

“Libraries and Autism: We’re Connected”

FINAL SCRIPT

VIDEO	AUDIO
<p data-bbox="186 247 295 279">TEASE</p> <p data-bbox="186 317 410 348">Title Graphic:</p> 	<p data-bbox="747 247 833 279"><i>Music</i></p>
<p data-bbox="186 483 383 514">HOST OPEN</p>	<p data-bbox="747 483 1414 548">MEG: I’m Meg Kolaya, Director of the Scotch Plains Public Library.</p> <p data-bbox="747 590 1357 655">DAN: And I’m Dan Weiss, Director of the Fanwood Memorial Library.</p> <p data-bbox="747 697 1442 835">MEG: Our libraries serve as focal points of our towns. We provide ways for people to connect to information and offer many activities and programs.</p> <p data-bbox="747 877 1406 974">DAN: We’re enthusiastic about serving our communities, and we always try to do it in a welcoming and inclusive way.</p> <p data-bbox="747 1016 1403 1081">MEG: But for people with autism spectrum disorders, we may not always be successful.</p> <p data-bbox="747 1123 1443 1188">DAN: Sometimes people with autism and their families don’t feel comfortable at the library.</p>
	<p data-bbox="747 1226 1417 1323">MEG: And library staff may not be at ease or knowledgeable about how to create a welcoming atmosphere for them.</p> <p data-bbox="747 1365 1446 1503">DAN: This spectrum of disorders is much more common than you might think. Approximately 1 out of 50 children ages 6 to 17 in the United States is currently diagnosed with autism.</p> <p data-bbox="747 1545 1446 1753">MEG: Right about now you may be thinking, 'Oh no, not another boring training film!', but this short video will focus on what you need to know about autism and offer a few specific techniques on how you can truly serve this growing population.</p> <p data-bbox="747 1795 1446 1892">DAN: Our libraries provided this information to our combined staff at a comprehensive training workshop.</p>

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	<p>MEG: And we’d like to share some of what we learned. We hope it will make a difference at your library.</p>
<p>WHAT IS AUTISM?</p> <p><i>General b-roll – people w/ autism; caregivers</i></p> <p>LOWER THIRD: Dr. Linda Meyer Executive Director, AUTISM, NJ</p> <p>LOWER THIRD: Dr. Jill Harris Director of Psychology, Children’s Specialized Hospital</p>	<p><i>Music</i></p> <p>NARR: If you have a hundred people within your library building, the chances are great that at least one or more will have Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD.</p> <p>No single individual with autism will display all of its possible characteristics. Hence, ASD is truly a spectrum disorder, providing a vast array of challenges and opportunities.</p> <p>LINDA: Autism is a developmental disability, which appears in a child’s life before age three. And children with autism have deficits or impairments in language, communication, and difficulties with behavior.</p> <p>ASD covers the broad scope of abilities, personalities, and sensitivities that people with this disorder have.</p> <p>There’s a saying, “If you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.”</p> <p>JILL: The spectrum goes from people who are extremely high functioning – very verbal, very articulate, very intelligent – to people who are really, really struggling and not able to communicate in a meaningful way. So, it’s so very, very mixed.</p>
<p>LOWER THIRD: Adrienne Robertiello Autism Educator, Children’s Specialized Hospital, founder, Community Partnership for People with Autism</p>	<p>ASD is not contagious and people with this condition shouldn’t be looked at unkindly.</p> <p>ADRIENNE: If the library staff is looking at each other or making comments on the side, and really not knowing how to um handle the situation, I think that’s difficult, because you know coming up and just talking to me might solve the whole problem.</p>

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	<p>Begin by considering the whole person. Refer to him or her as “a person with autism” rather than “an autistic person.”</p> <p>The more familiar you are with the condition, the better you’ll be at helping to make your library a welcoming place for people with autism.</p>
<p><u>GRAPHIC CARD: SECTION HEADER</u></p>  <p>Understanding Impaired Social Behavior</p>	<p><i>Music</i></p>
<p><i>B-roll lack of eye contact</i></p> <p><i>B-roll repetitive behavior</i></p>	<p>NARRATOR: Understanding impaired social behaviors is a good first step.</p> <p>Some common social behaviors of people with autism include lack of awareness of others and difficulty socializing.</p> <p><i>Brianna: I don’t want to answer questions.</i></p> <p>NARR: They may seem distant or lack eye contact and sometimes have inappropriate emotional responses.</p>
<p><i>General library b-roll (not people with autism)</i></p>	<p>NARR: Let’s concentrate on how we can best offer excellent customer service to people with autism and their families in the library setting. As you listen to these tips, you may find yourself thinking how universal these strategies can be when dealing with <i>any</i> library patron.</p> <p>LINDA: I think a library staff person who’s working at the front desk should initially treat everybody exactly the same, without any pre-conceived notions. Somebody walks up to their desk, if I was behind the desk, I would wait</p>

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	and see how the individual approaches me, and tries to communicate with me.
<p><i>Library staffer greets Ben</i></p>  <p><i>Address them by name first</i></p>	<p>As with any patron, greet people with a receptive smile and personal words of welcome.</p> <p>Address them by using their name first.</p> <p><i>Librarian: So Ben, we can now check these out to you.</i></p> <p>LINDA: Most of us would agree that saying the name first, to make sure that you get someone’s attention, and then making a simple direct request, is your best chance at having the individual with autism understand what you’re asking or telling them.</p>
 <p><i>Speak directly, simply and slowly</i></p>  <p><i>Try making eye contact</i></p>	<p>Help the individual focus by talking directly, simply and slowly.</p> <p>Whether or not the individual makes eye contact or responds, you will have helped them feel at ease in your library.</p>
 <p><i>Avoid open-ended questions</i></p>	<p>To help figure out what their interests are, avoid broad, open-ended questions.</p> <p>JILL: You might ask a question that’s close-ended, “Oh, do you like books about animals?” Then you could say yes, no. You don’t really have to process that or come up with a lengthy answer.</p> <p><i>Librarian: Do you think you have enough?</i> <i>Ben: I think that might be it.</i></p>
<p><i>Library staffer interacting w/ Ben</i></p> <p><i>Staffer speaking w/ PWA</i></p> <p><i>General b-roll PWA approaching desk/walking</i></p>	<p>Repeating may be necessary, but increasing the volume of your speech will not help them understand you. It may in fact be disturbing to the individual’s senses.</p> <p>A person’s response – or lack of response –will give you a first indication of their level of understanding and method of communication.</p>
<p>GRAPHIC CARD: SECTION</p>	<p><i>Music</i></p>

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<p>HEADER</p>  <p>Understanding Impaired Language Skills</p>	
<p><i>Linda on-camera</i></p> <p><i>B-roll interaction w/ librarian with Ben at computer</i></p>	<p>LINDA: Most individuals with autism have impaired language skills. And initially many parents feel that their children might be deaf, because they're not responding to their name or attending to loud noises.</p> <p>JILL: Sometimes the language could be different in terms of echoing or sounding kind of scripted, sounding kind of pedantic, kind of like lecturing.</p> <p><i>Ben: I look on Wikipedia all the time.</i> <i>Librarian: Oh, that's good.</i> <i>Ben: And I'm a huge fan of Celine Dione.</i> <i>Librarian: I love her too.</i></p> <p>Sometimes the tone of the language could be like monotone, could be kind of flat. So, even though there's a wide spectrum, you can see some of those behaviors more commonly than others.</p> <p>Impaired language skills may be comprised of repetitive use of words or phrases, difficulty expressing needs, or the inability to understand what others are saying.</p> <p><i>Librarian: Let's turn the next page.</i></p>
<p><i>Adrienne on-camera</i></p> <p><i>Adrienne with her son</i></p>	<p>ADRIENNE: My son, his communication level being nonverbal, we do a lot of body language with each other, make a lot of eye contact, which has taken some work to do. But he really responds to, um, very animated things.</p> <p>LINDA: Some begin to speak when they're young and then lose the ability to speak. And some individuals with autism never learn how</p>

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 <p><i>Provide a non-verbal communication board</i></p>	<p>to use verbal speech. Some use sign language. And others might use alternative or augmentative systems like pictures. Or actually electronic devices in order to communicate.</p> <p>Your library should have a communication board on hand with pictures that help you ask “yes” or “no” questions.</p> <p>You may find that putting in a little extra time and effort will be the key to breaking down barriers of communication.</p>
<p>GRAPHIC CARD: SECTION HEADER</p>  <p>Understanding Sensory Challenges</p>	<p><i>Music</i></p>
<p><i>Marco pushing books away</i></p>	<p>In addition to language impairments, you should also be aware that people with autism have sensory challenges. Bright lights may be disturbing. They may find vivid colors, certain noises, smells, or textures irritating.</p> <p>LINDA: If a child or adult with autism was surprised to hear a loud noise or was distracted by an activity or someone walking by, they might cover their ears with their hands or wave their hands in front of their eyes.</p> <p><i>Ben: Sometimes some people because I’m sensitive to buttons, if someone’s sensitive to lights like I’m closing my eyes like... They could be um, be uncomfortable.</i></p> <p>Some people with autism have hypo — meaning slow — sensory response and may seek out stimulation that others shy away from.</p>

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<p>Wiggling</p>	<p>is something that’s part of the nature of the disability. So my big tip would really be if it’s not bothering somebody else, let it go.</p> <p>Did you know that most behavior is a form of communication?</p> <p>It may simply be a way of saying, "I’m excited!", "It’s too loud for me!", "My routine is upset!", or "I need a break!"</p>
	<p>JILL: Some behaviors, I think, are disruptive and you really can’t just ignore them so sometimes some of the calling out or screeching or screaming can be something you’d really need to intervene with because it does bother other people.</p> <p>LINDA: I think there are a few reasons why and when library staff should intervene and that might be when a behavior is embarrassing or stigmatizing for the individual with autism. Or the person with autism is about to hurt themselves or someone else.</p>
<p><i>GRAPHIC CARD over footage:</i></p>  <p><i>Behaviors that shouldn’t be ignored –</i></p> <p>Destructive activity</p> <p>Violent Tantrums</p> <p>Loud or inappropriate behavior</p> <p>And inappropriate sexual behavior</p>	<p>Here are some situations that shouldn’t be ignored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Destructive activity – such as banging on a keyboard or tearing pages of a book ▪ Violent tantrums ▪ Loud or inappropriate interaction with other patrons ▪ And inappropriate sexual behavior
 <p><i>Offer to help caregiver</i></p> <p><i>Staffer sitting next to PWA</i></p> <p><i>Staffer trying to redirect attention</i></p>	<p>How can you best handle unsafe or disruptive behaviors? Here are some things you can try:</p> <p>Offer to help the caregiver and be empathetic.</p> <p><i>Librarian: Hi, good morning, how are you today?</i></p> <p><i>Adrienne: Hi Paula, how are you?</i></p>

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<p>Call 911</p> <p>Don't touch the person</p>	<p>Do not touch the individual and avoid standing too close.</p> <p>LINDA: I think with increased awareness we can be less fearful and more understanding and more patient.</p>
<p>GRAPHIC CARD: SECTION HEADER</p>  <p>Relationship Building</p>	<p><i>Music</i></p>
<p><i>B-roll general library</i></p> <p><i>B-roll staffer w/ people with autism & caregivers</i></p> <p> Don't be condescending</p> <p> Be aware of your own attitude</p> <p> Don't use caregiver as an intermediary</p>	<p>NARR: It's always easier to prevent problems rather than to correct them. Building relationships with families with autism will be mutually rewarding. Here are some suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Never be condescending or blame the caregiver. ▪ Be aware of your own attitude, comments and body language. Avoid being judgmental. ▪ Don't consider a caregiver as an intermediary, as it tends to make the person with autism feel unaccepted, incompetent, and helpless.
<p> Be an ambassador</p>	<p>This is an opportunity for you to send a message to other patrons that your library welcomes all individuals.</p> <p>LINDA: I think the library staff can begin to be good ambassadors by first having an understanding of autism and being an advocate for all patrons, but particularly patrons with autism. I think they should always appear confident and knowledgeable.</p>
	<p>JILL: When somebody's acting out in some way or looks a little bit different, a lot of times what do you do is you look around to see how everyone else is reacting. And if the other library patrons can look around and see the</p>

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	<p>librarians are saying, “Hey, this is no big deal,” they’re taking it in stride, then I think that that will be a great cue for the other patrons behavior to do the same.</p>
<p><i>Staffer gives tour of library</i></p>  <p><i>Give a tour of your library</i></p>	<p>Here are a few other tips.</p> <p>An individual, parent and/or caregiver may be coming to the library for the first time. Provide ways for it to be comforting and worthwhile.</p> <p>Give them a tour or direct them to areas of interest.</p>
 <p><i>Know where your autism materials are shelved</i></p> <p><i>Ben & family w/ autism materials & close-ups autism materials</i></p>	<p>Become well informed about the location of autism-related materials, accommodations made within the library for individuals with autism, and the resources and amenities that are available for patrons with various disabilities.</p> <p>LINDA: It’s important for our library to have autism specific information available. Autism is so prevalent. And libraries are always a good source for accurate information, complete information, not only for parents who have children with autism but for professionals and extended family members.</p>
<p><i>Staffer shows “This Is My Library” to Brianna & parents</i></p>  <p><i>Offer “This is My Library” book</i></p>	<p>We have created a book called “This is My Library”, which you may customize for your own building and services.</p> <p>Offer it to caregivers so they can read it with their child before their first visit to the library.</p> <p>JILL: Because people with autism, a lot of times, they really need to know what to expect. They like structure, they like routine. And by having this book, you can kind of pre-teach what the structure and routine is going to be of a library visit. So I think it’s a great thing.</p> <p>Publicize your library’s commitment to serving all members of your community.</p>

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<p><i>Cut-away decal again</i></p> 	<p>DAN: After our workshop we sent a press release to the local papers letting them know of our staff’s newly heightened awareness.</p> <p>MEG: We posted this decal on our front door to let the public know we are committed to welcoming and inclusive customer service for all members of our community.</p>
<p>GRAPHIC under webpage: <i>www.thejointlibrary.org/autism</i></p>	<p>DAN: At our website: www.librariesandautism.org, you’ll find a wealth of materials that can be adapted to your individual needs.</p> <p>MEG: You’ll be able to watch this video again, and find links to autism resources and to our partners.</p> <p>DAN: There’s a sample press release, the decal and other graphics, and templates for the communication boards and our book, “This is My Library.” We hope we’ve been able to help you make your library a more welcoming space for everyone in the autism community.</p>
	<p>Staff, PWAs & Caregivers: Libraries and Autism: We’re Connected!</p>

**Special thanks to Ben, Brianna, Marco
and their families, without whom this video
would not have been possible.**



Project Coordinators

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www.libraryconnections.net

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Dr. Jill Harris

Dr. Linda Meyer

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Music
DeWolfe Library

Credit Roll Music
“Emerald Eyes”
by Danny Weiss
Courtesy of Flying Fish Records

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