

# Solution Tree | Press

## **The General Education Teacher's Guide to Autism: Essential Answers to Key Questions**

*By Barbara Boroson*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *The General Education Teacher's Guide to Autism: Essential Answers to Key Questions* by Barbara Boroson. In *The General Education Teacher's Guide to Autism*, Boroson provides an in-depth exploration of the ways autism spectrum disorder presents in K–12 students and affects how these students may think, feel, and function in the classroom. She offers detail-rich, research-backed strategies for addressing the needs of these students and shows how educators can implement these strategies to make the classroom a safe and engaging place where all students may flourish.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

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*The General Education Teacher's Guide to Autism—Study Guide*

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Autism Overview**

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1. What are some of the ways in which autism spectrum disorder may present in children?  
Why is it important to recognize these different presentations in your students?
2. Why are diverse forms of support (including diverse program placement options) necessary to address the needs of students who are on the spectrum; what forms might support take and how might you appropriately match support and student?
3. Addressing the challenges of students on the spectrum often includes offering them supports that may not be available to neurotypical students. Is this fair or unfair? What does it mean to create a fair and equitable classroom for all students? How would you articulate to stakeholders, such as parents and guardians and the students themselves, what makes your classroom a fair learning environment?
4. While supporting students who are on the spectrum often involves active engagement with the students, how can you balance providing that active engagement with giving students opportunity for independence and autonomy? Please offer some concrete examples of what striking this balance might look like in your classroom, or what it has looked like when you've found this balance in the past.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Anxiety**

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1. What commonalities do you find in the situations in your classroom or school that tend to trigger anxiety in students who are on the spectrum?
2. As you grow aware of common anxiety triggers for students on the spectrum, what are some things you can do to either mitigate the trigger or give students tools to address anxiety in effective and socially appropriate ways?
3. Some people associate schedules with pressure and conformity, which can be quite stressful; how can schedules be relaxing and freeing to students who are on the spectrum?
4. What characterizes an effective schedule for a student who is on the spectrum?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Executive Function**

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1. What three important areas of cognition are supported by executive function and how might a student with poorly developed executive function struggle with these forms of cognition?
2. What connection exists between executive function and anxiety for students on the spectrum?
3. What are some of the strategies you can employ with your students to help them strengthen and utilize executive function?
4. How might the quality of a teacher's own executive function skills affect the functioning of students who are on the spectrum, and what are some ways teachers can model strong executive function?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Sensation**

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1. What are some of the variables that complicate responses to external stimuli in students who are on the spectrum?
2. Some of history's great innovators and artists, such as Michelangelo, Emily Dickinson, and Albert Einstein, are believed to have been on the spectrum. In what ways might their experiences with sensation have influenced their work? Do you see ways in which your students' responses to sensation give, or could give, strength and vitality to their academic work or creative processes, even as these responses might sometimes cause difficulty and discomfort for classmates, teachers, and the students themselves?
3. What are the three *additional* senses? How can you be sensitive to the ways students who are on the spectrum experience these senses?
4. What is the best first response to a student who is stimming? What are some subsequent helpful responses and actions you can take to create a sensory-friendly classroom?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Communication and Socialization**

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1. This chapter opens by discussing some of the challenges with communication that students on the spectrum may face. What are some of these challenges and what might trigger a particular challenge at a particular moment?
2. People who are on the spectrum are typically concrete thinkers. How might a student on the spectrum misunderstand phrases like, “Time to circle back around” or “Let’s wing it!”? How might you rephrase these statements, and others like them, to make them more accessible to concrete thinkers?
3. What are the three components of empathy and how might each component present a challenge for students on the spectrum, and if empathy is not necessarily instinctive, can it be taught? How?
4. Inclusive programming can be a good way to build acceptance in neurotypically developing students and to help students on the spectrum make important social connections. It can also be fraught with the potential for negative experiences. What can you do to facilitate the success of inclusive programming? How can you best model acceptance and respect?

## Chapter 6

### Engagement and Cognitive Processing

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1. What is *joint attention* and how can its absence affect how students on the spectrum engage with academic content?
2. How are *global coherence* and *local coherence* meant to work together to support thinking? How might students on the spectrum struggle to use these cognitive modes in tandem?
3. Describe some of the strategies, such as *scaffolding*, that you might use with students who are on the spectrum in order to promote thinking that relies on both global coherence and local coherence, thereby increasing engagement.
4. Researchers have discovered that there seems to be a link between perseveration and the development of expertise in a narrow subject area. Have you witnessed this phenomenon in any of your students? How might you encourage such areas of strength in your students on the spectrum?

## **Chapter 7**

### **Disruptive Behavior**

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1. What do basic needs for comfort and safety have to do with disruptive behaviors? In what ways can you mitigate disruptive behaviors in students who are on the spectrum before the behaviors emerge?
2. What are some of the not-always-obvious reasons students on the spectrum might not follow your class rules?
3. Why is the context of disruptive behaviors an important one in which to strive for *equity*, rather than *equality*, when responding to these behaviors? How can teachers differentiate their actions to meet the needs of each individual student while maintaining a cohesive classroom environment?
4. What is *coregulation* and when and how might you implement it in a situation in which a student has lost control?

## **Chapter 8**

### **Parents and Guardians**

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1. A strong positive partnership between the teacher and the parent or guardian can be critical to meeting the needs of students on the spectrum, yet this partnership is sometimes hard to create. What factors may contribute to a gap between parents or guardians and the teacher when it comes to addressing the needs of a student on the spectrum?
2. What strategies might you employ to bridge that gap that may exist between you and parents or guardians of students on the spectrum?
3. What are some of the ways that co-taught inclusion classrooms may benefit *all* students, and how do you set up this kind of classroom to be successful?
4. In the epilogue, Boroson recalls asking her adult son, who is on the spectrum, what he'd like teachers to know about students on the spectrum. He replies, *strengths*. How might you brainstorm with parents or guardians ways to recognize their children's strengths and talents in the school environment, thus providing these adults with the opportunity to share pride in their children and, at the same time, gain important information from the people who know these students best?