



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Best Practice

How to limit anxiety and inappropriate behaviour for children with autism spectrum disorders

Section of the module /Educate

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1. Context

Ordinary and specialized classes

2. Goals

- Protecting the child from situations that are too difficult to tackle or too exciting for him / her
- Acting so that the child feels reassured
- Seeking a return to calm

3. « Best practice » conduct

- Team composition

Teacher and / or AVS (Auxiliaire de Vie Scolaire, i.e. Auxiliary for School Life), AES (Accompagnant Educatif et Social, i.e. Educational and Social Support)

- Group of school-aged children
- ❖ First, alternate new activities and know ones in order to reduce anxiety and unacceptable behaviour.
- ❖ Enable the child to visualize the course of his / her day at any time: make available to him / her a visual representation of the day by a schedule chart illustrated with images. This daily schedule chart makes the child's day predictable.
- ❖ Plan changes, transitions by using schedule charts, photos of places or people to help the child prepare for change, to understand what is happening, to anticipate, so as to avoid some anxiety. Put

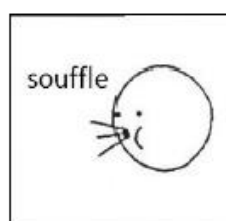
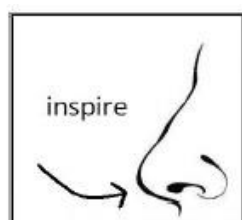
the picture of the completed activity in a small pocket of the daily schedule chart to make understand that you are about to move on to the next activity.

- ❖ Try to warn the child sufficiently in advance when there are modifications or changes in his or her routine or day (ex: absence of a teacher, rain that requires to spend the recreation inside ..). If an activity is cancelled, don't remove the pictogram from the daily schedule chart but visibly cross it out and hang the replacing activity next to it so that the child can understand well.



Ex: music session replaced by a multimedia computer session

- ❖ Explain to the child the correct behaviour to adopt in this or that situation (eg if he / she is annoyed by other children, he / she should talk about it to an adult; raising one's hand to speak or ask a question; if he / she pulls the hair of a comrade to get in touch with him / her, explain that he / she should rather call or catch his / her attention with a gesture ...).
- ❖ Encourage the child to talk to the teacher or an adult when he / she has a problem with something or with other children.
- ❖ Verbalize at most his /her emotions, putting in words what he / she can't express.
- ❖ Identify the nascent anxiety in the child, reassure him / her with soft words in a calm place protected from sound or visual stimulations.
- ❖ Help the pupil manage his / her anxiety to avoid angry outbursts: write a list of steps to take when he / she feels tense, accompany this list with images, eg: inspiring and expiring, reporting that he / she doesn't feel good, asking for a break, moving quietly, doing an activity he / she likes ...



- ❖ If the child behaves inappropriately, defuse the situation by trying to replace his / her behaviour with a more appropriate one. For example: if he / she plays with his / her saliva in his / her hands, propose to him / her to play with lotion; if he / she sniffs at other children, propose to him / she to smell odorous stickers; if he / she grinds teeth, propose to him / her to chew an object in rubber; if he / she taps the other children to attract the attention of the adult, ask him / her to raise his / her hand or to directly call on the adult; if he / she balances his / her hands, propose to manipulate an anti-stress ball ... The child must be valued whenever he / she uses the replacement behaviour.

- ❖ Design a system of signals (image, gesture, noise) that warns the pupil that he / she is not behaving appropriately in order to enable him / her to realize it and to encourage him / her to change his / her behaviour.
- ❖ Promote good behaviour, strengthen the child's adapted social behaviours, skills and progress.
- ❖ Avoid the use of "no" with some children that can't stand it.
- ❖ Avoid surprises (eg surprise birthday snack) that can cause a lot of anxiety and misunderstanding in the child.
- ❖ Never act in a brutal way, anticipating, explaining, foreseeing, speaking is essential with these children.
- ❖ Help the child if needed to spend his / her free time. These children often have trouble imagining, creating, initiating an activity, using the place and objects in an appropriate way.
- ❖ Sport can be beneficial in channelling the child's stress and anxiety, provided that sport sessions are structured and understandable for the child: put pictures on what to do, use an hour-glass so that the child can visualize the time he / she has to do this activity, mark the ground with cones or colour circles, etc ...
- ❖ Observe your own behaviour, be careful that your interventions do not inadvertently reinforce unwanted behaviours of the child.

4. Evaluation of best practice

These intervention strategies have proved their effectiveness and can limit behavioural disturbances in these children.

5. Limits

There is no sure-fire strategy and teachers need to adapt to these children's profiles, like to other children's. What may work at one time may be inappropriate at another one. But it is by trial and error that proposals that were brought here must be confirmed, challenged or amended.

6. Prospects

These intervention strategies can be developed in partnership with educational teams and with the family in order to help the child experience his / her emotions.

