Sensory Friendly Science: Designing Opportunities to Engage Toddlers to Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Sunday, October 22, 2017
3:00-4:15pm
Sensory-Friendly Science: Designing Opportunities to Engage Toddlers to Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Introduction

What is autism?

“When you meet one person with autism, you meet one person with autism”

The Social Model of Disability

Disability is a result of the ways that society is structured, rather than an individual’s differences or impairments.
Plan of Session

Sensory Friendly Day
Children’s Museum of Houston

Early Morning Openings
Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum

Social Stories Spectrum Project
San Diego Natural History Museum

Q&A
SENSORY FRIENDLY DAY
CHILDREN’S MUSEUM OF HOUSTON
• Auditory, tactile and visual stimuli adapted to alleviate stressful situations - music turned down, lights dimmed and announcements not given.

• Exhibits modification - sticky substances removes, hard balls replaced with rubber balls and certain exhibits remain turned off.

• Signs changed to focus on symbology and positive reinforcement language - do this as opposed to don’t do this.
External Organizations

- Faithful Paws - Therapy dogs and even a therapy cat!
- Harrison Music Therapy - Sensory friendly music presented in groups or 1 on 1 sessions
- Success on the Spectrum - Social thinking, storytimes, self-awareness, listening with your whole body, interactions and visual learning.
- Houston Ballet - Physical movement.
- We Rock the Spectrum - Focus on tactile interactions with an emphasis on hand/eye coordination.
Faithful Paws
Harrison Music Therapy
Success on the Spectrum
Success on the Spectrum
Success on the Spectrum
Houston Ballet
We Rock the Spectrum
Patron Feedback

- Safe and accepting environment
- Appreciate smaller crowds
- Rules are relaxed
- Great opportunity to network
- Appreciate the advice of specialists
- Legal counseling provided
Sensory Friendly Programming
at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum

Sara Lowenburg
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Early Morning Openings for Children (ages 3-17) with Autism and their Families

Early Morning Openings
For children with autism and their families (ages 3–18)
The Museum opens its doors one hour early for children with autism and their families. Educators lead short, interactive tours designed for the whole family as well as drop-in art activities and structured play opportunities.

These programs are free, but registration is required. Please fill out the online registration form at intrepidmuseum.org/access. For more information, please contact access@intrepidmuseum.org or call 646-381-5158.

Our Solar System and Beyond
Saturday, November 18, 9:00am–11:00am
Discover Intrepid's connection to space exploration. Families will visit the space shuttle Enterprise and learn how the shuttles helped us to explore our solar system and universe!

INTREPID
SEA, AIR & SPACE MUSEUM COMPLEX
Exploring the Museum
Activities in the Exploreum

[Images of various activities]
Meeting the Experts
We are going to the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum. The Museum is an aircraft carrier that floats in the Hudson River.
Quiet Room

Educator Bags
Growing Programming Opportunities
Increasing Museum-wide Access

● Collaborating with Public Programs and Group Sales
● Increasing staff training
● Internships
● Online resources

Sensory Guide
Key Partners

- Autism Advisory Council
  - Comprised of parents of children with ASD and self-advocates with autism
  - Meets quarterly
  - Provides crucial feedback, ideas, potential partners, and support for change within the institution
  - Councilmembers receive a family membership in exchange for attending three meetings and at least one program

- Colleagues across the Museum
  - Security, Operations, Museum Services, Educators, Development

- Community Organizations
Why engage young adults with autism?

Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders
1975-2014

Data compiled from the Center for Disease Control (CDC)
Two Sets of Goals for the Project

Learning Objective for SPECTRUM Participants

- To feel and know they are contributing to society and are valued.
- To build social skills and communication skills with their peers and with museum professionals.
- To build confidence and self-esteem.

Learning Objective for Museums

- Museum staff will gain awareness and knowledge of adults with ASD.
- Staff will learn to successfully engage young adults with ASD.
- To increase sensitivity towards the needs of adults with ASD.
Project Team

Advisors

Dr. Bonnie Kraemer
Associate Professor, Dept. of Special Education, San Diego State University

Christine Reich, Ph.D.
Director of Exhibit Development and Conservation, Museum Science, Boston

Beth Ziebarth
Director, Accessibility Program, Smithsonian Institution

Johnny Grant
Director of Development & Community Outreach, Include Autism

Participating Museums in Balboa Park

Fleet Science Center
Museum of Photographic Arts
San Diego Museum of Art
Museum of Man
San Diego History Center
Japanese Friendship Garden
San Diego Natural History Museum

Museum Project Team

Beth Redmpnd-Jones
Vice President of Engagement and Education

Erica Kelly
Senior Exhibit Developer

Robert Rutherford
Adult Engagement Manager

Bradley Tsalyuk
Project Manager

Bobbi Hanna
Certified Occupational Therapist, Autism
Group Expectations

Respect each other's differences.
Everyone's voices should be heard.
Respect someone else's perspective.
Honest and polite.
Take a break when you need it.
Have fun!!

Let the Nat Staff if leaving room.
BE A GOOD LISTENER - ACTIVE LISTENING!
Feel free to ask a question, turn body towards person who is talking.
Repeat something or say it in a different way.
Phone or for project work or for coping?
Advocate for yourself!

Contact Nat Staff if can't come or late.
Stress reliever (fidgets, headphones etc - 2 thumbs up!

FEELINGS
OVERWHELMED
PANIC ATTACK
CONFUSION
"SHUT DOWN"
LOSS OF VERBAL ABILITIES

5

4

3

2

1

HAPPY
RELAXED
CALM
CONTENT
EXCITED
FRUSTRATED
IRRITATED
NERVOUS
ANXIOUS

Frustrated
Ice Breakers

- Favorite food
- Favorite costume you’ve worn or seen
- Biggest fear
- Sound you hate
- If you could meet anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- Favorite movie
- Favorite musician or band
FEELING RESTLESS, TIRED OR ANXIOUS?

WHY NOT TRY AN ENGINE CHANGER.

(ENGINE CHANGERS CAN HELP TO REGULATE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM, MAKE YOU FEEL MORE ALERT AND FOCUSED.)
**BEFORE THE VISIT**

- Website - look for rules
- Exhibits
- Get $1 pass ready
- Make sure you have phone/wallet
- Map/route
- Parking
- Opening hours
- Cafe hours

**ARRIVING AT THE MUSEUM**

- Buy a ticket $$
- Show your ID/explorer pass
- Interact with person at desk
- Wait in line
- Might be security
- Explain about service dog
- Restrooms? Where?
- Look at map
- Check bag
- Rules, photography?
Moving Around the Museum

CRONDS - SCHOOL GROUPS
NOISES
LIGHT
BIG THINGS!
MOVING THINGS!
NOT MOVING - ART

GIFT SHOP
RESTROOMS
CLASSES/PROGRAMS
MOVIES
PLACES TO SIT

QUIET SPACES 🌟
LOUD SPACES
TEXTURES - ANY SENSORY ISSUES

DOLCE LEVELS
VOLUNTEERS

Food & Water

Leaving the Museum

GIFT SHOP
FIND EXITS
RESTROOMS
GET YOUR BAG / HAVE YOUR STUFF
FIND YOUR CAR & BUS
THIS DOOR TO REMAIN CLOSED AT ALL TIMES BY ORDER OF THE FIRE MARSHAL
Status of Social Stories

Completed:
● Fleet Science Center
● Museum of Photographic Arts

Currently Being Designed:
● Museum of Man
● San Diego Museum of Art
● San Diego History Center

In Development:
● Japanese Friendship Garden
● San Diego Natural History Museum
Things we were prepared for:

- Need for structure, but sometimes we didn’t provide enough
- Having fidgets, drawing paper, pencils
- Making sure we had snack time
- Social awkwardness of the young adults with each other and with us
- Working with unique, interested, and committed young adults
- What we thought we would do in case of a “meltdown”
- Had an occupational therapist who could help the Museum team with “autism” challenges that we might not be prepared for
Things we weren’t prepared for:

● Medication issues
● Some having mental health issues (anxiety, depression, bipolar) in addition to autism that would sometime play out during a meetup
● Sensory challenges with more than half the young adults
● Need for engine changers, exercise balls, and rocking chairs
● Some participants having verbal tics, which in turn would trigger/set off other participants
● Young adults cueing each other on social skills or manners
● Becoming so attached to these young adults, and they to us
What the young adults want you to know:

● “Because we are on the Spectrum, it doesn’t mean we don’t understand.”

● “Treat me like a regular human being. Don’t use a ‘Special Ed’ voice. We have a challenge, not a disability.”

● “We can do a lot for ourselves, but we may have trouble advocating for ourselves.”

● “Everyone views the world from different perspectives. We do too, but it doesn’t mean it’s wrong.”

● “Socially challenged doesn’t mean we are mentally challenged.”

● “We want our voices to be heard. This program does that.”
http://www.sdnat.org/socialstories

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Questions?