

29 WAYS FOR TEACHER ASSISTANTS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN 2019

Teacher assistants, school support officers, teacher aides etc. – **you are angels in disguise and we thank you for all your hard work with our ASD students.** You are usually the person that the student with ASD may develop a great mentoring relationship with, so it is important that you start off on the 'right foot'.

10 TOP TIPS TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT TO STAY ON TASK

Often, as a teacher assistant your most challenging task is to maintain your students concentration. This can be particularly difficult when working with a student with ASD. The ideas below are some strategies I found extremely useful when I had a teacher assistant in the classroom.

- 1 Work towards the student becoming independent.** Try to allow the student to do things for themselves at their own pace, even when they are falling behind a little.
 - ✔ Only start to help them when they are **stressed and/or becoming overwhelmed** by sensory issues in the classroom.
 - ✔ Doing things for the student **promotes dependant behaviour** and ever increasing reliance on you.
 - ✔ This independence will help to **instil self-assurance and self-esteem** in the student as they learn new concepts and are able to put them into practice by themselves.
- 2 Teach the student coping strategies.**
- 3 Help the student understand** the hidden agenda rules by discussing situations with the student, explaining what other people may be thinking.
- 4 Understand the difference** between the day a student is able to do work and keep them on task and the days they can't.
- 5 Encourage the student** to be flexible, social and cooperative by explaining the 'whys' and the 'how's' of each situation.
- 6 Catch opportunities** where the special interest of the student can keep them motivated.
- 7 Fade direct support** on occasions to allow the student to grow.
- 8 Teach the student** how to learn.
- 9 Avoid being the one who rescues** the student every time.
- 10 Avoid fostering helplessness** (by doing everything for them).



12 KEY STRATEGIES FOR TEACHER ASSISTANTS

- 1 Take time to **observe** the student and environment to identify the barriers for completing tasks.
- 2 **Adapt** tasks before the activity.
- 3 **Encourage** responses (whether right or wrong, do not constantly correct).
- 4 Have examples to **show** them what is expected.
- 5 **Be organised**. For example: have pencil sharp and ready, page ruled up, book opened to correct page etc.
- 6 **Give** a preventative break during the task.
- 7 **Limit** choices e.g. rather than choose an animal, list three.
- 8 **Create** a quiet area for them to work (collaborative tables can have limitations).
- 9 **Highlight** the easy parts first, so they don't get stuck on "difficult parts" etc.
- 10 **Show** them how to handle making mistakes.
- 11 **Reduce** frustration by including breaks (e.g. toilet, snacks)
- 12 **Ensure** clear, concise and explicit instructions.



7 CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS

- 1 Students with ASD are usually **visual learners**. You need to show them what to do rather than just tell them. Use visual instructions.
- 2 Students with ASD often can have **difficulty with communication**. Just because they can't talk doesn't mean they don't understand you. Be careful what you say in front of them.
- 3 Some students **can talk but don't understand**: they need visual strategies to support verbal information. You may need to minimise your speech so as not to overwhelm them.
- 4 There is always **a reason for behaviour**: social, sensory, anxiety, communication issues. Remember that behaviour is a second language.
- 5 Establishing **routines and consistency** from day to day are also a key component.
- 6 You will need to **develop a great relationship** with the teacher so you can work together.
- 7 You may want to **work with the other students** so the teacher has time to work with the student with ASD.

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By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemaans

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