



KIT Pod Cast Script: Autism
Funded by the National Foundation for Autism Research



Introduction

This podcast was made possible by the National Foundation for Autism Research. The National Foundation for Autism Research is a non-profit organization dedicated to funding the development of innovative treatment programs and options that improve the quality of life for children living with autism spectrum disorders. Visit their website at nfar.org to learn more.

Welcome

Welcome and thank you for listening to this KIT cast. We will be talking about autism. My name is Alissa Lavelle and I am the Program Coordinator for Kids Included Together. The purpose of our time together is to give you an introduction to autism spectrum disorders and some ideas for making sensory accommodations in a program setting.

Autism

Autism is a neurological disorder that affects communication, social interaction, behavior, sensory processing and movement. It is a spectrum disorder so it affects individuals very differently. No two children with autism will look or act the same, nor will they have the same strengths or struggle with the same challenges.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis of autism is based on observation in three different areas: communication, behavior, and development. You may include some children in your program who are diagnosed with Asperger's or you may hear children are diagnosed with PDD, which stands for Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Both Asperger's and PDD fall under the umbrella of autism spectrum disorders.

Supports and Accommodations

The cause of autism is unknown and there is no cure. However, early intervention can make a substantial difference for families. Although there is a lot we are still learning about autism, we do know that the sooner we include children with disabilities, the more socially competent and self-confident they become. Everyone is interested in developing relationships and it is our job to help children with autism play and interact with others. Sometimes individuals with autism struggle with movement and social interaction, but there are supports and accommodations that can help these children meaningfully participate in typical childhood environments.

Sound bite

Clip of the sounds heard in a typical childhood program.

Sounds

Think about all the different types of sounds you heard in that short clip. Did you notice the sound of the ping pong ball going back and forth? What about the wheels on a backpack along the floor? Did you hear children's laughter and different conversations? What about screams or high-pitched noises? All of the sounds that you just heard and other types of sensory stimulation affect individuals differently.

Sensory Processing

Some individuals with autism can be either under or over sensitive to sensory stimulation. They may experience visual, auditory, tactile, smell, taste and movement stimuli differently. Some individuals have significant sensory challenges and you may see this reflected in their behavior. You may see a child respond in a way that seems delayed or may appear immature. You may see a child engage in a repetitive behavior such as flapping his hands, spinning around or moving an object repeatedly. This may be a clue that the child is either under sensitive and seeking out sensory stimulation or oversensitive and trying to shut out some of the stimulation in the environment.

Accommodations for Children with Autism

The most important accommodation you can make for a child with autism is to assume competence. Even if the child is displaying a behavior that seems odd or she does not seem to be listening, it is important to speak directly to the child and assume she understood exactly what you said. You want to provide only key information. So with all of the sensory stimulation that is going on in the background, you want to make sure that you're speaking directly to the child and using short, clear and direct sentences.

Some other accommodations you can make are to try and reduce the background noise in a program. You can also build in quiet spaces for rest or a quiet space where a few children can go. It does not necessarily have to be for the child with autism. Any child can experience a feeling of being overwhelmed with all of the things that are going on simultaneously. You may want to consider allowing a child to wear ear plugs or headphones in a noisy environment as needed.

Conclusion

Remember the slide show you viewed on *Inclusion is Belonging?* Well, children with autism spectrum disorders belong in your program and KIT is here to help. Thank you for joining us for this KIT cast.

Did you know that Kids Included Together's National Training Center on Inclusion has a knowledge database and inclusion helpline? Click on the learning lab to check out the newest features or email help@kitonline.org with your specific questions on inclusion.