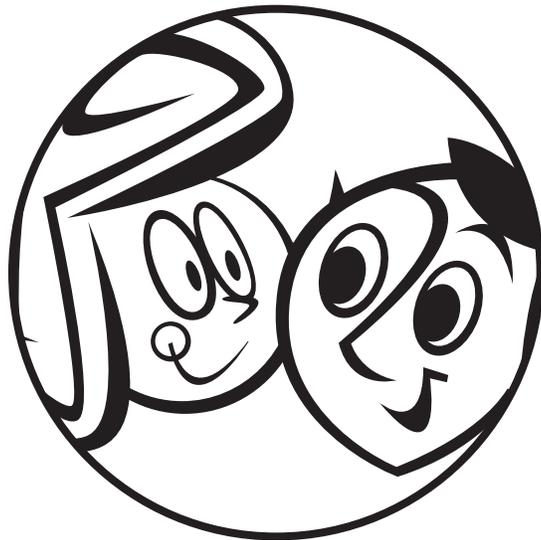


**Introduction**

# **An Overview and Introduction to the Curriculum**



## **What You Can Expect**

*Hygiene and Related Behaviors for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum and Related Disorders* teaches important hygiene skills and associated social understanding concepts in a fun, yet structured manner. The curriculum is aimed at meeting the constant search for inventive and intriguing methods for teaching often quite boring topics surrounding functional life skills.

Over the years, I have found that, although participants were laughing and having fun, they were improving their skills. What better way to teach and learn.



## **Success Stories**

- **Clay, 10<sup>th</sup> grader** – *Clay detested showering. Every night, a battle between Clay and his parents would erupt surrounding the issue. Typically, Clay would win out, and another day would pass without him taking a shower. On average, Clay was showering twice a week. As a result, he often arrived at school with greasy hair, dirty skin and fingernails – and a very ripe odor.*

*At school, Clay desperately wanted to fit in and make friends. Additionally, he had developed his first serious crush on a girl and wanted to talk to her at lunch. But due to his poor hygiene, everyone avoided Clay.*

*For years, his parents and teachers had emphasized to Clay how important hygiene is, how “everyone showers every day,” etc., but it wasn’t until Clay started receiving instruction using the activities in this book that changes started occurring. The visual, structured nature of the activities helped Clay see the powerful impact that his hygiene, or lack thereof, was having on his ability to fit in socially. Additionally, because the activities were fun, Clay finally relaxed and was more open about this topic that had caused him and his family years of tension. Using laughter, Clay lowered his guard and was able to learn the skills necessary. After a few lessons, Clay started showering on his own every night!*

- **Lizzie, 7<sup>th</sup> grader** – Lizzie had a very limited repertoire of clothing that she was willing to wear to school. In fact, she had exactly two pairs of sweatpants and two t-shirts that she would wear, alternating them across the days of the week. Although Lizzie's outfits had quite a few stains and tears, she refused to wear anything different. In addition to the unclean appearance of her clothes, the type of pants she chose to wear were not exactly what the other seventh-grade girls were wearing.

*Lizzie's supportive mother was exhausted from her unsuccessful attempts at expanding Lizzie's wardrobe to contain a few clean, comfortable, and "peer-acceptable" pieces, and had pretty much given up.*

*To help remedy the situation, Lizzie's occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, teacher, and mother worked together, using many of the lessons from this curriculum. The structured nature of the lessons and activities helped Lizzie understand that her appearance was impacting her ability to fit in and make friends. Lizzie was amazed to learn that her appearance, specifically her clothing, affected the way others were thinking and feeling about her.*

*Once she understood these concepts, she was motivated to expand her wardrobe. Through a lot of trial and error, and a lot of courage on Lizzie's part, she was able to find a brand of jeans that were comfortable for her to wear. She also allowed her mother to buy her a few new t-shirts.*

## **What Makes This Curriculum Effective?**

Good hygiene is an important aspect of our social world, as personal hygiene habits directly impact not only our health but also the thoughts and feelings of people around us. Children and youth are typically taught to shower every day or wear clean clothes to school, but often are not told "why" as we assume that is a given – others like us to be clean and well-groomed without bad breath and unpleasant body odor.

But many individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have deficits in perspective taking (Attwood, 2007; Winner, 2002) and do not naturally link personal hygiene habits to their ability to make good impressions on others. Further, there are many unwritten "social rules" surrounding hygiene and related behaviors. These social rules, often referred to as the "hidden curriculum" (Myles, Trautman, & Schelvan, 2004), are frequently assumed to be known by all. However, individuals with ASD typically fail to learn these rules intuitively. This curriculum provides an avenue for learning those unwritten social rules and why they are important to social success.

When working on hygiene skills with this group of students, therefore, it is important to teach both *how* to have good hygiene and *why* it is important, and to do so in a concrete and meaningful manner that maximizes their learning styles. This curriculum acknowledges the unique learning needs of individuals with ASD and teaches the “how-tos” and “whys” of hygiene in a very concrete manner. Therefore, a heavy emphasis is placed on appealing to their visual strengths (Attwood, 2007). For example, the instructional materials and supports that are part of each lesson help to enhance the correlating activity or game in a visual manner. In addition, after the lesson is completed, the instructional materials can serve as visual reminders of the skill learned, helping students to generalize the skill to everyday life.

### **Who Will Benefit from This Curriculum?**

*Hygiene and Related Behaviors for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum and Related Disorders* targets the skills needed by many children, adolescents, and teenagers with high-functioning autism (HFA), Asperger Syndrome (AS), and related diagnoses.

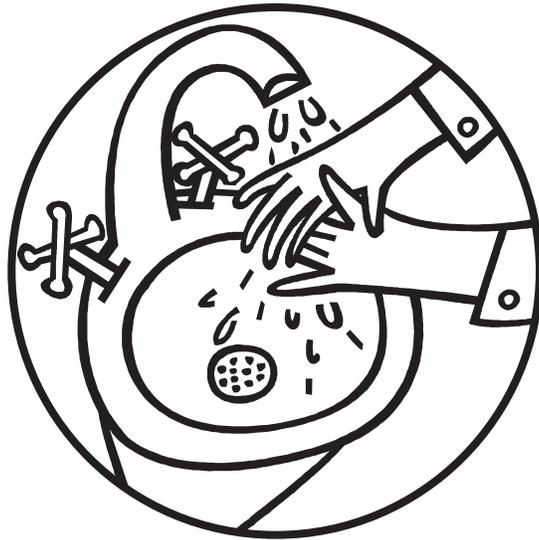
### **Who Can Teach This Curriculum?**

This book was developed for those who are searching for a fun, creative, and easy way to teach the crucial life skills related to hygiene. *Hygiene and Related Behaviors for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum and Related Disorders* can be implemented by a variety of professionals, including teachers, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, social workers, and psychologists. Additionally, the curriculum can be easily used by parents in the comfort of their own home.

Finally, the accompanying CD includes all worksheets and activity materials to make planning and implementation easier and less time-consuming.

Chapter 1

# Getting Started



## **Using the Curriculum**

This curriculum is designed to be flexible so it can be put to use without major preparation by professionals or parents working on hygiene issues with children and adolescents with autism spectrum or related disorders.

Each chapter provides a set of suggested lesson plans. They may be used as presented or be adapted to meet the needs of the individuals with whom you are working. Each lesson plan, comprised of various activities and instructional materials, is designed to take approximately 45 minutes to complete. If this length of time is not available, or if you wish to tailor instruction to individual needs, you can forego the lesson plans and instead select from the menu of activities and instructional materials provided in each chapter. The length of time needed for each activity varies, ranging from 5 to 30 minutes.

Each chapter contains the following four components:

### **Objectives**

- The objective statement lists the main focus of each individual chapter.

### **Lesson Plans**

- The suggested lesson plans outline complete instructional sessions, infusing all of the activities and instructional materials listed in each chapter in a systematic and structured manner. The suggested lesson plans are described in greater detail later in this chapter.

### **Activities**

- The suggested activities provide fun and creative ideas for teaching important hygiene topics and the related perspective-taking skills.
- Each activity is explained in detail, including a sequential description of instructions and a list of materials needed to complete the activity.
- The activities for a particular topic are listed at the beginning of each chapter.



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