Autism Vision
Creating Classroom Connections for Children With High-Functioning Autism and Asperger Syndrome
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Introduction

_AutismVision: Creating Classroom Connections for Children With High-Functioning Autism and Asperger Syndrome_ is a comprehensive resource for teachers, parents, counselors, and other concerned individuals who want to educate typically developing children about high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome. This guide and its accompanying videotape/DVD are designed with you in mind. This *AutismVision* program will provide ways for you to educate children about HFA and Asperger syndrome and increase social acceptance and understanding of children with these disorders. By using these resources, you will help create a more accepting, inclusive classroom environment for all children.

Children on the autism spectrum have only recently begun to be educated alongside their typically developing peers. Based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2006), an education act to provide Federal funding to State and local school systems to provide special education services to eligible students with disabilities, children with HFA and Asperger syndrome are included in general education classrooms and should receive the same benefits and services as their classmates. However, simply placing children with HFA and Asperger syndrome in a classroom does not necessarily ensure positive outcomes or acceptance by their peers. Research has found that educating students about differences—in this case, HFA and Asperger syndrome—can impact their attitudes toward and understanding of people affected by these disorders. This *AutismVision* program provides a structured intervention that can help typical peers learn about autism spectrum disorders and also how to be good friends and classmates to people who have these disorders.

A “socially inclusive” classroom fosters healthy interactions between children with disabilities and those without disabilities.
This AutismVision program is designed for use in classrooms that include children on the autism spectrum who are high functioning. This includes those who display symptoms and behaviors that are typical for children with diagnoses of high-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome. The information in this guide and the related videotape/DVD may not be appropriate if the child in your classroom has moderate or severe autism. However, this AutismVision program is part of a series of videos and related guides for different age groups and ability levels across the autism spectrum. Please see www.danya.com/AutismVision.asp for information on other classroom resources.

This AutismVision program was developed to foster the social inclusion of children with HFA and Asperger syndrome in general education classrooms. The program consists of a multimedia package designed to reach children ages 8 to 11; it is intended for classrooms that include children with HFA and Asperger syndrome.

The goals of this AutismVision program are to:

- Increase typical children’s understanding of HFA and Asperger syndrome
- Foster empathy and positive attitudes toward children with HFA and Asperger syndrome
- Promote positive social interactions between children with HFA and Asperger syndrome and their typical peers
Program Elements

This *AutismVision* program consists of a videotape/DVD and this facilitator’s guide.

The 14-minute videotape/DVD provides classmates with information about HFA and Asperger syndrome that is developmentally appropriate for children ages 8 to 11. The videotape/DVD is designed to educate and promote empathy in classmates of children with HFA and Asperger syndrome. Specifically, the videotape/DVD highlights what life is like for children with HFA and Asperger syndrome and includes personal interviews and examples. It creates a solid foundation for understanding and interacting with children with these disorders.

This facilitator’s guide is designed to support the efforts of teachers, parents, and other advocates as they conduct the videotape/DVD presentation. Step-by-step information is provided and includes:

- Suggestions for conducting the video presentation
- Pre- and postviewing activities
- Additional exercises and ideas for discussion
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about HFA and Asperger syndrome
- Tips for creating a supportive classroom environment
AutismVision

Guidelines for Program Facilitators

Who can facilitate the program? While teachers may be the most likely users of the program, any supportive or concerned adult can implement it. An informed parent, school counselor, or another advocate can conduct the presentation without receiving specialized education or training. All of the necessary information and procedures are explained and highlighted in this guide. It is designed to be easy to use!

The following are general guidelines for conducting an effective classroom presentation with this AutismVision program.

Be prepared and know the information. Before conducting the AutismVision program, it is important that you have a good knowledge base on the topic of HFA and Asperger syndrome. This guide provides you with answers to Frequently Asked Questions (page 35), as well as Additional Resources (page 41) for further reading.

To prepare to facilitate this AutismVision program, you should:

1. Skim through this guide to get an overall impression of the program and presentation components
2. Watch the AutismVision videotape/DVD
3. Read this guide thoroughly
4. Decide which pre- and postviewing activities you will use
5. Gather all materials needed to conduct the presentation and activities
6. Review additional resources from the list in the back of this guide

If you are not the classroom teacher, you will need to coordinate with the school administration and/or teacher in order to schedule a time to conduct the presentation in the classroom.
Promote a positive classroom environment. When conducting this presentation, it is important to promote an atmosphere of compassion, understanding, and mutual respect. Emphasize that everyone is different in some way and that we all must adjust to and respect differences. By explaining that children with HFA and Asperger syndrome may have unique or different ways of doing things, you can also emphasize that everyone has his or her own way of relating to the world. Stress that it is important not to laugh at or make fun of children with HFA or Asperger syndrome or any other condition and impress upon the class the importance of accepting all children—with or without HFA or Asperger syndrome.

Encourage creative thought and discussion. In order to facilitate a program that engages children while emphasizing key learning points, ask open-ended questions that allow classmates to think about the question and answer in their own way. Simply asking “yes or no” questions will not generate a lengthy discussion or give children time to think about the issues at hand. For example, rather than ask: “Does anyone know what HFA or Asperger Syndrome is?” you might ask: “What do you already know about HFA and Asperger syndrome?”

Advocate for an accurate description of the disorders. Some students may have inaccurate or erroneous beliefs about HFA and Asperger syndrome. Help them correct such misconceptions by pointing out where they are mistaken. Reinforce important points and information about HFA and Asperger syndrome, making sure the children understand how HFA or Asperger syndrome truly impact their classmate. Be prepared to address such common and erroneous children’s beliefs such as:

- HFA and Asperger syndrome are contagious; you can “catch” them.
- Children with HFA or Asperger syndrome act weird or are dangerous.
• Other friends will make fun of me if I play with a classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome.

• Children with HFA or Asperger syndrome do not want any friends.

Other common myths or concerns about HFA and Asperger syndrome are addressed in the “Truth About HFA and Asperger Syndrome” section of this guide (page 38).

Throughout the presentation—and especially at the end—be sure to restate and emphasize the following take-home messages of the AutismVision program to the class:

• Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome are first and foremost children; they are like other children in many ways.

• Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome experience the world differently.

• Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome need and want friends.

• Understanding HFA and Asperger syndrome is the key to creating connections.

• HFA and Asperger syndrome are not contagious.

• No one should ever tease or make fun of someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome.

• When a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome feels included, everyone in the classroom can learn and grow!
Should the Child With HFA or Asperger Syndrome Be in the Classroom During the Presentation?

The primary goal of this *AutismVision* program is to educate typically developing peers about HFA and Asperger syndrome. Whether the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome should be present in the classroom during the presentation should be carefully considered. Given that every child with HFA or Asperger syndrome is unique and has different strengths and weaknesses, each case needs to be considered individually. Some children with HFA or Asperger syndrome may benefit from being in the classroom and hearing the presentation and student questions. If they have disclosed their disorder to classmates, these children may even choose to answer student questions and contribute to the conversation; this process can be very empowering for them. However, being present during the presentation may cause other children with HFA or Asperger syndrome undue stress or anxiety. For this reason, it is recommended that the determination of whether to include the child during the presentation be made collaboratively by the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome, his or her parents, the facilitator, and relevant school personnel. Permission to disclose an individual’s disability should be received from the student and the student’s parents or guardians.
Conducting the Presentation

This *AutismVision* program can be used in any general education classroom that includes a student with HFA or Asperger syndrome. A typical presentation will consist of a brief introduction to the program, pre-viewing activities, viewing of the *AutismVision* videotape/DVD, postviewing activities, and a conclusion. Use the following information to help you structure and prepare for the classroom presentation.

**Introduction.** At the start of the presentation, introduce yourself and briefly explain why you are in class. Highlight the agenda for the presentation. Suggested wording could include:

“Hello boys and girls! My name is _______, and I’m here today to talk to you about high-functioning autism and Asperger syndrome. We are going to talk about what high-functioning autism and Asperger syndrome are, what it’s like for children who have these disabilities, and how to be a friend to someone who has high-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome. We’ll also do some activities together and watch a short video called ‘AutismVision.’ Then, I’m going to ask you some questions, and when I’m finished, you can ask me any questions you would like.”

**Pre-Viewing Activities.** Next, you will want to conduct one or more pre-viewing activities with the class. These activities are designed to get students thinking before watching the videotape/DVD. Decide in advance of the presentation which activities you would like to complete and be sure to bring any necessary materials. Pre-viewing activities for this *AutismVision* program start on page 12.

**Viewing the AutismVision Videotape/DVD.** The next step is to present the *AutismVision* videotape/DVD to the class. You may want to introduce it by saying:

“Now we’re going to watch a video called ‘AutismVision.’ This video will show you what it’s like to have high-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome. After you watch it, we’ll talk
about what you saw and do some more activities that will help you better understand high-functioning autism and Asperger syndrome.”

**Postviewing Activities.** Following the presentation of the videotape/DVD, you should conduct one or more postviewing activities with the class. Postviewing activities are designed to help students process information in the videotape/DVD and build on skills acquired through the pre-viewing activities. Postviewing activities begin on page 24 of this guide.

**Wrap-Up.** Conclude your presentation by allowing students the opportunity to ask questions. At this time, be sure to reemphasize the key points of the videotape/DVD; these key points can be found on page 31. Then, thank the children for their participation and remind them to always treat a classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome with respect and kindness.

### Customizing the Presentation to Your Specific Needs

This *AutismVision* program is designed to be flexible. You can choose and tailor the pre-viewing and postviewing activities to suit your own instructional style as well as the needs of the classroom. The table on the next page provides an overview of all the activities described in this guide, organized by name, with a brief description, amount of time needed to complete, and materials needed. Use the table to help you decide how to organize your presentation. A typical presentation—including conducting activities and viewing the videotape/DVD—should take approximately 45 minutes.

### Detailed Pre-Viewing and Postviewing Activities

The table below provides an overview of all the activities described in this guide, organized by name, description, amount of time they will take to complete, and materials needed. This table can help you decide how to organize your presentation and what activities will be useful during the presentation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Number</th>
<th>Activity Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time to Complete</th>
<th>Necessary Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Viewing</td>
<td>Differences Among People</td>
<td>Helps students think about how individuals differ from one another</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Paper, pencils, markers, flipchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Viewing</td>
<td>What Would You Like to Know About High-Functioning Autism and Asperger Syndrome?</td>
<td>Students share what they know about HFA and Asperger syndrome and discuss what they would like to learn</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Paper, pencils, markers, flipchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Viewing</td>
<td>We're All the Same on the Inside</td>
<td>Shows students that although we differ on the outside, we are very much the same on the inside</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Eggs, bowls, colored paper, pens, tape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Viewing</td>
<td>Exploring Feelings About HFA and Asperger Syndrome</td>
<td>Helps build empathy through discussions about experiences in which students have felt lonely or isolated</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Paper, pencils, markers, flipchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Viewing</td>
<td>Social Rules</td>
<td>Gives students experience of what it is like to not understand social rules at school</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Paper and pencils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Viewing</td>
<td>Specific Interests</td>
<td>Shows students that some children with HFA and Asperger syndrome have specific interests and how students can use these interests to connect with their classmate</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Markers, flipchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postviewing</td>
<td>Differences Among People</td>
<td>Students compare postviewing ideas about differences among people with their pre-viewing responses (Corresponds with Pre-Viewing Activity 1)</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Responses from Pre-Viewing Activity 1, paper, pencils, markers, flipchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postviewing</td>
<td>What Did You Learn About HFA and Asperger Syndrome?</td>
<td>Students discuss what they now know about HFA and Asperger syndrome (Corresponds with Pre-Viewing Activity 2)</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Responses from Pre-Viewing Activity 2, paper, pencils, markers, flipchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postviewing</td>
<td>Promoting Empathy</td>
<td>Students develop a list of dos and don'ts for interacting with a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Paper, pencils, markers, flipchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postviewing</td>
<td>Being a Good Friend</td>
<td>Students create a list of characteristics that make a good friend and what qualities they have to offer to someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Paper, pencils, chalkboard, chalk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips for Engaging Children

The following pages provide detailed instructions on conducting pre-viewing activities, presenting the videotape/DVD, and conducting postviewing activities. In addition, you may want to keep the following tips in mind for creating an engaging presentation for students ages 8 to 11.

- Use fun, colorful materials, such as colored markers and colored paper.
- During whole-class discussions, write the children’s ideas on the chalkboard or on a flipchart whenever possible.
- Encourage children to work cooperatively in small groups when creating posters, murals, and other projects.
- Positively reinforce participation and discussion. Get children involved in the presentation right from the beginning.
Pre-Viewing Activity 1: Differences Among People

Materials Needed

- Flipchart and markers or chalkboard and chalk
- Paper and pencils

Preparation

Write each of the following questions on a sheet of the flipchart or across the chalkboard:

- What are some differences between you and others?
- How does being different make YOU feel?
- How can having friends who are different from you be a good thing?

Before asking participants to answer these questions, take a few moments to answer them for yourself. Think about your answers and the feelings they evoke. Cite an example. This will help you empathize with the student participants’ feelings.

Procedure

1. Instruct students to write down their answers to the questions, individually or in small groups. Encourage them not to “think too much” about their responses; instead, they should write ideas freely as they come up. For students who have difficulty beginning this activity, you can offer the following sentence starters:

   - “I am ____________________________, but others are ____________________________.”
   - “Being different makes me feel ____________________________.”
   - “Having a friend who is different has helped me ____________________________.”
2. Allow students 5 minutes to respond to the questions. Then, facilitate a brief discussion on their answers. Write their responses on the flipchart/chalkboard.

3. Tell students to put their responses away in a safe place. Explain that they will need them for further discussion after they watch the videotape/DVD. Be sure to save the flipchart* on which you wrote their answers to use for Postviewing Activity 1.

*If using a chalkboard, be sure to write down students' responses on a sheet of paper for later use before erasing.
Pre-Viewing Activity 2: What Would You Like to Know About High-Functioning Autism and Asperger Syndrome?

Materials Needed

- Flipchart and markers or chalkboard and chalk
- Paper and pencils
- Strips of paper (Optional)

Preparation

To help spur conversation, prepare a list of questions about HFA and Asperger syndrome in advance of the presentation. Sample questions include:

- Can people with HFA or Asperger syndrome have friends?
- Will people with HFA or Asperger syndrome get better?
- Do all people with HFA or Asperger syndrome have specific interests?
- Do all people with HFA or Asperger syndrome like to be by themselves?
- Can we do anything to help [insert name of child* with HFA or Asperger syndrome in your class] feel better?

* Only if child has disclosed status and parent has okayed using the student’s name

Procedure

1. Begin the lesson by asking students what they already know about HFA and Asperger syndrome. Write down their ideas on the flipchart. Depending on the experience level of your group, you may not get a lot of information at this point. If no one offers anything, try providing this definition of HFA and Asperger syndrome:
“People who have HFA and Asperger are just like you and me, but they experience our world a little bit differently. Kids who have HFA and Asperger syndrome may sound different when they talk or seem only to talk about certain things—like trains—or only do certain things—like play with the same toy over and over again. Sometimes being in a classroom is hard for kids with HFA and Asperger syndrome.”

2. Now ask students what they would like to learn about HFA and Asperger syndrome. If they are having trouble thinking of questions, they can draw from the box that holds the questions you prepared in advance. Alternatively, you could have your students write down their questions and put them in a box that you can draw from.

3. Conclude the activity by asking students whether they have any final thoughts about HFA and Asperger syndrome before they see the videotape/DVD. Tell students they will revisit these questions after they watch the videotape/DVD.

Make sure you write down students’ ideas. You will need them for other activities.
Pre-Viewing Activity 3: We’re All the Same on the Inside

Materials Needed

- One brown and one white egg
- Two small bowls

Preparation

Discuss with your students the ways in which people are alike (for example, most people have a nose, eyes, two arms, and so forth). Discuss how people are different (for example, some people have green eyes; some wear glasses; and so forth).

Procedure

1. Show students a brown egg and a white egg.
2. Discuss the eggs’ similarities and differences.
3. Turn away from the class and break each egg in a bowl. Hide the shells.
4. Ask the students if they can tell which bowl contains the egg from the brown shell and which bowl contains the egg from the white shell.
5. Conclude the activity with a discussion about how people may look or act differently on the outside but that we are all similar on the inside.

As an extension to this activity, students could create a “chain of diversity.”

1. Using colored construction paper, ask students to cut two strips of paper.
2. On the first strip of paper, instruct students to write down one attribute that makes them similar to other classmates. On the second strip of paper, ask them to write down one attribute that makes them different.
3. Help the students create a paper chain that links together these similarities and differences.
The chain can be hung in your classroom as a visual aid showing how students’ similarities and differences “link” them together.
Pre-Viewing Activity 4: Exploring Feelings About HFA and Asperger Syndrome

Materials Needed

- Flipchart and markers or chalkboard and chalk
- Paper and pencils

Procedure

1. Ask students to take a few moments to think of experiences that made them feel isolated from their peers. Give them some examples, such as:
   - Being teased about clothing or a haircut
   - Having friends leave them out of a fun activity
   - Having a physical difference, such as a scar

2. Tell students to write down their experiences.

3. After students have written down their ideas, ask for volunteers to share them with the group.

4. Discuss the students’ experiences. Draw parallels between these experiences and the lives of people with HFA and Asperger syndrome. Tell students that while their experiences of being left out may have happened only once or twice, people with HFA or Asperger syndrome may have these kinds of experiences every day.

5. Conclude the activity by asking students how they might try to reach out to a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome. Record their ideas on a flipchart or the chalkboard. Tell them that they will have a chance to see the list again after they watch the videotape/DVD.

If students are shy and no one wants to speak, be prepared to offer an example from your own life. Being open about your own experience can help the children in the classroom open up.


Pre-Viewing Activity 5: Social Rules

Materials Needed

- Paper and pencils

Preparation

Begin this activity by briefly discussing with the students how some children with HFA and Asperger syndrome have trouble understanding simple social rules or etiquette. Give examples, such as: They may interrupt a conversation inappropriately; they may talk about one topic nonstop without letting someone else talk; or they may not understand jokes. Discuss with them how children with HFA and Asperger syndrome may feel uncomfortable in social situations because they do not know how to act and may feel anxious.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into small groups of four to five children. Ask each group to develop a new social rule for the group. For example, they could decide that whenever a person says hi, everyone has to jump on one leg. The point is for them to come up with a rule such that it would be hard for other members of the class to figure out why they are doing that particular action. They may want to brainstorm or write down their idea on a piece of paper.

2. Once the groups decide on their rules, ask one member of each group to interact with another group. Do this one at a time.

3. After each group has had an opportunity to demonstrate its new rule and get others to guess what it is, ask the class how it made them feel to interact with the other groups. Were they uncomfortable not understanding the rules? How could it have been easier?

4. Conclude this activity by emphasizing that it is helpful to explain certain rules or situations to people with HFA and Asperger syndrome. This will help them feel included and more a part of the class.
Pre-Viewing Activity 6: Specific Interests

Materials Needed

- Flipchart and markers or chalkboard and chalk

Procedure

The goal of this activity is to help the students understand that some people with HFA and Asperger syndrome have very specific interests that they continually focus on.

1. Begin this activity by asking students to list some of their interests or hobbies. Write these on the flipchart or board.

2. Ask the class how often they participate in these hobbies or interests. Do they do them every day after school or on the weekends? When do they learn more about them? Do they share their interests with other members of their family or friends?

3. Explain to the class that some people with HFA and Asperger syndrome have very specific interests that they focus on, and they would rather talk or learn about those interests and nothing else. Examples of interests may include computers, trains, the stock market, animals, and history.

4. It is important to explain to the class that everyone has an interest or hobby and that he or she may not have HFA or Asperger syndrome. Someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome may focus solely on one topic and exclude everything else. He or she may talk about it all the time, read about it, or watch movies about it.

5. Lead a discussion with the class based on the following questions.
   - How would you feel if you only wanted to talk about one topic and no one else shared your interest?
• What would it be like to know a lot about one area but not want to learn about any others?

• What would you do if you wanted to talk about your hobby, but your friends did not want to talk with you about it?

6. Conclude the activity by emphasizing that some people with HFA or Asperger syndrome may focus on specific interests and may have trouble communicating about other areas. Sometimes people with HFA and Asperger syndrome adopt these restricted or specific areas of interest because it is comforting to them. Ask the students how they could support a classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome. Could they learn about the hobby and talk to their classmate about it? What other things could they do to include their classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome?
Viewing the *AutismVision* Videotape/DVD

After conducting the pre-viewing activities, show the *AutismVision* videotape/DVD to the class. As an introduction to the videotape/DVD, you might say:

“Now we’re going to watch a video called ‘AutismVision.’ This video will teach you what it’s like to have high-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome. After you watch it, we’ll have a discussion and complete some more activities that will help us better understand these disorders.”

The *AutismVision* program videotape/DVD runs for 14 minutes and contains the following elements:

- A group of children learning about HFA and Asperger syndrome
- Interviews with brothers and sisters of children with HFA and Asperger syndrome, along with parents and other adults
- Children learning that although people with HFA and Asperger syndrome may have different ways of communicating, they have many similarities to other kids

Encourage your students to write down questions or comments that come to mind as they view the video.

We recommend that you reinforce learning immediately after the videotape/DVD by emphasizing its key points:

- Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome are first and foremost children; they are like other children in many ways.
- Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome experience the world differently.
- Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome need and want friends.
• Understanding HFA and Asperger syndrome is the key to creating connections.

• HFA and Asperger syndrome are not contagious.

• No one should ever tease or make fun of someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome.

• When a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome feels included, everyone in the classroom can learn and grow!

Then ask whether the students have any specific questions about the videotape/DVD and begin the postviewing activities.
Postviewing Activity 1: Differences Among People

Materials Needed

- Responses from Pre-Viewing Activity 1
- Paper and pencils
- Flipchart and markers or chalkboard and chalk

Procedure

1. Ask students to take out their responses from the “Differences Among People” Pre-Viewing Activity. Also, post the flipchart with the answers you wrote on the board or rewrite your saved answers on the chalkboard.

2. Tell students something like the following:
   “As you saw in the video, children with HFA and Asperger syndrome do some things differently than you or I do. However, having HFA or Asperger syndrome is just one way a person might be different from another. There are many differences among people. Can you give some examples of how people are different?”
   (If necessary, give examples of differences, such as skin or eye color.)

3. Break the class into smaller groups for the next discussion. Ask each group to think of at least three ways people can be different. Give the groups 5 to 10 minutes to complete their lists. They can use their ideas from the Pre-Viewing Activity. Suggest that they also discuss the following questions:
   - Have you ever felt different from others?
   - How did being different make you feel?

4. Bring the entire class back together. Ask the groups to share the results of their small-group discussions. On a page of the flipchart or on the chalkboard, list all the responses. Ask the children whether this activity helped them understand people with HFA and Asperger syndrome better.
5. Conclude the activity by making a list of recommendations on how to treat a classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome. Suggestions might include:

- Treat the student with HFA or Asperger syndrome the same way you treat everyone else.
- Don’t exclude the classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome from any school activities.
- Be polite and respectful. Don’t tease or make fun of the student with HFA or Asperger syndrome.
Postviewing Activity 2: What Did You Learn About HFA and Asperger Syndrome?

Materials Needed

- Responses from Pre-Viewing Activity 2
- Flipchart and markers
- Paper and pencils

Procedure

1. After showing the *AutismVision* video, ask students what they learned from it. Their ideas may include:
   - People with HFA and Asperger syndrome experience the world differently from most people.
   - Each person with HFA or Asperger syndrome is unique. Although they share certain characteristics, people with HFA and Asperger syndrome can be very different from each other.
   - People with HFA and Asperger syndrome have difficulty communicating or understanding how to act in certain circumstances.
   - People with HFA and Asperger syndrome like routines and do not like things to change from one day to the next.

You may want to record students’ ideas and keep them posted in the classroom. These points can serve as a reminder of the difficulties children with HFA and Asperger syndrome face every day. This should be done with sensitivity to the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome and always at the discretion of the classroom teacher.

2. Ask students whether they still have questions about HFA and Asperger syndrome and list them.
3. Answer the children’s questions if you can, and allow other children an opportunity to answer them. This guide’s “Frequently Asked Questions” and “Additional Resources” sections may be helpful to you. If you do not know the answer to a question, it is all right to tell the students that you will have to look up the answer and get back to them.

4. Some questions might provide a springboard for additional activities:
   - Students can draw pictures and write stories based on the questions and answers discussed.
   - A worksheet can be generated so students can connect correct answers with matching questions.
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Postviewing Activity 3: Promoting Empathy

Materials Needed

- Paper and pencils

Procedure

1. Tell students that they will be developing ideas on how to treat their classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome—and how not to behave with him or her. To refresh students’ memories, you may want to show the last segment of the videotape/DVD again.

2. Divide students into groups of two or three. Ask them to think of three ways of interacting with their classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome and three ways not to interact with that classmate. Allow approximately 10 minutes to complete this activity.

3. After students have completed their lists, bring the class back together. Ask each group to present its ideas by either talking about the list, acting out the ideas, or presenting a combination of the two. Students may come up with the following ideas:

   - If you see a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome sitting alone, go over and say hi. If the child doesn’t respond, don’t be sad. Hang around for a little while and see if he or she responds. If not, try again later. Be patient and try different ways to reach a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome.
   - If the class is going to a different room and it looks like the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome is confused, go over and help him or her find the way.
   - If a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome does or says something inappropriate during class, don’t laugh.

4. Next, discuss behaviors children should not engage in when dealing with a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome.
syndrome. For example:

- Never tease a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome.

- Never imitate a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome or laugh at his or her behavior.

- Never do anything that would make a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome feel uncomfortable.

5. Conclude the lesson by congratulating students on thinking of such good strategies. Tell them that their ideas will help the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome feel much more comfortable in class.
**Postviewing Activity 4: Being a Good Friend**

**Materials Needed**
- ✔️ Paper and pencils
- ✔️ Chalkboard and chalk

**Procedure**

1. Divide the class in half. Ask students in one group to make a list of the qualities they look for in a friend. You may want to give them examples, such as honesty, fun to be with, trustworthiness, or caring.

2. Ask students in the other group to make a list of the characteristics that make a good friend. What strengths do they have that make them a good friend to others?

3. Give each group 5 minutes to make up a list. Then, ask each group to read its list aloud. Write the ideas on the board.

4. Next, ask the class to discuss which traits would be most helpful in being a good friend to someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome. You may want to use these questions to lead a discussion:
   - After seeing the video, which qualities do you think would be most helpful to someone who has HFA or Asperger syndrome? (Examples may include patience, caring, and sharing.)
   - What characteristics do you think would make you a good friend to someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome?
   - How can you help others be good friends to someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome?
Wrap-Up

After you have completed the postviewing activities with the class, conclude your presentation by summarizing the main points of the presentation and videotape/DVD. These include:

- Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome are first and foremost children; they are like other children in many ways.
- Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome experience the world differently.
- Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome need and want friends.
- Understanding HFA and Asperger syndrome is the key to creating connections.
- HFA and Asperger syndrome are not contagious.
- No one should ever tease or make fun of someone with HFA or Asperger syndrome.
- When a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome feels included, everyone in the classroom can learn and grow!

Also, you may want to conclude the presentation by asking students to generate a list of recommendations on how to treat a classmate with HFA or Asperger syndrome. Write responses on the board or flipchart. Suggestions may include:

- Treat the student with HFA or Asperger syndrome the same way you treat everyone else.
- Include the student with HFA or Asperger syndrome in all school activities.
- Be polite and respectful. It isn’t nice to tease or make fun of anyone, especially a student with HFA or Asperger syndrome.

End your presentation by asking students whether they have any final questions about HFA and Asperger syndrome or what it is like for children with these disorders. Then, thank the
students for their participation in the group discussions. Finally, remind students that while children with HFA and Asperger syndrome may at times act differently, they are students—just like them in many ways!

If you are the parent of the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome in this classroom, you may choose to lead a short discussion specifically about your child. Determine in advance what information you will be sharing about the child and focus on information that will promote social acceptance of the child by his or her peers. Such topics may include:

- The child’s interests and hobbies
- His or her personal strengths
- His or her favorite foods or clothes
- How best to help the child
- How to be a good friend to the child
- What bothers the child or what the child does when upset or annoyed

You and your child may wish to create a small poster or visual display with pictures of your child’s interests, strengths, etc.
Extensions for Creating Socially Inclusive Classrooms

The activities in this section are designed for use with children with HFA and Asperger syndrome and their typical peers. Since research suggests that children with HFA and Asperger syndrome have an easier time interacting with others on a task when they are interested in the topic, we have included a range of activities that can be tailored to the needs of your students. For example, if a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome likes art, he or she could work with a classmate on an art project. If the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome prefers games, he or she can play games with other classmates.

Not all of these activities will be appropriate for all children in the target age range of 8 to 11. Thus, to help match students to appropriate activities, each has been identified as either:

★—“easy,” ★★—“moderate,” or ★★★—“difficult.”

Extension 1: Art Projects

★ Project 1
Working in pairs, ask students to draw pictures of themselves when they were babies and as they are now. Have the students share, in words or pictures, how they have changed over the years.

★★ Project 2
Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to create a scrapbook of things they like to do. Encourage them to draw pictures for the scrapbook or cut photos out of newspapers and magazines. Have them share the completed scrapbook with their classmates.

★★★ Project 3
Ask students to work in small groups to create a mural of a typical day at school. The mural can be created with a variety of media, including paint, colored pencils, and pastels. Ask students to place themselves in the mural.
Extension 2: Games

★ Project 1
Provide board games such as Jenga or Sorry! for use during indoor recess. Ask students to pull the names of other players out of a hat. Encourage students to play with children other than their best friends.

★★ Project 2
Play a game that requires more skill, such as Connect Four or Guess Who? Connect Four may work well with a child who likes numbers, while Guess Who? is a good game for a visual learner.

Extension 3: Movement Games

★ Project 1
Lead the class in Simon Says; then have students take turns in the “Simon” role.

★★ Project 2
Suggest that the class play a slightly more complicated game, such as Hot Potato or Red Light, Green Light. Give the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome the role with which he or she is most comfortable.

Extension 4: Empathy Building

★★★ Project 1
Ask students to write a poem about what it would be like to experience the world with HFA or Asperger syndrome. Remind them to include descriptive words and empathetic language. If the student with HFA or Asperger syndrome would like to participate, ask him or her to also write a poem about his or her experience. Read the poems aloud in class and post them on a bulletin board.

★★★ Project 2
Ask students to write a couple of paragraphs describing obstacles they have overcome. Make sure they include what the obstacle was, what they had to do to overcome it, and what they learned from the experience. Encourage the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome to write as much as he or she can.
Frequently Asked Questions

This section of the guide is designed to provide the facilitator with basic information about HFA and Asperger syndrome in a question-and-answer format. It has been divided into two sections: “HFA and Asperger Syndrome Versus Autism” and “HFA and Asperger Syndrome.” These pages can easily be photocopied and shared with colleagues and other interested individuals.

HFA and Asperger Syndrome Versus Autism: How Are They Different?

What is autism?

Autism is a developmental disorder that affects a person’s ability to communicate and interact with other people. This disorder affects different people in different ways. Some individuals can function well on their own, while others need more assistance. Some people with autism have good verbal skills; others do not speak at all. Autism is characterized by difficulties involving social relationships, communication, repetitive actions, and an unusual attachment to objects or routines.

What are high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome?

High-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome are developmental disorders that affect a person’s ability to communicate and interact with other people. People with HFA and Asperger syndrome may have trouble understanding social cues, cling to routines, move repetitively, have difficulty with fine motor skills and sensory integration, and become preoccupied with specific areas of interest.

How are high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome different from autism?

Asperger syndrome is one of five developmental disorders (Pervasive Developmental Disorders) that represent the autism...
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spectrum. HFA falls at the “high” end of the autism spectrum, where people with this diagnosis may be able to communicate better socially, have more language skills, and exhibit fewer behavior problems than people at the lower end of the spectrum. The main difference between Asperger syndrome and autism is in the language and cognitive areas. Typically, people with Asperger syndrome do not experience delayed language development and may have average to above-average intelligence.

HFA and Asperger Syndrome

What are symptoms of high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome?

While everyone with high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome is different, symptoms of people with HFA and Asperger syndrome involve problems in socialization, communication, cognition, and sensation. Each individual's characteristics may vary and may differ in severity. Examples of symptoms and characteristics include repetitive behaviors or interests, difficulty with fine motor skills (such as writing), difficulty communicating or connecting with others, inability to understand social cues and rules, poor organizational skills, literal (not abstract) thinking, specific focus on a particular interest, and strict adherence to routines and rules.

When do symptoms appear?

Although the range can vary widely, parents of children with autism often begin to notice signs of the disorder when their children are 2 to 3 years old. Children with Asperger syndrome may be diagnosed later because they do not have the same language or communication problems children with autism exhibit early on.

How many people have high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome?

While diagnoses of Asperger syndrome are increasing, the exact number of children with the disorder is not known.
Some sources indicate that 48 of every 10,000 children may have Asperger syndrome. In a recent survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 5.6 children per 1,000 were reported to have an autism diagnosis. Boys were four times more likely to have a diagnosis of autism than girls.

**Are high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome contagious?**

Autism and other developmental disabilities are not contagious. You cannot “catch” HFA or Asperger syndrome from someone who has it. Researchers believe that these conditions are the result of a person’s genetic makeup and other, unknown factors that may trigger the onset of symptoms.

**Is there a cure?**

At this time, no cure has been found for autism, HFA, or Asperger syndrome. Many researchers and educators are currently studying these disorders and looking for ways to cure or treat people who have them. While there is no cure yet, we do know that the earlier the disorders are diagnosed and treated, the better the result for the person.

Many adults with HFA and Asperger syndrome see their disorder as a strength and view the idea of a “cure” as offensive. Individuals with HFA or Asperger syndrome and their peers should understand that disability is a natural part of the human condition. “Aspies”— as self-advocates with HFA and Asperger syndrome often refer to themselves—are proud of who they are, a trait that should be encouraged in all youth, with and without autism spectrum disorders.

**How should children with HFA and Asperger syndrome be treated?**

Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome should be treated the same as other children. While they may have different ways of relating and communicating with people, they also have many strengths and interesting qualities.
Some people may have misperceptions of students with high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger syndrome. Some of the common myths, as well as the truth about HFA and Asperger syndrome, are provided below. This page can be photocopied and shared with students and other interested individuals.

What are some common myths?

- **Myth: People with HFA and Asperger syndrome do not want friends.**
  
  Truth: In fact, people with HFA and Asperger syndrome do want and can have friends. While they may have trouble communicating with or relating to people in certain circumstances, this does not mean that they want or would prefer to be alone.

- **Myth: People with HFA and Asperger syndrome are rude.**
  
  Truth: Some people with HFA and Asperger syndrome may speak bluntly or express their thoughts openly and honestly without thinking about how their words may be interpreted. This communication style is typical of people with HFA and Asperger syndrome and does not indicate that they are mean-spirited or rude. They simply may not understand the socially appropriate rules of behavior. These types of behaviors should just be ignored if it is a small indiscretion, or the person with HFA or Asperger syndrome should be told that what was said or done is not appropriate and be given an appropriate alternative behavior.

- **Myth: People with HFA and Asperger syndrome just have a behavior problem that can be corrected with good parenting.**
  
  Truth: HFA and Asperger syndrome are neurologically based disorders; a person with HFA or Asperger syndrome is not simply expressing bad behaviors or being noncompliant. HFA and Asperger syndrome are not caused by bad or ineffective parenting.
Tips for Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment

Integrating a child with HFA or Asperger syndrome into the classroom can be a challenge, especially if you have no previous experience to draw upon. Some simple strategies, such as those described below, can help create a supportive classroom environment.

- **Emphasize the importance of teamwork.** Stress that although each student is an individual, every student is a member of the larger team.

- **Structure the classroom in a simple, logical way.** For example, designate one section of the room for reading stories, one for doing math, and a third for science. It helps children with HFA and Asperger syndrome—and others who need structure—accomplish the activities required of them.

- **Have a “quiet corner” or space in the classroom for anyone who needs a break from activity.** A few chairs or a table placed away from the main hub of activity can provide all children with some necessary quiet time during the busy school day.

- **Reinforce positive behaviors.** A system that rewards desired behaviors benefits all students, not just those with HFA and Asperger syndrome.

- **At the end of each day, go over the schedule for the following day.** Provide a “picture schedule” as a visual aid. Post the daily schedule in the same location. If possible, try to conduct academic subjects and activities at the same time every day.

- **If a special event is planned, such as an assembly, give the class as much advance notice as you can.** Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome may have difficulty with changes in routine and can deal with them more successfully when they have some preparation time.
• **Discuss rules for emergency procedures, such as fire drills.** Have a plan in place to help the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome stay calm and reach safety during these events. For example, each child in the classroom could be paired with a buddy during emergency events. If possible, request advance notice before planned drills and be sure to prepare the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome in advance.

• **Help children with HFA and Asperger syndrome stay organized.** Children with HFA and Asperger syndrome may have trouble staying organized; help them by modeling this behavior in the classroom. Keep supplies labeled and stored in an orderly fashion in the classroom. Ask the children to organize their desks and materials. It may be helpful for children with HFA and Asperger syndrome to have specific folders for individual subjects; you can teach them how to keep their paperwork organized in these folders. Help them organize their homework assignments accordingly.

• **Structure particular assignments around the interests of the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome.** Some children with HFA and Asperger syndrome may fixate on one particular topic that they are very interested in. For example, they may be really interested in animals, and that is all they want to talk or learn about. You can use this interest in the classroom by structuring particular assignments around it. If appropriate, ask the child with HFA or Asperger syndrome to share information on the topic during the lesson; this can be a boost to his or her self-esteem. For example, for a child whose interest is fixed on animals, when you are teaching math, include examples that highlight animals. If you have a lesson in history, ask the student to look into the history of the Endangered Species List. Extend his or her focus on the topic while making the lesson interesting.
Additional Resources

Resources for Facilitators

Books


Web Sites

ASA: Autism Society of America

[www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

ASA provides detailed information on a wide range of autism-related topics for families and educators. It also provides a list of ASA chapters throughout the country for support and additional resources

MAAP: More Advanced Individuals With Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder

[www.maapservices.org](http://www.maapservices.org)

This organization provides resources on high-functioning autism and Asperger syndrome, including a tip sheet on teaching individuals with high-functioning autism.
OASIS: Online Asperger Syndrome Information & Support
www.aspergersyndrome.org
A helpful Web site created by parents of children with Asperger syndrome that offers information related to legal resources and links to diagnosis information, classroom management, and research.

OAR: Organization for Autism Research
www.researchautism.org
OAR provides detailed information on applied research to the autism community. Its Web site contains monthly newsletters, a comprehensive list of resources, and an overview of practical research underway in autism spectrum disorders.

NICHCY: National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
www.nichcy.org
NICHCY is a national source of information on disabilities in children of all ages. It includes research-based information, law and policy information, and resources for autism spectrum disorders.

NIMH: National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov
NIMH offers detailed information regarding autism spectrum disorders, including a printable booklet. Information can also be found about clinical trials, as well as research activities such as those of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee.

CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/
CDC offers a wealth of educational information about autism spectrum disorders and includes an Autism Information Center on its Web site. In addition to this, information on other research activities and resources is provided.
Resources for Children

Books


This story tells the tale of 12-year-old Moose, who moves to Alcatraz in 1935 so his father can work as a prison guard. Moose takes care of his autistic younger sister, Natalie.


This book introduces children aged 8 to 12 years to famous, inspirational figures from the world of science, art, math, literature, philosophy, and comedy.


This book highlights the everyday challenges faced by children with Asperger syndrome.


This book is written by a 10 year old with Asperger syndrome and gives a first-hand account of what it is like to have Asperger syndrome.


In this story, Daisy, a girl with Asperger syndrome, illustrates what her life is like.


This book provides a child’s perspective on Asperger syndrome.
Web Sites

**Kids Quest on Disability and Health**
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/kids/

This site, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leads children on a quest to learn more about common childhood disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders.

**KidsHealth**
www.kidshealth.org

This Web site has specific information on many children’s health problems, including Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism.

**OASIS: Online Asperger Syndrome Information & Support**
www.aspergerssyndrome.org

OASIS has a Kids Corner on its Web site that includes poems and other writings by children who have Asperger syndrome.