"THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM"
Assisting Individuals with ASD to Navigate the Unwritten Rules of Various Environments

Margaret Hildebrandt
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WORKSHOP OUTCOMES
- To understand the scope and complexities of the "Hidden Curriculum"
- To consider how the characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders impact the development of social skills
- To consider the factors involved in selecting appropriate social skills to work on
- To become familiar with a variety of techniques, strategies and resources which are effective in assisting individuals with ASD to develop a better understanding of the Hidden Curriculum

TEACHING WHAT IS MEANINGFUL
Brenda Smith Myles

What is the Hidden Curriculum?
WHAT IS THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM:

“The set of rules or guidelines that are often not directly taught but assumed to be known.”


When is it OK to eat something off the ground?

NAVIGATING THE SOCIAL WORLD

Is like:

“trying to build a 1000 piece puzzle without a picture”

Ros Blackbury
WHAT IS THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM:

Includes:

- Guidelines for behaviour

SOCIAL SKILL FUNCTIONS

- Initiate
- Self-regulation
- Follow rules
- Provide positive feedback
- Provide negative feedback
- Obtain cues

SOCIAL SKILL FUNCTIONS

- Provide information/assistance
- Requests/accepts assistance
- Indicate preference
- Cope with negative
- Terminate

WHAT IS THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM:

Includes:
- Guidelines for behaviour
- Idioms, metaphors and slang

FIGURATIVE SPEECH AND IDIOMS

- In a pig’s eye
- Mad as a hornet
- That cracks me up
- Quit horsing around
- Put a lid on it
- Roll with the punches

WHAT IS THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM:

Includes:
- Guidelines for behaviour
- Idioms, metaphors and slang
- Facial expressions
**FACIAL EXPRESSIONS**

- EYES wide open
- EYES almost closed
- EYES looking down
- EYEBROWS pulled close together and down
- MOUTH open wide
- MOUTH turned down
- CHIN lifted, pushed forward

- Surprise, amazement
- Disbelief, doubt
- Sadness, being ashamed
- Thinking, confused
- Surprise, shock
- Unhappy, disappointed
- Proud, tough, defiant


**WHAT IS THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM:**

Includes:

- Guidelines for behaviour
- Idioms, metaphors and slang
- Facial expressions
- Body language

**BODY LANGUAGE**

- HEAD leaning to one side
- HEAD tilting up
- ARMS folded across chest
- HANDS on hip
- FINGER pointing
- BODY sitting forward in chair

- Thinking, listening, confused
- Frustration
- Listening, unapproachable
- Bored, frustrated, waiting for an answer
- Threat, giving directions, getting in trouble
- Listening, interested, nervous

WHAT IS THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM:

Includes:
- Guidelines for behaviour
- Idioms, metaphors and slang
- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Voice

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM CHANGES

- Differs across age
- Differs across gender
- Differs across cultures
- Differs on who you are with
- Differs on how many people you are with
- Differs across environments


DO YOU ASK FOR A BATHROOM BREAK?
SOCIAL DEMANDS IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

Beyond your community
- Different social repertoire required in other social circles, cities, countries
Community
- Many uncontrollable actions and events that impact the individual
Work environment
- Social environment is somewhat scripted & production is another measure of competence
School
- School rules vs. peer expectations
Home
- The family sets the rules of acceptable behaviour.

COMPLEXITY OF THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

What Dr. Temple Grandin and Sean Barron Say
HIDDEN CURRICULUM AT SCHOOL

The Hidden Curriculum
Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations
Brenda Smith Myles
Melissa L. Trautman
Rhonda L. Schelven

EXPERIENCING AUTISM - AUTISM ONTARIO

CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL RULES

- Courtesy Rules
- Illegal But Not Bad
- Really Bad Things
- Sins of the System (SOS’s)

LEARNING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM
BY JUDY ENDOW

- Written by a 50+ person on the spectrum
- Talks about how she learned the hidden curriculum
- Provides hidden curriculum items which pertain to most areas of adult life
- Presents a framework for developing the ability to quickly assess a situation and take steps to avoid making social blunders BEFORE they are committed

IMPACT OF NOT KNOWING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

- May be prone to being bullied, made fun of, misunderstood or ignored
- May have few friends and therefore few opportunities for social development
- May get in trouble with teachers at school
- May be seen as being rude

IMPACT OF NOT KNOWING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

- May lead to being taken advantage of
- Expectations that the code of ethics, values etc. of a workplace will be mastered in a short period of time
- May have difficulty getting assistance
- May have difficulties with the legal system
“There is the world of neurotypicals and the world of the person on the autism spectrum. Our perspective and understanding – indeed our very thinking process – is so different than yours, yet we are required to conform to your set of rules. For you social understanding..."

Asking me to define the unwritten social rules that help or hinder us in forming relationships is like asking me to write a book about the unwritten rules of the people of France. I’m not French; I wasn’t born into the culture and I don’t know their rules. The same logic applies...

Neurological Challenges
- Cerebellum/perkinjie cell loss – issues with attention and focusing which are needed to learn social skills
- Fusiform gyrus – effects ability to recognize faces, focus on objects/activities instead
- Amygdala issues – causes unusual fears therefore not likely to explore environment
IMPACT OF ASD IN LEARNING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Communication Challenges
- Receptive language – difficulty understanding language, paraverbal language
- Expressive language – doesn’t always deliver the message in an appropriate way
- Kinesics – difficulty reading body language

WHY ARE TRANSITIONS DIFFICULT

Sensory Challenges
- May affect tactile (touch), hearing, vision, gustatory (taste), olfactory (smell), proprioception (spacial awareness) and vestibular (balance) systems
- Can fluctuate between hypo (craves it) and hyper (wants to escape it)
- Eliciting stimuli can be unpredictable

IMPACT OF ASD IN LEARNING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Behavioural Challenges
- Compulsion to engage in certain movements
- Compulsion to follow certain routines
- Narrow range of interests
- Intense emotions
- High anxiety
Autism is the inability to single out people as special, separate, unique entities - different from bits of the furniture, different.

I have to work out theoretically all the things that you just land yourselves instinctively.

Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen 1995)
- The ability to take someone else’s perspective
- The ability to understand how other people feel and think
- All people on the spectrum have some degree of “mindblindness”
“CORNERSTONES OF SOCIAL AWARENESS”

Perspective Taking - understanding that people have various viewpoints, emotions, responses

Flexible Thinking - accept change and process alternatives

Positive Self-Esteem - “can do” attitude - repeated achievements

Motivation - work towards goals - use their special interests

Social Success


MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL SKILL LESSONS

- Learning social skills is a lifelong process with many opportunities to practice.
- There are consequences to all of our choices and behaviours.
- Everyone is responsible for their own actions.

SELECTING HIDDEN CURRICULUM TO WORK ON

Step 1 – Collect information about the individual’s strengths and challenges
- Help the individual to recognize their assets
- Help the individuals to see their challenges as areas for instruction to reach their goals

SELECTING HIDDEN CURRICULUM TO WORK ON

Step 1 – Collect information about the individual’s strengths and challenges

Look at general abilities:
- Academic Skills
- Behaviour/Emotional Skills
- Sensory Issues
- Motor Skills

Look at social skills areas:
- Recognition of nonverbal cues and body language
- Dealing with anger and frustration
- Dealing with anxiety
- Conversation skills
- Building and maintaining friendships

Dating
- Dealing with school and family demands
- Employment skills
- Functional life skills
- Dealing with emergencies

SELECTING HIDDEN CURRICULUM TO WORK ON

Categories of Social Skill Deficits

- **Skill Deficit** – the individual has never learned the appropriate skill
- **Performance Deficit** – the individual may be able to tell you what has to be done but doesn’t do it
- **Self-control Deficit** – the individual needs support to inhibit impulsive, disruptive or aggressive behaviour because he lacks adequate self-control

Gresham, 1981

SELECTING HIDDEN CURRICULUM TO WORK ON

Step 2 – Collect information on the individual’s social opportunities

- **What** activities does or could the individual participate in?
- **Where** do these activities take place?
- **With whom** does the individual spend his or her time?

SELECTING HIDDEN CURRICULUM TO WORK ON

Step 3 – Gain an understanding of the hidden curriculum embedded in the activities

Consider:

- The Social Skills Functions
- Temple Grandin’s “Most Important Social Skill Lessons”
- Temple and Barron’s “Cornerstones of Social Awareness”
- The ‘seemingly obvious’
SELECTING HIDDEN CURRICULUM TO WORK ON

Step 4– Identify the priority skills for the individual

- Combine information from step 1, 2 and 3
- Help the individual to determine their goals and which skills they need to reach those goals

BEFORE TEACHING HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Identify a “Safe Person”

- Someone the individual can go to when they have questions
- Parent, sibling, teacher, paraprofessional, friend, mentor, job coach


BEFORE TEACHING HIDDEN CURRICULUM

“Safe Person”
Must be able to:
- understand the individual’s characteristics and perspectives
- be an active listener
- knows problem solving techniques
- can set boundaries

BEFORE TEACHING HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Teach the Individual How to Phrase Questions/Get Information:
- What does _______ mean?
- Help me understand.
- When (a person) says/does _____, what do (they) mean?
- Show me a better way to.......
**TEACHING HIDDEN CURRICULUM**

**Step 1: Explain**
- the rationale for the skill - why it is important and how it may affect the behaviour of others
- what to do and how to do it

**Step 2: Model**
- the skill and ask for feedback

**Step 3: Role Play**
- the skill to practice

**Step 4: Generalize**
- develop visuals for the individual to assist them in using this skill in other environments
- prime the individual before they go into the social situation

**Step 5: Facilitated Practice**
- coach others to set up practice situations in natural environments

**Step 6: Review**
- with the individual, his/her performance

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**TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - SOCIAL NARRATIVES**

Stories which:
- Describe a social situation
- Describe the relevant social cues in the situation
- May explain how people feel, and/or think
- Explain why people act the way they do
- Describe the appropriate responses to the situation
TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - SOCIAL NARRATIVES

Stories which:
- Are written in the language of the individual, usually in the first person
- Often includes sensory markers
- Often includes photographs, drawings, clip art

TRANSITION STRATEGY - SOCIAL NARRATIVES

Playing With My XBox

I love playing with my XBox. I want to do it all the time.

When someone tells me I have to stop and do something else I get mad

and want to yell and throw things. That makes other people scared. I also might break things. I might break my XBox or the TV.

PLAYING WITH MY XBOX

I can’t play XBox all the time because there are many other things I need to do to stay healthy and learn. I need to go to school, eat, play outside and sleep.

When I am told I have to turn the XBox off, I will close my eyes and do my square breathing 5 times.

When I open my eyes I will stay calm and say “I will play again soon”. I know that I will get to play again soon. That makes me happy.
TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - SOCIAL SCRIPTS

- A “To Do” list
- Breaks a social situation down into steps
- Uses simple language
- Often uses pictures
- May include a number of choices
- Does **not** teach social understanding

EXAMPLE OF A SOCIAL SCRIPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUN</th>
<th>MON</th>
<th>TUES</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THURS</th>
<th>FRI</th>
<th>SAT</th>
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<tr>
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<td>31</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

On Saturday, May 13 I am going to Grandma’s house.

Grandma is picking me up in her car. We will drive to her house.
I will have dinner with Grandma.

Then we will watch TV.

Close to 8 o’clock Mom and Dad will pick me up in their car and take me back to our house.

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**TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES – VIDEO MODELING**

The individual watches a video/DVD of him/herself engaging in a task or activity in order to learn a skill set such as a social skill.

**Video Self-modeling**

The individual is recorded engaging in a desired behaviour and then views the videotape/DVD as a review or reminder of appropriate behaviour.

**Video Instruction**

Someone else demonstrates the desired behaviour and the individual views it.
EVERYDAY SOCIAL SKILLS HD APP

Topics Include:
- Walking
- Using the Restroom
- Waiting in Line
- Asking for Directions
- Asking for Information/Help
- Joining the Group

INITIATING SOCIAL SKILLS HD – WORKPLACE APP

Topics Include:
- Ask for Help/Assistance/Feedback
- Give Directions
- Join Others In a Group
- Apologize/Excuse Self
- Give Compliment
- Make a complaint

PERSONAL SOCIAL SKILLS HD – WORKPLACE APP

Topics Include:
- Be Dependable
- Take Responsibility
- Accept Consequences
- Maintain Hygiene, Grooming and Dress
- Be Polite and Courteous
- Tell Truth
RESPONDING TO SOCIAL SKILLS - WORKPLACE AP

Topics Include:
- Follow Directions
- Understand the Feelings of Others
- Handle Criticism
- Respond to Peer Pressure
- Problem Solving
- Deal with Angry Person

TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - ROLE PLAYING IDEAS

- Act out a scenario showing the right and the wrong way
- Use celebrity characters in your scenarios
- Use areas of the individual’s special interest in the scenario
- Use a game show format such as Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune or Who Wants to be a Millionaire to review the skill
- Include peers, siblings, other friends in the role playing

TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - POWER CARD STRATEGY

The Script
- A brief story written at the individual’s comprehension level
- Use the individual’s special interest
- Outlines a problem the character has which is a similar problem to what the individual experiences
- Has a statement about why a positive behaviour is needed
- Outlines a 3-6 step strategy
TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - POWER CARD STRATEGY

The Power Card
- Size of a trading card
- Has a picture of the special interest character
- Can be carried in a pocket or velcroed inside a book, binder, locker
- Can be reviewed easily before the situation (priming)

TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - POWER CARD STRATEGY

Sidney Crosby loves playing hockey. He has to travel a lot with his team from city to city to play hockey. That means he often stays in hotels to sleep. Sometimes Sidney wants to visit with his team mates or has a question to ask them. When he wanted to visit he used to go straight into their room without knocking. This made his team mates mad because they wanted their privacy. Once he went into a team mate’s room when no one was there. His team mate thought Sidney was going to take something that didn’t belong to him. Sidney also made his parents and sister mad at home because he would go into their rooms without permission.

TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - POWER CARD STRATEGY

Sidney doesn’t want to make his team mates or family mad. He realizes that you need to respect other people’s privacy so now he remembers these rules when going wanting to visit someone in their room:
1. Use your knuckles to knock on the door 5 times and count to 20.
2. If there is no answer, knock 5 more times and count to 20.
3. If there is still no answer, leave and try again in 30 min. or more.
4. If the person answers the door, look at them briefly and say hello.
5. Tell them what you want by saying “May I visit with you.” or “I have a question to ask.”
6. If the person says you cannot visit or they will talk to you later you should leave.
**TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES – POWER CARD STRATEGY**

**Power Card Example**

Sadam Crosby wants you to respect other people’s privacy and remember these rules about going into someone else’s room.

1. Use your knuckles to knock on the door 5 times and count to 20.
2. If there is no answer, knock 5 more times and count to 20.
3. If there is still no answer, leave and try again in 30 min. or more.
4. If the person answers the door, look at them briefly and say hello.
5. Tell them what you want by saying “May I visit with you” or “I have a question to ask.”
6. If the person says you cannot visit or they will talk to you later you should leave.

**TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES – 5 POINT SCALE**

The Incredible 5-Point Scale

Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis

- Visual 5-point scales which reduce abstract ideas to simple numbers
- Often combined with a social narrative

**Voice Scale**

- **5** Screaming/ emergency only
- **4** Recess/ outside voice
- **3** Classroom voice/ talking
- **2** Soft voice/ whisper
- **1** No talking at all
### TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES – 5 POINT SCALE

**My Control Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Looks Like</th>
<th>Feels Like</th>
<th>I Can Try To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Screaming, almost hitting</td>
<td>All nervous inside</td>
<td>Go to my room, and hit my pillow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mad talk</td>
<td>Grumpy</td>
<td>Stay away from people I don’t like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Regular kid</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Stay that way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Riding my bike</td>
<td>Calm and free</td>
<td>Stay that way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
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### TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - CARTOONING

- A visual strategy which enhances social understanding and makes the abstract more concrete
- Can be used to introduce the social rules in an upcoming situation or review what happened in a past situation
- Thought bubbles help the individual to understand other people’s perspectives

**Steps:**

- Either the individual or the facilitator draws about a given situation as it is discussed
- The facilitator give their perspective often putting that perspective into thought bubbles
- Summarize the situation/cartoon
- Identify new solutions

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DEVELOP A CARTOON

One person be the facilitator and one be the individual with ASD.

Develop a cartoon to help Alex understand the perspective of others when he approaches them in this manner and a more appropriate way to meet others.

Or

Develop a cartoon relating directly to a behaviour that your individual with ASD is challenged by.

TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - SOCCSS

✧ Teacher directed
✧ Puts social and behavioural issues into a sequential form
✧ Helps individuals understand cause and effect
✧ Helps individuals understand that they have choices in most social situations

TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - SOCCSS

Situation – who, what, where, when, why

Option – brainstorm all options that could have been chosen

Consequences – outcomes are identified for each option
TEACHING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – STRATEGIES - SOCCSS

**Choices** - option/consequence pairs are prioritized numerically or with yes/no - individual chooses the top pair that (s)he feels they can carry out to obtain the desired result

**Strategies** - involves developing a plan to carry out the chosen option/consequence

**Simulation** - practice through writing out steps, role playing, cartooning, drawing a picture, discussing with others

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**Situation:**

Who: Jerry and Raja
When: lunch
Where: lunchroom
What: Jerry was sitting beside Raja at the table in the lunchroom. Raja was eating a curry dish. Jerry screamed "OOO that stinks!" and gave Raja a shove. The lunchroom supervisor gave Jerry a detention.
Why: Jerry is very sensitive to smells.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get up and move to another spot.</td>
<td>There may not be a spot for me to move to.</td>
<td>I might get in trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grab the curry dish and throw it out.</td>
<td>Raja might punch me.</td>
<td>I might get in worst trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quietly tell the lunchroom supervisor that the smell really bothers me and ask if I could move.</td>
<td>The LR supervisor will help me find another spot. If the LR supervisor doesn’t help me find a spot I could ask someone I know if I could switch places and tell the LR supervisor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to ignore the smell.</td>
<td>The smell will make me feel ill.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I might get used to the smell</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**SOCCSS ROLE PLAYING**

Decide with your partner what the chore is. or
Choose a situation that happened with your individual.

One of you be the indiv. with ASD and the other the facilitator. Use the SOCCSS form to practice using this strategy.
EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY

 Helps individuals become more aware of the hidden curriculum.

Myles, Brenda Smith, Trautman, Melissa L., Schelvan, Ronda L.

STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING HIDDEN CURRICULUM RULES


- Be aware key phrases others use which signal hidden curriculum information.
- Watch for facial cues that others are confused or disgusted.
- Wait and see if your understanding matches that of the other people.
- Laugh with the others.
- Look for other hidden curriculum in repeated experiences.

THE TEN UNWRITTEN RULES OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

RULE #1 Rules are not absolute. They are situation-based and people-based.
RULE #2 Not everything is equally important in the grand scheme of things.
RULE #3 Everyone in the world makes mistakes. It doesn’t have to ruin your day.
RULE #4 Honesty is different than diplomacy.
RULE #5 Being polite is appropriate in any situation.
THE TEN UNWRITTEN RULES OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

RULE #6 Not everyone who is nice to me is my friend.
RULE #7 People act differently in public than they do in private.
RULE #8 Know when you are turning people off.
RULE #9 “Fitting in” is often tied to looking and sounding like you fit in.
RULE #10 People are responsible for their own behaviours.”


BEING AN AUTISTIC’S FRIEND

Words from Smith, Joel. This Way of Life. 2007. www.thiswayoflife.org

“I am extremely thankful for the friendship that I’ve found in a handful of special people. I’m not an easy person to know, but these

Autistics want the same things that others want in their friendships. We want to have friends who are loving, honest, and kind.”

What can you do to be a good friend?
TO BE AN AUTISTIC'S FRIEND REMEMBER:

❖ To be Clear
❖ We don’t always understand social rules
❖ We don’t like crowds
❖ Don’t be easily offended
❖ Sometimes we just want to be alone
❖ You are strange to us

TO BE AN AUTISTIC'S FRIEND REMEMBER:

❖ I can see and hear fine
❖ Let us be autistic
❖ Help me when I ask
❖ Answer our questions
❖ Ask us questions
❖ Allow us alternate forms of communication

TO BE AN AUTISTIC'S FRIEND REMEMBER:

❖ Let us be silent
❖ Don’t ignore us
❖ Don’t pry into our past
❖ Forgive us

Thank you
Margaret
Hildebrandt