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2022

### Sesame Street Seminar – Autism Spectrum Disorders

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#### Recommended Citation

Doody, Kathy R. Ph.D, "Sesame Street Seminar – Autism Spectrum Disorders" (2022). *Sample module-themed coursework with Sesame Street examples*. 2.

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## Sesame Street Seminar – Autism Spectrum Disorders

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### RATIONALE:

This module will provide an overview of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The module will also provide insight into how Sesame Street has raised awareness and acceptance of ASD through a Muppet named Julia who is on the spectrum.

### CLASS MODULE:

This module can be used for Intro Psych, Developmental Psychology, Introduction to Special Education, Early Childhood Development, Typical and Atypical Development, etc. This module is an overview to ASD so would probably be used for a 100-level or introductory class.

### POTENTIAL FORMAT:

This module can be modified for use in an online, hybrid, or face-to-face class format.

### TOPICAL READINGS:

Anthony, B. J., Robertson, H. A., Verbalis, A., Myrick, Y., Troxel, M., Seese, S., & Anthony, L. G. (2020). Increasing autism acceptance: The impact of the Sesame Street "See Amazing in All Children" initiative. *Autism : the international journal of research and practice*, 24(1), 95–108.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319847927>

Lord, C., Elsabbagh, M., Baird, G., & Veenstra-Vanderweele, J. (2018). Autism spectrum disorder. *The Lancet* (British Edition), 392(10146), 508–520. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31129-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31129-2)

Explain autism to young children (brief reading; not scholarly article)

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/autism/?activity=teaching-kids-autism>

### VIDEO CLIPS:

ASD overview video from Duke University (2.26 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJuwhCiqQTs>

Sesame Street clip (10.07 minutes): Meet Julia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKCdV20zLMs>

video clip (2.52 minutes) “Autism: What makes you amazing?”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0H3o\\_Tjkok&list=PL8TioFHUBWFtrZ\\_oqh1uqmijgSPt2ii\\_0&index=29](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0H3o_Tjkok&list=PL8TioFHUBWFtrZ_oqh1uqmijgSPt2ii_0&index=29)

Sesame Street and Autism: Provider Video (9.46 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmmJa8MuAlw>

## ACTIVITIES:

PRINTABLES AND OTHER ASD RESOURCES

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/autism/>

See below

## SAMPLE LESSON PLAN (SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS)

### BEFORE CLASS:

**Read** this introductory [article on autism spectrum disorders](#) published in The Lancet in 2018.

Lord, C., Elsabbagh, M., Baird, G., & Veenstra-Vanderweele, J. (2018). Autism spectrum disorder. *The Lancet* (British Edition), 392(10146), 508–520. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31129-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31129-2)

**View** this ASD overview video from Duke University (2.26 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJuwHClQQTs>

### IN-CLASS:

- In small groups, ask students to create “Two truths and a lie” about ASD.
- Distribute white boards, or response/index cards that say “Truth” or “Lie” to the class.
- Ask each small group to share a few items with the entire class.
- Ask students to then identify by using response cards which are facts (truths) and which are misconceptions (lie) about ASD.

**View and discuss** a PPT providing an overview of ASD (I have several prepared if others would like me to include)

**Implement** a 3-2-1 exit ticket:

- three facts I learned today
- two facts I already knew
- one question I still have about ASD.

### AFTER CLASS:

**View** Sesame Street clip (10.07 minutes): Meet Julia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKCdV20zLMs>

**Participate** in small group discussions (F2F or remotely, via Zoom/FaceTime, etc.) related to the Meet Julia video clip:

- How would you prepare Big Bird (or any young child) for a first meeting with Julia, to avoid some of the confusion and conflict felt upon their first meeting?
- How many characteristics of ASD do we see Julia demonstrate in the video clip?

- How did Elmo, Abby, Alan accommodate Julia’s needs during their interactions?
- How do the Sesame Street creators use engagement strategies like music and problem-solving techniques to support child viewers in their understanding of Julia?

Small group assignment: **Watch** additional Sesame Street videos that focus on Julia. There are several found at this playlist: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8TioFHUbWFtrZ\\_oqh1uqmijgSPt2ii\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8TioFHUbWFtrZ_oqh1uqmijgSPt2ii_0)

After you have gotten to know Julia a bit better, within your small group, **create** a social media profile (Facebook, etc.) for Julia. Think about what Julia might enjoy.

Then, **include** information on her profile that would describe Julia, such as:

- Events
- Books
- Movies
- Activities
- Friends
- Possible check-ins, etc.

**Read** the article: Increasing autism acceptance: The impact of the Sesame Street “See Amazing in All Children” initiative

Anthony, B. J., Robertson, H. A., Verbalis, A., Myrick, Y., Troxel, M., Seese, S., & Anthony, L. G. (2020). Increasing autism acceptance: The impact of the Sesame Street "See Amazing in All Children" initiative. *Autism : the international journal of research and practice*, 24(1), 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319847927>

**View** the short video clip (2.52 minutes) “Autism: What makes you amazing?” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0H3o\\_Tjkk&list=PL8TioFHUbWFtrZ\\_oqh1uqmijgSPt2ii\\_0&index=29](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0H3o_Tjkk&list=PL8TioFHUbWFtrZ_oqh1uqmijgSPt2ii_0&index=29)

**Think** about an individual you know with ASD. If you do not know personally an individual with ASD, consider a character from a movie, television series, or book.

Possible ideas are [Sheldon Cooper](#) from the Big Bang Theory, David from the book [Rules](#), or Naoki Higashida from [The Reason I Jump](#), but there are many more.

With this person in mind, **create and narrate** a short video, entitled: “What makes \_\_\_\_\_ amazing?” List attributes, skills, abilities, strengths, etc. that make your selected person *amazing*.

**Meet** with a partner from class, face-to-face or remotely.

**Share** your videos with each other.

**Discuss** 2-3 things you have learned about ASD as a result of viewing your partner’s video.

See additional topics:

- Theory of Mind
- Cognition
- Social-emotional development