Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Rules in Social Situations

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Moderator: Nancy Bernotaitis
Guest Speaker: Brenda Smith-Myles

Good evening everyone. I want to welcome you to tonight’s webinar. This is momsfightingautism.com and I’m your moderator, Nancy Bernotaitis. I have a 13-year-old son with autism and I’m very active in the autism community. I have been since he was 4. I served as the president of the Autism Society of America Dayton Chapter and worked as the assistive technology specialist for Goodwill Easter Seals and aside from this job with momsfightingautism, I’m also a regular contributor to Autism Today.
There are two ways to participate in tonight’s webinar. You can log on to momsfightingautism.com and about halfway down the page, you’ll see a box that says Register for this Webinar. The webinar is completely free. Once you’re registered, you’ll see a blue box in the upper left-hand corner and there you can click Listen In and hear the discussion via the internet. You can click Ask a Question. You can click to watch the slides through that box. And there’s also a link to watch the videos that will be embedded within the hopefully embedded within the presentation. So, you’ll see all that in your blue box.

You can also listen in by phone by calling 949-333-4806 and then our conference ID, 168978#, and that’s all in on the website as well. All callers are immediately muted, so don’t worry about background noises, we can’t hear you. Later on our webinar, I’ll let telephone listeners know how they can ask a question directly to our presenter if they wish. We do try to get to as many of the pertinent questions as we can in a time we have allotted and after the presentation, we’ll ask the presenter to share their contact information for anyone who has questions afterwards.

When the slideshow begins, like I said, there’s a link in your blue box and there’s also link to the video. You might want to go ahead and click the link to the video to get that page up, so it’s ready to go. And if you’re listening via phone, mute your computer so you don’t get an echo.

We have two hours allotted for tonight’s webinar. So without further ado, let me introduce our speaker.

Tonight we are talking about the Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding the Rules in Social Situations with Brenda Smith-Myles. The Hidden Curriculum refers to the set of rules or guidelines that are often not directly taught but are assumed to be known. And Dr. Myles is a consultant with the Ziggurat Group and Chief Program Officer for the Autism Society of America. Dr. Myles is the recipient of the 2004 Autism Society of America's Outstanding Professional Award, and the 2006 Princeton Fellowship Award.

Nancy: Your bio just goes on and on Dr. Myles. Why don’t you tell us a little bit more about yourself?

Brenda: Currently, I am working on a couple of projects. One of them, I’m working on a project with a military to ensure that children of military families who have a member with autism have their needs met. And then as you mentioned, I’m working with the Ziggurat Group which is the multidisciplinary group that does programming and planning for individuals on the spectrum. I’m also working with the group of colleagues on a textbook on how to assess children with
autism spectrum disorders for programming purposes and for diagnosis or identification.

Nancy: You’re a very busy lady.

Brenda: You know, I think in the autism realm, everybody is.

Nancy: I can attest to that.

Brenda: Absolutely.

Nancy: Your slides are now ready to go. So you can click your slides tab.

Brenda: Excellent. And remind me again where the video show up.

Nancy: That will just show up on the slides themselves. There is a link for those who are participating via the web that will say, Videos for the presentation. And if you want to go ahead and log in as a participant so you can follow along, or I can just let you know when the videos are done, whatever makes you comfortable.

Brenda: Okay, I am on the website right now with slide number 1 up.

Nancy: Okay.

Brenda: Okay, and, let me just say that, oh my gosh, okay, and as I click on the bottom, it would have that slides, correct?

Nancy: That is correct.

Brenda: Okay. Actually I’m defaulting the slide like 47, so I will just go ahead and start.

Nancy: I’m viewing as a participant and I’m seeing the very first slide.

Brenda: Oh great. Okay. And I may have to have you advance from them because I am not.

Nancy: Okay. Let me...

Brenda: Okay.
Nancy: It says I’m about to take control of the slides. Do you want to try one more time to take control?

Brenda: I would love to.

Nancy: Okay. Sorry, everyone who is listening, we’re trying to work out some bugs here so this goes smoothly.

Brenda: I am so sorry. It’s going to be easier if I just slide down the right-hand side and you advance the slide because whenever I move from the advancing, it just changes slides.

Nancy: Okay. Okay. So we’ll go ahead and start. Welcome. Thank you for being here to talk about the Hidden Curriculum.

Brenda: One of the things that we need to look at is what’s the purpose of education should be, slide #2. And in fact, when we are looking at the purpose of education, we really need to be concerned with ensuring that children and you when they leave school are prepared either for future education or training so that they’re also prepared to leave as independently as possible. We also need to ensure that they have the skills to form relationships. These ideas quite often are not discussed often enough in schools when we’re focusing on things such as standardized curricula, standards. But if you look at slide #3, you will see that these ideas have directly from IDEA, the Individual for Disabilities Education Act, and so everyone who teaches or supports a child or youth with autism spectrum disorders should have this as the emphasis.

On slide #4, I’d like to introduce you to several questions and these questions have come from date test. And I would like you to ask yourself of the following, relate to life success. The first question is a mathematics question. It says, 36 times 4 equals 4 times 9 times 2 times 2, is an example of which property? Now, if you’re like me, you probably don’t know the answer. However, if you are a 4th grader, you will know the response and the response I think is either commutative or distributive.

The next question is a question on state test, generally for individual who are in the 6th grade. What do the Mayan, Incan, and Aztec civilizations have in common? The answer to this one which many many people know is large planned cities.
The next slide, a family is shopping for a house. They want a house with a big yard in a particular neighborhood. They find an affordable house they like but the yard is small. If they buy the house, what will the opportunity costs? The answer is I believe a large yard. Well, for those of you who don’t know that answer to this, did not knowing this answer prevents you from living in a condo, a house, or an apartment? Probably not.

Now, if you look at these three questions, how important are they to life success? What we have to realize is that we must question what we teach. Time is limited. As you know, our children and youth like all children and youth appear to grow up over night. In addition, as illustrated by those three questions, we focus on academics.

We also have another concern which is called the forgetting curve. As you see on slide #9, the forgetting curve was developed by a researcher by the name of Ebbinghaus. And this researcher found that people in general, tend to forget one-half of all information that they learned over days, weeks, or months, if it is not practiced. So, that means much of what our students are taught, if it is not reviewed on a regular basis, becomes information that they do not have access to.

I would like to share with you a video that illustrates the forgetting curve. This video is from the 1970’s from the television show Saturday Night Live. The forgetting curve is illustrated by Father Guido Sarducci who talks about the concept of the 5-minute university. Nancy?

Nancy: This is where you guys are going to click that link that says, Videos for the presentation, on your blue box and the very top slides that were, the very top video where it says slide#11, Father Guido Sarducci, that’s where you going to press Play.

Nancy: The slides shoot up. It’s almost finished. The video is almost finished. Okay, everyone go back to these slides.

Brenda: That would be lovely.

Nancy: You’re taking control of those slides.

Brenda: I’m sorry?
Nancy: I think you're taking control of the slides.

Brenda: Oh okay. As Father Sarducci has illustrated, we forget so much of what we have learned. One of the things that I think that should be taught information that indeed will be practiced over and over and be retained if information that is not yet a part of any form of curriculum and that is the hidden curriculum.

The hidden curriculum is information that everyone knows without being taught. It’s as if the information from the hidden curriculum has dropped from the sky, it has hit us individuals who are neurotypical but it has missed individuals on the spectrum. And despite not being taught, it is extremely important. And in fact, if you violate a hidden curriculum rule, your health and well-being can be threatened or you can become a social outcast.

Even if you’ve not taught about the hidden curriculum before, you probably come in contact with this. If you have ever been with an individual on the spectrum and you have taught one of these for even a nanosecond, you’re talking about the hidden curriculum. That is things such as I thought everyone knew that, I never thought I would have to teach this to anyone, it’s obvious that it’s common sense that, those phrases are associated with hidden curriculum item.

The hidden curriculum can be difficult to teach because it does differ. It differs for example across age. The hidden curriculum for a 16-year old is different that the hidden curriculum for a 6-year old. If you are a 6-year old boy, there is a hidden curriculum on how to tell a 6-year old girl that you like her. That hidden curriculum is when you see the girl, typically at recess, you hit her, you pull her hair and you chase her. Everyone knows this, no one has taught.

Now our trial with autism does not know this hidden curriculum. He is out at recess. A neurotypical child comes up to him and says, you like Sally, and pulls her hair. And many times, our children will do appear and tell them to do without knowing. So our child goes up to Sally, he hit her, he pulls her hair and he has been romantic heaven for 6 year olds.

Our child grows up. He’s 17. He developed an object of affection. He thinks about her a lot and after thinking, he decides to let her know how he feels. He knows about the reproductive system. He has read everything he could possibly find. But this really has not prepared him for what he needs to do. He
recalls the information he learned when he was younger. Information that he practiced and that he saw others engaged in. So when he sees this little girl, this young lady during passing time, he runs up to her and he hits her. This is not romantic heaven as you know. It is instead called assault. We may ask what this boy did wrong, and many people will start a long list, I think the boy did nothing wrong. We forgot to update our instruction. We forgot to say, when you are 16 or 17 or 18, and you like someone, here is the information that is important to you. Now, compare that to the importance of the Mayan and Incan empires which deserves more focus.

The hidden curriculum also differs based upon who you are with. The way you act in a meeting is significantly different than the way that you act when you are with friends on a Friday night in a casual activity, the way you dress, the way you talk, even your posture changes. If you have autism, you have one way of being and you are that way across all settings. Unfortunately or fortunately, the world does not adhere to that.

There is also a hidden curriculum of gender. There are hidden curriculum rules for men, there are hidden curriculum rules for women. Gender hidden curriculum items are not related to equality. They’re related to sociology. Research shows that men and women, boys and girls interact differently when given the same activity. For example, a group of women will get together without an activity. They will get together to chat. And sociological research shows that when four women for example get together, the first thing they do is calculate the percent of time that they will have to talk. So for these four women, they would each have 25%. Then they’ll begin to talk orienting toward each other. They will change topics of conversation rapidly. Generally, there will be limited interruption. Each woman will stake for her 25%. She will not dominate the conversation. This is true in women. This is also true in little girls.

Boys and men, however, have a different hidden curriculum for interaction. First, men would never get together without an activity. They don’t get together to chat. One of the best examples of interactions between men is to take four men sitting in front of a basketball game on the television. Did they count for 25%? No. When they talk, did they orient toward each other? No. What do they look? Straight ahead. Did they change topics of conversation? No. They stay on the same topic, the ball game. Is it likely that more than one person talks at a time. Absolutely. And is it a valued interaction? The answer is, absolutely.
Now why is it important to understand that there are two different set of rules for men and women in social interaction. The majority of us who teach and support individuals with autism are female, yet the majority of individuals on the spectrum are male. And in many cases, women not knowing the hidden curriculum of men teach girl hidden curriculum skills, which means that in the present, boys and men, they do not have the skills that they need.

Take an adult on the spectrum, one that you and I have taught social skills to. Let's insert him into a group of those four men watching a basketball game. Does our young man calculate his 20%? He may not do exactly that but what he will do, is he'll remember not to dominate the conversation. And he will spend the ball game trying to orient where the other guys waiting for a pause in the conversation so that he can talk and when there is a pause, he talks about the new photocopy machine that they have at work. At the end of the game, his anxiety level is high because he has tried all of his best skills and he has not been responded to in a way that a he anticipates. And is this man invited back? The answer is probably not because the other guys who were trying to watch the basketball game were interrupted by our man on the spectrum who didn't know the hidden curriculum of social skills during an activity for men.

We also have the hidden curriculum of cultures. We are beginning to understand the differences among cultures and how they affect interaction. And for individuals on the spectrum, from a different culture, it is even more difficult for them to understand the rules that generally are not spelled out.

I'd like to talk about the impact of the hidden curriculum based upon environment. There is a hidden curriculum at school. For example, there are hidden curriculum items related to how do you dress at school, which teachers will not ask for homework, which teachers will allow you not to bring supplies to class, which teachers you can joke with and which ones you don't. And at the home, there is a hidden curriculum. Which chair does a particular parent always sit in? Do you eat breakfast at the bar in the kitchen or in the dining room table? When it is okay to ask for helping for food? Do you let Aunt Mildred hug you even though she smells funny?

There is also a hidden curriculum in the community. For example, the rule is, don't talk to strangers. But in the community, we don't really mean that. You can say hello to store owners. You can ask a clerk where something is. At the post office, you can ask an employee to get you a stamp.
At work, there is a hidden curriculum. Hidden curricula item at work include, if you don’t like your boss, you probably have to be nice to that individual. Sometimes you’re going to be reprimanded and there is a way to react when that occurs.

And there is a hidden curriculum of the legal system. If you have not have the opportunity to see the video by Dennis Debbautd on the legal system, I urge you to watch it. What we know from Dennis Debbautd is that 20-50% of individuals on the spectrum come in contact with the legal system. Now, from the theoretical standpoint, most of us come in contact with the legal system. We have a parking ticket, we have a speeding ticket, and there is a way to react to the legal system. For example, we would never argue with a police officer. I know an adult on the spectrum for example, who is pulled over for speeding. The first time he had ever had any sort of contact with the legal system. The police officer followed protocol. He approached the man’s vehicle and asked him for his driver’s license and for his automobile registration. The man on the spectrum gave them to the police officer. The police officer went back to his vehicle to run a check, standard procedure. Our man on the spectrum not knowing appropriate protocol assumed that the transaction was over and he drove away. The police officer did not say, “Please wait here, I’ll return,” because it was assumed or expected knowledge and this man had quite the challenge trying to explain to a judge that he didn’t understand that he was supposed to wait.

I’d like to show with you some hidden curriculum items so that you can see how diverse they are. The first one, if one small incident occurs that teacher corrects you, it doesn’t mean the entire day is bad. For many of our individuals on the spectrum, you know the minute that that first thing happens, many folks are upset for the rest of the day. Part of this has to do with a lack of understanding that these things are going to happen and there is a way to react to them. You should talk to teachers with a pleasant tone of voice because they’ll respond to you in a more positive manner. They also like it if you smile every once in a while. This is a life skill. In life, we have learned that if we are pleasant to other people, we are more likely to get what we want. We’ll be waited on in a grocery store if we smile. If we are pleasant to a waiter or waitress, we’re probably going to get better service. Talking to teachers, talking to bosses, talking to friends, a pleasant tone of voice is more likely to get you what you want. Now, how important is this very simple item compared to the distributive property in multiplication?
The goal of social skills is generally to make others feel good about themselves. It is not to make you feel good. Even though we teach social skills to individuals on the spectrum, we often do not teach this particular hidden curriculum item and indeed, individual from the spectrum sometimes think that the goal of social skills is to talk to other people about what you want to talk about and that is simply not the case. If we want someone to interact with us, what we do is we find something to talk about that they are likely to respond to. And if that person wants to talk to us, they in kind would talk about something that we are interested in.

A police officer is always right and should not be corrected on small details. If a police officer tells you that you are driving 15 miles over the speed limit and you thought you were driving 20, you would never correct that police officer even if you thought you were absolutely 100% correct. The post of speed limit may allow for variance.

Now, this item is on here and it says, hey lean in the backseat as a reminder to me, there is a category of hidden curriculum items called Trickery and Deceit. Sometimes, it is preferable to offer a hidden curriculum rule that makes the individual feel faith or comfortable in his or her environment, even if that item is not the entire truth.

I’ll give an example from my daughter as listed here. When she was young, and when she was sitting in the backseat when I was driving, if the speed limit was 35 miles an hour, and I began to go 36, she would announce that I was speeding. Now, after a little bit of time, even though I love my daughter dearly, I quickly became tired of hearing at 36 and 37 and 38 miles/hour, that I was speeding, and so using the concept of trickery and deceit, what I did was I explained to her that when the speed limit was post in, for example at 35, you could go up to 5 miles under the speed limit or 5 miles over the speed limit without being considered a speeder. Now, of course, that’s not true. But that provided me with some comfort and also with her of some comfort of not having to closely watch how fast I was driving. Now, of course when she became old enough to drive and she was reading the driver’s manual, she told me that that was not the rule and of course my response was, oh my gosh, I wonder when they changed it. Trickery and deceit.

When your teacher gives you a warning about behavior and you continue to behave, you’re probably going to get in trouble. If you stop the behavior immediately after the first warning, you probably won’t get in trouble.
Nancy: The slide has advanced for me.

Brenda: Oh, I’m sorry. Let’s see.

Nancy: There at the bottom.

Brenda: Okay. Is it okay? Did it advance for you?

Nancy: It takes a second, but no, we’re still on more hidden curriculum.

Brenda: Let’s see. Okay, I moved it back to the Haley in the backseat and now it advance me again. Are you saying when your teacher gives you a warning?

Nancy: No.

Brenda: Okay, how would you like to take control?

Nancy: Is that crazy or what?

Brenda: Okay. When your teacher gives you a warning about a behavior, and you continue the behavior, you’re probably going to get in trouble. If you stop the behavior after the first warning, you probably will not get in trouble. Now, this is extremely important because our children with high anxiety, they worry, and they will worry, and worry, and worry, not understanding that if they stop the behavior, that there’s no need to be concerned about it because as far as the adult is concerned, it’s a non-issue.

Do not tell other students they smell and need to wear deodorant. Now, this falls under the category of just because it is the truth does not mean that you share the information with someone else. Our students on the spectrum and indeed all students, all individuals need to be able to ask themselves before they share information, is it kind or helpful?

The next slide, when a teacher tells another student to stop talking, it is not a good idea to start talking to your neighbor since the teacher has overly expressed disapproval of that action. This can be an area of confusion for student on spectrum. The teacher in the classroom says, “Sally, stop talking.” Our child was not named Sally will begin to talk or will continue to talk and the teacher will say to our student, you’ve lost a minute off of recess, or you’ve lost
computer time, or whatever the system is in place. And what does our child think? Our child thinks that the teacher is unfair, the teacher does not like him because his name is not Sally and he was not told to stop talking. He did not understand the hidden curriculum rule that a warning to one individual sometimes constitute a warning to everyone in the class. When hearing someone speaks using incorrect grammar, do not correct him every time especially in a critical way. This item again falls under the category of being kind or being helpful.

The next slide, okay, if it is okay, then I will just go ahead and I’ll just read it. Not all teachers have the same rules for their class. Some teachers do not allow any talking unless you raise your hand. Others may allow talking if you are not disruptive to other students. It is important to know the rules different teachers have for their class. The rule will always change from teacher to teacher and it will not do any good to focus on the fact that it is not fair. Our students, once they learn the rule that one teacher has quite often try to apply it to all teachers. What happens is that especially in middle school and high school, for our students who have 5 or 6 teachers, there are 5 or 6 different rules and our students try to apply the rules across all setting and they don’t understand when they have problems.

The next hidden curriculum item is to do something funny, it’s usually only funny once. Individuals on the spectrum need to be directly taught that a joke can be a wonderful thing. But jokes, a joke should be told only to one person one time. And just because a person laugh does not mean that he or she wants to hear the joke again. If you wish to tell a joke again, you need to find someone you have not told the joke to. Don’t tell the principal that if she listens better, more kids would like her. When someone else is getting in trouble, it is not the time to show the teacher something.

This is a life skill. This has to do with ascertaining mood. If you want help or if you want to share information or have someone grant you a favor, you want to make sure that the individual that you are talking to is in a positive mood. If it is a teacher and the teacher is reprimanding or scolding someone, chances are that individual is not going to be in the proper mindset to give you what you want. So it is best to wait.

On the next slide, when you are taking a shower in a group setting, do not sustain eye contact for very long or watch other people taking their shower. There comes a time in the life of almost every individual on the spectrum when
they will be showering in the presence of others they do not know well. And it’s true for a neurotypical individuals as well. Maybe it’s in middle school or high school physical education, maybe it’s in a summer camp, maybe even as adults if you belong to a gym. You might be showering in the presence of those you don’t know well. And there is a hidden curriculum of where you’re supposed to look. That hidden curriculum is, you look to the ceiling, you look to the floor, or if no one is directly in front of you, you can do something called, eyes on the horizon.

Now there is another hidden curriculum item that has to do with showering with people that you do not know well. And that hidden curriculum item is, it is completely natural to be interested in other people’s naked bodies that starts when you’re young and it may never go away and if it doesn’t go away, you are completely typical. So when you are showering in the presence of other people you do not know well, the other hidden curriculum item is, sometimes people may sneak a peek. In fact, if you were at a gym this morning working out, and you were showering afterward and someone walked into the shower, someone you did not know, had not seen before, you indeed would be following the protocol of ceiling, floor, eyes on the horizon, but you would also be doing something else and that is of course sneaking a peak.

How important is this? Let’s take one of our guys. He’s 15-years old. He’s got to wait to week long scout camp. He’s had a pretty good first day. And at the end of the day, everybody is showering. So he is showering with a bunch of guys. All the other guys are doing ceiling, they are doing floor, eyes on the horizon and chances are they’re sneaking a peak. Our young man doesn’t know this hidden curriculum item and because he has been taught, sustained eye contact, he looked at one of the guys and he holds. He maintains eye contact for one to two seconds. What happens to him? Well, he’s going to be harassed. He’s going to be given a name. Depending on the environment, he might even be beaten up. What will the rest of that camp experience be like? It’s my contention that almost every minute of the rest of that week, someone is going to recall that he was caught staring at someone else and he is going to be harassed. I think, the minute that sustained eye contact occurred and he was caught, you should go home, because he will not have too many positive moments because he will be consistently reminded of the fact that he didn’t know that hidden curriculum item. Now, how important is that compared to the Mayan and the Incan empires? I suggest, it’s very important and I’ve actually worked with dads who knew that their sons for going to sneak a peak in a showering situation and they decided that they wanted their sons to be safe.
The next item, when you’re with classmate or coworkers you do not know very well, and you are the center of attention, do not pick your nose, pass gas, or scratch an itch of a private body part. Now, there is a time and a place to do these very things. It’s not that you don’t do them, it’s you know where to do them and you know how to do them. This is tricky because, again, what you know is that this varies. And why does it vary? It varies because of your age and where you are. If you are a 2nd grade boy on the playground away from adults and there are other boys having a passing gas contest, what do you want our child to do? You want him to join in.

There is a hidden curriculum calendar that has one item per day and one of the items said, and it was a weekend item so that parents can discuss rather than teachers. If you happen to be in class and you pass gas by accident, quickly look to someone else as if they did it. Now, that item went to the editor and it came back corrected as if you pass gas by mistake in the class, apologize. Now I took exception to that because what I didn’t want to have happened is I did not want our child who happened to pass gas to apologize because the hidden curriculum is not that. What we want our child to do is what every other child does and that is if he or she passes gas in class, to quickly look at someone else as if they had done it.

On the next slide, and Nancy, are we able to see the slide?

Nancy: I believe so, I’m still kind of struggling with that, but I’m looking on it.

Brenda: Okay, perfect.

Nancy: You don’t want to try to take control?

Brenda: Sure, I would love to.

Nancy: Why don’t you try that?

Brenda: And how do I get that?

Nancy: Go to Slides, click it.

Brenda: Okay, just one second. Thank you very much.
Nancy: As a participant, I can still see more hidden curriculum when you’re taking a shower.

Brenda: Oh, okay. I am showing a compliment, it’s almost always a good thing to know what body parts can be complimented. If you’re not seeing that..

Nancy: I’m not. I’ve been refreshing the page and that kind of also go.

Brenda: Okay, let me know if it changes. This particular item is on there because of an incident that I knew from a friend on the spectrum. This lovely man was with his mother on an elevator and a woman got on the elevator and he thought she was very attractive. And he decided to compliment her. So he looked at her and very, very nicely said, “I like your breast.” Now, what he had not been taught is know what body parts you can compliment and which ones you cannot compliment in public. Luckily, this man’s mother was with him to do damage control because if you think about it, this man is on an elevator and in closed environment, the woman who has been sexually harassed is trapped and cannot go anywhere. Could that have been extremely problematic for the man? Absolutely. And terrifying for the woman? It might have been. Nancy, I cannot see that second item because it says moderator log in. So, perhaps you could help me.

Nancy: Hover over the slide.

Brenda: Yes. If I hover over the slide, I saw a blue moderator log in.

Nancy: Oh, I can’t read it.

Brenda: Can you see it?

Nancy: Click the slides again, I can’t see it.

Brenda: Okay. I’m so sorry guys.

Nancy: Yeah, thanks for struggling with us.

Brenda: That’s okay. Okay, let’s try slide. There you go. Okay. And what slide number are we on?

Nancy: Let’s see. 20.
Brenda: Slide #20. Okay. Sorry. And I think I’m taking control again.

Nancy: Yes ma’am.

Brenda: Thank you. Okay, never underestimate the importance of a good apology. It’s almost always better than an excuse but know exactly what to say. We teach people that an apology is good but truly we should be teaching a script that simply says, “I am sorry for,” and you name what you’re apologizing for, because quite often, if you don’t know how to issue an apology, you end up saying more negative things than you initially said.

The next slide, doctors will not help you if you arrive late but they will make you wait, so bring along something to do. This slide is on here because a man I know on the spectrum arrived at his doctor’s appointment a couple of minutes early. The doctor however was delayed for almost an hour because he had had a surgery that did not go as planned. When the man on the spectrum was escorted back to the doctor’s room, he demanded that the doctor pay him for an hour of his time. He was so emphatic that he was escorted from a doctor’s office and asked never to return again. Now, on one hand, that sounds extremely logical to say that everybody’s time is worth something and that man should be reimbursed, but the hidden curriculum item is, is that you know that when you go to the doctor’s office, chances are you’re going to wait.

It’s almost always better not to give unsolicited information on how someone could improve their look or work performance. We tell people, individuals who are neurotypical and those who are on the spectrum to help other people. What we truly mean though is to help other people if they want help. We do not volunteer that someone’s work is messy, that someone’s hair look awful, that someone needs to lose weight. That is not being helpful. Helping other people is related to whether or not they want help. And so we need to teach that particular item.

When you are out in public, the appropriate place to address your undergarment is in the bathroom stall. Do not pull on or fix your underwear in public. Now, this is a small behavior. But what we know is, is that, if you engage in this whole behavior, it is stigmatizing and as such, people will remember it.

And the second item I cannot read and it’s something like, do not adjust your
private parts in public. They are not going anywhere. And there should be a P.S., that this does not apply if involved in sports events. Again, a very stigmatizing item.

It is difficult to determine which academic skills may become important to you as an adult. Take spelling for example. If you will go to the movie on, depicted on slide #24, it is audio only, it illustrates when might be appropriate.

Nancy: What might that be called?

Brenda: It should be called, let’s see slide #24, let me get to my second slide.

Nancy: The difference between men and women in romance.

Brenda: No.

Nancy: When in pain, I’m good.

Brenda: No.

Nancy: Dude.

Brenda: No. It’s called audio only. Oh sorry, peer at slide #63, audio only Eucalyptus Drive, okay.

Nancy: Oh eucalyptus, okay. Everyone see slide #63, eucalyptus, play that. It’s audio only. Okay.

Brenda: Okay. That is I think somewhat of a cute illustration of basically you may think that you’re not going to use Algebra as an adult. You may think that you’re not going to use Spelling or Geography, but the truth is, as a young person, you do not know where you’re going to end up as an adult.

Slide #25, that they are nuking something is to heat something up in the microwave, it does not mean blowing something out with an atomic bomb. That hidden curriculum item refers to understanding that words have more than one meaning. And some words found as if they have a meaning that can be related to violence but it does not. Our students, our young people often like information that may be considered inappropriate and that’s what this next item comes from. When you are in a nice restaurant, avoid topics that contain the
word blood, or address a gory topic regardless of how interesting it is. Some people think that many of our children or young people on the spectrum are violent. And they think that because they often draw graphic picture, they often talk about graphic events. They do it not because they're violent and aggressive but they do it because they find those topics interesting and they need to understand that there are some places such as restaurants that this is not appropriate. Words have more than one meaning. If something does not make sense, please ask for clarification.

On the next slide, it’s a cartoon that illustrates one word, two meanings. Many of you, if you remember when you were young, we used to wear thongs on our feet. Now, we do not.

Nancy: So, slide #66 BB theory sarcasm sign.

Brenda: No. It’s actually from a hallmark card, believe it or not.

The next slide, it has a word Jill on it. The story here, a family who lived in Korea who had a daughter with autism where relocating back to United States and the family was largely, the parents were in touch with the school district prior to their relocation. The school was well prepared for the little girl with autism to transition into their school in the United States. The girl, and I’ll call her Kim here, all of her documents were sent in advance. They were reviewed. The school team in charge of her problem recruited a circle of friends, told them about Kim and talked about autism and prepared for Kim to have a buddy with her for a day. The first day arrived, Kim’s parents bring her to school. She’s met at a door by one of her cheer buddies. She is escorted to her locker and then to her first class. From that first class to the end of the day, she shared a class with the same girl who basically walked with her from class to class and sat by her in each class and made sure that she was introduced to other people. The circle of friends were generally high status peers who wanted to befriend Kim. Well, at first they seem to go really well. Kim goes home and later that afternoon, the father calls the principal and says that Kim is refusing to go back to school that she had an awful first day and everyone in the school was vulgar. Principal shared the information with the school team and they were surprised because they saw no incidence whatsoever of vulgarity. They talked to the peers to ask if they had witnessed something that was inappropriate and they could think of nothing. So not knowing what else to do is they asked the parents to meet with them so that they could discuss you know, what perhaps went wrong and what could be done to remediate. Well, as they met, the case
manager asked if she could spend some time talking about what they haven’t played and what’s the plan of the day look like and so she began to say, you know, when Kim arrived at school, Susan met her at the door and took her to her locker and then she went to her first class where she was introduced to Jill and Jill was in each of Kim’s class and walked with her between classes. Well, as the case manager was explaining this, she saw the mother’s face turned bright red. Now the mother did not say a thing. The teacher paused and said to the mother, you know, I can tell by your expression that I must have said something wrong. I am very sorry. However, I don’t really know what’s offensive, so if you could please tell me, I would greatly appreciate it. And what the mom said was, I think I know exactly what happened. The word Jill in Korean means vagina. And what had happened was, Jill with a high status peer and everyone was aware that Kim was new in school and so what they were doing was being extremely friendly and they were saying, Hi Jill, how are you doing Jill, Jill do you need a book. Ah Jill is this Kim. And so every time that Kim heard Jill’s name, she heard vagina, vagina, vagina, and of course she goes home and what does she report? That the entire school, students and teachers alike are vulgar. So this is an illustration of how we really need to be aware of words as having more than one meaning and when you add the complexity of culture to it, what you find out is that you can be constantly surprised by multiple meaning of words.

Do not play in other people’s backyard unless you are invited. We need to ensure that individual on the spectrum understand what a true invitation is. When can you invite yourself over to someone else’s house? What can you do when you’re over at someone else’s home? We say, make yourself at home. Do we mean that? The answer is no. I know a boy on the spectrum, he and his mother went to visit a neighbor, a new neighbor that they previously not know. The woman invites them in and says to the mother and the son, please make yourself at home, a common phrase. But this young boy went into the kitchen, climb back on the kitchen cabinet to get some cereal. He was indeed making himself at home. He had no idea that that phrase did not mean literally to act as if you were home.

Just because the person is positive, it does not mean that she is a nice or good person to have as a friend. Now, this is extremely important, up to 90% of individuals on spectrum report being bullied on an ongoing way in a serious manner. Individuals on the spectrum need to understand what a friend is. Just because someone is liked by other people does not mean that person is necessarily kind to you. And individuals who are friends should not hurt you
verbally or physically.

When you meet your friend’s parents the first time, do not tell them about problems you are having or secret things about your family. Our children often do not understand what is private information and what is public information. That needs to be directly taught and reinforced. What you see by that is that in many cases the teachers and individuals on the spectrum know many, many personal facts about the children’s parents because they were shared, only because the child was not taught what private information was.

When stopped for driving over the speed limit even though the real reading you speeding was that you are pushing too hard on the accelerator, it is better to simply call the police officer that you are sorry for speeding. This item is on there because a friend of mine on the spectrum was driving, she was speeding, she was pulled over by a police officer. A series of event happened and I received a phone call from her and her question to me was, why would a police officer asked me to lie. I, of course, had no idea what she was talking about and said, tell me more. She explained the situation and told me that the police officer said, “I bet you got a late start. And that’s why you were speeding.” And my friend said, “No, no. I actually started a few minutes early.” And then he said, well perhaps you got knocked. And she said, “No, I have a GPS. I know exactly where I’m going.” And then he gave her a couple of other excuses. She of course told the truth and of course, she got a ticket. I explained to her that it was accepted social protocol, and if a policeman gives you an excuse for speeding, even if it is not the truth, you are expected to agree and in fact to lie. And I also added that if she could perhaps manage a few tears, that that would also be in her favor. A good hidden curriculum item? Absolutely.

Do not tell a waiter or a waitress that his or her hair is messed up. Sometimes, honesty is not the best policy. That leads into the next item. When somebody asks if you like her new outfit, it is impolite to say, No, even if it’s not the truth. It is better to make a positive comment such as, nice outfit, I like that color on you. This item is on here because I have another friend who was spending a week with me and I had a meeting to go to so I came out. I had on a suit and I generally do the same thing every time. I look at the person in front of me and say, does this make me look fat? Now, even if you don’t know me and you don’t know how I look, you know the automatic response is, no. Well, my friend on the spectrum said, you don’t look any more fat today than you did yesterday. I thought that it would be kind of a good time to share with her the hidden curriculum item, and what I said was, if someone asks you that
question, it says not to use the word “fat” in the response. I thought that was a pretty good rule. And then I said, it’s probably good to say something like, “No, you look great.” And she looked at me and said, “But you don’t.” It’s okay to know that some people look or smell in a way that is offensive to you but it is rude to share your view even though it is a fact. Fat again is an example of sometimes the truth is not the best thing. Is it being nice? Is it being helpful?

If you make a mistake in balancing you checkbook, is it not necessary to inform the bank. I had a friend who found out that he made a mistake in his checkbook. He went to the bank to explain his mistake and could not understand why they were not interested. Here is a cartoon that appeared in the publication called Social Times. And here you see some young man smoking and our young man who says, “you’re probably not aware that your cigarette contain several human carcinogen as well as arsenic and” a good example of how it’s not best to volunteer information to individual who may not receive it kindly. Know your audience. What he is saying is factual but the people he is saying to probably do not wish to hear it and may not express their dislike in a kind way.

An adult party store is a store that sells pornographic items. It is not a place to get decoration for your grandmother’s birthday party and other items that is rue. I had a friend who was in charge of decorations for her grandmother’s party and she saw the word “adult,” went in and certainly had a surprise.

It’s right to be nice to your coworkers especially your boss whether you like them or not. If we wish to keep our jobs, we are nice to our supervisors. Whether we like them or not has nothing to do with how we act for them.

Here is another cartoon. It says, hey David, did you hear the news, Andrea finally got a bra. This illustrates very nicely, the information that is private that should not be shared.

When other seats are available in the theater, leave a space between yourself and a stranger because this is a protocol item. Leave at least one space and also if you are in the theater and there are extra spaces, if someone sits next to you, you may be concerned and might want to move. Now, see how diverse these items are, but do they have real meaning? Probably so.

If you’re at a movie theater watching a movie you had seen before, do not tell people around you what happened next.
When leaving a restaurant, never pick up money left on the table. This I discovered when I was lunching with a friend on a spectrum who when I left the money on the table, led it out to the car and gave it to me in the car.

It is a good general rule not to do in real life what people do in television or the movie even if the show is called reality. What we know is that the reality shows that we see on television have absolutely nothing to do with reality. But we teach that the term reality means in real life.

When you’re in a doctor’s waiting room, do not ask other people why they’re waiting to see the doctor or tell them in detail why you are there. You should tell this only to the receptionist, the nurse, and the doctor. Again, private information.

Here is the cartoon, not sharing information if it’s not kind or helpful. “Mrs. Hardy, do you know your house smells very strongly of urine?”

The next item again based upon someone I know, when the sign says, “Toilet out of order, please use floor below,” it means to use the restroom located on the next storey or lower down. See how complex and diverse these items can be?

Here is a child getting a present and the child said, “Oh this pants, I was hoping for something I like.” The protocol for receiving a gift even if you dislike it is to thank the other person even if you return it later.

New things are often difficult to learn. This is not unusual. Sometimes you may require help and that is absolutely fine. We need to teach that learning can be a challenge for all of us and that help is not negative. Help is seeing that it can get you needs met, and so we need to teach individuals on the spectrum how to ask for help.

There is a hidden curriculum in every single environment that we are in whether we are in an airport, whether we are with friends, whether we’re eating at a fast food restaurant or something a bit nicer. There’s a hidden curriculum for swimming pools whether they’re public or they’re private or even if you’re swimming in a lake for example which one of these can you go to the bathroom in?
I have illustrated schools have hidden curriculum rules. Teachers have hidden curriculum rules.

There is one area, the last area, the hidden curriculum of the bathroom that I would like to just very briefly discuss because it’s a gender issue. For women, the bathroom is a very social event. We go in groups, we go even if we don’t have to go. And when we are in the bathroom, we talk to each other. Men, boys on the other hand, do not go in group, they would never go if they didn’t have to go. And in fact, when they are in the bathroom, their brother could walk in and because they do not look at each other, a man, may not even acknowledge his brother or indeed even recognize him.

Women, when they are in the stall and they run out of toilet paper, they ask the woman next even if they don’t know her and that woman next will roll a toilet paper and pass it under the stall, an effective, efficient way of having your needs met. Men do not do that. And in fact, my good friend Peter said that if he were in a bathroom stall and a man ask him for toilet paper, he would simply raise his legs up and pretend like he wasn’t there. So the question I had to ask of course is, what would you do? And he said, first of all, a man would never run out of toilet paper because what a man does is he checks for toilet paper first. Women don’t check for toilet paper first. What we are programmed to do is to check to see if there are other woman in the bathroom, so the skill set is different. Boys need to be taught to check for toilet paper. Girls need to be taught to ask for toilet papers.

Now, bathroom behavior is also different in the way the bathrooms are constructed. In men’s bathroom across environment, there are least porcelain and unhygienic items that line almost every bathroom and these things are called urinals. In England, they’re called urinals and I like that term a bit better because it’s to me it sounds like a bit more offensive. But urinals have their own set of rule. For example, if there are five urinals, and urinal #1 is nearest the door, the first man will go to urinal #5, farthest away from the door. The next man who goes in would go either to urinal #3 in the middle or urinal #1 nearest the door. Now, they make the choice depending on whether or not they are comfortable or uncomfortable by the presence of a door. We as adult however, teach lining of behavior. We teach our neurotypical children and children on the spectrum to line up. They line up for recess, they line up for lunch, they line up at the grocery store and when we’re teaching that behavior, we do not think about generalization and what we know on many cases are individuals on the spectrum sometimes generalize differently than what we
There comes a time in a life of every boy on the spectrum where he can no longer go into the women’s bathroom. Let’s take our young man who is 14 years old. He has autism. He has gone to McDonald. He has to go to the bathroom. He can’t go in the women’s room. He walked into the men’s room. There is a man at urinal#5. He goes to urinal#4. Already a violation of one hidden curriculum rule.

The next thing, as I mentioned earlier, that man in the bathroom do not acknowledge each other’s existence. They do not look at each other. They do not talk to each other. But when we are teaching social skills to individuals on spectrum, we teach when you are in the presence of someone else, you need to acknowledge their existence. You need to nod. You need to wave. You need to say hello. And so we have our boy in the bathroom at urinal#4 turning to the man in urinal#5 and no matter what he says, it is inappropriate, he says, “How is it going?” The nice man at urinal#5 is unnerved and tries to get out of there as quickly as possible because hidden curriculum rules have been violated. But what if the man at urinal#5 is a sexual offender, what has been communicated to him. Very simply that he is vulnerable.

The next issue, we as woman do not like messes in the bathroom and indeed one of the things that we like to do is to ensure that as much as possible, bathrooms are clean and one of the ways that we do that is by teaching toileting skills to boys. Those who are neurotypical and those who are not, we teach them when they go to the bathroom, we like pants down to the ankles and underwear down to the ankles. Now, to be fair for teaching on regular toilet, we do not think about urinals.

Take our young man. He is at the mall. He’s with his mother. He’s 14 years old. He goes into the men’s room. There was a man at urinal#5. He goes to urinal#4. He greets the man at urinal#5 and then to use the urinal, he pulls his pants down to his ankles and his underwear down to his ankles. Nice man in urinal#5 is out of there as very quickly as he can. Sexual offender. Well, the sexual offender has received an invitation. Now, how important is urinal behavior compared to the Mayan and the Incan empire? And look at this slide. Which boy here is ours? And how important is it to teach the urinal behavior?

It’s important I think to understand the urinal rule. There’s actually a website that teaches a urinal rule. There are two apps that teach the urinal rules that
you can get on the iPhone. There is actually a urinal protocol music video that teaches the urinal rules and the rules can be quite complex as illustrated on slide#46, a child from Ontario gave me this item. It says, many bowling alleys and restaurants have ice on the urinals to keep them fresh so it is important to let kids know, never to eat ice they find in the bathroom. Something we often don’t think of. We also know that there are things in men’s room called urinal cakes and just because they are called cake does not mean that they are edible.

There is a hidden curriculum of the elevator. What are the rules for standing in the elevator? Where do you stand? Where do you look? What we know is that if there is one person, that person stands in the middle. If there’s two people, they stand corner to corner. If there’s three in this triangular state. And four, all four corners. And where do you look? Well, for no particular reason, you’re facing forward and you’re generally looking at the door or you’re looking at the floor numbers as they pass, as if you don’t already know that if you’re on floor 4 and you’re going up, that the next number is you’re likely to see is 5.

Teaching the hidden curriculum can be an overwhelming task. What I recommend is that you teach one hidden curriculum item a day. If you identify one item and you teach that and if you’re a parent and you’ve build it into the routine teaching one item at breakfast, or at dinner, or during bedtime routine, you can cover 365 items a year. If you’re an educational professional, and despite being in general ed or special ed setting, you select one item, you write it on the white board and you cover it during the first 3 minutes of class, you can cover 180 different items.

I also recommend that teachable moment. And what I mean by that is when you are in an environment and you quickly ask yourself what the rules are, the second question you ask is which ones from these are not directly taught. And to those that are not directly taught, take a minute or two, and explain them quickly to the children or the adolescents and if appropriate, model them. In that way, they will begin to learn skills and be able to immediately apply them.

For adults on the spectrum, the magazine called Real Simple is a fabulous resource to teach hidden curriculum items and it teaches things such as what information do you save for income tax, how do you know when you throw things away in your refrigerator, how do you organize your clothes in your dresser.

And then we have idioms and metaphors. If you would teach one idiom, one
metaphor per week what you would find out is that you will greatly enrich the lives of our children.

There are several materials out there that can be used to teach the hidden curriculum. Some are for individuals on the spectrum, some are designed for children and youth whether or not they have an exceptionality. For example, there are two hidden curriculum calendars, one designed for children, one designed for adolescents and adults. They have one item per day. There is also a hidden curriculum book, a hidden curriculum DVD and as I mentioned earlier, there are hidden curriculum apps for the iPhone, one for children, one for adolescents and adults.

This book is by Alex Packer called *How Rude*. It contains many hidden curriculum items designed for adolescents. It covers a wide range of topics. I recommend that adults read it before giving it to adolescents because many different items are covered. There is even one that talks about what to do if you walk in on your parents. That in reality happen sometimes, the parents may want to choose when to give that particular item to their children.

Here is an example of *The Ten Commandments of Telephone Etiquette* that illustrate how the information in the book is valuable but it also uses a sense of humor. I appreciate that about Alex Packer’s books, and for adolescents on the spectrum who read at this level, it’s generally very enjoyable.

Nancy: I wanted you to know that the slides aren’t advancing, so if you could maybe describe what that slide looks like.

Brenda: I am so sorry. This slide illustrates the hidden curriculum of telephone calls and it actually says things such as, thou shall not make or accept calls during dinner. Thou shall not eat while talking on the phone. Thou shall not carry on conversations with people in the room while on the telephone. It says also that, whenever you take a message, you need to give it to the person, and then the last item says, thou shall not beep, whistle, or pretend to be an incoming fax.

The next book is something that many of you may be familiar with and that is, *The Amelia Bedelia Treasury*. Amelia Bedelia as you may recall is a very lovely woman who has many skills but she is extremely literal and it is a great way to introduce the hidden curriculum to young children.

The next book is called *A Little Book of Manners for Boys*. This book is narrated
by Coach Bob who I’ve had many boys and men read it say that it is pretty true to form and Coach Bob gives recommendation on a variety of behaviors including things such as how to greet, how to say goodbye, because what we know is that the formal greetings that we teach often apply to adults but they don’t apply to kids. So we need to ensure that we are teaching child specific language.

The next book by the Barnes’ who also wrote A Little Book of Manners For Boys is called A Little Book of Manners: Courtesy and Kindness for Young Ladies. The narrator of this book is Aunt Emilie and it provides a variety of hidden curriculum rules for girls.

I think that the majority of girls on the spectrum who need to learn hidden curriculum items can benefit by The American Girl series. Some of you may be familiar with the American Girl series as that particular company that sells fairly expensive dolls that depict different periods of time. They have a part of their company that publishes books and these are books for modern American girls and they have about 20 different books at this point in time. They are very well illustrated. They are generally paperback. Some of them are activity books and some of them are books that simply are read. There are books called Help and More Help and they are written in a Dear Ann Landers, Dear Abby style.

There’s a book called The Care and Keeping of Your Emotions. A book called The Care and Keeping of Your Body. There’s a book on how to be a good sports, how to have a slumber party, how to survive in middle school, what to do if you a like a boy, and these all focus on girls having good self-esteem, understanding their environment and recognizing that they have skills. It’s a marvelous theories which I’ve used from girls at age 8 to about age 17, and they are designed not for girls on the spectrum but just for girls in general. There’s even a book for friends to complete, where one friend will write, you know, my favorite ice cream is, and then another girl will write, my favorite ice cream is, so it provides a comparison- contrast to show a friend share and what friends may not have in common.

Slide 62 provides an illustration of the book More Help which is written by a columnist and slide#64 is a book called The Care and Keeping of You: The Body Books for Girls that talks about hygiene and developmental issue.

The next book is called Practical Solutions for Everyday Challenges for Children with Asperger Syndrome. Now this book is available on Spanish and also
available in English and it had approximately 100 different hidden curriculum items that children need to know, things such as how to start a conversation, what constitute an emergency, what to do if you see a dog you don’t know, just a variety of different items.

On slide #67, there’s a book called *NO B.O! The Head-to-Toe Book of Hygiene for Preteens*, for individuals who have problems with hygiene and many of our children and adolescents do. This book incorporates a sense of humor. It has a table of contents that talks about areas of importance for the sense of humor such as there’s a chapter called, Hair: Crowning Glory or Constant Struggle? There’s a chapter called Body Odor Basics, another called Face Facts. This book in addition gives facts about the body. For example, when it’s talking about brushing your teeth, it talks about when you start losing your baby teeth and when you will get your adult teeth, and then it also includes desire facts. So that when it’s talking about teeth, there’s a fact about how many teeth alligators may have. So it’s interesting on a variety of different levels.

By Kari Dunn Buron, there’s a book called *A 5 is Against The Law!: Social Boundaries: Straight Up!* It’s an honest guide for teens and young adults. This book talks about some of the hidden curriculum items that can get our folks in trouble, things such as understanding the difference between trying to get to know someone and stalking them which has become a problem that actually has been written about in our research literature. It’s well written in an informal style that conveys excellent information.

The next slide is *As A Gentleman Would Say Responses To Life’s Important (And Sometimes Awkward) Events*. This particular book on the first half, gives you a variety of different tips that can be helpful, things such as a gentleman always attempts make sure his breath is fresh, and make sure that he is carrying mints. The second half of the book offers a different format and in fact, it offers a format of an event, what not to do and what to do. For example, when a gentleman receives a duplicate of something he already has, he does not say, you know, I always wanted the second one of this, or I guess great minds think alike. What he does say is, thank you so much, I really like this which is the truth, and then later on, quietly he returns it.

What we know is that we need to ensure that we teach the skills that our individuals need to be successful. If we teach the hidden curriculum, one of the things that we will know is that individual on the spectrum are more likely to be safe in their environment and also will have more skills to be able to make and
I would like to conclude with the slide, from a book that I found in 2002, and the book was called *Could Do Better* and it was a teacher’s report on students. And I’d like to share just a couple of teacher’s responses. One teacher said about a student, “Although he seems to view the school masters with a --and Olympian contempt, the present illusion of a superior mind is usually shattered by a display of abominable ignorance. He is a lazy observer and lazy in acquiring the solid factual foundations of knowledge. Well, this could not keep the student from winning a Nobel Prize in Chemistry.”

Another teacher said, this student is a constant trouble to everybody and he’s always in some scrape or another. He cannot be trusted to behave himself anywhere. He has no ambition. He is constantly late for school. He has seen his book and papers and various other things into which I need not enter. He is so regular in his irregularity that I really don’t know what to do. That is Mr. Winston Churchill.”

Another teacher reported that this student is inclined to be troublesome and disobedient. Everything he does is spoiled by his attitude towards work in school and by his bad behavior. The teacher further said, I hope he’ll be happy and successful in his new school, but he must change attitude to school life in general. This student grew up to be Ken Follett, the very famous novelist.

Another teacher wrote that this student is then ill showing little or no ambition even in mathematics, but that did not prevent him as an adult of writing the Winnie the Pooh series and this teacher said, that this student would be very good pupil if she lived in this world and this student became Dame Judi Dench.

What we need to do is teach the information that is relevant and also realize at the same time that are individuals on the spectrum have limitless potential. They are limited only by what we teach them. And when they are young, we cannot predict how far they will go as adult. We only know that we need to arm them with the skills that will help them make their journey be successful as possible.

I hope that this brief presentation on the hidden curriculum has given you some new and different ideas to think about and please consider looking to our individuals on the spectrum of having great potential and identifying the skills that are truly important for them to be successful. Thank you very much.
Nancy: Thank you so much. I wanted to ask you if there is a website where maybe these books are listed for folks.

Brenda: Yes. The books are listed on [www.asperger.net](http://www.asperger.net).

Nancy: And is that where they can also find the hidden curriculum calendar?

Brenda: Yes.

Nancy: And you suggested teaching one hidden curriculum item a day and maybe idioms and metaphors, maybe one time a week?

Brenda: Absolutely. That would be, that is wonderful.

Nancy: And I’m never sending my son to a public restroom again, I just want you to know he is going to just have to hold it.

Brenda: It’s very frightening, but you know, if our children have the skills that they will go in like other children, use the restroom and come out. What we want them to do is blend.

Nancy: We have a couple of minutes. I wanted to let those listeners who are using the telephone know that they can raise their hand to ask a question by pressing *2. I let you know that and in the meantime I’ll go to the questions that have come in through the website. I will also let everyone know that I will attempt to advance the slide after this presentation so they will be included in the online webinar, so I will make an attempt to do that.

I had some questions come in that was asking about, how do you teach the hidden curriculum item in the moment and maintain the dignity of the person on the spectrum?

Brenda: By just approaching it the same way you would approach in a situation and in fact, the individual on the spectrum does not need to be singled out, you may say, if there are several individual, okay now, remember, here is what you need to do. I mean it could be something as simple as, you know, if you put your quarter in the machine at the petting zoo and you turn the knobs and the food doesn’t come out, try to turn the knob a little further or ask an adult. It can be done, I mean, it should be done in the same way that that you’re teaching
Nancy: Very nice. My 8-year old son has no concept of stranger danger. How do I help him understand that there are strangers?

Brenda: And that’s an excellent question. It also depends upon how old the individual is because you may want to give specific rule such as you only go in a car with, you only go in the grocery store with, and instead of talking about stranger danger, if you tell the child what to do and how to do it, like for example, in a grocery store, if you get lost, here is where you go and here is what you do, or for the child who is non-verbal, give them a card that you can teach them to show to other people. And then teach them what to say if someone that they don’t know wants them to do something. But instead of teaching what not to do, try to teach positively what to do.

Nancy: Do you think the hidden curriculum item should be taught in a social skills group or one on one?

Brenda: I think it depends upon the child in a situation. I think that all children can benefit from the hidden curriculum whether they have autism or not, it’s just that our kids specifically need them. So it maybe that you teach the item to an entire class and maybe our child will need a booster, and he might get the instruction twice.

Nancy: Okay, here is someone from Canada asking, will making a statement, really teen say awful things on Facebook, my friend gets frustrated with the few who want to be a friend, then say, but they have a boyfriend. So they want to be a friend but they have a boyfriend. She is unable to explain what this means.

Brenda: Okay, one of the very best resources about this is really the American Girl book. There is an American Girl book on boyfriends and girlfriends, and it talks about boys who are friends and boys that you have a more special feeling for, but the thing that it does and it talks about that I like is that, you need to have a solid friendship with a boy if you’re a girl before you make that boy a boyfriend. And it really does a nice job and at this point, I will say that actually that book could tell you what the difference between a friend and a boyfriend is.

Nancy: This person shares the same affliction with her child, as I do mine. She says that her daughter always acts like she is unfriendly and rude when people greet or compliment her. How can I teach my daughter to respond nicely to the
greetings and compliments of other people?

Brenda: Okay, now, this depends upon the level of skills, but what I would do is give a script because the quickest way to get someone to stop complimenting you is to accept the compliment. Okay, because if someone compliments you and you say, “no, no,” or you make a face what they do is they continue to compliment you. So if you want them to stop, the nicest thing to do is to say, oh thank you so much, oh that is so kind of you. And give her a script, write it down and practice, practice, practice. And then you can also tackle on to the end of that, that so very kind of you, and then she can also perhaps make an exit with something like, I’ll talk to you later, that will allow her to get out of the situation, that teach her to accept the compliment and move on. And if she doesn’t understand why people are complimenting her, tell her that it is an accepted social protocol to which thee maybe not be any logic but it just happens and here’s what you do.

Nancy: Okay, I think we have time for one more question and I’ve heard you talk about this one before. So I’m going to ask, how do you extinguish cursing in public when upset? My 10-year old has learned to curse in school. I tried positive reinforcement and replacement, but he hears all the other children doing it and thinks it’s okay.

Brenda: Okay, well, you know what, he hears the other students do it and then what he also does is he hears the other student laughing at that student and they think that that’s the appropriate behavior to do. I have a philosophy that maybe different than most people and that is I believe this is an accepted social behavior among young adolescents and I am very much supportive of finding a peer mentor and teaching the hidden curriculum rule of, if you’re going to curse at school, you need to look around first and see if there is an adult present, and if there is, do not curse or you’re going to get in trouble. If there’s not an adult present, and there are other children who do not mind cursing, then you may be able to say specific words but also, if you look around, there are also some children who don’t like cursing and they will not like you if you curse. So you need to find out who you can curse in front of and who you cannot. But truly, it’s something that most adolescents whether they’re boys or girls.

Nancy: I think a lot of this stuff is not autism specific.

Brenda: Not.
Nancy: I think my typical need to learn these things, my husband needs to learn some of these things.

Brenda: I agree, I really think that the hidden curriculum, I mean I think every general educator should start out the morning by selecting a hidden curriculum item, write it in on the whiteboard and covering it with the entire class, because we all need boosters, reminding ourselves of what unwritten rules are. I agree because, I mean because many of them just have to do with being kind and respectful people and understanding that. I will it will be much better off if we do that.

Nancy: I agree, let’s start a revolution.

Brenda: There you go.

Nancy: Dr. Myles, I want to thank you so much for your presentation tonight. I know you helped a lot of people tonight and we’re all going to go out and have our elementary school teachers and middle school and high school teachers start their day with the hidden curriculum items.

Brenda: Well, thank you so very much for this opportunity.

Nancy: One more time, can you say the website where they can find some of these resources?

Brenda: The resources include The Hidden Curriculum Calendar, Hidden Curriculum Book and DVD, the American Girl series, the book called How Rude, and The Amelia Bedelia series and these can be found at a variety of places including Amazon.com and I list it on the website www.asperger.net.

Nancy: Wonderful. I did want to thank you once again for being here this evening and I also want to let our listeners know that if you want a transcript of this event, you can join the Spectrum Gold Club by clicking on the button on the screen if you’re logged into the website and we will send you a copy of this webinar, audio and transcript plus send you 29 other webinars when you join.

Also, tell us what you think except about the part about the video is not advancing, tell us at 877-211-0212 extension 1 and leave a short comment or a testimonial. Again that number is 877-211-0212. And again, thanks everyone, and I hope you all have a great night.