

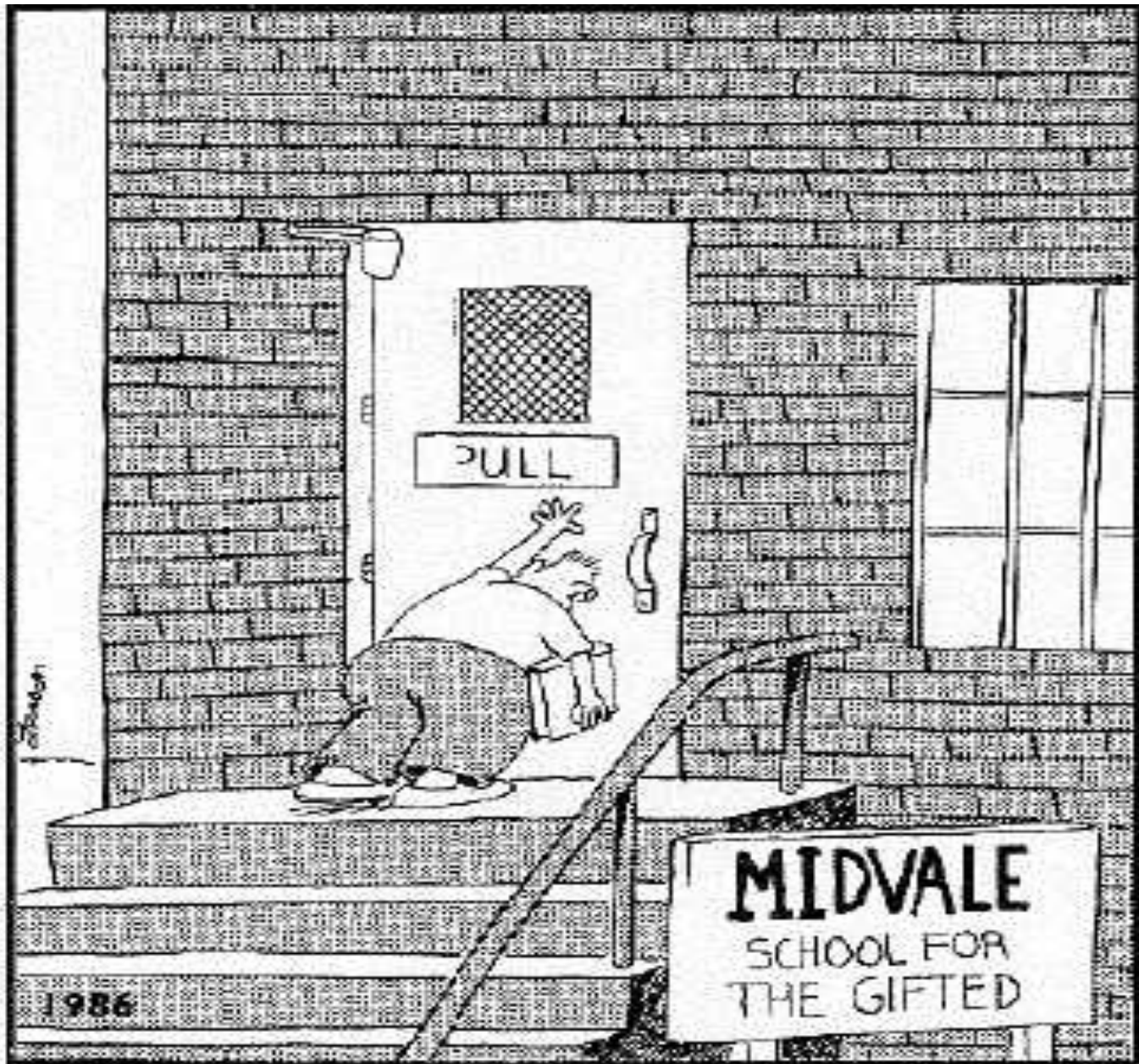




# Transitioning to Work for Consumers with Asperger Syndrome: It takes an A-Team

Lisa King, M.Ed.  
Higher Education and Autism  
Spectrum Disorders, Inc.  
[www.CollegeAutismSpectrum.com](http://www.CollegeAutismSpectrum.com)





Wolf, Thierfeld Brown, King, Bork, 2008  
Do Not Reproduce

# Overview

- Introductions
  - Difficult cases
  - What do you need to leave with today?
- Incidence/prevalence
  - The scope of the problem
  - Employment prospects
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
  - Characteristics, Domains affected
- Problems in the workplace
- Today's Man
- Working with employers
- Resources

# Do you know this client?

- ✓ They are experts in a particular area, but can't get past human resources when interviewing
- ✓ They would work all weekend if you let them
- ✓ They won't take a lunch break because it's an inefficient use of time
- ✓ They are fluent in four languages (self-taught)
- ✓ They can't turn in the project when required because it's not perfect
- ✓ They have a meltdown if there is a change in routine
- ✓ They can't remember to wash their uniform
- ✓ They find the cure for the common cold
- ✓ They ask the boss if he is wearing a toupee
- ✓ They can't remember to refill or take their meds
- ✓ They have 150 IQ's
- ✓ They get lost in the building on daily basis

# Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Workforce

- Increasing numbers in VR system
- Not like other students with disabilities
- Accommodations typically address social and executive areas vs specific job skills
- Support needed in the non-verbal and cultural aspects of the work place
- Environment presents barriers

# The Autism Spectrum

- **Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)**
  - High functioning Autism (HFA)**
  - Asperger Syndrome**
  - Pervasive Developmental Disorder**
- **Distinctions between categories not clear**
- **Continuum from mild to severe**

# The Borders of Autism

- HFA
- PDD-NOS
- NVLD
- Semantic Pragmatic Language Disorder
- Schizoid Personality Disorder
- Sensory Integration Dysfunction
- Developmental Right Hemisphere Disorder
- Social-Emotional Learning Disability

# Asperger's Syndrome

- Normal to (way) above average IQ
- Mildest end of spectrum
- Best prognosis, least symptomatic
- No language delay (clinical criteria)
- Shadow syndromes range into normal
- Einstein, Mozart, Gates?

- Functional limitations continue through into adulthood, which can cause difficulty in independent living and stable long-term employment outcomes.

(Autism Society of America, 2008)

# Why must we pay attention?

- Huge increase of ASD identified in k12 nationwide
- More students going on to colleges and universities
- Potential to drain time, energy, resources of systems
- Low incidence = high maintenance
- Even students who don't make it to higher ed, can and will enter the workforce
- How can our environment adapt to provide access to employment for these capable/ challenging individuals?
- Unique gifts and potential for societal impact
- Ready or not.....here they come!

# Increase in Incidence or Prevalence

- Reasons for increased incidence/diagnosis:
  - DSM IV, earlier identification
  - Popular press (Wired, Time magazines)
  - Some districts report increase > 600%
  - Before 1994 = 3/10,000. Now 30/10,000.
  - Higher ratio ( 50-80/10,000) for wider spectrum
  - FedEx example

# 10 occupations with the largest job growth, 2004-14 (US-BLS)

- Retail salespersons
- Registered nurses
- **Postsecondary teachers**
- Customer service representatives
- Janitors and cleaners, except maids & housekeeping cleaners
- Waiters and waitresses
- Combined food preparation & serving workers, including fast food
- Home health aides
- Nursing aides, orderlies, attendants
- General & operations managers

# Issues unique to high school graduates on the spectrum

- Lack of job exposure/experience
- Academic prep vs. life/independent living skills
- Little motivation for work unrelated to special interest
- Little focus on soft skills
- Communication and social skills not commensurate with technical skill

# Typical Path of the graduating student with ASD

- Special Ed is all done
- No more disability
- I want to be like everyone else
- STRESS
- I am overwhelmed
- What's wrong with me
- Depression, isolation
- CRASH
- Cleaning up “the mess”
- Lost time, money, maybe irreparable damage
- Maybe I do need disability supports.....

# Employment: Autistic adults

- Unemployment rate for the U.S, general population= 5%
- Unemployment rate for adults with Asperger Syndrome = 88%
- Unemployment rate for adults with Autism = 98%

Minnesota Department of Education, 2008

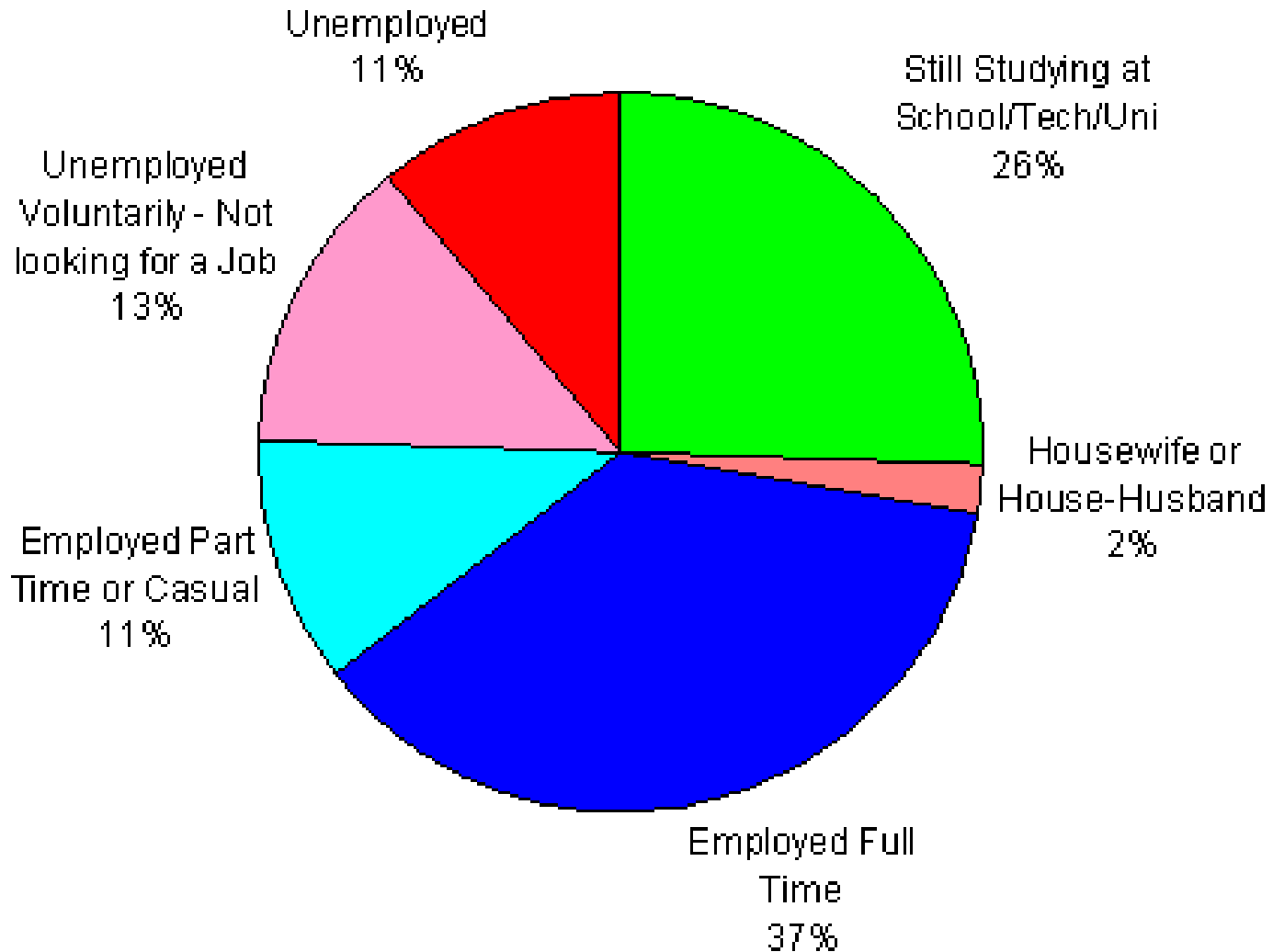
## **Vocational Rehabilitation Area**

**RSA data for FY2003-2005 suggest people with ASD are underserved**

**In FY2005, 206, 295 people were closed in Status 26; of that total 1,141 (.55%) were people with autism. An additional 1,689 people with autism applied for services but were not successfully placed.**

**(U.S. ED, OSERS, RSA, 2007)**

# Aspie Employment



# Jobs are in Service Industries

- The service-producing sector will continue to be the dominant employment generator in the economy, adding 20.5 million jobs by 2010. Within the goods-producing sector, construction and durable manufacturing will contribute relatively modest employment gains.

US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005

# Problems with current model

- If not using academic accommodations in H.S., districts see no need to re-assess
- Secondary personnel unaware of ASD impacts postsecondary settings
- Students and parents reluctant to consider 18-21 year old programs.
- Superior intelligence does not translate into workplace competence

IRI on Rehabilitation of Individuals with ASD (2007) suggests several challenges for state VR systems in serving people with ASD.

- VR counselor involvement in public school transition planning usually starts at about the time of the student's graduation.
- Needs of individuals with ASD do not match well with achieving a rapid Status 26 closure by a VR counselor.
- Few supported employment job coaches have experience with adults with ASD.
- Shortage of specialized services for adults with AS
- Best practice information derived from research is severely limited.

# Strengths of clients with AS in workforce

- Focus
- Unique way of seeing things
- Independent thinking
- Loves rules and routine
- Attention to detail
- Loyal
- Honest
- Likes problem solving

## **IRI on Rehabilitation of Individuals with ASDs identifies several challenges of people with autism in obtaining and maintaining employment**

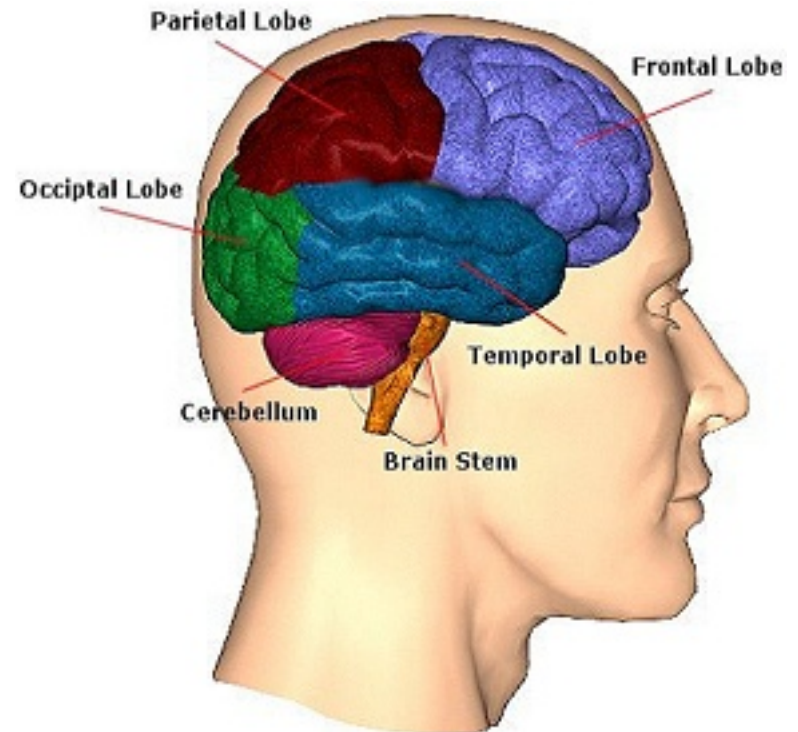
- Mastering job application process
- Acclimating to new routines
- Communication
- Navigating social interactions with supervisors and co-workers

# What's it like to Think like me?

- Distractible
- Unable to “know” what other's want from me
- Concrete – black and white
- Highly knowledgeable about certain topics
- Excellent memory for things that were said, seen, heard, from a long time ago – many of wouldn't
- Remember (pros and cons)
- I show little to no care or interest in interest areas of my friends and family
- Problems generalizing across settings
- Rule-bound

# Executive Function

- Frontal lobe functions:
  - Emotional-Regulation
  - Inhibition of Impulsive Responding
  - Planning & Organization
  - Goal Directed Behavior
  - Attention
  - Problem Solving
  - Working Memory
  - Shifting Set



Copyright 2001 by Randy Glasbergen.  
www.glasbergen.com



**“How do they expect us to learn time management when every hour here feels like three hours, a week feels like a year, and the weekends fly by like ten minutes?”**

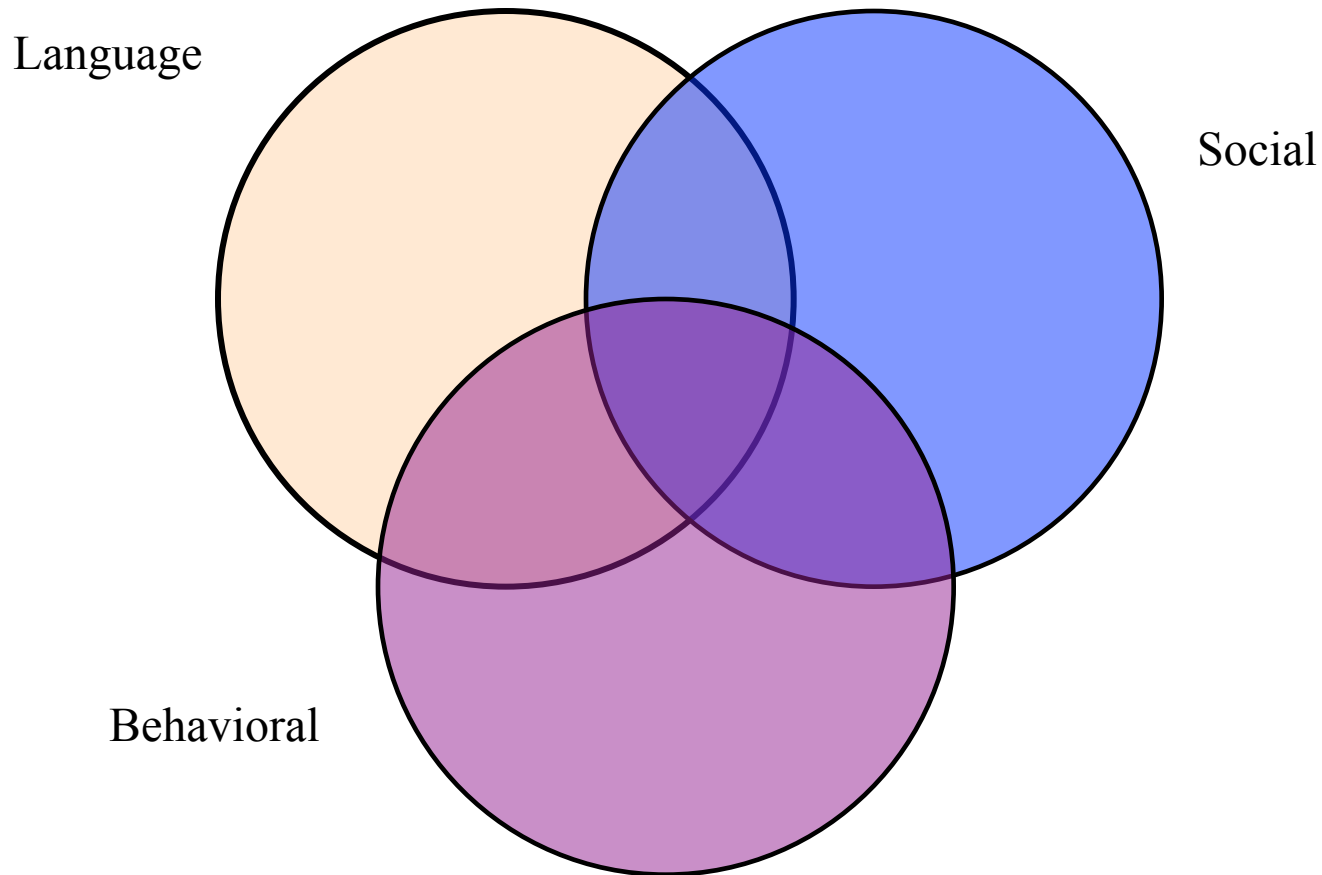
# Domains affected:

- Social
- Language
- Behavior

## Other Associated Features:

- Motor clumsiness
- Perceptual difficulties (visual)
- Sensory sensitivities
- Organizational and planning deficits
- Depression/anxiety

# Domains Overlap

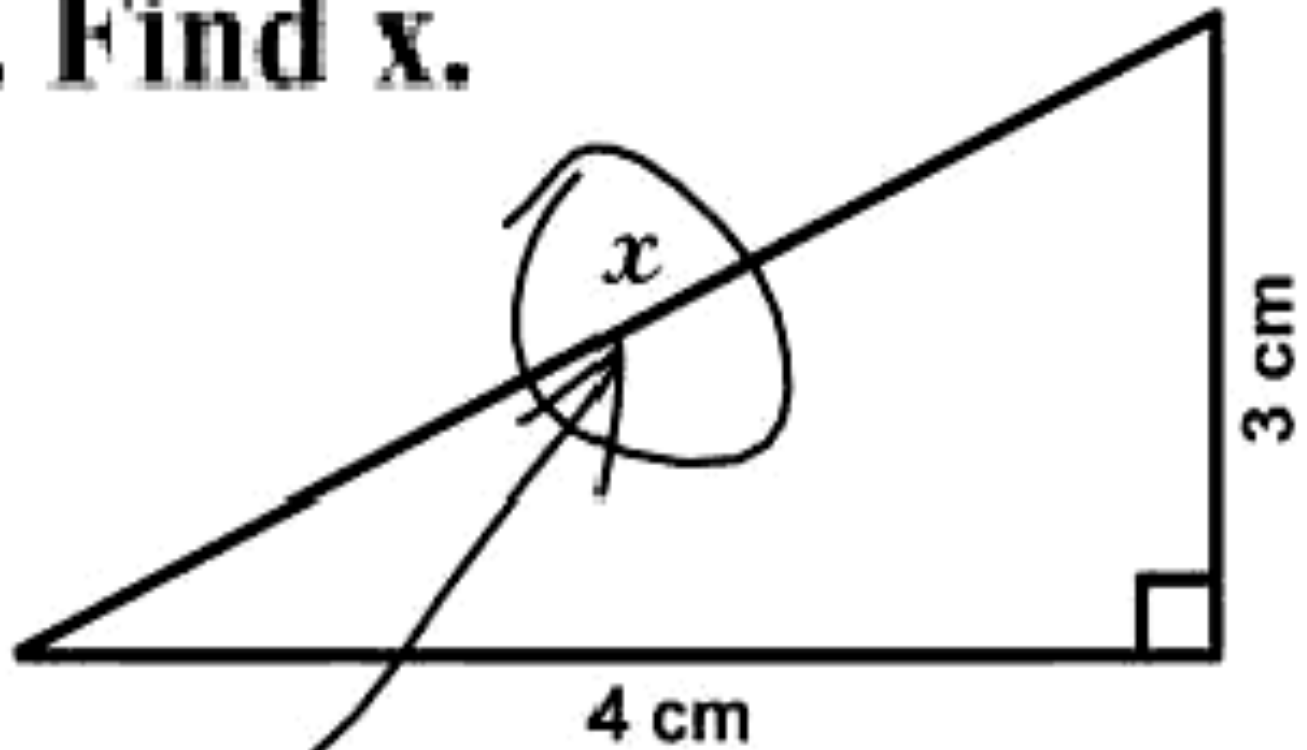


Adapted from Bishop, 2001  
Wolf, Thierfeld Brown, King, Bork, 2008  
Do Not Reproduce

# Neurocognitive Processing Disability

- Widespread neurointegrative deficit
- Piecemeal vs. gestalt processing
- Facial processing especially
- Executive dysfunction
- “Theory of Mind” or mentalizing
- Decreased empathy and increased systematizing (Baron Cohen, 2005)

**3. Find  $x$ .**



*Here it is*

# Why Can't He Get it Together?

- Imagine if you processed pieces of the environment in the order they came in and could not organize these bits?
- Imagine if you screened out many of the bits because they confused or overwhelmed you?
- What if you could not rely on consistency in your sensory environment?
- Imagine if you could not fathom how other people do it any differently?
- What if everyone is expecting or demanding that you comply with things you don't understand?

Boston University & University of Connecticut School of Law © 2007-Do not Reproduce

# Behavioral Disability

- Rigid, stereotyped behavior and/or mannerisms
- Unusual, repetitive preoccupation with objects or ideas
- Often mechanical in nature, maps, weather, trains, schedules
- Special interests may become real talents and assets

# Sensory Integration Dysfunction

- Lights
- Music
- Food
- General workplace noise
- Fire alarms
- Touch

# Behavior

# Cause

# (mis)Interpretation

<b>Head on desk</b>	<b>Sensory overload</b>	<b>Rude, sleeping</b>
<b>Mimics or recites back</b>	<b>Time to process</b>	<b>Not taking speaker seriously</b>
<b>Great expressive skills</b>	<b>Compensates for receptive skills</b>	<b>Overestimation of functioning</b>
<b>Odd speaking habits</b>	<b>Pragmatic Language deficits</b>	<b>Inappropriate</b>
<b>May not respond to facial expressions, tone</b>	<b>Difficulty with non-verbals</b>	<b>Leads to miscues in assignments</b>
<b>Does not recognize you</b>	<b>Limited facial recognition</b>	<b>Aloof, rude</b>
<b>May not shift topic on cue</b>	<b>Does not automatically catch on</b>	<b>Self-absorbed, uninterested</b>

Wolf, Thierfeld Brown, King, Bork, 2008

Do Not Reproduce

# Sensory Issues: Too much or too little

- Tactile: deep pressure, certain fabrics
- Olfactory: nose plugs, unscented personal products
- Visual: visors, sunglasses, low light
- Auditory: ear plugs, headphones, move work space
- Food sensitivity: bring own to work, chew gum vs. pencils

# What's it like to Learn like me?

- Disorganized: planning and preparation, problems using planners, etc...
- Concept of time issue
- Singular learning style – my learning style is rigid, but once you find it, watch out! (hands-on or kinesthetic, visual – pictures, words, auditory)
- Sequencing – Previewing: following the order of events that other's follow
- Executive functioning problems - poor judgment and decision making
- Inflexible thinking
- Learning disabilities: vary significantly not one specific disability - math, reading, fine and gross motor

- I have rigid thinking... about everything
- I persevere
- Choices are good for me – I don't do well with open ended questions about my likes or thoughts
- Unaware of what other's feel
- Unaware of what I feel
- Problems “reading” other's intentions
- Problem self-monitoring, lack of insight – need to self manage and self regulate
- Executive functioning - judgment and common sense “I know the rules, I know right and wrong, I just can't remember to do them...”
- Easily overwhelmed... even though I don't look like it

# Social Disability

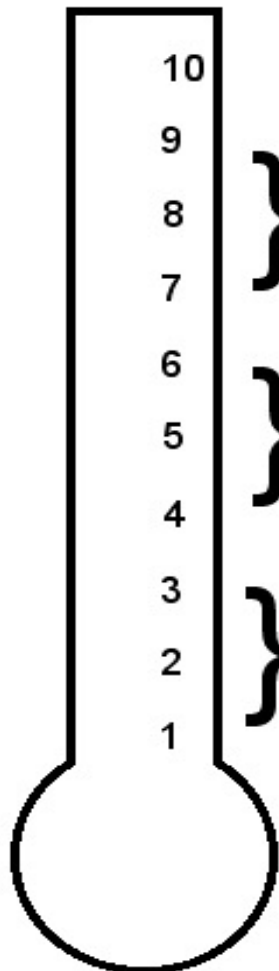
- Core social skills (joining, initiating conversation, etc.)
- Poor social awareness, interpersonally naïve or indifferent
  - Alternately, socially acute and anxious
- Approach often awkward & effortful
- Responding to interpersonal & language cues
- Lack “intuitive social knowledge”
- Bully magnets

# A Word about Stress

- Stressful situations
- What precipitates crises
- How stress manifests itself
- Behaviors
- Interactions with others
- Calming methods
- Medications

# NEW + Change = **STRESS!!!**

## Stress Thermometer



10 Impossible

9 }  
8 } Extreme anxiety  
7 } or panic

6 }  
5 } Anxious, but  
4 } Okay

3 }  
2 } No big deal  
1 }

- Lack of clarity
- Being misunderstood
- Social situations
- Confusion/chaos
- Unstructured time
- Having to rush
- Change/novelty
- Having things not go the way you wanted

$$c = a + b + d$$

$$c = (\pi \cdot 8 \cdot (\Omega - 10^\circ) + 3\alpha + 2 \cdot 3 \ln 11)^2$$

$$c = (\pi \cdot 8 \cdot \log \frac{1}{2} + 3\alpha + 6 \ln 11)^2$$

$$c = \left[ \int_{x_1}^{x_2} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \alpha dx + \frac{3[(3+7x)^2 + 6 + 3\pi]}{(5+y)(8+z)+1} + 6 \ln 11 \right]^2$$

$$c = \left[ \int_{x_1}^{x_2} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \frac{(3+7x)^2 + 6 + 3\pi}{(5+y)(8+z)+1} dx + \frac{3[(3+7x)^2 + 6 + 3\pi]}{(5+y)(8+z)+1} + 6 \ln 11 \right]^2$$

$$c = \left[ \int_{x_1}^{x_2} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \frac{(3+7x)^2 + (\beta - 180^\circ) + 3\pi}{(5+y)(8+z)+1} dx + \frac{3[(3+7x)^2 + (\beta - 180^\circ) + 3\pi]}{(5+y)(8+z)+1} + 6 \ln 11 \right]^2$$

$$c = \left[ \int_{x_1}^{x_2} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \frac{\sqrt{3+7x} + (\beta - 180^\circ) + 3\pi}{\frac{(5+y)(8+z) + \log 8}{10\Omega - 6\pi - 1}} dx + \frac{3[\sqrt{3+7x} + (\beta - 180^\circ) + 3\pi + 6 \ln 11]}{\frac{(5+y)(8+z)}{10\Omega - 6\pi - 1} + \log 8} \right]^2$$

$$c = \sqrt{\left[ \int_{x_1}^{x_2} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \alpha dx + \frac{3[\sqrt{3+7x} + (\beta - 180^\circ) + 3\pi]}{\frac{(5+y)(8+z)}{10\Omega - 6\pi - 1} + \log 8} + 6 \ln 11 \right]^2}$$

$$c = \sqrt{\left[ \int_{x_1}^{x_2} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \alpha dx + \frac{3[\sqrt{3+7x} + (\beta - 180^\circ) + 3\pi]}{\frac{(5+y)(8+z)}{10\Omega - 6\pi - 1} + \log 8} + 6 \ln 11 \right]^2}$$

$$c = \sqrt{\left[ \int_{x_1}^{x_2} \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \alpha dx + \frac{3[\sqrt{3+7x} + (\beta - 180^\circ) + 3\pi]}{\frac{(5+y)(8+z)}{10\Omega - 6\pi - 1} + \log 8} + 6 \ln 11 \right]^2}$$

# Basic Social Competence expected from entry level workers

- Personal Presentation:

- General cleanliness and good hygiene, grooming
  - Job and age appropriate clothing
- Initiation of greetings and introductions

- Social Behaviors

- What to do on break
- What to talk about/ not talk about at work
  - Use telephone and email effectively
- Understanding private behavior is different than public

- Communication Skills

- Asking for assistance when needed
- Eye contact, listening and responding skills
  - How to talk to supervisors
- Excusing oneself to use restroom

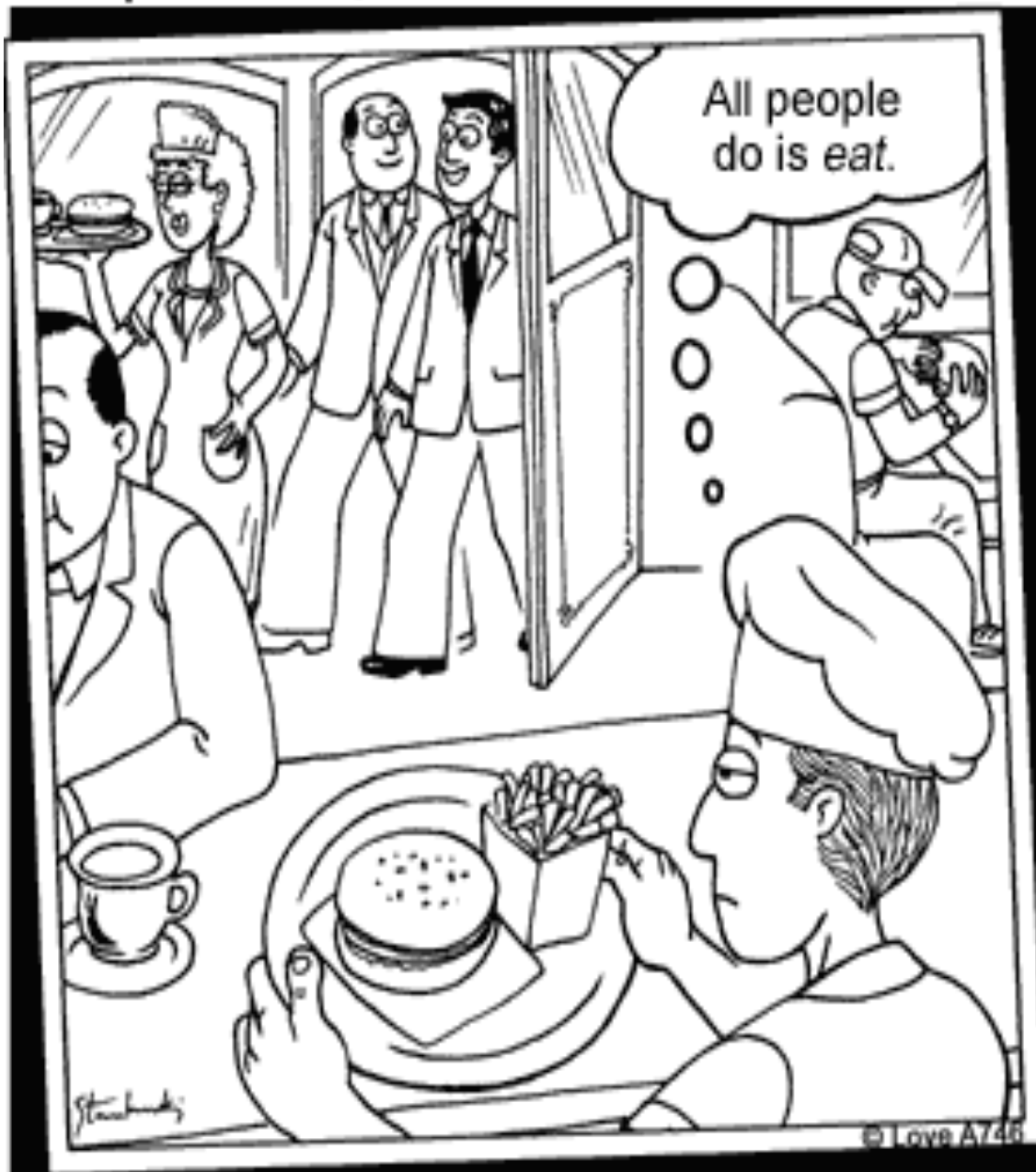
Organization for Autism Research, 2006.

Wolf, Thierfeld Brown, King,  
Bork, 2008

Do Not

# Common work problems

- Getting overwhelmed
- Seeing the big picture
- Time management & deadlines
- Multi-tasking
- Initiation & follow-through
- Dealing with the “public”
- Responding to feedback or criticism
- Stress overload



## TODAY'S MAN

THE FILM

THE MAKING OF

THE FILMMAKERS

TALKBACK

## The Film



*"From the time my brother was born, we could tell that he was not like other children. As a small child he had amazing skills—he could tell you what day of the week you were born, could figure prime numbers into the thousands, but he was incapable of holding a real conversation, of making friends. No one could tell us what might be wrong with Nicky or how to help him."*

—Lizzie Gottlieb, filmmaker



VIDEO

"That was his first word. It was like the great Helen Keller moment, on tape, there it was."  
(4:41)

[Watch video](#)

**TODAY'S MAN** tells the story of Nicky Gottlieb, a former child genius who, at age 21, is diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome. People with Asperger's, which is a form of autism, tend to be highly intelligent—often geniuses in certain subjects—but are unable to pick up on social cues. The subtleties of body language, facial expression, tones or gestures are lost to Nicky, and his own behavior can be considered by others to be bizarre and inappropriate.

One in 160 children today are born with some form of autism. Although Asperger Syndrome is considered to be on the high-functioning end of the autistic spectrum, it was only recognized in the U.S. in 1994. While there are an increasing number of resources for Asperger's children, there are surprisingly few organizations and programs for adults with the syndrome, resulting in a "lost generation" of people like Nicky who must find their own ways to navigate

life with this perplexing disorder.

**TODAY'S MAN** follows Nicky as he struggles to leave the safety of his family's home and the comfort of his favorite TV shows in order to find a job and an apartment. Made by Nicky's sister Lizzie Gottlieb, the film is a sister's search to understand her brother's mysterious inner life and a larger effort to comprehend Asperger Syndrome and the people who struggle with it.

# Your Role as VR counselor

- ✓ As part of the transition team you can make secondary personnel and family aware of documentation requirements post high school
- ✓ IEP is a plan not dx.
- ✓ Advocate for comprehensive evaluation:
- ✓ Neuropsych is best
- ✓ Advocate for job/volunteer experience
- ✓ Advocate for the need for time management, scheduling skills

# Assessing Employment Skills

- Observation in employment environment critical
- If no current employment, set up volunteer experience
- Define and prioritize most needed areas of support
- Functional assessment
- Fundamental requirements

# Vocational Assessment

- IQ tests
- Ability tests
- Aptitude tests
- Achievement tests
- Language tests
- Vocational interest inventories
- Personality tests
- Attitude surveys
- Social and emotional functioning
- Adaptive behavior

# Job Matching & ASD

- Only service jobs will be available for many potential workers
- Most ASD are unsuited to service work
- Higher education will greatly improve chances of a successful match
- Even with a successful match, employers will face issues with transition, job training, and supervision
- We need to better understand the employee with ASD

# Other important areas of focus

- General work culture
  - Arrive on times
  - Follow the dress code
  - Meet task/project deadlines
  - Understand how to address others
  
  - Specific office policies:
    - Absences
    - Eating at your desk
    - Office “don’ ts”:
      - Making personal phone calls
      - Playing computer games

Vocational success frequently depends not only on meeting the technical requirements of the job, but upon

One's ability to “fit in”

“Can he do the job?  
He could have invented the  
product!.....

...But it doesn't matter if he can't  
wear clean  
clothes to work!”

# Focus on “fitting in”

- Office dress code
- Grooming and hygiene
- Office comportment
- Telephone equipment
- Learning new vocabulary

# Focus on fitting in (cont.)

- Learning office routines
  - Time sheets
  - Lunch hours
  - Breaks
  - Doors

# Include the family

- Better historians than client
- Help parents redefine role
- Be aware of “shadow syndromes” in family
- Provide reality check
- Great memory for all that has gone wrong
- Helicopter parents.....

- ✓ Develop relationship with client:
- ✓ “Find the hook”
- ✓ View obsessions as passions to be developed
- ✓ Be aware of sensory concerns
- ✓ Problem behaviors
- ✓ Hygiene
- ✓ Handling money

# Developing Scripts

- Learning to be a good team player
- Teaching negotiating strategies
- Working with employer for problem solving
- Working with colleagues
- Members of the opposite sex
- Office etiquette

# Policies and Procedures

- Know and use the Employee Handbook
- Create rules sheet
- Create reminders
- BE SPECIFIC and concrete
- Scripts: Steps to a process

# Accommodations for ASD

- No clear-cut guidelines
- Awareness of fundamental requirements
- Standards not subject to accommodation
- Some common: short breaks, predictable environment, stress ball
- Accommodations flow from understanding of impairments and fundamental course requirements

# Work with employer to identify essential standards of job or course

- Fundamental requirements are not to be compromised.
- What is essential?
- Example: Mandatory team building?

# What are NOT Reasonable Accommodations

- Fundamentally altering a course requirement (examples: attendance, group projects, oral speaking, etc)
- Accepting violent or abusive behaviors
- Non-adherence to policies and procedures that are consistent with workplace
- Personal services such as toileting, clothing management, feeding, medications, etc.
- Code of Conduct versus manifest determination

# Preparing and supporting the employer

If client chooses to disclose to potential employer:

- Provide advance information on difficulties with interviewing, sensory environment
- Request questions be clear, concrete
- Consider providing the candidate questions in advance
  
- Disclosure after employment
- Advantages/disadvantages
- Promote acceptance in the workplace
- Educate employees

# Good Employers for ASD have:

- General understanding of AS as well as specific understanding of individual
- Willingness to make reasonable accommodations
- Discretion and sensitivity in addressing problems, yet maintaining confidential employee info
- Willingness to think outside the box in solving issues that arise due to social skills
- Consideration of work trial before permanent decisions are made

# Resources for AS clients seeking employment

- Employment Workbook for Adults with Asperger Syndrome, Meyer, Roger. 2001
- Ask and Tell: Self Advocacy and Disclosure for People on the Spectrum, Shore, Stephen. 2006
- Pretending to be Normal, Willey, Liane Holliday. 1999
- Developing Talents: Careers for Individuals with AS and High functioning Autism, Grandin, Temple and Duffy, Katy. 2004

[www.hownottotalk.com](http://www.hownottotalk.com)

*user:* edina73     *password:* social2012

*user:* 19rsa4     *password:* 8car49

Role-Playing Workout | [how to play](#) [exit](#)

## How [ Not ] To Talk

to a job interviewer about your first job

Are you looking for your first job? Do you have Asperger's Syndrome? Are you 18 to 21 years old? Here's your chance to practice a job interview with an employer – in private, at your own pace – and get valuable feedback on the answers you picked.

*These scenarios are a Special Service Project of the Hennepin-Carver Youth Council, which is affiliated with the Hennepin-Carver Workforce Investment Board. This software is funded by a grant from Hennepin County, Minnesota.*


**Before role-playing, click [here](#) for job interview tips.**


## Role-playing Workout:

Just click in the box, enter your name & email, then click "enter".

**name:**

**email:**

 **enter the course**



# Social Animals

Role-Playing Workout

play

how to play

exit

Hello, Lisa King. I'm Jim McCarthy. So, how was the traffic on your way here?

"he says"

"you say"



Fine.

It wasn't too bad, actually -- just the usual stuff.

There was a 12-minute delay on the 94 exit ramp, a 20% speed decrease on 169 and a 6-minute backup at 5th St.



feedback



tips

Wow, you really have a head for figures.

"he says"

"you say"



I like numbers.

Sorry -- I guess I'm not here to analyze the regional traffic flow, am I?

Everyone's brain records mathematical data, but most people tune it out. Traffic is full of statistics if you just pay attention to it.



feedback



tips

# When working with clients with AS, remember:

- If you have met one person with AS, you have met one person with AS
- Be clear and direct in communication: say what you mean; mean what you say
- Provide big picture and details: why are we doing what we are doing
- Don't assume what's in your head is in theirs:  
check it out

# When working with clients with AS, remember:

- Consistency, Structure and Predictability
- Honor who they are; prioritize challenges based on impact on life/job or course
- Use special interests or fascinations whenever possible; find their “hook”
- Visuals remain constant, words do not
- What’s obvious to you is not to AS, explain

# Conclusions

- Workers with ASD are becoming more common
- Higher education may offer the best employment outcome
- Employers can assist with job matching and support
- Persons with ASD are unique & capable employees