7 New and Exciting Developments in Aspergers Syndrome...

By

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Exclusive To Members Of The Parenting Aspergers Community
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Introduction

Hi there,

First of all I just want to say a huge thank you for joining The Parenting Aspergers Community. Without people just like you the website and community just wouldn’t happen – and it’s definitely a resource that a lot of parents value.

This ebook is just one of the many resources that you get access to as a member of The Parenting Aspergers Community.

As I run a number of Aspergers websites online I am naturally involved with a variety of new and emerging information technologies. Now I won’t deny that at times I find these new technologies a huge challenge, but on the other hand I find them quite fascinating.

The emergence of new technologies and the way that they can then impact on all of us in society is what has really inspired me to put this resource together. Because many of these technologies are potentially very helpful for children and adults with Aspergers.

So in this report I focus on several new technological advances. Firstly I look at social networking online (sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter etc.) and Aspergers. This approach can have some pretty great advantages for people with Aspergers, but obviously there are some points of caution to be aware of too.

Related to some of this is the emerging hand held technology from the likes of Apple with their IPhones and IPads. Now I am not necessarily advocating Apple as the company to go with in such instances (as many other companies are doing similar things) is just that they are probably the most visible of the companies. But some of these devices have a great
number of advantages for people with Aspergers, some of which are more obvious than others.

And maybe one of the best things to come out of the explosion in technology growth over the past 5 years is the employment opportunities. Now I am certainly not stereotyping all young people with Aspergers as perfect computer programmers. However in my opinion there is certainly an overly proportionate number of people with Aspergers who have such skills, and a number of the characteristics of Aspergers lend themselves well to this kind of work.

All of this stuff with technology really inspired this project as I said. But I also wanted to look a little wider than just technology. So I've looked at several other "hot" topics that are current or future-related. The media has always been hugely important in the way that has Aspergers is perceived in the general public, and this hasn't changed. So I've looked at things we can all do to help with this process.

The "biggie" that is just around the corner is the proposed change that will see "Aspergers" no longer used as a medical diagnosis after 2013. The jury is still out on that one, but it clearly has the potential to make some big changes to the Aspergers community at large.

Finally I have done some research into several relatively new theories/approaches. Firstly is "theory of mind" and what studies into this area can teach children and adults with Aspergers. In addition I outline use of "behavioral coaching" for people with Aspergers, because many people see this to be an excellent approach for Aspergers.
Social Networking and Children with Aspergers: What Every Parent Needs to Know...
You can find social networking sites everywhere online. These sites can change the lives of all users—especially children with Aspergers. There are over 100 million users on sites like Facebook and MySpace. These sites however can be a problem for parents of teenage children and an even bigger problem for parents of children with Aspergers. As a parent, you probably are wondering if social networking sites can help or hurt your child with Aspergers. You must look at the pros and cons in order to make a decision. Parents need to know what happens on social networking sites to decide which sites are best for children.

**Pros and Cons of Social Networking Sites**

There are pros and cons to social networking just like anything else in the world. Parents have a right to be concerned about the good and bad reasons children should or should not use social networking sites. Here are a few of the pros and cons that you need to know about as a parent.

**Pros-**

- **Social networking sites build the confidence of children with Aspergers.**
  
  Children with Aspergers have problems with communicating and socializing with others. These two skills are something that children with Aspergers struggle with throughout their lives. It is important that children with Aspergers make social connections with others in society. The confidence level of children with Aspergers grows once they join social networking sites. Your child can make friends that will last a lifetime.

- **The use of social networking sites can be very relaxing and calming for your child.**
  
  There is no need for your child to be stressed or embarrassed when they meet new friends on social networking sites. Other children accept your child for the wonderful person that they are and their social issues can be overlooked on the
Internet. In-person interaction may cause children with Aspergers to be misunderstood. Your child only has to worry about making friends, and they do not have to stress over not being accepted by other children.

- **Your child can join social support groups for children with Aspergers.** There are a number of social groups that parents and children with Aspergers may be interested in joining. This acceptance can be great for your child’s self-esteem. There are also groups that family members of children with Aspergers can join and talk to other people who understand your needs and concerns. Look at a few of these sites and decide if these are sites that you want your children to use. Go to sites like [www.Habbo.com](http://www.Habbo.com) and [www.Scallyroo.com](http://www.Scallyroo.com) to decide if these sites are okay for your child to visit.

**Cons-**

- **Children can become dependent upon social networking sites.** Make sure that your child does not use these sites as a substitute for real human interaction. Just communicating with other children online will not help your child get over their social and communication issues. They still need to learn social skills, so they must continue to socialize with other children in person as well. Communicating through social networking sites only may even make your child’s social and communication issues get worse.

- **Your child may become obsessed with social networking sites.** It is really easy to get hooked on talking to other children online. Internet addiction is a problem for many people. Many adults struggle with Internet addiction, so children are especially prone to becoming addicted to social networking sites.
• **Your child may be at risk of cyber-bullying and other threats.** Cyber-bullying is becoming a bigger problem each day. Your child may suffer at the hands of other children because they are a child with Aspergers. Cyber-bullying can cause a child to become depressed or threaten to take their life. Additionally, social networking sites put your child’s personal information at risk. Someone may try to use your child’s personal information or use this information to stalk them online or in person.

**Tips for Parents**

So what is a parent of a child with Aspergers supposed to do about social networking sites? The most important thing parents need to remember is that educating yourself about social networking sites is the only way to keep your child safe. Make sure that there is a balance and that your child uses these sites in moderation. Here are a few tips that will help your keep your child with Aspergers safe while they are online:

• **You can talk about Internet safety with your child.** Anyone who uses the Internet may be exposed to bad things on the Internet and people with bad intentions—especially children with Aspergers. You need to talk to your child about the dangers of sharing information with others online. They also need to know that it is very important to let you know if something or someone makes them feel uncomfortable while they are on a social networking site. Make sure that you monitor your child’s page and any photographs and videos that your child posts or comes in contact with while online.
• **Encourage your child to do activities that do not involve just a social networking site.** There are many activities that your child with Aspergers can do instead of surfing the Internet. There are many activities, such as sports, social groups, and extracurricular activities that your child can get involved in instead of using the Internet so often. These activities and groups can help your child stop depending on the Internet to socialize with others. Consider activities such as camping, music, basketball, kayaking, and rock climbing to help with your child’s self-esteem and social skills.

• **Make sure that your child uses privacy settings.** Educate yourself on how social networking sites work. Read the "About" page and "Frequently Asked Questions" page to learn more about the sites that your child uses. Talk to your child about information that they should never share online, such as full name, social security number, address, phone number and any other personal information. Make sure that they never agree to meet a stranger that they meet online.

• **Set limits for your child’s use of social networking sites.** The Internet is a good social and academic tool for your child. You cannot completely stop your child from using the Internet, but you can prevent Internet dangers in your home. You should set clear rules as to how much time may be spent online, the kind of sites your child visits, and specific times of the day that your child can use the computer. All computers in the home need to be in an open area where you can supervise the activity. Use the history feature of your computer to check the sites that your child visits to make sure that they are appropriate. Make sure you have a clear understanding of what attracts
your child with Aspergers to these sites and what attracts them to the people they come in contact with on the Internet. Also on sites like Facebook you can join too and become a “friend” online with your child – and keep a subtle eye on their online activities. I do this with my teenaged children and it can be quite reassuring (although be careful not to get into “serious spying” mode).

- **Talk to your child about cyber-bullying online.** Bullying online is a serious problem on many social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. It is possible for other children to make jokes, spread rumors, and threaten your child over the Internet. Children with Aspergers are in greater danger than other children are for cyber-bullying. Make sure that they know that they should contact you as soon as someone threatens or bullies them online.

- **You can compromise with your child with Aspergers on Internet usage.** Compromising with a child with Aspergers may be very hard. Your child may want to know why you are setting limits, so you may need to explain the reasons in detail for them. You may need help with talking to your child if they still do not understand your limitations. You may need help from groups that specialize in helping the Aspergers community. These groups can help you with the challenges that you face with compromising with your child.

Social networking online for children with Aspergers can be helpful and harmful—especially without adult supervision. As a parent of a child with Aspergers, you must closely monitor what social networking sites they use. Children can be extremely cruel and vicious to other
children online. Social networking sites can give your child the chance to meet and communicate with other children their age and create lasting relationships in the process. They can also get much needed support from members of social groups for children with Aspergers. Social networking sites do not have to be a problem in your household. Communicate with your child, monitor their computer usage and the social networking sites visited, and set limitations for your child with Aspergers and everything should work out fine.
How Parents Can Use iPhones and iPads to Help Their Child with Aspergers...
The creation of the iPhone, iPod, and iPad may be one of the greatest creations in history. You can do everything from using the technology to keep record of important events to having a face-to-face conversation with someone on your device. Many people depend on these devices to function properly throughout the day. Someone had a great idea that children with Aspergers can benefit from the use of these devices. The use of the devices is in the early stages, but the Aspergers community is very accepting of the use of iPhones, iPods, and iPads to help with problems faced by children with Aspergers.

Many groups use these devices as a treatment option for children with Aspergers. The iPod, iPad, and iPhone can be programmed to work as an electronic voice that teaches what behaviors or actions are appropriate and inappropriate for children with Aspergers. This type of therapy is known as “social stories” in special education. Social stories are short picture books that teach children with Aspergers appropriate behaviors. These social stories can easily be downloaded to an iPhone, iPad, or iPod.

These applications can also show children different social situations, such as to having conversation with others or respecting the boundaries of others, so that they have a model to see. This is a wonderful discovery for parents of children with Aspergers. Your child can learn the skills that they need from anywhere with just a touch of a button. These applications have had great success, and children with Aspergers love the applications as much as their parents do.

**Information for Parents**

There are many different applications that may interest you and your child. You should take some time to look through these applications before allowing your child to use them. Make sure that the application can help in an area that your child struggles with and that the
application is structured to help improve the area. There are many free applications and applications that you must pay to use that you may find helpful.

Here is a great application that is designed to help the parents of children with Aspergers. “IEP Checklist” is a great application for parents - http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/iep-checklist/id348702423?mt=8 The application is free of charge to parents. IEP checklist offers assistance to parents whose child has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan). The application helps you understand what information is needed in your child’s IEP. It helps you make sure that your child with Aspergers gets everything they need to get a good education. Parents can record their child’s IEP meeting, customize notes, and gain access to the federal regulation website.

Applications for Children

Many applications have been researched and grouped into different categories. Parents can easily find an area that their child struggles with and look at the site to see if it is okay for their child to use. Here are a few excellent applications that you may find helpful for your child with Aspergers. The applications are groups by skill to make it easier for parents. The applications are available through the iTunes App Store.

- Communication Skills

Children with Aspergers have trouble with properly understanding language in context—especially expressive and receptive language (saying information and understanding information correctly). Here are a few helpful applications that may help your child achieve these skills.

1. **Tom the Talking Cat** – This is a free application that teaches children communication skills. Children can have fun talking to Tom while developing
their communication skills. Tom repeats everything that your child says using a funny voice that will make your child laugh. Tom even responds when your child touches him on the screen.

2. **ABA Receptive** – This is an application that you have to pay to use. The application is currently available for $0.99. Flash cards help your child to develop their communication skills. The application teaches children that thing can fit into different categories, and it teaches your child to have a good functioning conversation skills.

- **Behavioral Skills**

  Children with Aspergers struggle with change and sometimes have trouble handling their emotions as a result. Here are a few applications that can teach your child skills that can improve their behavior.

  1. **Angry Octopus** – This beautifully illustrated book will have your child glued to the screen. The application teaches your child how to handle anger in different situations. It is very relaxing application, and your child will enjoy the interactive and animated parts of the application. The application is currently $7.99.

  2. **iReward Chart** – This is an application that your child with Aspergers will enjoy. This application helps parents create positive behavior changes in their children. Parents can encourage children to complete homework, do chores, and brush their teeth and chart the tasks for rewards. It is also a great way to change bad behavior in your child immediately. The application currently costs $2.99.
Social Skills

Social skills are an area that children with Aspergers struggle with throughout their lives. Social skills can be taught through applications that can help improve by teaching children to share, communicate, listen, and take turns. The use of iPads, iPhones, and iPhones makes it fun and easy for children to learn social skills.

1. **Look in My Eyes** – The application is a game that rewards children for making eye contact quickly. Children are rewarded with virtual money to buy items for a virtual restaurant. It has an interactive screen that allows children to zoom, shrink, and rotate items to create a cool scene. This application helps to improve the social skill of making eye contact. The application is currently available for $2.99.

2. **Model Me Going Places** – This application is available for free. This application helps children learn to move around areas in the community if this skill may be a challenge for them. The application has photo slides that show your child other children modeling the correct behavior. Your child can choose between 6 locations to help them. The application has a descriptive text and audio to go with each photo.

Tips for Parents

There is so much that parents can do to continue the progress of using these devices to assist children with Aspergers. Here are a few tips that you can use as a parent to continue to promote growth in your child and other children and families in the Aspergers community.

- **Consult with writers to create applications for children with Aspergers.**
  There are many companies and individuals available that create these wonderful
applications that are great for children with Aspergers. You do not have to be a famous writer to create an application. The businesses that create applications have a professional staff that can edit your information and turn it into a great tool for children with Aspergers.

- **Encourage members of your child’s school to purchase iPhones, iPads, and iPods for students to use at school.** These devices are excellent educational tools that can help improve social and communication skills in children with Aspergers. The devices can also be a great tool that children can use at home. Students may be able to check the item out of the library to use at home. Parents can work on specific skills with students to improve trouble areas.

- **Use social groups for the Asperger’s community to get the word out about the importance of these devices.** The Aspergers community has a duty to get the information out about these wonderful tools. The social groups have the power to promote the use of the devices and to promote more research into developing new ways to improve the skills of children with Aspergers.

- **Explore new applications and encourage your child to try new applications.** New applications for children with Aspergers are created every day. As a parent, you have the responsibility of finding the applications that are the most appropriate for your child to use. Encourage them to use the applications. You can even work on the applications with your child to encourage them to use them.

- **Consider purchasing an iPad, iPhone, or iPod for your child to use at home.** These devices can be expensive, but sometimes you can find them at affordable prices. Retail stores and cell phone companies have these devices on sale at times. You may even get a free or discounted device on a cell phone upgrade. You can also look on site such as Overstock and Amazon to find discounted devices. You may even bid on a device through EBay and get it at a deeply discounted price.
Discuss the purchase of one of these devices with your child’s IEP committee. Some school offer assistive devices such as Alpha Smart (offers typing assistance), hearing devices, hand-help dictionaries and thesauruses and more as a requirement in your child’s IEP. If funds allow, it may be possible for your child to use an iPad or IPod to assist them in developing their skills.

Children with Aspergers have many tools to assist them with their social and communication skills. As a parent, you must continue to voice your concerns and promote advancements in technology that can build your child’s skills. Make sure you encourage your child to use these wonderful tools and devices so that companies will continue to see the need for them and continue to create tool and devices that help children with Aspergers. Technology is a wonderful thing.
The Gaming and PC World Hold a Bright Future for Children with Aspergers...
Children with Aspergers have a great future ahead of them in the gaming and PC world. Children with Aspergers have high functioning intellectual abilities but lack in the areas of communication and socialization. This lack may be seen as a downfall to many, but can actually be a good thing for children with Aspergers. Many parents notice that their children enjoy surfing social networking sites and playing video games for hours at a time. Maybe this fascination has a future for children with Aspergers. Computers and games give your child the chance to meet and mix with other children their age without the personal contact. They can be themselves while overcoming their social and communication barriers.

The job market is poor these days just about anywhere you go. Currently, less than 20 percent of people with disabilities has a job. The job outlook is improving for the children with Aspergers who will populate jobs in the future. Studies show that many children with Aspergers grow up and work in the gaming and PC industry. The gaming and PC world is a growing industry that many people want to get in on.

People with Aspergers have really poor short-term memory and good long-term memory. It may even be said that they have better long-term memory than most people without Aspergers. This is an amazing discovery for the Aspergers community. For parents, this means that your child can lead a normal, independent life and work in a successful position someday. There are many things that you must consider as a parent to ensure your child’s present and future success.

**Job Seeking Tips**

You probably want to know what jobs in the gaming and PC world may be good for your child with Aspergers? Your child can one day hold many specific jobs in the gaming and PC world. There are a few things to think about before starting a job. Although your child
may not be ready for a full career just yet, your child may volunteer or work a summer job right now. Here are a few things for parents and children with Aspergers to consider.

1 **Well-defined jobs are the best for children with Aspergers.** Your child must know the specifics in step-by-step details in order to do their job well. People with Aspergers think more concretely. Breaking jobs down into smaller parts is also great for them.

2 **Discuss social limitations with the boss.** Children with Aspergers have limitations just like everyone else. Make sure that the boss is aware of the limitations so that accommodations may be made. Discussing limitations may also be a great way to make sure that the current job is a great fit. If a child with Aspergers is not doing well in the current position, the boss may be able to move them to a more suitable position or make the changes needed to make the worker more productive.

3 **Use your skills and not your personality to gain work.** Show your potential employer that you have excellent skills in particular areas. Make them see you for your skills and not your social and communication limitations. Make them so impressed with what you can do that the employer does not consider your personality issues as a limitation.

**Job Market**

The gaming and PC world welcome people with Aspergers because of great long-term memory abilities. The job market welcomes the visual thinkers of the world. For this reason, people with Aspergers have a bright future ahead. Here are a few specific PC and gaming jobs that may interest children with Aspergers.
1 **Computer Programming** – The opportunities are limitless because there is always a need for workers in this field. Jobs are available in the areas of software design, communications and networking systems and more.

2 **Computer Animation** – This is a very competitive field of work. There is a shortage of qualified programmers in industrial and business fields of computer programming, so business owners are recruiting overseers for these positions.

3 **Video Game Designer** – Jobs are scarce in this position in some areas. The field is overcrowded, but that does not mean that you cannot succeed in finding a job. You may need to start in software design or industrial computer designs first if you have trouble finding a job.

4 **Drafting** – Computer aided drafting is a very important part of engineering. Drafting positions can lead to a position in designing and laying out entire structures. It may be helpful to learn to draw freehand first before drawing on the computer. Freehand drafting helps you to draw with more detail on the computer.

5 **Commercial Art** – This type of work is important to magazine layouts and advertising. You can be very successful as a freelancer in this area.

6 **Web Page Designer** – The Internet is full of websites with many more on the way. This is a well paying job that can be done from anywhere. Many designers find success as freelancers with sites like www.elance.com or www.rentacoder.com helping them to find work.

**Tips for Parents**

Parents must be prepared for the future with children with Aspergers. One day your child will be a successful, independent individual in society with your assistance as a parent. There are many things that you can do before that day comes to make sure your child has success. Here are a few helpful tips for parent with children with Aspergers.
1 Choose a college major a few years before graduating high school. Your child needs to prepare well before graduating for their future careers. Your child needs to find a career and a major in an area that they can find a job. PC and gaming positions are in high demand these days, and your child’s long-term memory and concrete thinking are a perfect fit for these jobs.

2 Take courses for the future before graduating high school. This can increase your child’s motivation about their future job. Taking courses at a community college or local university in commercial art, drafting, or computer programming can give them a head start on their future.

3 Take advantage of free courses offered online or in the community. Many groups offer free computer courses that may be helpful to your child. The courses may even transfer for college credit for their degree program. Sometimes high schools offer courses in the summer free of charge to students. Take advantage of every opportunity that can benefit your child’s future.

4 Search the community and schools for outdated computers. Computers are expensive to purchase. Many businesses and school have outdated computers that they no longer use. Your child may use these computers as a tool for their future career. Businesses and schools may be willing to sell the computers at a good price or even give them to your child free of charge. You never know until you ask. Take advantage of the opportunities that you have.

5 Volunteer at job sites that are in the area of gaming and PCs. Experience is the best teacher. You can learn much of the hands-on parts of gaming and PC jobs just by dedicating a few hours of your free time. You can volunteer nights, weekends, and summers to earn valuable experience for your future career. The company that you work for may even consider you for a future position.

6 Take advantage of internships in college. Interning is a great way to open doors
to opportunity. Many gaming and PC business owners hire workers who have interned with them in the past. You are a valuable asset to the business owner because they already know what skills you have. You have an advantage over other job applicants because of this experience.

7 Find non-profit organizations and businesses that offer training in computer programming. Believe it or not, there are organizations that offer training in computer program testing for people with Aspergers. An organization called Aspiritech (http://www.aspiritech.org/) is helping people with Aspergers use the skill that come naturally to train for jobs. Organizations like this one also help their trainees find work after completing the program. This can be a great opportunity.

8 Make sure that you know your rights on the job site. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to provide accommodations to people with Aspergers. The law is on your side. Your employer must provide accommodations according to your individual needs. Make sure you discuss your needs with your employer so that things run smoothly at your job. Do not be afraid to ask for accommodations if you need them. It is your right.

The future is now brighter for children with Aspergers. Your child’s intense skills are needed in the gaming and PC world. Who says your limitations are a problem? The gaming and PC world welcome your skills and talents for positions that require attention to detail. Parents need to make sure that their children are prepared as the children move toward their future careers. Make sure your child takes advantage of anything that can lead to their future success. Becoming a successful, independent worker could not be easier.
Media Portrayal of Aspergers: Ways to Improve the Perception of the Aspergers Community...
Aspergers has slowly crept into the media in recent years. The character in the movie *Rain Man* helps many people with Aspergers relate to their own issues and confusions. There are even the television shows with the “undiagnosed” people with Aspergers such as characters in *House M.D.*, *The Big Bang Theory*, and *Bones*. The unofficial diagnosis of Aspergers for these characters has created quite a stir over the Internet. Hollywood has been quite shy about Aspergers even though 1 in 100 children have Aspergers and 1 in 70 boys have Aspergers.

It is time that Aspergers gets the recognition that it needs. It is extremely important that media types get the information about Aspergers correct. The media has and always will influence the public. The media stirs up interest on important topics just as it has with the topic of Aspergers. The increase in interest can have a negative or positive impact on society depending on how Aspergers in portrayed. For many people and families, the media recognition can provide answers about the unknown issues to a problem that have caused problems in a family for years. For others, the media attention may serve as a beginning point to start learning something about Aspergers.

Aspergers is such a relatively new discovery that there has not been a great amount of time to research Aspergers in depth. Society knows only a limited amount of information about Aspergers at the moment. For this reason, it is important that the media portray the image of people with Aspergers correctly. Media is intended to entertain the public, but when shown the way the author sees Aspergers, things may not be depicted correctly and the consequences may be very serious for the Aspergers community.
It is important that the Aspergers community makes sure that the correct light shines on the subject of Aspergers. Negative images can create uneasiness about the topic, the people Aspergers affects, and a feeling of shame and embarrassment for the children and the families affected by Aspergers. As a parent, you must do everything possible to protect your child while showing society that people with Aspergers live normal lives just as those not affected. Media is the key to make sure that your message gets out correctly.

**Tips to Help Parents to Raise Awareness**

Many things can be done to raise awareness of Aspergers and to portray a positive image in the media. Remember that as a parent you have the power to change the way the world sees Aspergers. You know firsthand what goes on with children with Aspergers and how it affects the families. You create a positive and correct image of the way others see Aspergers. Here are a few helpful tips to raise correct awareness to the media, the community, and your child.

- **Monitor shows that depict those with Aspergers.** Make sure that the media does not show people with Aspergers as strange, unintelligent people who cannot spend time around others. If the shows display people with Aspergers in a negative light, make sure that your child is not exposed. It may upset your child and cause them to suffer from anxiety or become withdrawn.

- **Discuss media portrayal of Aspergers with your child.** You may not be able to prevent your child from being exposed to all forms of media and views of society
about Aspergers. Children spend much time on computers or in public. It is really easy for them to see and hear many negative things about Aspergers. Prepare your child by sitting down and discussing a few of the media images about Aspergers with them. Help your child to appreciate the person inside and be proud of whom he or she is.

- **Contact writers and producers about their portrayal of Aspergers in the media.** Let them know that these people are intelligent people who can function independently in society if they view Aspergers in a negative way. Offer advice based on your first hand experience with your child. If they do a good job of displaying Aspergers, congratulate them and support their efforts to get the word out about Aspergers.

- **Do not support media that has a negative image of Aspergers.** Television, movies, and the Internet have a great amount of influence on the public. Some of the information is incorrect and not researched. For those that rely only on media sources for an idea of what Aspergers is all about, these individuals may only gain partial knowledge about Aspergers. Do not support media sources that portray a negative image of Aspergers. Encourage others not to support the efforts either. Support from society is the only way that media sources make money and stay around to provide information.

- **Use social media sources to contact producers and writers about the images of Aspergers that are displayed in their movies and television shows.** Those in the media use sites such as Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, and other media sources
to promote their media sources. Millions of people log into social media sites each
day. Producers and writers depend on these media forms to promote their movies
and television shows. Parents can log into these sites and show their support or
dislike for the portrayal of Aspergers. Parents can also provide an accurate
description of what a person with Aspergers is like.

• **Parents can use Aspergers social groups to impact society.** Aspergers social
groups are great sources of information about Aspergers. These groups can provide
the public with accurate view and images of what those affected by Aspergers is all
about. Aspergers social groups have websites and newsletters with the latest findings
and information related to Aspergers. Most have websites with blogs. Parents can
blog about their concerns and issues related to Aspergers. This is also a source of
support for those who are affected by Aspergers and have no idea where to turn for
help.

• **Use local media to influence the way society sees Aspergers.** Local gatherings
in the community are a great time to educate others about Aspergers. You can set
up booths or tables during these functions and provide packets of information for
those interested. Sometimes community events invite the media to provide
coverage on the event. This is your chance to change the way the world sees people
with Aspergers.

• **Offer to do an interview with the news or for a social group.** The world needs
to know about Asperger, so why not be the one to tell them? You can be the source
of a wealth of information to those who either know nothing or very little about
Aspergers. Millions of people watch the news each day. Watching your interview about Aspergers may be a great way to make others feel comfortable about the topic. Many misunderstandings and myths can be cleared up thanks to your efforts.

- **Create your own Aspergers blog.** The Internet can be a source of great information at times. You can provide information on the subject of Aspergers for the world to see. You can interact with other parents of people affected by Aspergers. You can also do some research on what other websites and blogs have to say about Aspergers. You can support these sites if the information is correct or straighten out any incorrect information on these sites. You want those in the Aspergers community to have the most accurate information available.

- **Use newspapers and magazines to influence the opinion of the public.** Many people read the newspaper and magazines each day. Society is influenced by what they read in the pages of newspapers and magazines since they cannot be everywhere in the world at once. These forms of media have the ability to influence society in a negative or positive way. Voicing your option in an article or opinion column is a great way to use these media sources to influence the public. You can grab the attention of others and create a group of followers that support your efforts to show Aspergers in a positive light.

- **Use congress to let your voice be heard.** Those in congress meet each year to decide how to spend and tax the public in a fiscal year. Meet with members of congress to decide if there is room in the budget for money to perform research and create programs that raise awareness of Aspergers. The fiscal budget receives much
media attention. Others will see the importance of educating others on Aspergers and support the efforts of the Aspergers community.

The list can go on and on with ways to improve the way the media portrays Aspergers. It is the job of the Aspergers community to influence every media source to create a positive image of Aspergers. Exposure to the facts is the only want that others can become informed about Aspergers. Those affected by Aspergers can have a since of pride about themselves once the world realizes how intelligent they are and that having Aspergers is nothing to be ashamed of in our society. Working together with those in the media is the only way to get the correct message out about Aspergers.
Changes to Aspergers Diagnosis: How to Handle the Changes as a Parent...
In our world, people with Aspergers are seen as bright individuals with a few social problems but have great academic talents. One of the most widely used manuals of mental illness, DSM or Diagnostic and Statistical of Manual Disorders, has proposed to change the diagnosis of Aspergers to the Autism Spectrum. The decision was proposed in 2009 and a draft was released in February 2010. Final approval for this change is not expected until May 2013, but the decision has already caused some mixed feeling with those who are affected by children with Aspergers.

Many parents and their children with Aspergers are concerned that the children may lose their identity and suffer academically because of the Autism label. Because of the lower IQs and language delays of children with Autism, many parents and children feel that children with Aspergers may not rise to their true ability levels. You should know that you have help and support around you. This change does not have to cause problems with education. The ability level is still there. It may take more standing up for your child and asking questions, but you and your child with Aspergers can rise above this change.

**Pros and Cons of Changes**

You should know what some of the pros and cons are of the possible changes. No matter what changes take place, your child’s abilities remain.
Pros-

- **Children with Aspergers can have all related health issues identified and treated.** Any health related issues such as gastrointestinal problems, seizures, anxiety, etc. are covered under the Autism spectrum. Additionally, public schools are responsible for the cost of related services by law. These services are available free of charge to children with Aspergers.

- **Academic services are available for all academic levels.** If your child performs at a high academic level, the schools must give the child the services needed. Children with Aspergers can function in gifted and talented classrooms (GT), accelerated classrooms (classrooms that teach students at a higher level and move through the class work at a faster pace that other classrooms), or inclusion settings (a regular education classrooms with a regular education teacher and a special education teacher both teacher the class). Your child’s ability level can continue to grow in these settings.

- **School districts are responsible for the cost of private placement of children with Aspergers.** Private placement can cost thousands of dollars for an education. As a parent, you do not have to take care of this responsibility because it is the responsibility of the school district.
Cons—

- **Children with Aspergers and their parents do not want the stigma of the Autism label.** The Aspergers label has a more neutral suggestion. Children have a sense of identity and pride about themselves with the Aspergers label. The proposed change lumps children with Aspergers into a broader category that may cause these children to be overlooked.

- **Changing the label may be extreme for children with Aspergers.** Children with Aspergers struggle with change. Anxiety is one of the related health issues that change can cause for these children. The Aspergers label is fairly new. Making changes so soon before a clear understanding of Aspergers is established makes understanding Aspergers harder. The understanding level of the public about Aspergers must start over again.

- **Diagnosing Aspergers under the proposed spectrum may cause children to be missed.** Aspergers is a milder case under the proposed spectrum. Children may likely be missed or fail to qualify under the new spectrum.

**Helpful Tips for Parents**

The proposed changes do not have to cause problems for you, your child, or your family. Although change is hard for children with Aspergers, there are many things that you and your child can do to make the proposed changes smoother. The following tips are for all
aspects of your child’s life. Every child is different. Some of the tips may work better than others do with your child. No one knows your child better than you do. Adjust the tips you need to gain better results with your child.

➢ **You and your child must be patient with the proposed changes.** Change is constant in our society. You and your child must make adjustments and get all the information you need to move in the new direction. Make sure that your child receives all of the services that they are supposed to under the broad spectrum.

➢ **You are your child’s best advocate.** You and your child need to attend all school meetings related to your child’s education. Make sure that they are getting the attention and the services that they need. Children with Aspergers function on a higher level and may be overlooked in the classroom. Stay in constant contact with all those involved in your child’s education and related services so that you know what is going on at all times.

➢ **Find an educational advocate.** Advocates are expert at the laws that protect you and your child. They can make sure that your child gets all of the services that they need to get a good education. The advocate can attend educational meetings with you and your child to make sure that the both of you understand everything that is involved in your child’s education. Advocates can also help you and your child set goals for your child’s future. Educational advocates take all of the guessing out of how the changes affect your child.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Make sure that the school provides the educational services your child needs. It is common for children with Aspergers to attend inclusion, gifted and talented, and accelerated classes. Communicate with the school to make sure that your child is in the right classrooms that challenge them academically. Discuss your concerns with the school if you think your child needs to be moved to a more challenging classroom setting. Contact your advocate if you have problems with the school hearing your needs.

- **You and your child should find a social group with other children with Aspergers for your child to join.** It is important that your child stays connected with other children with Aspergers. The proposed changes would group your child under a broader spectrum. It may be possible for children with Aspergers to lose their identity. Their social skills can improve with social groups. Your child can make new friends and learn new skills that they can use for the rest of their lives. Your child will find that fitting in and finding new friends can make the adjustment smoother.

- **Use and create support networks as much as you can.** It may ease the pain of change when you have others that support your views. Friends, teachers, parents, church groups, and school staff can offer you and your child the support needed. It may be helpful to learn new strategies from other parents and get support and resources in the process. Individual and groups therapy may be a solution to consider during rough times.
➢ **You should schedule a monthly meeting with your child’s educational team to monitor progress.** Your child has an IEP (Individual Education Plan). The IEP discusses the educational and related services that your child receives as well as how often the services take place. A monthly meeting can make sure that your child’s IEP is carried out and changed if necessary. These meetings are very important to your child’s education. You and the team can decide to meet less often if your child is progressing well. Make sure that plans for the next year are made before the end of the present school year.

➢ **Create transition plans for your child’s future education.** The transition plan is part of your child’s IEP. The plan talks about the skills your child needs for high school and college that lead to an independent life after graduation. The information in the transition plan should be discussed in the educational meetings. You and your child have a say in what information is in the transition plan. Make sure that your child has a solid transition plan and that it is carried out properly.

➢ **You need permission to get information about your child in college.** You no longer have a right to your child’s educational information when they go to college. Colleges do not openly communicate with parents without a signed waiver signed by the student. It is your child’s responsibility to ask for help when needed.

Do not let the proposed changes to the Aspergers label cause your child’s education to suffer. You and your child have control over the situation and support if needed. The broad spectrum label does not change your child’s high educational level or keep them from getting the services that they need. Keep the lines of communication open with all those
involved in your child’s education. Ask questions and make yourself known in your child’s school. Create a support system for you and your child through the proposed changes. Make sure that research continues on Aspergers so that the world can get a better understanding of children with Aspergers. Additionally, if you are a parent concerned about the changes and want to protest the changes, you can voice your concerns to The American Psychiatric Association. Since the views are divided about the proposed changes, the association allowed the public to make comments about the changes until April 20, 2010. These comments on www.DSM5.org will determine if the changes become final. Although the time has passed, it would not hurt to continue to post comments on the overall comments section or on an individual diagnosis page. You never know. The association may continue to use comments to make the final decision due in May 2013. You can also voice your opinion to Aspergers groups to have your voice heard. Remember, you are not alone.
Theory of Mind and Children with Aspergers...
As a parent of a child with Aspergers, you want the very best for your child. You want them to experience a normal life in as many ways as possible. It is important to know what you can do to bring comfort and joy to your child’s life. There are ways that you and your child can see life through each other’s eyes and manage any situations that may come about in life. Understanding theory of mind can move you closer to understanding how your child thinks and the reason behind many actions you may notice. Make sure that you know that you are not alone in your journey. You have support that can increase your understanding and improve your relationship with your child.

**Theory of Mind**

The basic idea of “Theory of Mind” is that children with Aspergers do not understand that others have their own point of views, plans, and thoughts, which makes it hard for the children to understand the emotions, beliefs, and attitudes of others. Your child can become frustrated with you when you do not have the answers to questions asked. If your child does not understand that others think differently than themselves, it may become increasingly difficult to communicate and interact socially with others. Once a child with Aspergers experiences life as others do, the child can adapt to society better than before.

**Testing Your Child’s Theory of Mind**

Here is a scenario that you can use to see if your child has a theory of mind. You may also hear theory of mind scenarios referred to as “false belief tests” (a mistaken belief based on incorrect reasoning).

Here is one scenario that you can use. A young boy with Autism is shown a box of cereal, and he is asked to guess what he thought was inside. He guesses that the box contains cereal. Once the box was opened and revealed, instead of cereal, there were rocks inside the box. Now the boy is told that his father was going to be invited into the room. The boy was asked what he thought his father would say was in the box. Since the boy was unable
to separate what was in his mind (due to his experiences) the boy said that his father would believe that rocks were in the box. This boy clearly displays problems with theory of mind in his actions.

Theories of mind are hard for children with Aspergers because it involves judgment and social understanding. It is a difficult task for even children with high functioning abilities. The inability to “size up” causes the child to experience trouble with empathy, taking perspectives, making inferences, predicting, and theory of mind. Theory of mind generally onsets around the ages of 3 or 4, but for children Aspergers, it does not. There are a number of activities that can be used to improve theory of mind and other areas that children with Aspergers struggle with on a regular basis.

Mental Barriers

Your child may face quite a few barriers in this journey. Encourage them to have courage and overcome mental barriers in society. The following are a few fears that your child may experience:

- **Anger**
  Your child may become very upset about situations where they are mistreated. A child with Aspergers may be bullied or rejected because of social barriers. As your child learns to adapt to the world around them, the constant anger will decrease.

- **Fear**
  The thought of being socially rejected or judged is enough to cause deep fear in your child. The simplest situations can make them afraid. Learning to cope in the society around them helps reduce this fear.

- **Loneliness**
This is yet another situation that causes problems for children with Aspergers. They may feel socially isolated as they find it difficult to play and interact with others appropriately. Loneliness improves with time as well.

**What Can Parents Do?**

Just as any concerned parent, you want to find ways to improve your child’s understanding of the world and the ability to fit in well. You can help your child by assisting with ways to develop theory of mind so that your child can understand that others are separate beings.

Here are a few strategies that you can use to develop your child’s theory of mind based on certain characteristics. The characteristics are:

- Children with Aspergers who are ages 5 through 8 struggle with understanding that others do not think and feel the same way they do, judging the thoughts and feelings of others, and understanding that what they think in their mind is not always something physical.

**You can use these strategies to improve your child’s theory of mind.**

- Ask questions that deal with thoughts and feelings while reading storybooks.
- Discuss the feeling, thoughts, and motives of others using works such as *want, remember, thing*, and *feel*.
Children with Aspergers who are ages 8 to 11 experience difficulty understanding that others may act in ways that hide how they really feel, and they struggle with the fact that others read and understand experiences differently than they do. This difficulty may cause your child to misread events.

**You can use these strategies to improve your child’s theory of mind.**

- Use events in history and ask your child what the people may have been feeling or thinking during that time.

- Use various forms of literature with your child and ask your child to tell you why various characters behave the way they do.

- Ask your child to create a solution to deal with the conflict of other individual. Ask the child to make sure that the solution addresses the needs of everyone involved.

11-14 year old children with Aspergers may experience difficulty with realizing that people may have different emotions and motives that may even be conflicting sometimes. Children may experience an increase in interest of the feelings and thoughts of others.

**You can use these strategies to improve your child’s theory of mind.**

- As you read literature with your child, use examples from the story to explain the reasons a character acts a certain way. You can also use the literature to get your child to discuss the reasons for the character’s changing actions. Help your child to understand that is sometimes hard to understand and explain the actions of others.
Encourage your child to look at present and past events through the eyes of various cultural and historical groups. You can even use role-play activities to increase the child’s understanding of the perspective of others.

14 to 18 year olds with Aspergers may experience difficulty understanding that others do not always understand the reasons they act a certain way and that the past and present experiences in a person’s life shape the way they act.

You can use these strategies to improve your child’s theory of mind.

- Expose your child to psychology courses that focus on emotion, cognition, and motivation (internal actions) such as general psychology, social psychology, and child development courses. These courses can help students dealing with self-esteem, bullying, and expressing emotions.

- Use fictional and real events to explore the causes and reasons people act a certain way. You can also discuss the reasons why others see things the way they do. Literature books and newspapers are good sources for this type of information.

- Allow your child to participate in scheduled debates (organized arguments) with other students. Make sure that your child gives you believable reasons that they view things differently than their challengers.

You can use quite a few strategies as a parent of a child with Aspergers. Here are a few additional strategies that you may find helpful.

- **Allow your child to participate in pretend play.** This kind of activity is excellent at promoting the development of play skills. These skills can assist your child with overcoming social and communication barriers with others. Play needs to be appropriate
for your child’s current level of functioning. This type of play is also known as sensorimotor play (when toddlers and infants try out different motor movements and sensations with people and objects).

- **Participating in activities that help your child identify emotions can help with theory of mind.** Using drawings and pictures of people expressing various emotions is a good way to help your child identify emotions. Explain to your child how they can identify various emotions. You can also help them to identify various facial expressions that connect to a certain emotion. Additionally, you can assist your child with specific emotions such as belief-based, desire-based, and situation-based emotions.

- **Develop simple and complex visual understanding.** Children with Aspergers have difficulty understanding that seeing things lead to knowing. These viewpoint helps your child understand false-beliefs (a mistaken belief based on incorrect reasoning), which is one of the concepts behind theory of mind. Additionally, you can work with your child on activities that require predicating based on knowledge (what a child knows and has experienced).

- **Drawing is another way to help your child.** Drawing pictures that shows conversations between people is a great way to develop theory of mind understanding.

**Conclusion**

Theory of mind is a basic level of understanding that many take for granted. Children with Aspergers need help with training and teaching to gain the foundation that they can use to establish and build social relationships that are meaningful to both parties.

Theory of mind development allows your child to see that others have feeling and beliefs outside of themselves. As your child develops the understanding of theory of mind, predicting and understanding the behaviors of others increases. While this theory peaks at
the ages of 3 to 4, many children with Aspergers continue to struggle with this mental understanding throughout their lives and it leads to challenges in communication and socialization. Thanks to research and the developments in research, your child can continue to improve in the areas of socialization and communication with support from you. Continue to help your child improve!
Behavioral Coaching: An Excellent Way to Improve Behaviors in Children with Aspergers...
Children with Aspergers are extremely intelligent individuals. Their communication and socialization barriers cause them to be withdrawn and misunderstood. The barriers may cause problems with children with Aspergers in school, at home, and with peers. Traditional treatments for Aspergers are medications and psychotherapy (treatment with a therapist). For parents who do not like any of these choices a new option is available. Behavioral coaching focuses on helping your child to solve everyday problems in their lives. Behavioral coaches teach children with Aspergers ways to act effectively and positively at home, in school, and with peers.

The process involves the behavioral coach meeting with the parents of the child with Aspergers and the child’s teachers to create a plan that will improve the child’s behaviors. This process can be very helpful to a child with Aspergers. The detailed procedures and well-defined rewards and consequences make behavior coaching a natural way to get children with Aspergers to change their behaviors. If this is something that interests you as a parent and you think that your child’s behavior needs improving, you need the help of a behavior coach.

**Behavioral Coaching Process**

The process involves gathering information about the current behaviors of your child to assess the areas that need improvement. Here is the process that your child must go through in behavioral coaching.

- **Observations** - The coach conducts observations of your child in your home, your child’s school, and with peers. This information provides the behavior coach with some basic information to begin making a plan for improvement. The plan will include behaviors, antecedents (cause), and consequences for the plan for improvement. The plan must be well defined for a child with Aspergers to follow.
**Behavior Intervention**  – The behavior intervention plan includes the teacher, the parents, and the child in the creation process. The intervention plan includes the use of a daily report card with the child’s target behaviors. Parents and teachers have a right to include target behaviors that they believe are important to the child’s improvement. The team works together to find new ways to improve the child’s behavior.

The observation process is so important in behavior coaching. The gathered information serves a guide to find ways to improve behaviors. The parents, teachers, and behavior coach has to meet after the observations have taken place. This is the time that the target behaviors are established for home and school. The daily report card in the best way to keep up with the daily behaviors and to make sure that the child performs the behavior correctly. Daily record keeping serves two purposes:

- **Feedback**  – Structured feedback is important to your child’s behavioral improvement. Feedback allows the team to decide on new targets and behaviors based on the information received. It also allows the child to see that they are making progress toward their goals.

- **Establish Reward System**  – Your child needs to know that they are working towards earning something. Parents and teachers can reinforce good behaviors when rewards are involved. Make sure that the child has a say in the rewards that are earned.

The teachers, parents, and the child are responsible for monitoring or making changes to the report card once the behavior coach helps to get things set up. The behavior coach may come back in a few weeks or as requested by parents to evaluate the plan and the changes in behavior.
During this process, it is important that your child understand what will take place in this process. Children with Aspergers think concretely and need things presented to them in a step-by-step approach. Taking this approach is the only way that your child will succeed in the behavior intervention. Children with Aspergers also have problems with change. The child needs to be told in advanced that this process is going to take place so that the child can prepare for the upcoming changes. Here are a few things that need to be a part of your discussion in your conversation about the behavior intervention with your child:

- **Verbal Instructions and Feedback**
  Children with Aspergers need detailed instructions about what is expected of them. Discuss with your child what behaviors are an issue and why. Make sure that your child has a clear understanding as to why the behavior must change. Clearly provide them with the details of the replacement behavior and the way you want the behavior performed. Make sure that your child understands what progress is being made. Offer verbal feedback about good behavior and ways to improve both. There are no surprises when you discuss the behaviors every step of the way.

- **Positive and Negative Reinforcement**
  Your child needs to understand that there are consequences for good and bad behaviors. You need to have specific rewards for the improvement of negative behaviors. Keep in mind that your child is the best source for deciding upon rewards. Use rewards that motivate your child. Rewards can range from positive praise to material rewards. Make sure that there is also punishment for negative behaviors. You may consider taking personal items, giving time outs, or taking away privileges to reinforce the targeted behaviors.
• **Positive Practice**

   Practice is necessary to see the results that you want. Discuss the behaviors that you want to improve and model ways to change the behaviors. Providing practice and alternative behavior options is excellent for children with Aspergers. Make sure that your child has a clear understanding of what is expected.

**Tips for Parents**

There are a few additional things that you can do to prevent certain behaviors before your child displays inappropriate behaviors. You can prevent behaviors or change behaviors in the early stages before the behaviors become a problem. Practice makes perfect. If you practice correct behaviors with your child before the behaviors begin or in the early stages of the behaviors, you can lessen the amount of times the behaviors occur. Here are a few things that you can do as a parent to change behaviors in your child:

• **Determine what triggers your child’s negative behaviors.** Children with Aspergers may act out to avoid something or to get something. You need to identify what happens directly before a negative behavior occurs. You can use a notebook or journal to observe the behaviors and keep accurate records for yourself. Discuss with your child the negative behaviors and the behaviors. Let them know why the behaviors are not appropriate and offer good behaviors to replace them.

• **Deal with the behavior at the time it happens.** Do not allow hours, weeks, and days go by without correcting behaviors. Let your child know right when the behavior occurs so that the child knows that the behavior is wrong.

• **Remove the child from the situation.** Do not let your child control the situation. Remove your child from the situation and discuss the matter in private. Help your
child understand that acting out will not help the situation. Again, provide a replacement behavior, model the behavior, and return the child to the situation.

- **Keep routines to prevent negative behaviors.** Children with Aspergers operate best when routines are in place. Routines allow them to prepare emotionally and mentally for situations. Asking a child to prepare for something that is not an established routine may bring on an episode of bad behavior.

- **Turn your child’s obsession or compulsion into a hobby.** Many children with Aspergers display obsessive compulsive behavior. They may be fixated on an activity, compulsive cleanliness, computer games and more. If children with Aspergers are not allowed to enjoy a compulsion, a negative behavior may come about as a result. If the behavior is appropriate, you may want to consider turning the behavior into something that can be used in an everyday activity. The hobby may be something that can help your child at home and school or during social activities.

- **Introduce your child to the school staff before school starts.** An episode of bad behavior can be brought on by a new situation. Starting a new school or a new grade means meeting new people in a new situation and this can be a problem for children with Aspergers. A new situation breaks the routine that a child with Aspergers is used to having. Take your child on a trial run for the new situation. Allow your child to meet the teachers and get a feel for the new situation. The trial run will prevent confusion and frustration that can cause bad behavior.

- **Help siblings understand Aspergers.** Siblings may have trouble understanding the nature of the behavior of a child with Aspergers. The relationship may be awkward between the siblings because they do not understand each other and this may cause an episode of bad behavior for a child with Aspergers. Help siblings understand and help the child with Aspergers have a normal life in a normal environment.
Certain behaviors are a part of Aspergers, and the behaviors can be changed with time. Although behavior coaching is not a traditional treatment for Aspergers, it is an excellent choice for parents and their children. The process teaches children with Aspergers to change behaviors and replace the negative behaviors. The outcome of the intervention is a wonderful child with Aspergers who has the skills and structure to manage everyday situations.