



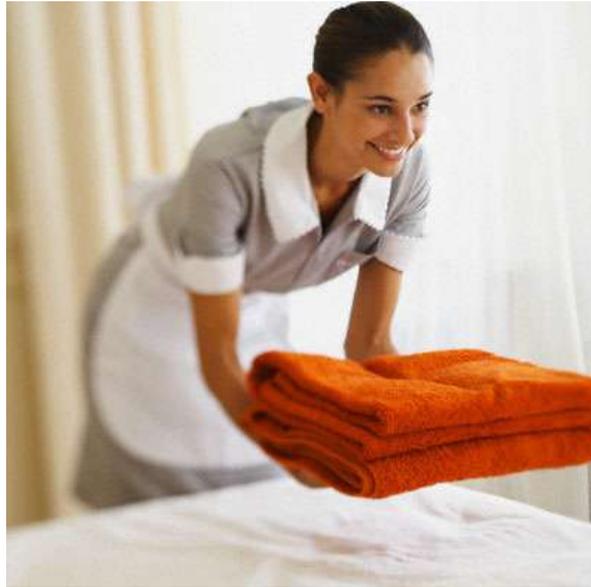
# Helping Children With Hidden Disabilities

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# A Few Housekeeping Items...



- Sticky Notes: Keep Track of Questions!
- Ah Ha Moments: Keep Track of them!

# What's the Big Idea?

As a result of this training, Sunday School teachers will understand that including students with emotional, behavioral and developmental needs allows more families to participate in the church body

## Learning Objectives

- Teachers will understand why including children with diverse needs is important and part of God's message for us as Christians
- Teachers will understand the basic definitions of "hidden disabilities" and how they impact learning and socializing in a Sunday school setting.
- Teachers will learn specific strategies that will provide access to those with diverse needs while benefiting all students in the class

# This American Life



# What comes to mind when you see this?



# How we view disability ministry...



# How we view special needs ministry...



What about kids who lack physical or intellectual disabilities, but struggle in our church environments?



# What are “hidden disabilities?”

- Hidden disabilities are significant emotional, behavioral, developmental or neurologic conditions lacking outwardly apparent physical symptoms.
- It’s not a “hidden disability” if you can recognize it in a still photograph of the child.

“It is our culture that disables.”

“When one is disabled, the problem is not really that they have impairments and social skill deficits. The issue at stake is that they live in an ‘ableist’ culture that rarely affords them the space or opportunity to make their unique contribution to society and does not lift up the value of choosing them as friends.”

Ben Conner...*Amplifying Our Witness* (2012)



Kids with “hidden disabilities” are often disabled in some, but not all environments...

# Examples of “hidden disabilities”

- ADHD
- Anxiety Disorders
- Attachment Disorders
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Bipolar Disorder
- Mood disorders (depression)
- Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder
- Learning disorders
- PTSD
- Social pragmatic language disorder
- Sensory processing disorder

# Why should serving kids with hidden disabilities be a priority?

- 22% of U.S. kids have one (or more) mental health disorders
- 11% of U.S. children between 4 and 17 have been prescribed ADHD medication
- 8% of teens have anxiety disorders...less than one in five are treated
- 13% of U.S. kids have at least one developmental disorder
- One child in 88 in U.S. has an autism spectrum disorder...the majority have average to superior intelligence

Carter, AS et al. *J. Am Acad. Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2010;49(7): 686-698

Visser et al. *J Am Acad. Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2014;53(1): 34-46

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxiety-disorders-in-children-and-adolescents/index.shtml>

Boulet, SL, Boyle CA, Schieve, LA. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2009;163(1):19-26.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>



The barriers are different for kids hidden disabilities...

# What keeps kids with hidden disabilities and their families from “doing church?”

## What keeps them...*and their families* from church?

- ❑ Social isolation
- ❑ Difficulty with social communication
- ❑ Poor impulse control, diminished capacity for self-regulating emotions
- ❑ Sensory processing
- ❑ Reluctance to self-identify
- ❑ Often reject help that draws attention to their differences
- ❑ Parents with disabilities

## Where does she fit at church?



# Environments...What do we expect kids and adults to do who attend our church?

	Kids	Adults
How do people find Parkside Church?		
The process of getting to church		
Finding their way around at church		
Social expectations		
Worship experience (crowds, noise, lighting, color, seating)		
Age-appropriate Christian education		
Small group participation		
Special events (VBS, retreats, mission trips)		
Service activities		
Multi-family activities		

# What might get in the way of these families becoming (or staying) involved at Parkside Church?

## Family #1

A single mom moves to your community with her eleven year-old daughter and eight year-old son. The boy (completely neurotypical) has a great time at Parkside's VBS when invited by a friend, and wants to come to church every week. His eleven year old sister has untreated separation anxiety disorder, and the mom struggles with panic attacks, social anxiety and agoraphobia.

## Family #2

An established family is led to adopt a five year old boy from an orphanage in the Ukraine. While typical in appearance, he is prone to darting from classrooms and running from the building. He experiences frequent anger outbursts, talks back to his Sunday school leaders, and will punch/kick other children when he can't have his way. He is prone to protracted meltdowns during transitions from one activity to another.

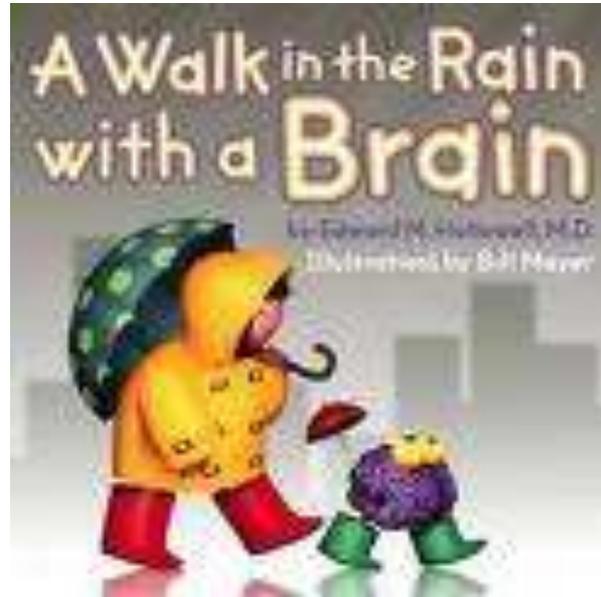


**”Behold, children are  
a heritage from the  
Lord, the fruit of the  
womb is a reward.”  
- Psalm 127:3**

# Carrie's Agenda

- Introduction
  - ▣ Takeaway: Fair doesn't always mean equal
  
- Classroom Management
  - ▣ Takeaway: Consistency is KEY
  
- Quick strategies for struggling students
  - ▣ Takeaway: Awareness is KEY
  - ▣ Takeaway: Effective strategies can benefit ALL kids

# A Walk in the Rain with a Brain



By Edward Hallowell M.D.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take the thorn away from me. But he said to me, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12: 8-10

INSPIRED BY A PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT WITH DISABILITIES



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CLEARING A PATH  
FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS  
CLEARS THE PATH FOR EVERYONE!

- **How Difficult Can This Be?**
- **The F.A.T. City Workshop—Understanding Learning Disabilities**

# Classroom Management

"**DISCIPLINE** is one of the key tools **God** has given to help us groom our children for *greatness*.

To avoid disciplining your **child** because it makes you feel **UNCOMFORTABLE** is to say you love your **OWN** best interests more than **theirs**."

-Dr. Tim Kimmel, Grace Based Parenting

I READ IT SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!  
Like Carrie Lupoli a.k.a. Chief Mum on  
Facebook for more great excerpts!  
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# The **KEY** to Effective Classroom MANAGEMENT

<b>EXPLICIT DIRECTIONS</b>	<i>Positive Narration</i>	<b>Accountability</b>	<i>Relationships</i>
<p><b>KEY</b> Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do they do with their bodies, voices and how do they participate?</li> <li>• "Whey I say go..."</li> <li>• Think and PLAN routines</li> <li>• Write out directions</li> </ul>	<p><b>KEY</b> Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce who is following directions</li> <li>• Restates directions</li> <li>• Increases teacher awareness</li> </ul>	<p><b>KEY</b> Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency</li> <li>• Non-emotional</li> <li>• Fair</li> <li>• Involves Consequences and Rewards</li> </ul>	<p><b>KEY</b> Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness of language</li> <li>• The power play in classroom management</li> <li>• Love works</li> <li>• Praise</li> </ul>

# Explicit Directions

Research indicates that the first step teachers need to take to motivate all the students to get on task is to make sure that the students know exactly how they are to behave in any activity they engage in, be it a transition from one activity to another, entering or leaving the classroom, receiving direct instruction, working in groups, etc.

(Riegler & Baer, 1989; Walker & Walker, 1991).

# Common Issues

## Unclear

- “I need everyone to work on your assignment”
- “I want everyone to take your chairs to your study group and wait for my directions”
- I want you to begin working with your partners on page 14”

## Ineffective

- Not a strong teacher voice
- Forgets to Check for Understanding
- All students to start following directions before teacher is ready for them to do so

# Positive Narration

Teachers who provide effective positive feedback can reduce disruptive behavior by over 30% (Stage & Quiroz, 1997). In order to be effective, the positive feedback needs to be:

- Provided immediately after the students engage in the desired behavior
- Provided in recognition of the specific behavior the students are engaging in
- Provided frequently to students throughout the period or day

# Rewards and Consequences

**“A refusal to correct is a refusal to love; love your children by disciplining them.”**

*Proverbs 13:24 The Message*

When used effectively, disciplinary consequences reduce disruptive behavior at all grade levels

(Marzano, et al., 2003)

# Possible Hierarchy-Color System

- *Purple*: Earn 2 tickets at the end of class
- *Blue*: Earn 1 ticket at the end of class
- *Green*: 0 tickets, try again next week!
- *Yellow*: Move to another part of the room to refocus
- *Orange*: Time out in another room
- *Red*: Parents come to pick up early

# *What to stay away from*

- *Teacher Nag*
- *Rhetorical Questions*
- *Threaten*
- *Anger/Frustration*

# Rewards

- *Ticket system tied to hierarchy*
- *Class Points*
- *Mindful language filled with Praise*





The  
“Yes”  
Test

## John 9: 1-3

### Healing the Man Born Blind

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

*“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”*

# Domains of functional impairment in kids...impacts on spiritual growth?

- Executive functioning (impulse control, working memory, emotional self-regulation, reconstitution) Prototype: ADHD (mood disorders, intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders, trauma)
- Social communication  
Prototype: autism (Asperger's Disorder)
- Propensity to misperceive risk  
Prototype: anxiety disorders

# Executive functioning: Spiritual growth challenges

	Child	Teenager
Weekend Worship:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Difficulty sitting in worship service</li> <li>•Attention highly interest-dependent</li> <li>•Environmental stimulation taxes cognitive resources needed for self-control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sleep problems impact AM church attendance</li> <li>•Communication needs to be crisp, engaging</li> <li>•Procrastination results in lots of unfinished schoolwork on Sunday</li> </ul>
Church Activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Self-control more difficulty in noisy, chaotic environments (VBS)</li> <li>•Unreliable at bringing information home</li> <li>•More difficulty preparing for activities outside typical routine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Action-oriented ...“doing while talking”</li> <li>•More difficulty avoiding negative influences...risk-taking, struggle with self-denial</li> <li>•Time management may affect participation...they show up late</li> </ul>
Spiritual Disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•More difficulty praying quietly</li> <li>•More difficulty memorizing Scripture</li> <li>•Better with active disciplines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Prone to seek peak religious experiences</li> <li>•Roller-coaster spirituality</li> <li>•Inconsistent with spiritual disciplines</li> </ul>
Growing in faith at home:	Kids with ADHD may learn better when 1:1 with parents	<p>Expose teens to service opportunities</p> <p>Share personal experiences with them</p> <p>Encourage spiritual relationships outside home</p>

# Social communication difficulties: Spiritual growth challenges

	Child	Teenager
Weekend Worship:	<p>May struggle to process body space issues in large group worship</p> <p>May not grasp when their behavior might annoy others</p>	<p>More difficulty navigating social aspects of church</p> <p>Less likely to be invited to church (few friends)</p>
Church Activities:	<p>Transitions, social expectations in church environments problematic</p> <p>May be easily irritated by peers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty picking up social cues in small groups</li> <li>• Very sensitive to teasing/rejection by peers</li> <li>• Negative perceptions of church (once formed) difficult to change</li> </ul>
Spiritual Disciplines	<p>May lack sensitivity to others</p> <p>Prone to mechanical spirituality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctant to experiment with new spiritual practices, disciplines,</li> <li>• Prone to legalism</li> <li>• Avoidant of group disciplines</li> </ul>
Growing in faith at home:	<p>Parents may struggle to engage child in spiritual discussions</p> <p>Difficulty with abstract concepts</p>	<p>Difficulty engaging in family service experiences</p> <p>Conflicts around church attendance may follow negative experiences with peers</p>

# Kids who misperceive risk: Spiritual growth challenges

	Child	Teenager
Weekend Worship:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Difficulty separating from parents</li> <li>•Visiting unfamiliar church is challenging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Reluctant to attend without friends</li> <li>•Uncomfortable with attention of group</li> <li>•Transitions between age-group ministries difficult</li> </ul>
Church Activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctant to read Scripture aloud</li> <li>• Reluctant to participate actively</li> <li>• Avoids plays, performances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Self-disclosure in small groupschallenging</li> <li>•Unfamiliar places, experiences threatening...retreats, mission trips</li> </ul>
Spiritual Disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Negativemisperceive who God is...</li> <li>•Public prayer, process of confession challenging in some traditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•More prone to ritualism</li> <li>•Prone to doubting salvation</li> <li>•Group disciplines more challenging</li> </ul>
Growing in faith at home:	Parents can model faith, practicing disciplines as a positive coping strategy	Parents can sensitively expose teens to new spiritual experiences

# General ministry principles with families of kids with “hidden disabilities”

- ❑ You don't need a “program” to minister effectively
- ❑ Kids with hidden disabilities don't think of themselves as “disabled” or “special needs”...nor do most parents
- ❑ Most kids won't need “buddies”
- ❑ Defining the “win”...Whenever a child with a disability or a family member experiences a meaningful encounter with a local church

# Four things your church can do to reach families of kids with hidden disabilities...

- ❑ You can't wait for them to come to you!
- ❑ Train children's/youth staff, volunteers in strategies promoting positive church experiences
- ❑ Consider your ministry environments!
- ❑ Focus on inclusion in activities your church has found critical for spiritual growth

# Takeaway Reflections...

- Why is it important to include students with hidden disabilities in our Sunday School Classrooms?
- What are some things you are going to commit to doing in your classroom?
- What questions do you still have?

# Additional Resources:

- Resource page on ADHD and spiritual development (includes video from Dr. Russ Barkley) <http://drgrcevich.wordpress.com/teaching-series-adhd-and-spiritual-development/>
- Resource page on anxiety and spiritual development <http://drgrcevich.wordpress.com/resource-page-anxiety-and-spiritual-development/>
- Resource page on Asperger's Disorder and spiritual development (includes video of 2012 Children's Ministry Web Summit presentation) <http://drgrcevich.wordpress.com/resource-page-anxiety-and-spiritual-development/>
- Resource page on Pediatric Bipolar Disorder (includes link to 2010 Grand Rounds presentation at Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron) <http://drgrcevich.wordpress.com/pediatric-bipolar-disorder-a-guide-for-childrens-and-youth-pastors-and-volunteers/>
- The Mission Field Next Door (2011 Inclusion Fusion presentation with Katie Wetherbee) <http://youtu.be/PshzmYircCo>

**Key Ministry provides knowledge, innovation and experience to the worldwide church as it ministers to and with families of children impacted by mental illness, trauma and developmental disabilities.**

# Stay in Touch!

Key Ministry Website: <http://www.keyministry.org>

Church4EveryChild...Key Ministry Blog: <http://drgrcevich.wordpress.com>

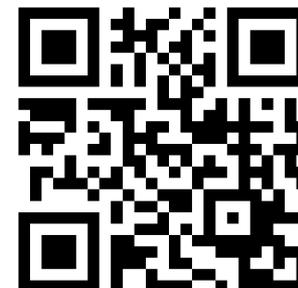
Live and Learn Asia...Carrie Lupoli's Blog: <http://liveandlearnasia.blogspot.com>



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# Questions?

# Additional Slides

# What is ADHD?:

- ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by an age-inappropriate degree of **inattentiveness** and **disorganization**, and in some, but not all instances, **impulsivity** and **hyperactivity**

# Executive functioning as the fundamental difference in persons with ADHD?

- Executive functions describe a set of cognitive abilities involved in controlling and regulating other abilities and behaviors.
- Necessary in initiating goal-directed behavior, regulating emotions, delaying gratification, planning future behavior.
- Children with weaknesses in executive functioning have more difficulty foreseeing outcomes of behavior, adapting to new situations.
- Executive functions...behavioral inhibition, verbal and nonverbal working memory, emotional self-regulation, reconstitution

Hathaway WL, Barkley RA. J Psychol Christianity 2003, 22(2) 101-114

# How might ADHD affect one's spiritual life?

## Children/teens:

- Inhibition: sitting through a worship service
- Nonverbal working memory: remembering my Bible when it's time to leave for church
- Verbal working memory: the ability to pray silently
- Emotional self-regulation: immediately react negatively to demands from authority
- Planning, problem-solving: I'm not going to youth group on Sunday night because my homework's not done.

## Adults:

- Can I use the computer without viewing pornography?
- Forgetting to register my kids for the weekend retreat
- The ability to memorize and meditate quietly upon Scripture
- I scream and yell at my spouse and my kids, overreact when imposing discipline
- Difficulty applying Biblical truths, wisdom in daily life

# Problems with internalization of faith arising from ADHD:

- Persons with ADHD may have more difficulty maintaining a spiritually disciplined life
- May have more difficulty meditating quietly upon God
- More prone to give up on Bible study when it becomes tedious
- More difficulty delaying immediate gratification for long-term spiritual outcomes

Hathaway WL, Barkley RA. J Psychol Christianity 2003, 22(2) 101-114

# Problems with stability of spiritual growth arising from ADHD:

- Greater vulnerability to negative environmental influences
- More likely to have intense spiritual experiences at VBS, camp, mission trips that fade when spiritual context is gone
- More prone to “roller-coaster” spirituality
- Miss out on volunteer, service opportunities if perceived as undisciplined, disorganized
- Drawn to religious contexts that are more participatory, action-oriented, relational

Hathaway WL, Barkley RA. J Psychol Christianity 2003, 22(2) 101-114

# Ministry strategies for persons with ADHD: Environments

## Children/teens:

- Registration/sign-in needs to be orderly
- Staffing for transition times before/after services
- Use of color, lighting
- Engaging, not overwhelming
- Communication strategies... reinforce key point(s)
- Use of touch, nonverbal cues
- Family worship experiences geared to kids?

## Adults:

- Is signage, direction clear?
- Use of music, technology
- Physical environment shouldn't become a distraction
- Flexibility in dress code
- Simplicity in communication

# Ministry strategies for persons with ADHD: Discipleship

## Children/teens:

- Church and parents as partners in teaching kids about God
- They'll learn and retain more in 1:1, small group situations
- Ministry resources need to be sent directly to parents
- Where can they be involved in meaningful service?

## Adults:

- Connecting them with others in the church especially important
- Break Scripture into smaller, manageable parts
- Small groups offer multiple accountability partners
- Where can they be involved in meaningful service?
- You have to remind them if you want them to come

# What can I do to help someone I love with ADHD come to faith, grow in faith?

## My child:

- Spend time with your child one on one or as a family praying together, studying the Bible together
- Make Jesus, Scripture interesting by sharing from your experiences
- Seek opportunities for your child to serve in ways that fit their talents, gifts
- Attend church regularly

## My spouse, sibling, friend:

- Invite them to church (or remind them to come)
- Go with them to a church where they're more likely to have a positive experience
- Pray, study the Bible, serve with them
- Connect them to others in the church who will accept them, follow up with them

# Challenges presented to the church by persons with ADHD:

- ❑ Style of worship...engaging, but not overstimulating best
- ❑ Kids, some adults find worship environments as unpleasant
- ❑ Church staff lack training, experience with kids with ADHD
- ❑ Church environments less structured than school
- ❑ Parents choose not to use, or physicians encourage discontinuation of effective medication on weekends
- ❑ Many church activities occur when medication has worn off or rebound is occurring

# What advantages might ADHD provide a follower of Christ?

- Willingness to take chances for God
- May be very energized by topics or ministry activities that capture the imagination
- May be very effective in ministry teams when others have complimentary organizational skills
- Ability to engage others may help in sharing the Gospel
- Good at scanning environment for trends
- Is ADHD over-represented among senior pastors?

# Specific Anxiety Disorders in Children, Adolescents:

*Note: Kids may experience different manifestations of anxiety as they progress through developmental stages*

- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Specific Phobia
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Selective Mutism

*J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry, 2007;46(2):267-283*

# How are kids with anxiety disorders different from their peers?

- They misperceive the level of threat, danger in their environment
- They think too much...eventually to the point that academic performance, family functioning, friendships, extracurricular activities are compromised...rumination, perseveration, indecisiveness, perfectionism

# Tips for church staff and volunteers: Kids with anxiety

- ❑ Look for kids from established families in worship with parents
- ❑ Greeters watch for problems when “drop-offs” occur
- ❑ Have a quiet place to meet with kids/parents in distress
- ❑ Leaders can watch for kids who are alone
- ❑ Offer to meet with parents when a child’s anxiety appears to interfere with ministry participation
- ❑ Anxiety generally decreases with experience (exposure)
- ❑ Potential areas of giftedness: administration, organization, sensitivity to others

# Kids With Asperger's Disorder:

- Severe, sustained impairment in social interactions...
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities
- Clinically significant impairment in social, academic, family functioning
- No delays in language development
- No delays in cognitive development...often have above-average to superior IQ

# Issues seen in kids with Asperger's Disorder:

- Intense preoccupation with topics, objects takes on an odd or unusual quality
- May struggle with motor skills, coordination
- Difficulty with pragmatic language, differences in intonation, pace, volume, pitch (monotonal)...difficulty with implied meaning, figurative speech
- Difficulties identifying with experiences of others
- More likely to experience issues with attention, organization, obsessive thoughts than peers
- More likely to experience sensory processing issues

# Barriers for kids with Asperger's/PDD/social disabilities at church...

- Getting parents to bring them to church
- Church environments don't play to their strengths...change in daily routine, unfamiliar people, transitions, sensory issues, physical activity
- Uneven development complicates program placement
- Very resistant to placement in "special needs" ministry
- Experience of "Christian kids" at school

# Applying family-based ministry model when kids have Asperger's/PDD/Social Disabilities...

- Parent as the “expert” to individualize strategies to promote spiritual development
- Coming alongside vs. “equipping”
- Defining your “win”...Whenever a child/family with a disability connects in a meaningful way with their larger family in Christ through the ministries of a local church
- Church as a shared family experience?
- Spiritual disciplines as routines...(establishing rhythm)
- Creating a place to experience an intentionally safe and supportive community

# Tips for church staff and volunteers: Kids with Asperger's/PDD/social disabilities

- Consider impact of sensory stimulation in ministry environments
- Partial inclusion an option
- Consider service opportunities alongside adults
- Provide opportunities to rehearse new situations, environments
- Promote disability awareness in children's, student ministry
- Identify areas of potential giftedness

# Hypothetical strategies for promoting spiritual growth...

- Tangible acts of service, modeled by parents, family members, other adults
- Assuming identified role at church
- Role of electronic media in presenting Jesus in an engaging way?
- Online ministry as strategy for overcoming barriers to live participation in church?

# The “relationship” issue...

- Kids with Asperger’s/social disabilities have some capacity to grasp relationships
- There’s more than one spiritual pathway...intellectual, activist, servant, contemplative, worship and creation...in addition to the relational pathway
- “Give as much of yourself as you can to as much of God as you can know.”

# Tips for church staff and volunteers: Kids with Asperger's Disorder

- Be aware of sensory stimulation in ministry environments
- Partial/reverse inclusion an option
- May do better when serving alongside adults
- Provide opportunities to rehearse new situations, environments
- Disability awareness important in student ministry
- Tap into areas of potential giftedness

# Final thoughts...

- Kids who are less neurotypical are likely to require more individualized approaches to spiritual growth
- Allow parents to take the lead...come alongside families by providing resources, ideas
- Identify their strengths/gifts/talents and give them opportunities to use them
- Many kids with social disabilities are desperate for friends, acceptance. What better place to find them, especially the Ultimate Friend...Jesus-than church?