



Communicating On The Spectrum

Dr. Brian King

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Autism Works

Guest Speaker: Dr. Brian King

Brian: Alright. Very good. Everyone is attentive? Everybody feeling like they're in a participatory mood?

Audience: Yes.

Brian: Because I do not believe in monologues, I believe in dialogues. The only way to learn from each other is through conversation. If you sit there and you are passive recipients of knowledge, you'll learn nothing and I'll get a chance to talk to myself for an hour and a half which really doesn't interest me very much. I didn't come all this way and endure the airports and various other travel anomalies to talk to myself. I can

do that at home (Laughter). So, let's have a conversation. Fair enough? Hands raised, feel free to interrupt me. If you have a question, ask it. Because as much as I can talk about my favorite subject today, I just as soon give you as specific information as possible to allow to solve the specific problems in your life that you can here learn how to solve. So I would like to do that for you as much as I can. Agreed?

Audience: Agreed.

Brian: I'll start out with a little background about myself. First of all, there's a chair behind me because in addition to various motor planning issues, I recently developed a condition called gout. It's very exciting that I'm having to deal with and standing too long is very painful, so I'll be sitting down on occasion. Fortunately with the mike, you'll be able to hear me regardless. My name is Brian King. I'm a licensed clinical social worker by profession; I'm also an adult on the spectrum and have the privilege and challenge and adventure of raising three boys on the spectrum as well. So I have everything about the spectrum. I live and breathe it every single day of my life. It is my reality. So, I can speak from all kinds of various perspectives as someone who is married on the spectrum, someone who works clinically with those on the spectrum, someone who is on the spectrum and is raising other on the spectrum. A very global perspective on the spectrum (Laughter).

So ask me things related to any of those perspectives, especially as it pertains to communication. Yes, communication is ultimately what allows us to connect effectively with each other. In fact, the entire framework of this conference is about communicating in the workplace environment. Well, that's all fine and dandy but it presupposes that communication has taken place in other environments prior to the workplace environment. So we need to talk about relationships across the board. The parents, teachers, peers, neighbors; anyone that we could possibly communicate and relate to that furthers us along that path of being able to communicate effectively, especially in the workplace.

But before we can talk about communication, we need to define it, so we're thinking about it the same way. So who wants to offer me some ideas on what communication is.

Audience: Interaction between people.

Brian: Interaction between people. How in (inaudible)? (Laughter) That's interacting.

Audience: Thinking of ideas.

Brian: Bumping into someone at the mall. 'cause me. Is communication more than that, just an interaction? Over here.

Audience: An exchanging of ideas.

Brian: An exchanging of ideas. Ok. Any ideas? Because in Congress, I think you'd agree there's a lot of exchanging of ideas, but there's no agreement about those ideas (Laughter). So do we need more in terms of communication?

Audience: Understanding.

Brian: Understanding. How would you measure understanding?

Audience: You need to make sure you understand each other.

Brian: Right. You need to make sure you understand each other when you're communicating but how do you know that you understand?

Audience: You can repeat it back.

Brian: Repeat it back. Ok. Does that guarantee you anything? (Laughter) Anybody familiar with the concept of "Echolalia"? (Laughter) Repeating back the language that was just spoken to you. Not necessarily meaning comprehension has occurred. So just kind of moving things along, the way I think of communication is an agreed upon means of exchanging information between two people in a way that maximizes understanding. It's an agreed upon way which means we have decided how we're going to exchange our information. So there is no "my way." We do it my way. The rest of the world speaks, you can speak; that's our way. That's my way of communicating. That makes me comfortable. Communication is about "our way;" what works in our relationship. I have clients where the father is very talkative; likes to get his thoughts out, needs to hear himself speak. His son needs to reply by texting to dad's cell phone, even if they're in the same room, because that's the most expedient means for him to get his words and thoughts out, especially if his dad's giving him a lecture or reprimand. That emotional intensity can be very dis-regulating, and made it difficult to produce speech. However, being able to text is much more accessible and more organizing task of this young man, so once they discovered that and agreed to communicating in that way, now they have much more effective information exchange, as opposed to encouraging him to "use your words." Doesn't work. May be convenient, may be preferred, may be ideal, but we're not looking for ideal, we're looking for appropriate. We're looking for effective. What is going to work. That's what you use.

So, for the next hour and a half or so, I want to highlight ten strategies that I have found throughout my life trying to navigate this wonderfully abstract non-verbal laced world. Try to figure out...try to grasp at the things I can count on. That things are more concrete that are reliable from one situation to the next so I can find some universal way of communicating with just about everybody; that is everybody who is interested in communicating. Not just lecturing at being right, speaking their mind and

having you sit there and listen to it. Somebody who's actually interested in dialogue. Now, another thing I want to add is there will be some gaps in the knowledge that I am to talk about today because these ten strategies, I can easily do an entire day seminar, if I could have, and there's still gaps, because these will require you to think about communication in a brand new way. In fact, you might be getting to hear some of the paradigm shift as we're talking. Usually gasps, groans; other kinds of just uncomfortable noises. Hopefully, the occasional "aha" epiphany kind of thing. So, feel free to let some of those out, you'll make me feel good. Positive feedback. (Laughter)

So the first idea I want to get into is actually the answer to a very important question. It's one that's always going on in the backs of our minds during our waking hours, and a lot of you are probably not even aware that you're answering that question all day long, and that question is, how am I doing? That's the feedback question; that's how we measure our effectiveness in life. Am I making progress? Am I standing still? Am I going backwards? Do people like me? Am I accepted? Have I been hurt? Have I been understood? All of that is gotten through feedback. We need to be able to give and receive feedback in order to monitor how we're doing. And for kids on the spectrum; teens, adults, what do you think our experience is in terms of answering the question, how am I doing? You're being inappropriate. You're acting out. You're off task. Don't do that. That's weird, what are you doing that for? Those are the answers we get, and as much as I like hearing presentations about all the accommodations and all these treatments, kids whose lives are scheduled like a corporate CEO; when it's all these interventions, every step of their day is filled with feedback that you're doing it wrong. You need to try harder. You need to stay on task. You didn't make your benchmarks. You didn't allow me to check off all these things on my clipboard.

If you want to rip apart a kid's self-esteem, do that. There's a lot of kids that I've met that are teens now. Much more verbal, more self aware. The feedback I historically get is that they're burnt out on interventions that keep telling them they're doing it wrong. So if you're going to be assisting someone, whether typical spectrum or not, keep in mind all the feedback you're giving them is answering that question, how am I doing? Constructive criticism; has that word in it, does not build the person up. Constructive criticism is a veiled insult. Well, you messed it up, but you can do better. Doesn't help. What kind of feedback are you all used to in your lives?

Audience: Compliments.

Brian: Compliments. You get a lot of compliments?

Audience: Sometimes.

Brian: What do you get complimented on?

Audience: When I'm doing something right.

Brian: Ok. Now, if you're doing something right, do you know you're doing it right, or do you rely upon someone else to tell you that you're doing it right?

Audience: Umm, I don't know.

Brian: Do we see a certain imbalance in that? If you have a goal for yourself, if you want to feel effective in life, if it's your goal, then you have some criteria for what that end product is going to look like. But if it's somebody else's goal for you that you are being required to meet, they hold the criteria for whether you've done it right or not. That is also a strong imbalance, and that's right in our community. Everybody else has the agenda. This is how you know you're being effective; this is how you know you're being successful because I told you so. Because I decided it was worthy of putting a sticker on the chart. Not because you have any internalized criteria for doing well yourself, and if you don't any internalized criteria, how do you learn what your needs are, what your wants are, how you establish goals, dreams, desires. I come across so many young adults, graduated high school and had no idea what to do with themselves. I hear all the time, "Well, he needs to have goals." Really, when has he ever been allowed them? (Inaudible) were decided behind closed doors with a bunch of people who know him superficially. Know him according to diagnostic tests; know him according to their different opinions or physical assessments that they may or may not read, but very little of that information is gathered by getting to know the individual and having a relationship with him or her. In terms of this research based stuff that everybody's climbing over, the best research you will ever find is by establishing a relationship with the individual.

The autism spectrum is too vast to comprehend, but you can comprehend what it means for him. What does it mean for her? What does her life look like? With her unique set of strengths and challenges, that's the research you need in order to help him or her connect with a larger world, to have an agreed upon means of exchange. To even learn how to do that begins with the relationship with you. Make sense? So of all the social strategies that you could think of, which do you think would be the most important for anyone to learn, in addition to feedback?

Audience: Building a relationship?

Brian: Building a relationship requires many different skills, but one skill in particular; which do you think would be the most important one to have?

Audience: Trust.

Audience: Listening?

Brian: Listening? Listening is one part of a conversation. Trust? I'm glad you brought that up. It's not a strategy, but it is a component. What are the things that must occur in a relationship for trust to be established?

Audience: Empathy?

Brian: Okay. Empathy. Any other thoughts? Who do you trust in your lives? Do you trust the person that says one thing and does another? Okay. Do you trust the person that completely violates your confidence? Who do you trust?

Audience: Who you care about. Who cares for you.

Brian: Okay. You can care for someone and yet it's a person you need to keep your distance from because they're somewhat toxic. Trust begins with certainty. You need to be certain that you can count on this person. When this person says something, they're going to do it. When they're consistent; when they're reliable; when you can begin to feel safe with that person. You can begin to feel that it's okay to be vulnerable with that person and will not be exploited. Those are the ones that you trust. So a lot of what we're going to be talking about today is about establishing trust, so I'm glad you brought that up.

In my experience; in my opinion, the most important social strategy you can have is clarification. The opposite of clarification is assumption, and unfortunately, reading between the lines, perspective taking, knowing what the other person might be thinking; that is all assumption. It is not based on checking in, getting feedback from the person to find out what their experience is, you're just guessing. That's a dangerous habit for anybody to get into, because you end up making decisions about what's happening in the communication based on no reciprocal exchange of information. Well, it look likes they're feeling this way; well, it sounds like what they meant. I'm not going to clarify, I'm going to assume because I have good perspective taking skills. I can read body language, so I know what the person's feeling. No, you assume that the person's feeling (inaudible) something. The only way to know is to clarify. How many clarifiers do we have in the room? It's a lot of hesitation (Laughter). You try. Yet, but some people do it on occasion. It's kind of a random event, but it's not a conscious act. It's not something that they will do deliberately and strategically. My not being visual, being highly auditory, not being on...my not being on the spectrum, there is a lot of noise that goes on when people communicate. Their face sort of jumps around a bit and they do some things with their posture and their body, and I've read books and I've been told that that all means specific things, but to me it's like throwing a Scrabble board on the floor, look at all the pieces and have to come up with as many words as possible, that this could possibly mean while attending to you.

It's difficult for me to multitask two things, let alone this symphony of information that's coming at me in the average conversation. So, I need to find a way to get rid of all that

noise and stick with the information I needed and I need to figure out how could I operate in the conversation, communicate effectively without the non-verbal, and for people on the spectrum, that's essential, and that is (inaudible) I come up with. I'm probably days away from finishing up the book that's gonna be published this year on how to do all this so there's...there's more to come.

Clarification is all about making sure that you are understood. Being understood and that you understand that person and the way they want to be understood. So that requires checking in, making sure that, did I hear what you wanted me to hear? Did I read something into it that wasn't there? Is there more that you need to tell me? And the most important step in clarification will let you know that you've got it. What action am I now to take based on this conversation, and then communicate exactly how the action takes place. Because you sit there and say to a student, 'Okay, I need you to open up your book and you need to...to go to this chapter and touch on these questions. You understand?' 'Uh huh.' Is that clarification? 'Repeat back to me what I said to you.' 'You said to open up the book to this page and start the problems.' 'Okay, you understand.' What's missing? I heard it murmured.

Audience: The action?

Brian: The action. If they can't do something, if it's not actionable, it's not understood. Because when you work with people on the spectrum, especially in an employment situation; 'All right, this is your job, this is what I need you to do today. Okay. You understand what you need to do?' 'Yes.' 'Go and do it.' And then they'll kind of wander around, looking lost or go stand there and they'll stare at it and not know how to begin. Something about that communication was not actionable, whether it was how do I start this, or where are the things that I need? There are so many unknowns that still exist, that there isn't enough for the individual to take action. So that's the ultimate outcome of clarification. What action will be taken by either one of us or both of us. That's one thing that's really interesting about clarification is people will have huge misunderstandings with each other. They'll apologize, they'll hug, or depending, they might not. They'll say, 'hey, next time, I'll remember to clarify first.' And do you? Maybe you forget. Maybe I'm not even sure what clarification means. We talk about clarifying, but we're not taught how to clarify. Another thing I want to say about the non-verbal communication, in fact, I'll be talking a lot about it; anybody out there consider themselves very well versed or having achieved a certain level of mastery at non-verbal communication? Is this room full of spectrumites? I didn't see any hands up (Laughter). You use non-verbal at all? In your honest opinion and your experience, how reliable is it?

Audience: It depends. I mean, men and women have double communicating, are there cultures, you know, cultures within a culture, we're different.

Brian: We're different between men and women; different between cultures. Different clicks may have their own non-verbal, and yet, it is put out there as the end all-be all of the necessary skill set that we must all have to be effective communicators in life. And yet I'm hearing that it's unreliable. So why it is emphasized? So why do you think?

Audience: It's just one piece of the communication...what you see.

Brian: Now here's what interesting. It's one piece of communication, but is it a reliable piece? Would you rather have mastery, familiarity over what's common or what's effective? Non-verbal's not effective. It's information, but it demands more...it demands clarification. Now because people do all the song and dance they're talking to me, I've learned that it means something. I don't know what it means (laughter), but when I clarify, I give the person an opportunity to tell me what it means in a concrete way, as opposed to trying to decode this abstract nonsense. So I'll say something, a person will do a little dance and I'll say, 'Well, let me check in with you. Can you tell me how you took what I just said to you?' So, I know they had a reaction. I'm inviting them to verbalize whatever the non-verbal stuff is supposed to tell me. So I'll let them know I need something concrete here. If something is going on that I need to adjust to, I need to know, or I can sit there in my mind and scramble through all that Rolodex information I was taught in social skills class and the books that I've read and say okay, of all the things I've learned, what did that mean? Because heaven knows, everything I was taught someplace else, is supposed to give me an encyclopedic education on this individual human being. Because they should not be expected to speak for themselves. Because they're supposed to have theory of mind and mind read, not what they're thinking and feeling. Not supposed to ask; not allowed to do that. I should just know. Does this make sense? We're asked to do this. Why? Any effective mind readers out here? (Laughter). So if we all know these are not reasonable expectations, why don't we clarify with each other? What happens when you clarify?

What if you...maybe you zoned out a little bit and you need to ask a person to repeat themselves, what kind of response are you likely to get or what response have you haven't asked?

Audience: Are you listening?

Brian: Uh hum. Weren't you paying attention? I don't repeating myself. (Laughter) So if you seek to clarify and people get snooty, what does that teach you about the body of clarification? In clarification, efforts to improve communication gets you anger. So why would you clarify? Parents set the groundwork for that, teachers set the groundwork for that and impatient supervisors reinforce it, 'Now, I'm only going to say this once.' Okay, well if you're going to say it once, you need to choose your words so perfectly, (Laughter) that everyone in the room has an enlightened experience and knows exactly what you are to do from here on out. (Laughter)

If communication is imperfect, you must be prepared to do what is necessary to clarify, so you can get the outcome; the action that you need. So think about how you respond when people clarify with you. Think about the expectations you have about clarifying, because whatever barriers there are; typically it's anger in my experience. That stands in the way of effective communication.

So the next strategy is a very important way of getting the anger factor completely out of it. That's negotiation. Negotiation is an agreement about how to do us. How do we do our relationship; our partnership? How do we agree to communicate with each other? Are we gonna shake hands, Are we gonna hug, are we gonna hi-five? Do we get to talk trash? Do we get to swear to each other? In my relationships, I have a no teasing policy. I make it very clear to people. People out there, you like teasing? Like being teased? How do feel when you're teased? Feel better about yourself? Do you feel supported? I'm monitory, remember folks? You have to speak up.

Audience: No, no.

Brian: You feel insulted. So being teased, does that build the trust that we established early on, in the essential hallmark of relationships?

Audience: No.

Brian: Teasing is basically someone giving you an opportunity to feel embarrassed; self-conscious. And if they say, 'oh come on, now, lighten up.' What they're saying is, 'I need to feel a little...I'm insecure, so I need to have you feel insecure so I can feel more confident.' So when they say get over it, they're saying, 'okay. I'm feeling a little bit more tough right now and you're looking weaker, I've succeeded.' That person needs to go to therapy, they don't need to be in a relationship with you (Laughter). Because if someone thinks that some part of improving your communication; building a stronger connection between the two of you is by picking at you and helping you feel less than, while with them, not a good use of your time. If they want relationships that allow teasing, fine. They can go find them. But to negotiate between the two of you, it doesn't happen, because if a relationship doesn't make you better by being a part of it, it is not a healthy one. Is that a fair assessment? So what kind of things can you negotiate in a relationship? I hear a lot of talk about independence. It's important for someone to be independent. Would anybody here consider themselves independent? What would you refer to the relationships in your life? Is there a word that captures it? Inter-dependence. That is the ultimate goal for any human being. Not independence, because people that are encouraged to be independent when I asked, what does that mean? What does it mean to be independent? To not need help. Seriously. For the first time in my life, on my way here, I needed to be pushed through the airport in a wheelchair. Wrote a whole bio-post last night when I got here to process it. That was a level of inter-dependence I've never experienced. To be served in that way, to be vulnerable, to my hand...myself in the hands of a stranger, and to trust them to get me

from...where I needed to go safely. And it worked. But if my goal, as a trustful human being is to be in the absence of help; I must be independent, not need help. What does that do in terms of the action to be allow ourselves to let people in; to give us guidance; to give us support. 'Naw, I don't need your opinion, I'm independent.' I've been asked for various inputs. I could collaborate with various individuals, but not. I need to be independent. You shut yourself off from being a part of something; from growing; from learning new things because you need to be independent.

There are some people that can be part of this tremendous outcome and they'll feel bad about because, 'well, I wanted to do by myself.' So, partnership's the idea of working together gets lost in the thinking behind independence. I like some of the ideas, the advances in technology that were proposed this morning in terms of virtual support. Having someone there to prompt you from a distance. If all indications are that you're getting distracted, you're not staying on point, whatnot; and that's very reasonable. It's kind of like tech support. But somewhere in there, the value needs to be established that the partnership is part of what makes success possible. It's not one of those things that you go to when things are breaking down, when you're not having a good day, when things are going wrong. That's when you have the support. Because if that's the mindset, what you're teaching is, 'we only go to each other when we're screwing up.' That has to be a mainstay of our lives. Partnership is an essential ingredient to our life experience.

We go for help because we need it. We need additional information. We need to clarify. We need to verify. We need some feedback, not simply because we blow it, we've messed up something.

How many of you get together to share common experiences; go to see a movie; go to see a play, because you felt like you screwed up that day? (Laughter) That's not why we seek each other out. You want to connect, you want to enhance our experiences. You to experience in a more fulfilling way because we're doing it with another person who also has that shared experience and gets it the same way we do. When you think of a connection, I think of a connection as the "get factor." When you just get it. You don't have to educate the person, every little nuance of it, when you're together, you laugh at the same stuff; you notice things at the same time, you just get it. You're in sync. You're on the same page. That's connection. You get up together with people you want to connect with. If none of that just have a shared interest. Too many parents say, 'ah the kid down the street has ash burgers, let's get together, you should have a lot in common (laughter). Okay? Everyone woman in this room is simply being a woman, being able to get along with every lady here (laughter). Guys? Why? Because it's not enough. You need to have the same values. The same things that you care about. The same things you are fighting for in life. The experiences you want to create. The things that light you up and energize you. Those are the things you want to connect on. Not simply characteristics,' hey I got a bald head dude, let's reflect on that. (Laughter) I see you have one too.' (Laughter) You're not going to get very far. The two main goals of negotiation, as I mentioned, the first one is establishing inter-

dependence. How do we rely upon each other? How do we partner? And the second one is a slight expansion of that, I see more specific, is a strategic partnership. I have a strategic partnership with my accountant. Be it that is a skill set that I lack in terms of understanding the different nuances of the tax code which is ever evolving. My accountant has a mastery over that. I need my taxes done, she provides that service, so we strategically partner so I can get that need met. My physician, same way. My mechanic...my wife who is a very visual thinker; we strategically partner when we are out in public because she knows I need to be cued in on what's happening visually around me. And because our relationship is negotiated, we have agreed to that. She knows that I am looking to her in that role; she has accepted that role. There's no using, no exploitation, no taking for granted. There is a "we," there is an "us." We are partners in this out in the world.

If you do this in friendships, whether they're a sister, spouses, an employment situation. When you know exactly how to do your relationship with that person, you have more certainty, more reliability because the expectations have been made very clear. Who do you go to for this? If you have this problem, who do you talk to? And that person knows exactly how to align themselves with you. What would you be coming to them for? What information are you going to need when you do come? When I go to my accountant, she knows why I'm there. When I go to my doctor for my foot, she doesn't say, 'So, how's your (inaudible)?' That's irrelevant to our relationship. It's that specific. It's deliberate. It's agreed upon. Now my being highly verbal, I do things by speaking. So, is...if people are non-verbal, does that mean they can't negotiate relationships? Because communication is about exchanging information in an agreed upon way.

The first example I gave; the son texts, the father speaks. What if someone has a Vox or some other kind of speaking device. They agree in that partnership that you will speak verbally and you'll patiently wait for me to respond using my talking port. Now we have apps that can produce things much more quickly; perhaps people are chatting between two computer terminals. They have agreed to talk that way. Anybody who does any kind of social media where little contractions and smiley faces and emoticons and all that stuff, have turned my mere language much more into kind of (manacryoglyphics – unsure) (Laughter). And yet there are people that understand that and when they read it, it makes sense. I can see two people, who are deaf, furiously having a conversation with their hands and I have no idea what's going on, but they're lighting up. They're animated. They're excited. They're having a meaningful exchange, because they've agreed to communicate that way. So the idea that someone must be verbal to communicate is boloney. People that are advocating for that are the ones that want it for themselves. They don't to have to negotiate a way for us to communicate, they only want the other person to communicate their way. And that's a dangerous ego-centrism, because what it essentially does is that it rejects the idea that there are other ways to communicate. And no wonder men and women can't get along. There are very different styles; very different ways of filtering the world. So, in the midst of

that, there's your way, my way, and there's our way. We'll get to that in a little bit. Any questions on the first three so far; feedback, clarification, negotiation. Okay.

The next strategy is what I refer to as my "gressor (inaudible) strategy." It's the three G's. You want to teach a give and take conversationalism in three steps. I'm all about simplicity too. The three things you need to know to have a give and take conversation are your goal, information you need to give, any information you need to get. The common example I use is asking for directions. My goal is I need to get to a certain place by a certain time. I'm driving around; I can't find it; I'm lost. I need to get the information I need to get me to my goal. I need to find someone who can give me that information. So I'll ask around. I start by stating my goal. Excuse me, I'd like to get to this place. Then I'll ask them a question. Do you happen to know how to get to this place? By asking a question, I'm requesting that they give me information. If I simply make a statement, 'Well, I'm lost.' Is anybody compelled to respond to that statement?

Audience: Aren't we all?

Brian: Then again, some people might just, 'Yep. Nice day. Uh huh.' Maybe they're validating your statement but have you asked them for information? You will not get specific information unless you request the information. You need to ask a question. Do you know the directions to this place? And if you're asking if a spectrum might rule here, yes! (Laughter). And then your follow up question, 'would you please tell me the directions?' 'oh sure.' Then you'll get the information. If the people expect for you to read between the lines; take hints; take suggestions, they'll say, 'man, this is really heavy, this is hard work. Be great if I had some help.' Nobody moves. What's missing? You haven't made a request, you've made a statement. If you want to get something, you must ask for it, not state it. You get things by asking questions. You give information by making statements. That's the two way street of a conversation: give get. Give information, get by asking questions. All of those in service of getting your goal met. In the work situation, 'I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do here.' That's a statement. If you ask, 'can you please tell me how to get started.' That is far more specific; it's asking for something very concrete. Your goal is to get started, you need to put it like that. It's like in a classroom situation, 'I don't understand.' 'Okay, what don't you understand?' 'I don't know.' Well, welcome to frustration, because the person that you asking for guidance from has no idea where to begin, now there has to be this lengthy troubleshooting you may or may not have enough time for; you may or may not even come across the solution that you'll ultimately need because you're not having a very concrete give and take conversation. Pretty straight forward huh? Any non-verbal in that? Goal give and get. This is my goal, this is the information I need from you. I'll give you the information I need to let you know what I need. Once we have that information, I'm good to go.

Now, some people might be saying, 'well, that's common sense.' It may be common, but it's definitely not done in awareness. There are people that go through those steps, they don't do it deliberately. And if you don't know how you do it how can you teach it?

Because there are a lot of people out there; very well-meaning people. I mean, I applaud them on their efforts. Teaching social skills classes, some of them with PhD after their name, who teach reserproxia this way: When I say this, you say this in return. That's scripting, that's not dialogue. Are we rehearsing Romeo and Juliet or are we trying to connect? Teaching the three G's is in more conscious construct where a person can come into a conversation and initiate it instead of having to wait to prompted by someone who knows the rules. Let me give you an example of the "one word complete conversation." Who would like to do this with me? Piece of cake. Okay? We're going to do right now, you ready? Hi.

Audience: Hi.

Brian: That's it. Conversation's done. What did we just do? My goal, what do you think, in saying hi to her was my goal? What was that?

Audience: Connect.

Brian: Beautiful! Connect. I wanted to connect her and acknowledge her. So, that was my goal. So my give to her to let her know I acknowledge you was to say Hi. So what did I get back to know that I was effective.

Audience: Hi.

Brian: She said hi back. I got feedback. I had a goal. I initiated and I got a response, bam, we're done. How hard is it? All starts with that. If we agree to wave, hey it's more non-verbal, but we agree to do it like that. You know, I guess if you force people, it agree to the hi five. You know, the back slap, the hug, whatever. And then there are people that don't negotiate that and walk up to you and hug you and wonder why you pull away (Laughter). I have too many experiences like that. Unwanted physical contact.

The next strategy is the one I referred to just a little bit ago. Think of it as a three-legged stool. Take one of the legs out and what happens?

Audience: Falls down.

Brian: Falls down, because you need all three. In a relationship, there are three parts: You, me and we. The "we" is the partnership, the relationship between you. You have your needs, I have my needs. When we're together we have our needs. Like when the woman goes out with her friends, you act one way. When the guy is with his friends, you act another, when you are together, now there's our way of being together. To (inaudible) what happens in relationships is someone shows up, usually the one with stronger personality or the bigger ego that says, 'I'm going to show you how it's done,' and then trying to indoctrinate the other person into "my way." That's how a lot of

social strategies are taught. My way. So they say, 'why you need to fit in more. Be more...be more normal.' What they're saying is, 'be like me.' There's no concept of partnership in that kind of thinking. There's no thinking of "our way." It's "my way." So again, where does the person receiving the instruction, get their needs met? Doesn't enter into it. They don't learn what their needs are. It's known that they're supposed to be, but appropriate needs would be, what they should do, but not what they need or want. So you me and we emphasizes the we, the us. How do we do us? Let's negotiate the "we." Because if it's all about getting my needs met, you don't allow yourself to consider alternate ways of communicating with each other. Maybe you can be creative. My middle son has a speech delay; gets very overwhelmed in the classroom. It's too noisy, too much motion and by the time he forms his words to figure out what he wants to say and builds up the courage to do so, the teacher's on to something else or someone else has cut in line. So, it's hard for him to do that. What he stumbled upon was writing notes to his teacher, helped him to get his thoughts down, so he could then pass the note to her, so she'd then know what he needed. If there was an inflexible approach like, 'no, just raise your hand like everybody else,' he'd never be able to ask a question, because that is expected, convenient for the teacher, hey, that's not a "we" approach, that's a "me" approach. If it doesn't work for the two of them, they will not have connection, they will not have trust. They're will be no reason there for him to be compelled to establish rapport or get feedback, clarify because it is so lopsided to one person's advantage.

Imagine if you took these concepts I've discussed so far and built them into a corporate culture? We clarify with each other. We get feedback. We negotiate how we're going to be together. On a larger picture, sexual harassment would never occur. Teasing, gossiping wouldn't occur if these things were practiced. Yes, why on earth would you negotiate that garbage? My wife has this job. She started working in the Admissions office at a community college. And she's had a lot of jobs like that in the past, but she comes home all the time and says, 'I can't believe how well these people work together. If someone has to go take a break, or if someone's out sick, people just jump in and start doing that person's job.' There's no concept of, 'well, that's not my job. That's not what I was hired to do.' She said, 'it simply doesn't happen. If a supervisor has an office with a door that she can close, live in a little ivory tower off to the side, but if things get busy and the supervisor notices it, she comes out of her office, starts answering phones, going to the counter and tending to the students. The you and me, poof! There's a solid "we" in that type of mindset in that department. So it's not only doable, it occurs. And she loves being with those people. Senserally speaking, there's a big disconnect. My wife's a spectrumite too. So there are a lot of things that need to happen on that end to make a better fit between her and her environment. But the fit between her and her colleagues is awesome. When her supervisor sees her getting a little overloaded, she calls her says, 'come in here and talk to me.' So my wife goes in and says, 'well do you need anything? 'nothing. You need a break. Close the door.' That kind of attending is clearly an emphasis on relationships, not just on completing tasks. Not how quickly can you crank out another widget today? It's understanding the

need for inter-dependent partnerships to make it work. Because if you have a workplace environment that is just too much about the process and it's rigid, and it needs to be this way and we need to crank out this many units. Okay, that might not be the best place for a spectromite. It's not relationship-driven enough. It's too task oriented. But if that is a place that is open to introducing much more of this relationship type thinking into it, a lot of good things can happen because that kind of instruction environment can work very well for many people on the spectrum who need that kind of structure and predictability and atomization.

But within the absence of support, like inter-dependence. All of a sudden, you've got a crabby supervisor, who's on your case to move faster, do it harder and the essential component of being supported, being backed up. That could make the difference between this person being effective and being a catastrophe. Just with those little changes can make a huge difference.

Now, the next strategy. Asking for help. Now self-advocacy I don't know is necessarily synonymous with that even though it's sometimes used that way. Self-advocacy could be something just as simple as speaking up. People that stand across the street picketing or complaining on the state capitals; they're self-advocating. Does that necessarily get them results?

Asking for help is about asking specifically for what you need from us...the person, the way you need it and how you need it, and it's much more deliberate. It's not just shouting from the rooftops with anger. I disagree with you; you're evil; go home; okay, now we can talk about how successfully we were at being pissed off together today (Laughter), we we've made absolutely no progress. That's not dialogue. And I've seen very few...yeah, yeah, there's some instances throughout history where that was effective over time, but for results to get done more quickly, you need to be specific. Now who here finds asking for help an easy thing to do? No hands?

Audience: Depends.

Brian: Depends. Depends on what?

Audience: Who you're asking. What's the history with that particular person.

Brian: Okay, who you're asking, your history with that person. I love the way this thinking is going.

Audience: Depends on the general perceived difficulty of the task according to uh, according to the people around you.

Brian: Interesting. There's a lot of that statement. Depends on the perceived difficulty of the task or the people around you. Any others? Is help as simple as raising your

hand? I've come across people that believe that. What do you need to know before you ask for help?

Audience: When you don't understand.

Brian: When you don't understand what you need help with. There's something more essential. You need to know that a problem even exists. Yes, there are too many people on the spectrum that have spent their entire lives being rescued. 'Oh, don't want to get overwhelmed; don't want to have meltdown.' They run around them on eggshells eliminating any possible trigger, anything that can set them off, so they don't have to deal with that. They prevent them from bumping up against problems. They don't learn problems exist. There have been a lot of times where I've gone into AP meetings, where they talk about their wonderful plan; how successful it is; how they've seen so many wonderful gains. Child not acting out, child's not pushing back, child's not been oppositional. When I examine what they've done, then I ask the child, 'So, you think things are getting better?' 'Yeah, things are getting a lot better.' 'You're not getting as angry as you used to?' 'No.' 'Well, why not?' 'Oh, people aren't ticking me off anymore.' So the child isn't doing anything proactively to change things. The child is simply acknowledging there's nothing to react to. That is not progress. Progress is when you help the child have a different approach to that trigger; to process it differently; to relate to it differently. Not to simply avoid it. We do that by default, that's why some of us spend hours on a computer, rather play with video games instead of engaging the world because we're avoiding. We know how to avoid. When people help us avoid, we don't that progress, we call that "enabling." And far too often that is described as measures of success. It isn't. It's to keep things under wraps, calm, so everybody else around them doesn't need to be inconvenienced while they're trying to accomplish their tasks; then we get them out into the real world completely unprepared because we've taught them no strategies to increase their resilience. We've just limited their reactivity. So, they graduate from high school and fall flat on their face and that's when my phone starts ringing, and there's a lot of cleaning up to do. I have clients from California to New York; an increasing number of young adults who graduate from high school; don't have any friends, any job prospects; don't know what they want and the parents are asking me, 'what do we do?'

Unfortunately, I tell them to strap in because there's a lot of work, and all that's preventable, despite changing up how you do things. So asking for help begins knowing that a problem exists. Then you need to know what the problem is. What's not working. So a child says I don't get it, I don't understand. What don't you understand? I don't know. Those kinds of ambiguities can be made more specific if you know how to get at those things, but just for our conversation today, know that you need that kind of information. And, am I trying to figure out how to get help. What do I need in order to get help effectively and consistently. I was able to boil it down to five essential steps. And of course I'm sure there are several layers underneath these, but these are the main five. The first one is (inaudible), know that you need it. Know that

your efforts are not giving you the result you're looking for, but if you want to be independent, you'll think you must do it yourself. So, in that kind of thinking, maybe the outfit of help is not even a consideration; not even an option for you. Either I do it, or it can't be done. There are people in the spectrum that think like that. They will go without before they ask for help, because their measure of success does not include partnering. Why? Because they're encouraged to be independent. You need to learn how to do this on your own someday, son. Proud of you. Did it all by yourself.

But then what do we also say. But if you need any help, come and ask me. Can you feel an aneurism coming on when you hear stuff like that? It's a very confusing mixed message that is not helpful. If anything, it causes some kind of paralysis. We don't know which is a higher priority. Do I do it independently or do I ask for help, and which one of those approaches is going to get me decent feedback from the question, how am I doing? Because sometimes you'll hear, oh, thanks for asking. Okay, how am I doing? Pretty good thing I asked for help. The same person may give you the next time, did you try it yourself first? Did you try hard enough before you came to me? That doesn't build trust, that is inconsistent. Part of negotiating the relationship is, when I come to you for help, am I going to get, or am I going to get blown off, sent to the back of the line, told to go back to my desk. That all needs to be negotiated in, in our strategic partnership. If I need help, who do I go to? Who can I go to for help with math, or my taxes or to figure how to do this part of my job? Whatever the context is.

So after you know that you need it, the next thing is to know in what form do you need it? We all have different learning styles, living in a multi-sensory world, but not all of us takes in information effectively through all channels. (Inaudible), but this has come up a couple of times today, how to be visual. Our world is about pictures. My world is about sounds. So if someone wants to demonstrate something to me using a PowerPoint or a overhead, I can care less what's on the screen, I'm watching their mouth move and I'm listening to their voice. That's why I don't use PowerPoint, it's a distraction. It's like me trying to say, 'okay, today, we're going to step outside our comfort zones and this entire presentation will be in Chinese. I don't read it, I don't speak it, let's give it a shot. (Laughter) That's what PowerPoint is like for me. It's totally disorienting. That's why I stick with what I know. And for those who are visual, hopefully you're doodling and that's helping coalesce with what's in your brain. So if you need it auditorally, and you don't know that, and you ask for help from someone, and they say, 'well, why didn't draw your diagram.' Put it all up there all nice and pretty. 'You understand now?' You say, 'uh huh.' Even though you don't. And then you go uh, this person feels successful because they've effectively communicated to you. You go off and try and do it and you no further have any worth. You still don't get it but you don't know why, because you don't know what you're best input channel is. Sometimes you need to have explained; you need to have it shown to you; you need to have it demonstrated; you need to have it done with you. Know the way you need it. What's your learning style?

The third one is who do you need it from? Who has this knowledge? One of the tendencies for the people on the spectrum and I'm sure for a lot of people in general, is you ask who you're most comfortable with; who you have the trust with; who you know is going to be supportive. Like the child who has a special interest in World War II and wants to keep asking his mother everything about, 'why'd the General do this? What was he thinking? Why didn't he use this strategy instead?', and the mom says, 'I don't know,' and he gets mad at her. 'Why. You're supposed to know.' Anybody encounter this? Ever? Okay, see some head nodding. That's good. That's pretty definitive non-verbal. Or I can clarify and say, 'so, are you saying that you agree?'

Audience: Yeah.

Brian: That...see that? Now I got a verbal confirmation. Thank you. Good clarification. Was there a hand over here? Okay. So the person you need it from needs to be the person that has the information you need. What's going to make you more likely to reach out to that person, if you have negotiated as I said, get that information from them in a way where you feel supportive for asking, instead of being made to feel dumb, because you should have tried it yourself first. Then there is the matter of, how do you ask them for it? You raise your hand, you write a note, you send them an email, you pick up the phone, you have to schedule a face-to-face meeting. Because again, we're talking about the spectrum community. There is a tendency to hate the telephone. Don't want to make phone calls, don't want to receive phone calls. 'Call me sometime.' 'No, just send me an email. Just text me and let me know when we're getting together.' 'Well, I'll call you later.' 'No.' 'If it's okay, could we get together sometime?' 'No, just send me an email.' 'You like to chat?' 'We could chat.' 'Let's hang out sometime.' 'No, but we could chat.' They're telling you what their style is; how to connect. Now there are some people that will say, 'well, you know, I prefer the face-to-face.' Okay, that's your way. And if my way of chatting, if we are really committed to connecting and having a relationship, we must find "our" way. What will work for us? Because if you have a bunch of friends that love the face-to-face or like to get together, doesn't mean you absolutely cannot have a relationship with a human being who doesn't want to do that. Of course it doesn't mean that. But if you're totally locked into your style, you cut yourself off from relationships with other people, because you're not flexible enough to realize communication exists in so many forms.

There are people that I am close with, that I have never met. I have clients that I've worked with for over six months that I've never seen. We do everything by phone conference. I've established trust in my predictable and reliable way of engaging them by agreeing how our time will be spent. This is how we talk to each other; this is how we do not talk to each other; this is what we can rely upon each other for; and if I stick to that I establish trust, I keep trust and vulnerability emerges even though I could pass them on the street...well they, you know, they'd recognize me because my big bald head is all over my website, but I wouldn't know them. But our relationship doesn't require that, because we negotiated this and it works.

The fifth step in asking for help is at the right time. Even up to five, six years ago, I would barge into conversations and just start asking my question, or I wouldn't...I kind of in a hit or miss style kind of interrupt or excuse me or whatever. I'm not very good at pauses, catching pauses, because things can happen so fast in a conversation. I much prefer getting an email or a text. The only time I'll pick up the phone is if I have a lot to say and it's easier for me to get it out than to text it, then I'll say, 'can I call you? It will be easier to explain this.' So I have set the parameters for that conversation to say, 'sure, give me a call.' I call them up, I tell exactly what it is I want to tell them, because it's easier to say that way. When we're good with it, the conversation's done, because we negotiate that. It's none of those, phone rings, 'what 'cha doin?'

(Laughter) Okay, my day's just come to a screeching halt. I have no idea where this is going; is there an end point? Is there a goal, or should I just in and make sure I have food and water, because this could go on for days. (Laughter) It needs to be tightened up; it needs to be specific, concrete, negotiated, and we're going to use this medium to communicate and we need to know how we're going to do it. How WE'RE going to do it. Question?

Audience: Where does banter in party talk. You know, when you get small talk and...?

Brian: Do you mean chit chat?

Audience: Chit chat. Where does that fit in to that?

Brian: It doesn't. There is a way to make chit chat more concrete. Let's go back to the three G's: Goal, Give and Get. We need to know what the outcome is, what they want from us, because there has to be a "we" in it. How do "we" do us? Chit chat has no end point; it's talking just to talk. It's kind of an unstructured way to talk to someone. You want to be attended to; you want to attend to someone. The way you do it is to keep throwing information out to keep your attention on that person, but it's not going anywhere. For people on the spectrum or with ADD, and I happen to have both. I'm overqualified. Attending takes a tremendous amount of mental energy to stay connected to someone. And if chit chat is in the conversation, you don't know how long you're going to have to do it. It's exhausting. You need to be able to check out, because it's too hard to hold on. So when a person says, 'okay, now pay attention.' Oh I'm getting there, I'm getting there. Oh for crying out loud, you're killing me. Get to the point! Cut to the chase. It's not that I don't want to hear your story, I can't hang on that long. So if a person's really getting chit chatty, then you can just say, 'oh excuse me. Was there something that you needed?' You encourage them to get to the point. Get specific. Tell me what your direction is. Because if there isn't one, (inaudible) tell you, 'I'm just making conversation.' Then I would (inaudible) and say, 'oh, that's very nice, but actually I'm kind of enjoying being quiet right now, if that's okay.' So I clarified their intention. What's their goal? If they didn't have a goal, I encourage them; they verbalize they don't have a goal. So now I know I don't have to

sit here waiting for one. (Laughter) I can just tell them, 'okay, well that's fine. I'm just going to sit here quietly.' So I've negotiated and clarified my way out of chit chat. I only spent twenty years thinking this through (Laughter), because there's got to be a way to make it work. Does that answer your question?

Chit chat (inaudible) is not going to work for someone, but we also need to be respectful of the person who wants to connect with us; they want to be chit chatty in that way, but we don't want to insult them, but to support them. We want to feel supported, so we need a diplomatic way to kind of let them know we can't connect like this. This won't work for "us." Chit chat's not going to work for "us." So if they need that, they can go and find it from someone else and if they want to have a much more specific conversation, maybe they'll seek you out and you can have that conversation with them. Okay? Any questions on those five steps?

Okay. The next strategy is what I call, "touch and go." Touch and go. This is my all purpose sensory strategy. Whenever I have to go into a very busy place, whether it be a classroom, a conference room, a work place, a wedding, a party, I know that my threshold will be reached pretty quickly and I will need to take occasional breaks. I will need to go; get out; take a breather. Now, if you go to gatherings like that, the neural-typical intention is that you are there to engage; to participate; to be involved. If you go too often, people want to come and find you (Laughter). They're afraid they're being left out. They want to bring you back in. But if you need this in order to engage, in fact if you need the break, you need someone there who understands that this is your strategy. I want to be there, but I need to check out to kind of you know, reboot my brain; collect myself, so I will be going on occasion. So you check in with this person and typically, it's the party host, or the person that's running the board meeting, whatever. The teacher in the classroom, your supervisor, or your mentor, however your workplace is set up, so that when you need a break, you let them know, 'I need a break; this is where I'm going; this is about how long I will be.' So that if someone comes looking for you, they'll go that person, that person will run interference for you. 'Okay, that's fine. He's taking a break, be back shortly.' But if they don't know what you're doing they'll say, 'well you know, I haven't seen him for a while, let's go look for him.' Totally blows your reboot. You need to be able to moderate your exposure to those environments (inaudible) engaged. If you stay there the entire time, then you have a love-hate, win-lose relationship with that environment, because you don't give yourself the option to disengage.

Now yes, there are accommodations you can use. If it's a noisy floor, earplugs can help you increase your threshold, so you can stay in there longer. I wear earplugs at wedding receptions and stuff. My youngest son, almost six, wears earplugs and ear muffs at the movie theater, so that he can be in there without just totally coming dis-regulated. He's also visual so if someone mentions those (inaudible) friendly movies where the lights come up and people can run around, he wouldn't watch the movie at all. He'd want to play with the kids, because now he can see more. So he needs the

darkness to tune out all this auxiliary motion so he can focus on the screen. So those accommodations are dandy if you're allowed them; are aware that you need them; and are confident enough to actually use them, so that you can engage in an environment and work more effectively. Is that pretty straight forward? Okay?

Ah, this is one of my favorites. Social disclaimers. Does anybody know what a disclaimer is?

What's a disclaimer? Do not use this toaster while taking a bath (Laughter). If you do, you'll be electrocuted and it's not our fault, because we warned you. A disclaimer is a way of getting yourself out of liability for something. In traditional social circles, I'm told, we are all held responsible for hand shaking, making eye contact, and all these other things that are put out there as non-negotiable. Anybody here ever have a staring contest with a blind person? (Laughter) Okay. Do they look you in the eye when they're talking to you? Not necessarily? Doesn't mean they're not paying attention. I can't say, 'look at me when I talk to you.' Why wouldn't you say that? Maybe because eye contact is not a prerequisite for paying attention to you. Maybe you think it is; you've been told it is, but is it? How many of you have looked someone in the eye while thinking about, 'man, as soon as I leave here, I got to remember to do this, and 'well tomorrow, I have to remember that I need to pick up this thing or email that person.' Is it possible that you could be looking at someone, nodding, and your mind be completely elsewhere? So why do people keep telling me, 'well, he has to look at me because I know he's paying attention.' Well, when we've just established that's unreliable, how do you know someone is paying attention to you? It's the most important strategy....clarify. Check in; ask. You understand what I've just said? What does it mean to you? Thank you; dis clarifying and continue. Because on social media, texting, emailing, there's no eye contact. The way you know a person's attending to you is by the feedback you get, the clarification you use to make sure that what you have put out there has been understood. Plain and simple. All the non-verbal stuff people have assumed is necessary is unreliable. It doesn't give you the information you think it does. Thank goodness I forget about it because I've been driving myself crazy for years thinking I have to do this and I'm walking away and I don't what the heck just happened. I wanted to do the stuff I was supposed to do, not the stuff that was effective. Let's try to get rid of all the extraneous stuff and boil it down to what works for us. Because there are two many people on both sides that say, 'no. Accept me the way I am. Do it my way. Do it my way.' That's part of the problem. It cannot be so much "my way", except there's nothing in there for the other person to use that will help them communicate effectively. There must be the halfway point. If it's not our way, it's not good for anybody. So in my case, a social disclaimer, and what I do is, I casually let the person I'm talking to know, that what they may be used to, they're not going to get from me. If someone thinks that eye contact is necessary, I generally don't make eye contact. The closer I am to you, the more likely I am to be looking off to the side or looking down, because I simply cannot hear you and hear what you're saying while I'm looking at you, because that engages my eyes. When my eyes are engaged, my ears turn off, or they kind of hear at a (inaudible), so I hear a little bit of

what you're saying. So what I will tell the person, is, 'hey you know, it's kind of noisy in here (inaudible), this is perfect because in a noisy lunchroom, I'll say, 'hey, I really want to hear you but it's kind of noisy. I'm just going to turn my ear in, so I can hear you better.' I've just told them, I'm not giving you eye contact, why I'm not giving it to you, how it's going to help you that I'm not looking at you. I've given them all the information that they needed; say, 'I'm supporting our conversation because I want to hear you better so you can be understood. It's noisy in here, so I'm not going to look at you, I'm going to turn my ear in instead.' All the information they need to understand why eye contact is not going to happen and guess what? They do not care. It's when you're not looking at a person and they don't know why. 'What does this mean?' What does my perspective taking tell me? Does it tell me they're hiding something, they're being deceptive, they're ignoring me. (Inaudible). Or you can just check it and say, 'did you hear what I just said?' 'oh yeah, I was listening.' 'oh well, what did I say?' 'oh, you were talking about this.' 'oh great. Thanks. I was just clarifying; just checking,' as opposed to, 'look at me when I talk to you,' because that creates tension. Now the social disclaimer would be maybe not verbal but non-verbal. Somebody who wants to handshake. If I have too many handshakes, I get overwhelmed because of my tactual sensitivity. Hands feel different, don't they? Some are soft, some are clammy, some grips are soft, some are tougher. Some hands feel like pillows; some feel like they've been dipped in acid. Okay? There are too many of those (inaudible), it's overwhelming. So sometimes, I always strategically make my hands unavailable. I make sure that I carry something. Make sure my hand's in my pocket, my arms folded. When I see a person coming, I'll nod or do something else to acknowledge them to make the handshake less necessary. Sometimes I'll imitate the (inaudible). 'hey what's up.' Smaller surface, I can pull that. People can't take ownership of my hand and decide to grab my forearm or pat me on the shoulder, then it gets to be too much. Then I want to call security (Laughter), and I'd rather avoid that. So, a social disclaimer is basically explaining to someone why you're going to do what you're doing and how it helps the communication. Makes sense?

The next strategy, because we have two more and I'll go into a few more details; wrap up. I'm so proud of myself for staying on schedule here, I usually ramble on and on. The next strategy is the five W's. Those of you who have taken a journalism class know what they are. Who, what, when, where, why and how. Five W's and an H. Okay. I refer to this as a 360-degree conversation. Because if I'm looking to make conversation concrete and get rid of that reading between the lines and all that innuendo, hinting and suggestion. You are in a framework that allows you to take all the necessary facts that must be put out there into consideration, so that no ambiguities; nothing implied. So when you're talking to somebody and you run those questions through your head, you have to make sure you convey all that. You're giving someone instructions on the job. Who, what, when, where, why and how. Who needs to do this? What do they need to do? When do they need to do it? Where they need to do it. Why this way? How does it get done? Because if you ran those questions through your head when you were giving instruction, you should pretty quickly figure

out, 'opps. I missed this part. Oh I didn't explain this thoroughly enough, need to make sure I say that.' because too much is relied upon to just be "understood." When I clarify, the understanding has taken place. And when you want to get information from a person, you need to make sure that you get all those questions answered for yourself, because you'll go in there with what's at the top of your head and say, 'I have a quick question.' And then you'll get some information, 'oh great, that's what I needed.' and you'll come back later, 'oh well there was something else I needed.' Because those additional questions that you haven't asked keep coming up after you walk away, because the one you asked is definitely the one that's far most in your mind. But if you go in there looking for a global snapshot of the whole thing, a very thorough understanding of it, say, 'hey, I need to answer all six of these questions.' You are more likely to get more information; more concrete information; more complete information the first time out. Imagine how well this would work in a classroom; in a parenting situation; in a workplace, if so many bases were covered at the same time, in a concrete, measurable way. Imagine how much fewer misunderstandings you would have in your conversations, as you're being thorough. Is anybody's head hurting right now? Obviously I'm not trying hard enough. (Laughter).

Last of the ten strategies is the all purpose negativity killer. The person's always, 'oh that won't work. I'm trying...I've tried everything. It's too hard.' All the negativity. It's another very simple question. The question is, what's the solution? Because the people on the spectrum are used to being told what the problem is, 'this is what you're doing wrong.' 'This is what's not working.' For people to learn and grow and expand their horizons, they need to be solution-focused. So if somebody's not working well, start off by saying, 'well, let me tell you what you did wrong.' What do you think that person's focused on? 'Man, I screwed up again.' They answer the question, how am I doing? Well, okay. One more mistake.' Now they're focusing on that more than anything that comes after. So if someone comes to you and says, oh this isn't working, this is terrible.' You going to join them in that conversation or are you going to be solution-focused? So you ask, 'okay I hear you. What's the solution?' What solution are you looking for? What would you like to have happen? What do you need to happen instead? So you quickly move them beyond that. They want something to work. Help them move along that kind of thinking.

Whenever my thirteen-year-old comes to me, 'oh I had a lousy day at school today.' 'oh, something not work in school?' 'yeah.' 'What didn't work?' 'Everything.' 'hmm. Everything didn't work.' So you tripped and fell on the way out; the bus crashed; your teacher's are all at home sick. Tell me what worked.' 'What did you like about today?' 'Oh there was this one thing.' 'Good. Tell me about that.' Immediately moved him to what was effective. Because if your entire view of the world is that nothing works, what do you have to build on? You need to have some successes to give you some indication that things can work. That it is possible. So if a person comes to you completely mired in this self-destructive negativity, there's no room in there to conceive of a solution, until you introduce that as

the topic of conversation. What's the solution? Also, if you're in a workplace with someone who always attention-seeking and just wants to tell you about their life's coming to an end. They've come to tell you about their latest catastrophe, 'oh times are rough.' 'What are you going to do about that? What's your next step? How are going to solve that problem?' 'Well, I don't know, it's just so rough.' 'Yeah, it can be hairy sometimes. So what are going to do?' Engage in what's the solution? If all they want is a big pity party and they're going to get sick of not getting that from you, because they don't want a solution, they want sympathy. You stay solution-focused and they'll find someone else, or maybe they'll get a clue, that they need to look a little bit bigger than they've been looking. Okay?

So the last part of this to kind of wrap it up, I'll take some last minute questions. This is four rules for communicating with someone on the spectrum. This kind of caps what we've been talking about. The first rule is to say their name first. Say their name first, whether on the spectrum or not, because you'll see this a lot. Happens (inaudible) with my thirteen-year-old. They'll come up and start talking to the person and then halfway through your statement, they'll say, 'oh oh, were you talking to me? Could you repeat that?' And the person will say, 'well, why weren't you listening? Because I was paying attention to this; you didn't tell me you wanted my attention. You just expected it and started talking; didn't have it and now it's my fault because I didn't get your opening statement. Someone who's on the spectrum is engaged in what their doing; they're uni-tasking. They're cued in to everything happening around them. If you want them to disengage, I mean, I (inaudible) before when you come up to somebody and say, 'excuse me. EXCUSE ME.' They know you're talking to them. It's just sound their tuning out. But what word do they recognize? Their name. So, if it's in the workplace, you can say, 'Dan? Excuse me.' Say his name, let him disengage. Then you say, 'I'd like to ask you a question, are you ready? When he's ready, then you can ask the question. Because it takes time for them to transition from what their paying attention to. So you go to them, say, 'so, you ready to take your break Dan? He heard Dan, but he didn't hear what you just asked him. So now, you've got his attention, you've said his name and now you're saying nothing and he's waiting for you to say something. You see how that works? Say his name or her name, get their attention, make sure you've got it, ask for permission to ask a question. I'd like to ask you a question, are you ready? Let them know what's coming. Make it tighter, more concrete, more predictable. Rule number 2 that we talked about a lot, clarify the how. What action are you to take based on what we've discussed? How do you begin? How do you do it? Is there anything you need to know about the how? Any conversation in the world that's not actionable, it's nothing anybody can use. The third rule is making those 360-degree statements. Who, what, when, where, why and how. A complete encapsulation of what is needed for us to understand each other in the most complete way possible, and the fourth rule is train to their learning style. If they're auditory, explain. If they're visual, give them pictures. If their kinesthetic, means they use their body, let them do it once, do it with them, let them get their hands on it. And you'll even use that language, you'll probably hear it from each other. You're talking to somebody, you

explain something funny, and they say, 'yeah, I see what you mean.' That's a visual statement or someone says, 'I hear you.' That's auditory. Or someone says, 'so what do you think about the new job?' 'It doesn't feel right to me.' Feel. That's a body type statement. More kinesthetic. So when you're talking to someone who is using...first of all, you're not going to say, 'you see what I mean,' to a hearing person. Someone's auditory, you don't say, do you see what I mean? Are you hearing what I'm saying to you? Are the words I'm using making sense? So you also have to adjust your language to the accommodation so you're much more connected to their learning style. Make sense? Okay, any questions on anything we have discussed? Yes?

Audience: What is the best way to assess...(inaudible)?

Brian: Oh, absolutely. The best way to assess someone's learning style? Their special interests. How do they interact? They want to sit there and watch YouTube videos all day; they want to read a book. Do they want to listen to things or do they want to watch things? Do they want to do things? My youngest wants to dance and watch videos and movies. What's that tell you? He's visual and kinesthetic. My middle boy wants to be building things. He made something with Legos, he made something with his erector set and he also likes to draw. Okay, so he's visual and kinesthetic. My older boy wants to sit on his butt, play on the computer, maybe read a book and listen to his movies all the time. His visual and auditory. So, knowing those things, I know how to start channeling the information I'm giving them. So, if I say to my older boy, 'hey let's go out and play catch.' 'Oh, I don't wanna.' Can I call him a wimp; lazy or am I asking the wrong person? He's not kinesthetic. If I say to the younger boy, wanna wrestle, he'll go get his pads on so he can really make it count. Because that's where he's coming from. Watch how they engage the world, what sensory input do they seek? That tells you their learning style. Okay? We're right at that time. Hopefully, this has been very helpful to you. It's a wonderful place to start. I have business cards up here as well so can come and take as many as you need to follow up, and it's been a pleasure meeting you and hope we'll be meeting again sometime.