

Sports and Recreation: Teaching strategies for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Objectives of this Presentation

- What is Ascendigo
- Population we serve and why
- Types of adventure activities taught
- Factors to consider when teaching individuals with autism spectrum disorder
- Methods and strategies used for sports instruction of this population

Ascendigo

- Non-Profit started in 2004
- Currently offer Summer, Fall, Winter camps for Adventure sports
- Everyone included
- Community-Based
- Long-term effects

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/KoObqTt3ULg>

What we teach

- Climbing (Indoor/Outdoor)
- River Activities (Rafting, Paddleboard, Duckies)
- Boating (Wake Surfing and Boarding, Tubing, etc.)
- Overnight Hut trips
- Skiing/Snowboarding

Climbing

- Indoor/outdoor
- Provide a number of easy routes
- Remove distractors
- Build in choice
- Capture motivation/momentum
- Utilize preferred objects/games
- Pace of progression
- <https://www.youtube.com/embed/krAh8GIYsX4>

River Activities

- Offer both rafting/ducky's and eventually paddleboard in progression
- Build in options
- Stretch progression utilizing shaping
- Fill down time with creative structure
- Schedule
- <https://www.youtube.com/embed/5A0K8TY6aBM>

Boating

- Variety of options
- Shaping behavior or skills using the boat environment
- Utilizing objects to transition to boat
- <https://www.youtube.com/embed/QwIfRJVcfFY>

Skiing/Snowboarding

- Important to choose correct environment (runs, lodges, chairlifts, etc.)
- Utilize natural reinforcers (gondola, magic carpet)
- Proactively wait to put on gear whenever necessary
- Teach by skiing, not by talking
- Build in other activities to help define the day or skiing itself
- https://www.youtube.com/embed/_onrs1ks5Dg

Autism

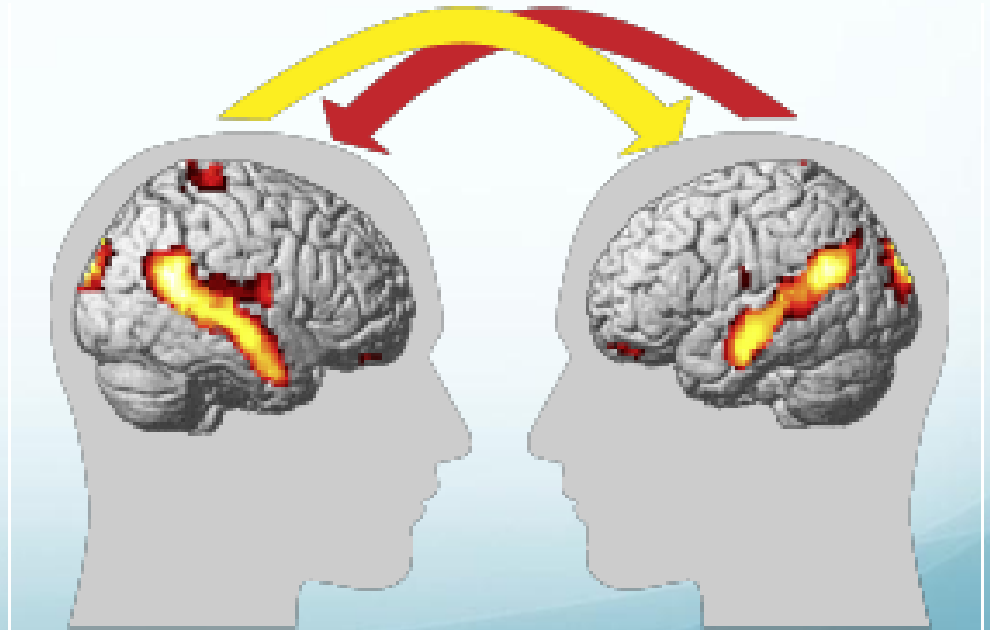
- What's so difficult?
 - Social communication and “skills”
 - Anxiety
 - Executive Function



Autism

- Missing the forest for trees (Global vs. Local)

- Social cognition



Teaching Strategies

- Gather information
- Build rapport
- Support for concepts
- Visual Supports
- Giving Instructions
- Reinforcement

Gather Info!

- Determine level of communication
- Ask parent/caregiver:
 - “How do you know what they want?”
 - “How are they at trying new things?”
 - “How do you tell them what’s next?”
 - “What’s their level of endurance?”
 - “How do they show they are scared/happy/etc.?”
 - “Are there any words/phrases that are helpful or not helpful?”

Build Rapport

- Find a smile!
- Build a relationship
- More deposits vs. withdrawals



Negative vs. positive

- Avoid negative interactions
 - Example: “you can’t do this unless you do this” vs. “let’s do this and then we can get to do that”
- Try not to take favorite object away. Use in activity.

Build trust in relationship

- Maximize autonomy
- Instill intrinsic purpose
- Instructor is source of fun and empowerment
- Relationship with instructor is a motivator

Emphasize Strengths

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Three little kids and their first words. Can you find out which one is the British kid?

Use metaphors that tap into interest



Old Turtle's...
Secret to a Happier Life

- 1.** Say what you are feeling and **recognize** your feelings
- 2.** Go into your shell and **relax**
- 3.** **Think** of something you can do to help yourself
- 4.** Then **do it**

An illustration of four green turtles on an orange background with yellow spots. One turtle is standing and pointing, another is sitting with its hands on its head, one is sitting with a hand on its chin, and another is sitting and giving a thumbs up. A glowing lightbulb is shown near the first turtle.

Empathize with Frustrations

- Quickly, then move on...



Support for concepts

- May have difficulty understanding
 - Where are we going?
 - How long is this activity?
 - May need help understanding
 - When will this be over?
 - When do I get to see mom and dad

Visual supports

START	ALL DONE
	
	
	
	

1. *Put on boots*
2. *Ride the Gondola, watch people skiing*
3. *Ride Magic Carpet*
4. *Ski down Scooper*
5. *Take a break- Go have a snack*
6. *Bathroom*

Communication

- Declarative Language vs. Imperative
- “Do’s vs. Don’ts”
- Be a model; not bossy
- How to give instructions?
 - Verbal, gesture, video, visual support
- Common Mistakes
 - Too much language
 - Too much emotion
 - Too many details
 - Threats and Bribes

Beginner Zone

- Expect more time in the “beginner zone”
- Break down steps more finely
- Plan on the possibility for slow pace of progression/”stretch”

Intrinsic Motivation

- Introduce “fun” aspect of the sport immediately to build motivation.



Prompting

- Acts as assistant to produce target behavior (how you help them to achieve goal)
- Types of prompts
 - Physical, verbal, gestural, model, video/visual
- Introducing new skills; you can use errorless learning
- Maintaining or progressing behavior - work towards fading level of prompt
- Generalize prompting whenever possible

Transitions

- Can be very difficult for someone with Autism
- Looking ahead
 - Create a picture or schedule of when activity will finish and/or what's next
- Give countdown when effective (not always) and ample time to transition.
- Use visual supports to explain what activity is coming next and when.

Ratio

- Need for 1:1 or even 2:1
- Option of embedding student in group lessons with neuro-typical peers
 - Ex. Student in “regular” lesson with skills trainer supporting social engagement and behaviors
- Supply Instructor with behavioral support as needed
 - Ex. Private ski instructor teaching lesson with additional skills trainer supporting through transitions, etc.

How students learn..

- Reinforcement
- Motivation
- Joy
- “Stretch” (progression)



“Its kind of fun to do the impossible”

-Walt Disney

Thanks!!

For Further Information

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