UNDERSTANDING AUTISM

Jackie Mills-Fernald
Director of Access Ministry, Mclean Bible Church
703-770-2942
Jackie.millsfernald@mcleanbible.org
http://www.facebook.com/accessministry
www.theinclusivechurch.wordpress.com
• Luke 14:21-23
• Matthew 18-16
UNDERSTANDING AUTISM AND ASD

• Group of developmental disabilities caused by problem in the brain
• People with ASDs handle information in their brains differently
TYPES OF ASDs

• Autism – significant language challenges, social deficits, and unusual behaviors and interests; may or may not have cognitive
• Asperger’s – milder symptoms of autistic disorder; typically do not have problems with language or intellectual disabilities
• Pervasive Development Disorder – not otherwise specified; also called “atypical autism”; meets some of the criteria for autism disorder or Asperger's, but not all
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Limited or no “fantasy” play
- Avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- Trouble relating to others
- Prefer not to be touched
- Difficulty understanding or interpreting others’ feelings
- Repeat actions over and over again
- May not be able to express needs or desires through words
- Repeat words or phrases over “echol?”
- Have challenges when routines/environments change
- Have obsessive interests
DIAGNOSIS

- No blood tests
- Child’s behavior and development
- As early as 18 months; typical age for complete diagnosis is 36 months
TREATMENT

• Early intervention greatly improves a child’s development
• Specialist
• Developmental ped
• Pediatric neurologist
• Child psychologist or psychiatrist
SUSPECTED CAUSES

- Environmental
- Biological
- Genetic
• ASD cuts through all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups
• Four times more likely in boys
• 1 in 91 or 1:115 children now being diagnosed.
CLASSROOM FRIENDLY

• Structure and predictability
  Well–organized classroom (labeled with pictures)
  Multi-sensory environment
  Posted pictures schedule
  Rules/expectations posted
  Chillax or quite area
  Visual timers
  Be aware of classroom noise level
  Poster art on walls
  Fluorescent lighting
  Bean bags, floor mats, trampoline
PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

- Sensory rich
- Guided activities (whenever possible, give choices)
- Allow for movement
- Give visual cues regarding space boundaries
- Make lessons interactive/hands on
PARENT/CHURCH CONNECTION

• Get to know children and families
• Shared goals
• Open communication
• Plan to achieve success
• Commitment
REASONS FOR BEHAVIORS

• All behaviors serve a purpose
• Behavior either gets us something or gets us out of doing something
  Pain angle
  Change angle
  Frustration factor
FUNCTION VS. TOPOGRAPHY

• “Why does the behavior exist?” vs “What does this behavior look like?”
ABC OF BEHAVIOR  FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

• A (Antecedent) – what’s happening before the behavior?
• B (Behavior) – what does the behavior look like?
• C (Consequences) – what is happening after the behavior?
COMMUNICATION TIPS

• Less is more
• Match a visual with a verbal
• Allow for “wait time” to receive a response
• Use if-then statements
• Use concrete examples whenever possible
• Call the child’s name before giving instruction
• Give prompts or warnings when something is going to change
• Develop good rapport
• Ignore as much negative as possible
• Reinforce appropriate behaviors
• Be consistent with plan(s) in home and school
CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

- Provide structure and predictability
- Clarify what is expected
- Use positive reinforcers (adults control)
- All adults agree on plan
- Give choices
- Use peer mentors or helpers
BEYOND SUNDAY MORNINGS

- Family support (spiritual, emotional, physical)
- Service opportunities
- Membership
- Baptism