

FDLRS Record

Newsletter for the University of Florida FDLRS-MDC program in Jacksonville

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The LGBTQ+ and ASD Population

by Brett A. Walden, MPH

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) estimates the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to be one in every 68 children. In the United States, data from Gallop (2016) estimated 4.1% of the adult population identified as LGBT. As of right now, there is no reliable estimate for the prevalence of individuals with ASD who identify as LGBTQ+. Studies focused on specifically ASD who identify as LGBTQ+ are scarce and has led to urgent calls for further research in this area (1).

Now, more than ever, social awareness and support is needed. The knowledge of the above data allows us to see the need to be more mindful of our youth and provide the educational support needed to help the LGBTQ+ community as well as the ASD community. Our youth need to feel safe and understood. We want to provide resources that will assist our families, caregivers, and individuals with ASD who identify as LGBTQ+ that have questions or need assistance.

Starting in August, our center will begin a support group for young adults (18-22 years old) with autism spectrum disorder and identify as LGBTQ+. If you are interested, please email brett.walden@jax.ufl.edu to get more information.

If you want to continue the conversation, check out some resources below.

Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

JASMYN Jacksonville: <https://www.jasmyn.org/>

LGBT National Help Center: <https://www.glbthotline.org/>

UNF LGBTQ Center: <https://www.unf.edu/lgbtqcenter/>

Youth Gender Program: <https://endo.pediatrics.med.ufl.edu/resources/youth-gender-program/>



Florida Diagnostic & Learning
RESOURCES SYSTEM

OUR SERVICES

Who we Serve:

- Individuals between the ages of 3 & 22 who have not graduated high school.
- Who are struggling in school and have complicated medical, behavioral, developmental, &/or social histories
- And who reside in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, & St. Johns counties

Services for Families:

- Comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment, which may include psychoeducational, emotional-behavioral, &/or developmental pediatric evaluations
- Feedback sessions and a report detailing our findings
- Assistance in planning for your child's educational and psychological needs
- Trainings for parents covering a variety of topics

Services for the Community:

- Training/consultations for educators, students, & other professionals
- Educational consultation and support services: This can include collaboration with school personnel to facilitate school placement & provision of services

Processing Speed in the Classroom

By Christopher Adalio, Ph.D.

Imagine your child is sitting at the kitchen table doing their homework and it is taking them a long time to finish their assignments. "Why can't they just hurry up and get it done?" you may be asking yourself. Or imagine you are a teacher and you have a student finishing only a portion of the test you have given them, leaving the rest of the test blank. "Why didn't they finish the test?" you may wonder.

One possible explanation may have to do with your child's or student's processing speed abilities.

Processing speed is the rate at which one can take in information and generate an appropriate response. It is a cognitive ability that makes the brain more efficient at processing information. Some students have naturally slow processing speeds. For them, this is just how their brains work. Youth with the inattentive presentation of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are at increased likelihood for slow processing speed. But other youth without ADHD may also have naturally slow processing speed.

Research suggests that processing speed is influenced by the myelination of axons connecting neurons in the brain. The brain has billions of brain cells that communicate with each other through electrical impulses passed along through axons, cables that connect brain cells to each other. Myelin is the fatty substance that insulates these cables. When the cables have less insulation, some of the electrical impulse may escape the cable, leading to weaker electrical impulse and thus slower communication of information throughout the brain's networks of neurons. This is just one explanation for why a student may have naturally slow processing speed.

It is important to know that having slow processing speed does not have to do with how much a student knows or how capable

they are of learning. A student may have strong nonverbal and verbal reasoning, and yet have weakly developed processing speed. For these students, how fast they perform tasks does not have anything to do with how well they can perform tasks.

We can use computers as an example. Think of the brain like a computer's CPU, with the RAM being its working memory (i.e., ability to use information in short-term memory) and the hard drive being its long-term memory (i.e., ability to store information). Processing speed is how fast the CPU, or brain, can perform these functions! It has nothing to do with how well it can perform these functions or how much information it is capable of storing.

But slow processing speed can affect how well a student can demonstrate what they truly know and are capable of. This is particularly true on timed assignments. If it takes a student longer to demonstrate their academic achievement in a certain subject, but they have limited time, they may not be able to represent their knowledge of the subject being assessed. Thus adults in the student's life may not have a true understanding of what the student is capable of. In these instances, it is sometimes helpful for students with processing speed difficulties to be given additional time on tests and reduced homework. For example, if a student shows they consistently understand the concept of multiplication, they may give that student fewer multiplication questions for homework.

Processing speed can also lead to frustration for the student. Think back to times when you have sat at your computer and tried to complete a task, only to find that the computer is moving very slowly. You know what you need to do, you know how to solve the problem, and you are ready to complete

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the task. But the computer is slowing you down. This can be frustrating. Students with slow processing speeds can experience this frustration quite frequently. In these instances, helping them learn relaxation techniques, and giving them reminders to use those techniques in the moment, can be helpful. Remembering your child struggles with processing speed may also help ease your own frustration, thereby putting less pressure on your child to complete homework faster.

Some students have naturally slower processing speed. This is just the way their brains work. But sometimes processing speed is influenced by a student's approach to work or even their feelings and mood.

Sometimes processing speed is influenced by how carefully and cautiously a student is performing tasks. In these instances, it is important for students to be taught how to judge whether to prioritize accuracy versus speed. During timed math drills, for example, it may be more helpful for the student to complete more problems than to complete fewer more accurately.

Students experiencing anxiety or depression may also seem to process information slowly. In these instances, it is important to help the student learn to manage their depression or anxiety. Seeking support from a licensed mental health professional (e.g., psychologist, psychiatrist, LMHC) may be helpful.

Regardless of why your child or student struggles with processing speed, there are techniques and accommodations that can be made at home and in the classroom so that it does not interfere with their learning. For more information on processing speed, please refer to the resources below.

Recommended Readings:

[Bright Kids Who Can't Keep Up](#) by Ellen Braaten, Ph.D.

<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/processing-speed-what-you-need-to-know>

<https://www.mghclaycenter.org/parenting-concerns/grade-school/intro-processing-speed/>

<https://pediatrics.med.jax.ufl.edu/diagnostic-and-learning-resources/>

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UF-Jacksonville
FDLRS-MDC serves
Baker, Clay, Duval,
Flagler, Nassau, &
St. Johns County.



Important Questions to Ask About the Transition Process

By Audrey Bringman, M.Ed.

In education, the term transition refers to the movement from high school to adulthood, whether that is post-secondary education or work. In health care, it is the shift from pediatric to adult health care providers. Big changes happen during this time, which can be overwhelming for emerging adults, parents and caregivers.

It is important to be curious, ask questions, and learn as much as possible to be equipped for a smooth transition.

Below are some questions to ask individuals in your circle of support, in order to be an active participant in your transition process and start planning for your own transition into adulthood.

10 Questions for Adolescents to Ask about Health Care Transition

Ask Your Health Care Provider

- What is your Health Care Transition Policy?
- What age will I have to transfer to an adult doctor?
- Where may I obtain a copy of my diagnoses and my medication list?
- When may I speak with you alone during my medical appointments?

Ask Your Parent or Caregiver

- Where do you go for primary or specialty care and could we see if they could take me on as a new adult patient?
- What pharmacy do we use for medications? Name, location and phone number?
- May I keep a copy of our insurance and pharmacy prescription cards?

Ask your Medical Insurer

- When will my insurance coverage end or expire? Is there an age cut-off?
- Will I have to re-apply or update my records when I turn 18?
- How can I find out what doctors accept my insurance?

Additional Resources:

Got Transition. (n.d.). *Home Page*. Got Transition. <https://www.gottransition.org/>

FloridaHATS. (n.d.). *Florida Health and Transition Services*. FloridaHATS. <https://www.floridahats.org/>

10 Questions for Adolescents to Ask about Education Transition

Ask Your Teachers

- May I see a copy of my Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan? Can you help me understand it?
- When may I participate in my IEP meetings?
- What are my accommodations in school?
- When can I register for Vocational Rehabilitation?

Ask Your Parent or Caregiver

- Can we set up a time to do an interest profile questionnaire on <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip> ?
- Can we set up appointments for me to interview family members and family friends about their careers?
- Can we find work and volunteer opportunities for me in the community?
- When I turn 18, can we talk about my independent living options?
- May I start working on my own budget and making independent purchases?
- Can I start learning how to navigate my community, whether by driving, bus, public transit, bicycle, or walking?

Additional resources:

Project 10 (2021). *Project 10: Transition Education Network*. Project10.info

Time Flies When You're Having Fun

by Marlena Jenkins, M.S., BCaBA

I'm pretty sure I have heard the saying, "Time flies when you're **HAVING** fun" a million and one times, but why don't we ever seem to **HAVE** time for fun? All too often, I meet parents who are searching for ways to intervene in their child's life in a meaningful, positive **AND** fun way. But they are bogged down with therapy and tutoring appointments, social skills and support groups, and don't forget the regular demands of life, like taking a bath and eating. After taking the kids (young and old) to all of their preferred and non-preferred activities, parents have little energy, focus or time to work on skills in the natural environment. Below are a few things to remember when you want to help, but don't want it to feel like you are clocking yourself in or your child in for work.

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I know this will sound like a contradiction, but skill development is **WORK**. Yes, working on areas of need or deficit does take work, but a clear understanding of where your child is

functioning allows you to research and select activities that will get straight to the point and take the guesswork out of planning. If you are like me, planning is where you lose steam and start to cut corners. To avoid this, make a list of things you or other important adults want to see your child work on during a set period of time (like summer break.) Work off of this list and avoid adding things unless you have crossed something else off.

*

You're likely sitting on a gold mine of activities and materials around the house that can be used to stimulate your child's **INTERESTS**. Children who show curiosity while you are cooking, mowing the lawn, putting on make-up, or completing other daily chores, may be ready to jump





in and help. Start with modeling the task in small steps for your child. As they show greater levels of attending, fade out one of the steps and prompt your child to perform the step that is missing. Remember, you are making learning fun, so redirection, prompting and error correction should be done in a manner that is direct but light-hearted. If you find yourself getting frustrated, back off and reassess the importance and relevance of the activity.

*

Lastly, PRAISE at every step of the way. Make praising your child a natural part of your language and interaction. If praise serves as reinforcement, this will help everyone continue smiling even on the days that are difficult. Praising also helps us to reframe the situation as something that IS positive and encouraging and something that for us and not against us. Who doesn't want to be encouraging? After changing your language, you may find that you receive more praise from those around you, which is always an added benefit.

The road is long, but who says it doesn't have to be fun? Insert some fun into your day and you will see that learning to have fun together is the first thing your family does this summer!

Different Phrases to Use to Encourage Instead of 'I'm Proud of You'

by Gina Bauer, B.A.

I am guilty as a parent and as an educator of just mentioning that I'm proud of my teenaged sons or of my students. After reading an article written by Tarn Wilson from the Edutopia site, I wanted to share her perspective. Ms. Wilson shares how the intention of letting your child or student know that you are proud of them, may shift the attention away from their accomplishment on to the adult, as if the

approval of that specific person was the goal. I enjoyed reading about how shifting those statements and rephrasing the popular saying of "I'm proud of you" to four simple strategies to shed some insight on this topic.

'Tell Me More'

This phrase allows the student to genuinely know that you are interested in their



accomplishment and you want to hear more about it. Ms. Wilson describes this phrase as slowing down and savoring the particular achievement; allowing students to relive the moment and share the happiness with you.

For example:

Student: "I made the soccer team!"

Me: "I'm so happy for you! Tell me more."

'You Must Feel'

As an educator I have learned to incorporate social emotional learning into the curriculum. As a parent, sometimes I miss those opportunities. By shifting the attention and emotion of being proud of them to how they feel, allows that sense of pride to take over while building their emotional awareness.

'What Did You Do To Make That Happen?'

Self-reflection is another skill as an educator and as a parent I try to instill in my students/ children. By changing the phrase to "what did you do to make that happen", allows the student to become conscious of choices and patterns that lead them to success. Don't be surprised if they come back with the famous "I don't know" answer. Perhaps with some prompting, this will open up an opportunity to practice building self-reflection and awareness.

For example:

Student: "I made the soccer team!"

Me: "Excellent, how did you make that happen?"

Student: "I practiced with my dad every night."

'I Appreciate..' OR 'I Admire..'

Using specific praise and positive words tells the student or child that you genuinely admire their qualities and talents. By adding the words "I admire" instead of "I'm proud" tells them that they have character traits that you respect.

I agree with Ms. Tarn Wilson as she stated that she believes our praise should not position the teacher as the center of bestowing approval or disapproval, rather providing them with genuine feedback to develop healthy self-awareness and self-trust. I also can relate this to parenting my teenagers as well.

Your local FDLRS or FDLRS-MDC is also available for training, consultation and additional resources.

Resources:

Wilson, T. (2021, June 22). What to Say Instead of 'I'm Proud of You'. Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/article/what-say-instead-im-proud-you?fbclid=IwAR3n5ENTvoE_ynXRvoeyWUW7kO-rz6QwmqgX-kjDGkdEnhqLL_cgBAMioUY



Books We Recommend

Making

Mistakes



Books for Ages 3-8

Even Superheroes Make Mistakes by Shelly Becker
She's Got This by Laurie Hernandez
I Can't Do That, Yet: Growth Mindset by Ester Pia Cordova

Books for Ages 9-15

Be A Perfect Person In Just Three Days by Stephen Manes
Mistakes That Worked: The World's Familiar Inventions and How They Came To Be by Charlotte Foltz Jones
Star Wars: Jedi Academy by Jeffrey Brown