

10 EVIDENCE- BASED TIPS FOR COUNSELING ADULTS WITH AUTISM

Ali Cunningham Abbott, PhD, LMHC, QS, Assistant Professor at Lynn University

Alison Bourdeau, MEd, Clinical Support Specialist, Center for Autism & Related Disabilities at Florida Atlantic University



Rationale



- Importance of early recognition and accurate diagnosis
- Understanding the common comorbid conditions (CCCs)
- Choosing an effective approach, assessment and interventions



1. *Presume competence & capability*

Splintered skill sets

Common strengths & limitations

Procedural versus declarative knowledge

Personal power, agency and a voice

Person-first language and approach

Clinical interventions:

Rapport building: Assessing for strengths and interests

Engaging through Socratic questioning

2. Understand the support system

Social support

- Family structure and dynamics

- Friends, partners, spouse

Clinical interventions:

Reciprocity in social support

Assist in identifying a “social coach”

3. *Increase optimism*

“Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional”

Caregiver pessimism is one of the strongest predictors of problems in adulthood; optimism promotes a person's ability to:

- identify alternatives to past behaviors,
- increases problem-solving skills,
- decreases helplessness,
- increases coping skills, and
- promotes a positive worldview

Clinical interventions:

Thoughts quiz

Self-Talk Journal: tracking, disputation and reframing

4. *Assess & plan for treatment*

Treatment goals to address the core symptoms of ASD

The power of adult self-report & third-party reporting

Clinical interventions:

Social Responsiveness Scale 2

- Useful in distinguishing from common comorbid conditions
- Designed to help inform treatment outcomes & progress
- Five subscales: social awareness, social cognition, social communication, social motivation, and restricted interests and repetitive behaviors

5. Treat social motivation

How interested are they in the social landscape?

Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation

Clinical interventions:

Explore intrinsic & extrinsic social motivations and expectations

Identify common interests and build upon success as a way to foster social interactions or relationship(s)

6. *Treat social awareness*

Navigating the social landscape starts with identification

Presentation can range from hyper to hypo sensitivities

Clinical interventions:

Utilize direct instruction with concrete rules to aid in identification

Provide opportunities for practice with visual cues (written, photographic or video) for real world application and generalization

7. *Treat social cognition*

Interpreting and predicting the social landscape

Theory of mind (TOM)

Clinical interventions:

Examine social errors and successes through questioning:

1. What was that like for the other person?
2. What did that other person think about you?
3. Does the person want to interact with you again?

8. *Treat social communication*

Expressing oneself successfully in the social landscape

All social communication involves verbal and non-verbal elements

Clinical interventions:

Role-play to demonstrate errors & model effective strategies

Rehearsal in session for practice & corrective feedback

9. *Treat restricted interests & repetitive behaviors*

Preoccupation with restricted patterns of interest, adherence to nonfunctional routines and unexpected motor mannerisms

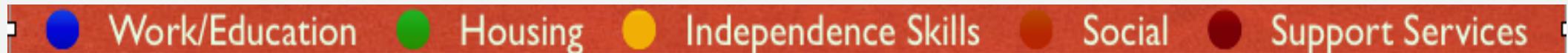
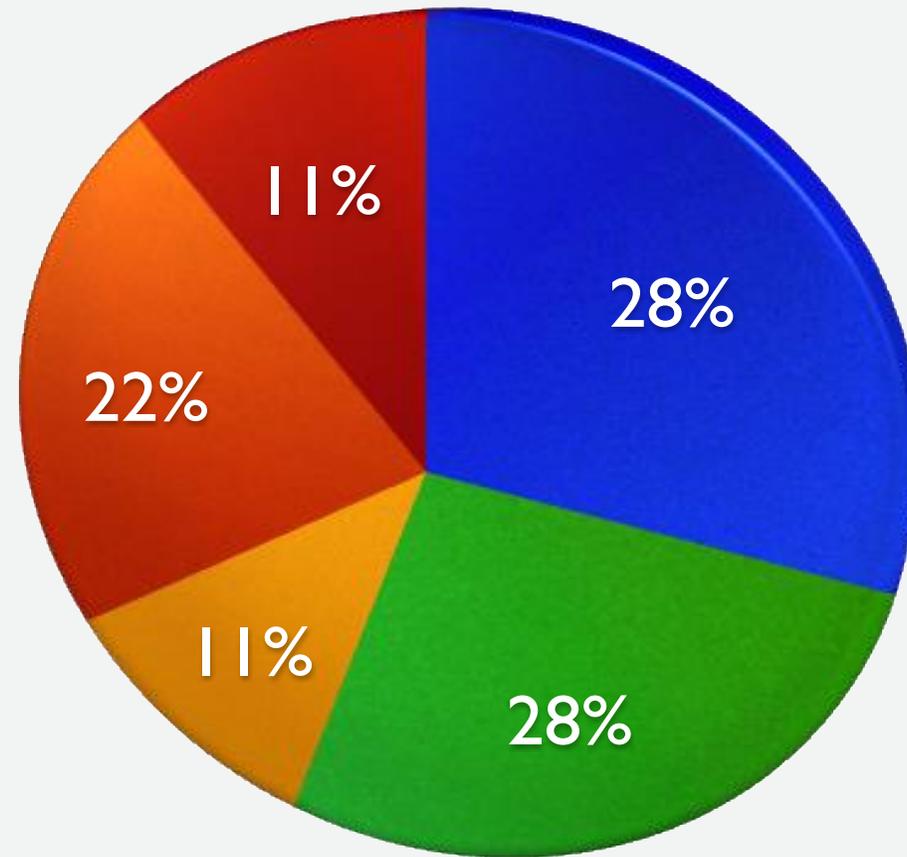
Clinical interventions:

Applied behavior analysis

Identifying alternatives

Utilize current interests as a means to further develop and broaden skill set and interests

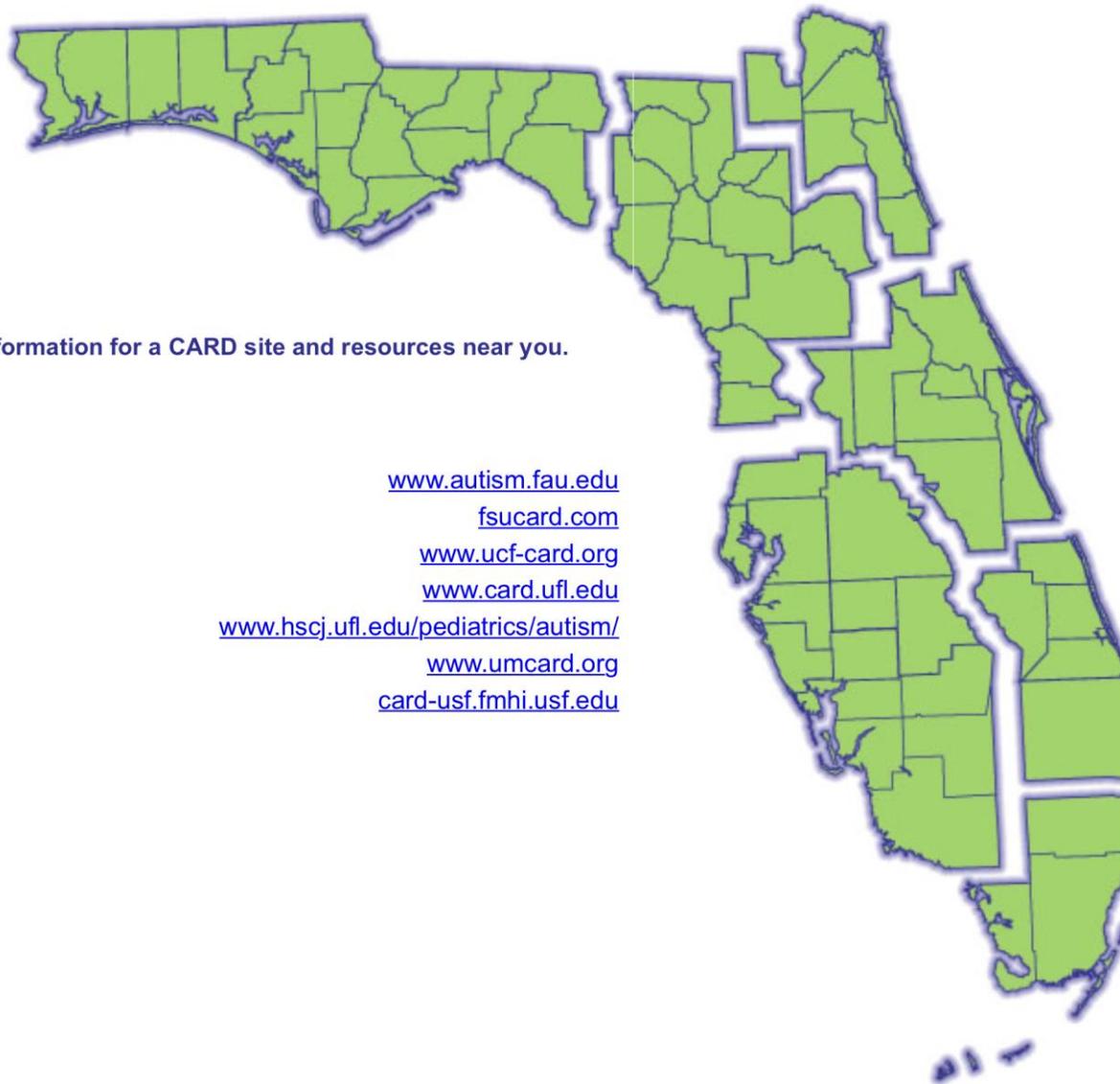
10. Promote independence





Center for Autism and
Related Disabilities

*Florida's First Choice
for Autism Support*



Select a region on the map to view contact information for a CARD site and resources near you.

CARD sites

Florida Atlantic University

Florida State University

University of Central Florida

University of Florida at Gainesville

University of Florida at Jacksonville

University of Miami

University of South Florida

www.autism.fau.edu

fsucard.com

www.ucf-card.org

www.card.ufl.edu

www.hscj.ufl.edu/pediatrics/autism/

www.umcard.org

card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu

References & Resources

American Speech Language Hearing Association. www.asha.org

Baker, J. (2006). *Preparing for life: The complete guide for transitioning to adulthood for those with autism & asperger's syndrome*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

Bellini, S. (2008). *Building social relationships: A systematic approach to teaching social interaction skills to children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders and others with social difficulties*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

Bilken, D., & Burke, J. (2006). Presuming Competence. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39:2. 166-175.

Chevallier, C., Kohls, G., Troiani, V., Brodtkin, E. S., & Schultz, R.T. (2012). The social motivation theory of autism. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Volume 16, Issue 4, p231–239, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2012.02.007>

Devoldre, I., Davis, M. H., Verhofstadt, L. L., & Buysse, A. (2010). Empathy and social support provision in couples: Social support and the need to study the underlying process. *The Journal of Psychology*, 144, 259-284. doi: 10.1080/00223981003648294

Edelson, S. M. (2016). Theory of Mind. Retrieved from https://www.autism.com/understanding_theoryofmind

Gerhardt, P. F., & Lainer, I. (2011). Addressing the needs of adolescents and adults with autism: A crisis on the horizon. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 41, 37- 45. doi: 10.1007/s10879-010-9160-2

Kim, S. H., & Lord, C. (2010). Restricted and repetitive behaviors in toddlers and preschoolers with autism spectrum disorders based on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS). *Autism Research*, [Volume 3, Issue 4, pages 162–173](#), doi: 10.1002/aur.142

Laugeson, E. (2013) *The science of making friends: Helping socially challenged teens and young adults*. San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Myles, B. S. Trautman, M. L., Schelvan, R. L. (2004). *The Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

Senju, A., Southgate, V., White, S., & Frith, U. (2009). Mindblind Eyes: An Absence of Spontaneous Theory of Mind in Asperger Syndrome, *Science*, Vol. 325, Issue 5942, pp. 883-885. DOI: 10.1126/science.1176170
