brother, likes to cycle fast with dad
- has never behaved badly and never showed obvious negative reaction to work
- has never been bullied
- has one good friend
- gets on very well with his support assistant
- has recently learned how to make small jokes, like word plays



James has
serious issues
with school
which are
affecting him

James is a 'behavioural nightmare'

- doesn't look at people
- doesn't talk much or touch
- 'sticks out' as being odd
- does everything very s-l-o-w-l-y
- won't engage with any other student unless prompted
- won't volunteer answers
- rarely shows any enthusiasm
- is body rigid
- is 'socially invisible'

James is a 'behavioural nightmare'

- can be very physical at home, with objects and his mum and brother
- pulls his eyelashes out and squeezes his hands
- some staff think he may be depressed or be a candidate for other mental health issues



what do his
behaviours
tell us?

task

**write down five ideas about
the effect of**

and/or

the purpose

of his behaviours in school or home

some clues from behaviours?

- lack of eye contact, body rigidity, slowness, passivity
- the difference between home and school
- are his body signals serving some other function? - 'masking' or 'coping' strategy for dealing with school?

task - discuss, then present your ideas

- what is it about school that is difficult for him?
- what clues do you have for your ideas?

here are some clues

low academic ability = been in the 'low sets'

- what might this tell you about the kind of learning environment he's been exposed to?
- what might this tell you about the kind of social contact he has in his classes?

after 3 years at school he only has one friend

- what might this tell you about his social communication skills?



what strategies
would you
consider to
begin to
modify these
behaviours?

strategies for intervention

the curriculum is not working for him - change it

Social Skills groups:

- start small groups on a regular, timetabled basis - target sessions during lessons that are the most anxious for him
- include his friend in these groups as a 'way in'
- build security - same structure every session
- use non-verbal games to start sessions, build engagement and confidence e.g. Jenga, building construction models, cards
- when he's ready, introduce others in the group

strategies for intervention

the curriculum is not working for him - change it

Social Skills groups

- include an emotional literacy programme e.g. reading faces, reading gestures
- tell him how he should feel, 'model' it for him

practice communication

- use set phrases to initiate and respond to common situations, start with non-verbal 'hello's' and 'goodbye's'

strategies for intervention

the curriculum is not working for him - change it

- use Social Stories™
- tackle self-harm, harming others, safety issues
- use whatever method engages him, be flexible
- drawing with pen and paper or computer
- use humour, get him to enjoy the sessions
- limit language, use repetition and small steps to deal with his low ability, confidence, high anxiety, build familiarity

strategies for intervention

the 'social side' of school is not working for him -
improve it

- avoid free-play and big assemblies
- encourage him to go to lunch-clubs, the library and other social environments with low noise, control and good behaviour
- give him an 'exit card' and a 'place of safety'
- teach him how to use it, rehearse going there, make contact with staff there, let all staff know

strategies for intervention

share aims and success

- inform support staff and teachers of aims and successes
e.g. ask all staff to use his name and ask for 'hello's
- inform home of successes

encourage social contact out of school

- put home in contact with local organisations
- encourage his friend to visit home and vice versa
- encourage out of school club/activities e.g. karate

what will you change first?

