



REROUTING THE ROAD PAVED WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS TO BETTER CLIMATE-CONTROLLED LAND

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Background

- Theory of a Different Kind of Mind
- Individuals on the autism spectrum may differ in
 - Perceptions
 - Desire for
 - Arousal
 - Stimulation
 - Surprise
 - Interaction
 - Values
 - Expectations
 - Energy

Hazard #1: Misunderstanding or Wishful Thinking About Special Interests

- Special interests may not make sense to the “uninitiated.”
 - E.g., interest in baseball *statistics*, not in actually playing baseball
- “Sacred” or precious interests that may not be “compromised”
- There may be opportunities for social interaction with others who share this same *angle* on the interest
- More helpful: Questioning about—and listening to answers on—the interest and what makes this interesting

Hazard #2: Emphasizing Quantity Over Quality

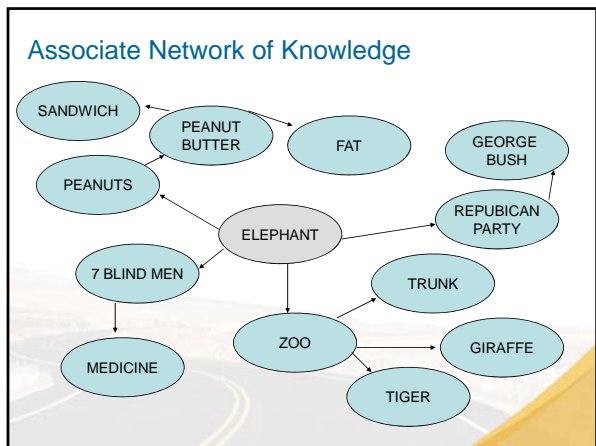
- Traditional view: “Practice makes perfect.”
- However: Fatigue makes for frustration.
- Which is better?
 - Actually enjoying 20 minutes of a birthday party
 - Making it through three hours with crying
- Tony Attwood’s “Thimble” of socializing
- More is *not* always better!
- Trap: Pressuring for more “progress” may not be productive

Hazard #3: “Combating” Preoccupation With Special Interests

- Overriding special interests do tend to conflict with necessary tasks and objectives—e.g.,
 - Other school work
 - Family logistics
- Special interests may also be socially embarrassing—especially to parents
- If extinguished, special interests will probably be replaced by others
- Instead, special interests may be used to *facilitate* learning

Special Interests in Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome

- Special interests
 - Provide motivation
 - Provide a *structure* where new information can be anchored
 - Ironically, this may *help* provide the foundation for generalization because the context is better understood



Long Term Use of Special Interests

- Career opportunities related to interest
- Going the road less traveled

Hazard #4: False Assurances and “Reckless Optimism”

- Everything is probably *not* going to be alright!
- Such false assurances
 - Are more likely than anything else to lead to reduced trust
 - May come across as very callous
- Instead, the following may be useful:
 - Clear timelines of what is scheduled to happen
 - Assurances of what is being done to reduce problems

Hazard #5: Surprises and Other “Noxious Stuff”

- Surprises are pleasurable to many—usually off the autism spectrum—as mild stimulation
- For someone on the spectrum, such surprises:
 - May be very intense
 - Make it difficult to “re-group”
 - Take away opportunities to prepare
 - May take away felt control.
- A special opportunity for an encounter with a special interest may be *more than canceled out* by a surprise

Change and Surprises

- Dislike of change
 - Violation of expectations
 - Difficulty understanding new environment
 - Perceived loss of control
 - Strong preference for established tastes

